



Reconnecting from beyond the prison bars: A rapid evidence assessment on parent/children engagement post-release.

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Summary

The research presented in this report sought to examine how parents reconnect with their children when released from prison. Adopting a gender inclusive approach, the research examines the process and outcomes experienced by former male and female prisoners post-release along with the experiences of their children. Factors such as previous criminal history, socio-economic disadvantages and substance abuse are explored, and services offered to parents with children who are released from prison. The research adopted a rapid evidence assessment (REA) method, which was supported by the PRISM guidelines for doing systematic research. Search engines such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost (Psychology) and Informit were used to source existing literature and evidence, while a thematic analytical framework was utilised in order to thematize the evidence. The key findings of the research centre on the impact that both formal and informal throughcare support services offer parents post-release from prison. The key findings also reveal how positive and negative experiences of the throughcare process affect resettlement and parent-child relationships upon release from prison.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are terms used throughout the report:

- CRC – Community Restorative Centre
- FaCS – Family and Community Services
- REA – Rapid Evidence Assessment
- PRISMA – Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Review and Meta-Analyses
- PTSD – Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
- PUP – Parents Under Pressure

Section 1: Introduction to the Study

The throughcare and resettlement process of offenders who are released from custody has many elements, such as housing, employment, and continued access to community-based offender programs to address their prior offending. Often the issue of offenders as parents is overlooked, and the role of throughcare and resettlement for offenders as parents is limited. Throughcare supports individuals through leaving prison and preparing them for the resettlement process (Dixon & Stein, 2005). The term resettlement focuses on reintegrating individuals back into the community positively through formal and informal support services (Decarpes & Durnescu, 2014). Throughcare and resettlement need to be mentioned together as they are both involved throughout the process of parents leaving prison and entering back into the community. When parents are released from prison, throughcare services can provide parents with information to help guide themselves for a smooth and well-planned transition back into the community when provided to them. Some of the needs parents face once released from prison include welfare needs such as food, housing, employment, mental health, finance and drug and alcohol abuse (Decarpes & Durnescu, 2014). Support services provide parents with the skills and information needed to help combat these common challenges once released from prison while also giving them the best chances to reconnect with their children in a positive environment.

Support services come in two forms which are formal and informal support services. Formal support services are run by institutional or government agencies include support in specific issues such as educational, employment, cognitive behavioural, sex offender treatment, mental health, domestic violence, and prisoner re-entry programmes (Duwe, 2017). These formal support services are offered to individuals within prison and post-release from prison (Duwe, 2017). Informal support services involve support from friends, parents, partners, neighbours, and the community to help individuals with information and skills (Peer Connect, n.d.).

Resettlement starts as early as the pre-release stage as prisoners will be guided through a concrete plan to transition back into the community; this plan should include basic needs such as food, shelter and a stable course of financial income (Decarpes & Durnescu, 2014). However, if pre-release support services are not followed through

with community-based support services post-release, pre-release services can often be unbeneficial. Therefore, this expresses the need for formal and informal support services throughout the resettlement process to ensure that parents get the best chance of a reconnection with their children post-release.

Formal and informal support services are crucial elements for the success of parents post-release resettlement and reconnection with their children. If throughcare support services are not offered to parents, it can create issues during the post-release stage, such as lack of employment opportunities (Kemper & Rivara, 1993). The theme of unemployment for parents post-release increased financial instability, which further influences related financial struggles such as food and housing (Decarpes & Durnescu, 2014). The lack of employment opportunities can then have a domino effect on parents-children, and the lack of support services on employment opportunities can affect the reconnection parents have with their children. Overall, children's behavioural, educational, psychological, social, and financial development are affected, and parents do not have the finances to provide children with this care (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019).

Another main theme was identified by Bartlett & Trotter (2019), explaining the issue of the staggering number of fathers who do not receive the same amount of access to parenting support services as mothers do. Bartlett & Trotter (2019) found that 79% of fathers reported they were not offered parent support or services, which is an area of concern considering men are the dominant gender within the prison system. This issue will be explored further by identifying the available support services both in prison and post-release. Overall, these risk factors for both parents and children reinforce the importance of adequate support programmes for pre-release and post-release.

Therefore, with these emerging issues, programs such as Parents Under Pressure (PUP) for low-security confinement have been developed to help support post-release transition and give parents the tools to build their relationship with their children (Frye & Dawe, 2008). Support programmes are also tailored to provide specific support for children. This stems from the particular issue children face when disconnected from their parents in their most vulnerable stages of development (Fergusson, Horwood & Lynskey, 1992). Specific programmes for children include 'SHINE for kids' to visit their parents within the jail in a child-friendly environment. Programmes like SHINE help

increase the chances of reconnections post-release as children spend less time away from their parents while in prison.

Aims of the Study

This study seeks to explore the issues experienced by men and women who are parented post-release from prison, as well as the experiences of their children as they look to reconnect. This study also examines both formal and informal support services available to parents post-release from prison.

These aims are addressed through the following research questions:

1. What is the resettlement process for men and women post-release from prison?
2. What are the experiences of parents when reconnecting with their children post-release from prison?
3. What are the formal and informal support services available to parents in prison the support them in reconnecting with their children post-release from prison?
4. What is the efficacy of such support, evidenced through experiences during the resettlement process?

Section Two: Methodology

In order to conduct the research, a Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was adopted. A Rapid Evidence Assessment involves a systematic analysis of interventions, problems, and practical issues of the chosen topic to help identify the interventions reported in the literature (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017). The research strategy is to collect data from databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost and Informit to help sort through the existing data. It is essential to constantly analyse the data's trustworthiness and sort the information through the four categories of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Bryman, 2016). By seeking journals that have been peer-reviewed through the Primo search engine provided by Charles Sturt University and databases such as Google Scholar, EBSCOhost (Psychology) and Informit. The benefit of using an REA is reviewing studies selected in a two-stage process by reviewing the abstract and then checking the full article (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017). Using an REA over other research methods, such as a systematic review, was chosen as a quick and thorough research method on a more specific topic for the timeframe and word count available. The selected REA method helps the research develop particular research questions, and explicit evidence is developed from the clear search strategies (Varker et al., 2015). The PICOC (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome and Context) framework will further support the REA method in research.

PICOC Framework

The PICOC framework is applied to the research to maintain the relevance of the contexts searched throughout the study (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017). The PICOC acronym, as noted above, stands for: Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome and Context (Barends, Rousseau & Briner, 2017).

The population examined through the PICOC framework in this study includes a gender-inclusive approach for both male and female offenders leaving prison. The children of mothers and fathers post-release are also represented in this population. Subgroups that may be affected by the outcomes of parents post-release are grandparents, foster care or adopted (Backhouse & Graham, 2012).

The intervention for this research was factoring into the formal and informal support services offered to parents within prison and post-release. This research also identified the gaps that support services fail to cover, such as fathers not receiving the same support services as mothers (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019).

The comparison within this research follows from the formal and informal support services available for male and female parents and their children post-release from prison. Finally, formal and informal support systems are compared against the experiences had by male and female parents and their children post-release during their resettlement process. This will be broken down into two categories of both positive and negative experiences had within formal and informal support services to further see more precisely this comparison and understand the aims of where support services are successful or need improvement.

The outcomes of this research are to identify and understand the positives and negatives of parent-child reconnections post-release from prison by examining formal and informal support services through a gender-inclusive approach exploring both mothers and fathers. Such an understanding is applied to the throughcare and resettlement process of parent/child reconnections for post-release from prison to help strengthen the programmes provided to parents.

The context of this research provides support services with information that will continue to support their work in the field of resettlement and throughcare. Other community-based organisations may also look to this information to better understand the situation of parents' post-release and how they may improve their experiences.

Search Terms

The table below provides a list of the search terms used in the research to find information that sought to answer the research questions guiding this study. The search terms used were based on the keywords within the research questions and PICOC framework.

Table 1: REA Search Terms

PICOC Elements	Keyword(s)	Search terms and strategies
Population	Ex-offender OR Ex-prisoners AND Parents, Men, Women, Children,	Fathers OR Mothers OR Guardian OR Husband OR Wife OR Spouse OR Adolescent OR Minor
Intervention	Formal support services, Informal support services	Family support OR Government Services OR Legal OR Benefit
Comparison	Positive experiences, negative experiences	Involvement OR Understanding OR Struggle OR Participation OR Contact
Outcome	Throughcare, resettlement, reconnections	Reestablishment OR Support OR Displacement OR Journey OR Relation
Context	Community-based organisations, information, programmes	Advice OR Knowledge OR Data OR Report OR System OR Institution OR Arrangements

PRISMA Framework

This Rapid Evidence Assessment utilises the process of Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) to support the search process (Moher et al., 2009). The search was completed through the following databases Primo, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost (Psychology) and Informit.

From the search process, there were 54,923 articles identified within Informit. Articles included fell within a 15-year timeframe to cover a contemporary landscape of this issues this study sought to consider. Articles of the English language and published within Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom were included. Duplicates of articles were also removed, and peer-reviewed,

full-text articles were obtained. Articles that had irrelevant titles and abstracts were excluded. A PRISMA flow chart was created in Appendix 1 to show how the included studies were selected.

Analytical Framework

As part of the REA, the evidence must be analysed through an analytical framework to help support the researcher with their logical thinking throughout the process of research (Fray, 2018). A thematic analysis was used to manage the data and to make sense of the large volume of data. A thematic analysis identifies, analyses, and reports patterns within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analyses involve identifying the key themes mentioned throughout the research data. This process of identifying themes helps to understand the relation between the data and the research question at hand (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the themes have established a pattern within the research, this can help identify if your research takes an inductive or deductive approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke (2006) then explain the process of coding the research themes to help develop a thematic map. This process further helps identify the key topics that should be addressed in the study as main headings or sub-headings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Once the revision of codes has happened a few times to produce the final thematic map, it is essential to review and revise this map through two levels (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first level reviewed all correlated data collected for each code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The second level involves reading the data set to make sure each theme flows and is consistent with the study as a whole (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This also gives the last chance to remove or change themes and data before finalising the thematic map; however, these stages will be repeated multiple times to ensure the accuracy of the themes of the data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The benefits of using the thematic analyses are to help connect current knowledge and analyse the developing themes among the research (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen & Snelgrove, 2016). Another benefit of thematic analysis is being flexible with the direction of research and relating to the connections made earlier in the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, some disadvantages can include the ease of potentially overlapping themes or using themes that may not mainly answer the main

research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This can be avoided by reviewing the codes and the drafts of the thematic maps.

The findings of the process yielded several themes which centre on both the positive and negative experiences both men and women face when seeking to reconnect with their children when being released from prison. The analytical process also reveal the role formal and informal support services play in the parent-child reconnection process. The remaining sections of this report address this findings and reflect on the throughcare and resettlement process for parents leaving prison and reconnecting with their children.

Section Three: Men's Experiences Post-release from Prison

This section considers formal and informal support services provided to men during their post-release stages of prison release. This section draws on 30 articles to inform this work. This information informs an understanding of how these experiences affect the resettlement and reconnection process between men as fathers and their children in the post-release process.

The aims of formal support services and understanding the positives and negatives

Understanding what formal support services aim to achieve for men post-release is essential as this will reflect on how successful the throughcare programs are in successfully resettling men back into the community. Formal throughcare support services designed for fathers commonly aim to address education, substance abuse treatment, job training, family counselling (Anderson-Fecile, 2009). These aims for formal support services for fathers are like those aims for mothers and their involvement with throughcare programmes. The REA identified positive themes for fathers' formal support services, such as the importance of contact support with children while serving their sentence within the prison (Kiraly & Humphreys, 2013). Throughcare programmes such as SHINE for Kids, offering services to allow children to maintain contact with fathers through visits, writing letters and phone calls (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). Firstly, the programme's benefits are seen through fathers feeling closer to their children through consistent involvement and learnt skills during formal programmes that can be utilised when reconnecting with children (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). Secondly, when formal support services are offered to fathers, specific parenting education benefits disadvantaged or at-risk families (Meek, 2007). These two themes relate to the common formal support system aims of family counselling and education and will be examined further under the positive experiences for formal support services post-release.

However, there are a number of negative elements to men's experiences and their throughcare process with regards to reconnecting with their children. As an illustration, the lack of access to formal support programmes has been identified throughout the REA regarding the father's post-release experiences (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). The literature explained the staggering number of fathers who do not receive the same

access to parenting support services as mothers. Bartlett & Trotter (2019) found that 79% of fathers reported not being offered parent support or services. The lack of formal support services will be examined through the experiences had by fathers when minimal throughcare opportunities limit their educational and employment opportunities. These experiences will then be examined on how they can affect father-child reconnection post-release from prison.

Negative experiences with lack of formal support services post-release for men as fathers

One of the most common disadvantages fathers face is the lack of formal throughcare support services for parents. Fathers lack access to formal support services such as specific education programmes, affecting employment opportunities post-release from prison. It has been identified by Bartlett & Trotter (2019) that 79% of fathers report they were not offered any form of parent throughcare support service. The reason for this is the limited father-specific programmes available for fathers for their particular needs for their resettlement and reconnection with their children (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). These specific needs include difficulty finding housing, employment, lack of education and substance abuse (Souza et al., 2015). These specific needs are similar to those for mothers in their resettlement and post-release stage. These issues of limited father-specific throughcare formal programmes create disadvantages in the post-release stage as fathers do not have the resources to improve their education and employment (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019).

The REA identified the main theme of the lack of father-specific programmes provided by formal throughcare services. There is a lack of engagement by formal throughcare services to ensure fathers stay engaged with throughcare programmes. Bartlett (2019) has done significant research on fathers' experiences post-release in Australia and understanding their needs and the issues they commonly face. The lack of father specific education programmes creates post-release issues such as lack of parenting skills, confidence in fatherhood and involvement in their children's lives (Dennison et al., 2014). Within Australia, further parenting programmes are established within male prisons; however, fathers are not always offered these programmes or choose not to engage with them (Bartlett, 2019). The lack of engagement stems from the minimal commitment from correctional services to deliver throughcare programmes for fathers

(Bartlett, 2019). This is caused by the lack of data collected to examine if father-specific programmes are effective once resettlement commences post-release and fathers try to establish reconnections with their children (Bartlett, 2019). Overall affecting fathers' experiences of reconnecting with their children as without parenting skills being provided to help fathers become involved in their child's life, it creates communication barriers with their children (Swanson et al., 2012). Social support throughcare programmes are needed for fathers to feel confident in their abilities to be good fathers for their children once in the post-release stage (Swanson et al., 2012). The lack of access to father specific parenting education creates the inability for fathers to have the skills needed to reconnect with their children post-release from prison due to the lack of commitment from service providers to ensure the programmes created for father's successfully support them post-release from prison.

The lack of parenting education relates to the lack of employment opportunities for fathers as, during imprisonment, fathers are not gaining opportunities to learn the skills needed for post-release employment. The lack of employment opportunities provided to fathers creates low self-esteem, poor motivation, lack of training, lack of employment skills and poor employment record (Hai & Dandurand, 2013). Even though fathers are aware of the importance of having employment post-release from prison, the difficulty of gaining employment comes from a lack of education and work experience (Souza et al., 2015). The lack of work experience creates a struggle to find employment as it shows employers that individuals cannot retain a job (Berg & Huebner, 2011). In turn, lack of employment history reduces the chances of employment further during the post-release stage (Berg & Huebner, 2011). Souza et al. (2015) identified the connection between income and relationships and how the lack of income creates strains on relationships, in turn creating poor reconnections with children. These issues of lack of employment opportunities increase further as fathers within prison lack access to educational throughcare programmes that would teach them job-ready skills such as resume writing and interview skills (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). Overall, affecting the parent-child reconnections through the lack of parenting skills and employment opportunities post-release from prison (Dennison et al., 2014). These issues affect the parental support and emotional support fathers can provide to their children as they are feeling unsuccessful as a father providing for the family (Berg & Huebner, 2011).

The REA has identified the issue of the inability of throughcare support services to support fathers adequately. Throughcare programmes typically develop their programmes based on the needs of the individual or the current understanding of dynamic risk factors faced in the post-release stage (Hai & Dandurand, 2013). However, it is an issue for fathers as lack of commitment from formal support services to collect and understand the data of father specific programmes creates these gaps that lead to fathers not being taught the correct skills needed to resettle and reconnect with children (Bartlett, 2019). An example of a throughcare programme that struggles to support fathers appropriately would be the pilot programme in the ACT called the Extended Throughcare Pilot Program (Griffiths, Zmudzki & Bates, 2017). Support workers of the program even recognised that they are setting up clients to fail if they are not doing their jobs properly through providing incorrect help to fathers (Griffiths, Zmudzki & Bates, 2017). Overall, exposing the evidence of how formal throughcare programmes can struggle to provide the father with the correct skill and education needed for their resettlement post-release from prison and help them create reconnections with their children. There needs to be a better understanding of the needs for fathers to ensure a smoother transition from prison to the post-release stage and to ensure reconnections are created with their children.

Positive experiences of formal support services post-release for men as fathers

After examining the negative experiences of formal throughcare support services on the resettlement of fathers and their reconnections with their children, this section will now explore the positives of formal throughcare support services. The REA identified themes for the positive outcomes of formal support services for fathers, including maintaining contact support with children while fathers serve their sentences (Kiraly & Humphreys, 2013). As well as how successful specific parenting programmes are for fathers to reconnect with their children (Meek, 2007). These two themes will be examined through fathers' experiences post-release from prison and how they positively affect the reconnections they had with their children.

While fathers are imprisoned, they are often left with little to no contact with their children outside of prison. The importance of contact support for fathers was identified through the REA as a positive formal support service that allows fathers to maintain

their connections with their children during incarceration. Contact support is provided by formal support services to help parents maintain contact with their children while serving a sentence within the prison (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). The benefits of contact support include fathers feeling closer to their children during their sentence due to the consistent involvement in their child's life (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). Involvement includes children keeping in contact with their fathers through visits, writing letters and phone calls with them (Bartlett & Trotter, 2019). Without this consistent support, fathers feel conflicted with their fathering roles and the criminal behaviour, emphasising the importance of family ties with children to ensure fathers do not lose a sense of their father roles (Bartlett, 2019). The importance of maintaining this father role will also help to retain parenting skills, and fathers can transition from prison to the post-release stage slightly easier as connections with children have been maintained through contact support programmes (Patulny, 2012). Therefore, the positive benefits of contact support for fathers allow them to maintain positive experiences with their children while also maintaining parental skills to continue reconnecting with their children post-release from prison.

For children, contact support is necessary to ensure they feel less distressed, feel less withdrawn from parents, and meet their physical needs (Shlafer, Hardeman & Carlson, 2019). Formal support services provide fathers with an opportunity to maintain relationships with children in a safe and supportive manner that will allow the child to adjust easier to the situation (Shlafer, Hardeman & Carlson, 2019). Overall, increasing the reconnections fathers have with their children and their ongoing contact with their father make the post-release reconnection stage slightly easier (Patulny, 2012). During contact support, fathers have been able to retain their parenting skills and maintain their relationships with their children throughout the sentencing period (Patulny, 2012). This shows the importance of contact support for fathers and their children, as they too can maintain connections with their parents.

The benefits of specific parenting education include improved family relationships, increased contact, parenting skills, support for children education and successful reunification with family and children (Shlafer, Hardemam & Carlson, 2019). These benefits have been shown to significantly help disadvantaged or at-risk fathers as they provide fathers with the skills and knowledge needed to maintain family relationships (Meek, 2007). Specific parenting education involves teaching fathers employment

education, mental health, parenting classes and rewards fathers with visitation opportunities (Shlafer, Hardemam & Carlson, 2019). Rewarding fathers with visitation opportunities help fathers stay motivated and remember they are learning these skills for their children (Meek, 2007). The combinations of contact support and specific education for fathers increase the chances for successful resettlement and reconnection with their children post-release from prison. Successfully supporting fathers in gaining knowledge for themselves and their children to make positive changes allows fathers to successfully resettle and reconnect with their children.

SHINE for Kids is an example of a formal throughcare support programme that helps in allowing parents to visit their children while providing parenting education to maintain skills and relationships. SHINE for Kids provides facilitated playgroups within correction centres and transport services to take children to see their incarcerated parents (Hyslop, 2009). SHINE for Kids also develop, implement, and evaluate education and support programmes within the correctional centre while also teaching facilitators of those groups (Hyslop, 2009). The benefits of teaching facilitators allow already developed programmes to become better in what they achieve for parents. SHINE for Kids also provides educational information and resources for parents, including what to expect from children during a visit, strategies during visiting times and skills to make parting from visiting times easier (Hyslop, 2009). Overall, SHINE for Kids combines the importance of contact support and parenting education in a supervised and safe space for both parents and children. This allows connection between parents and children to be maintained during parents sentencing periods and enable the transition from prison to post-release smoother. The reconnection with children post-release becomes smoother due to the maintained contact throughout sentencing and skills provided from formal throughcare support services such as Shine for Kids.

The aims of informal support services and understanding the positives and negatives

Informal support services, such as family and friends, aim to help fathers with emotional help, employment, communication and finding resources (Martinez, 2008). The REA identified the common positive themes of informal support for men providing support during the post-release stage by assisting them in becoming productive

citizens in terms of employment and interpersonal skills (Martinez & Christina, 2009). Families who are supportive in these environments can also significantly reduce depression for fathers while they learn to resettle back into the community (Martinez & Christina, 2009). These positives show the aims of informal support systems in employment and emotional help are met by the supportive reactions from family and friends by providing fathers with resources and skills.

However, the negative themes found from the REA are the barriers father's face with the involvement with their children due to custody arrangements (Muentner & Charles, 2020). This is often overlooked when mothers are the 'primary caregivers', leading to further issues for fathers such as struggles with self-identity as a father's roles are taken away from them (Tripp, 2009). These issues challenge the emotional informal support service experiences had by fathers and increase the challenges of reconnecting with their children with less time and access to them. The following section will examine these negative experiences from informal support services and see how these experiences affect their reconnections with their children.

Negative experiences of informal support services post-release for men as fathers

Fathers are often overlooked as the primary caregiver of their children, which often creates further issues such as self-identity struggles as father roles are taken away (Tripp, 2009). This negative theme has been identified from the REA as custody arrangements create barriers for fathers not allowing fathers to be involved in their children's lives (Muentner & Charles, 2020). These issues challenge the effectiveness of informal support service experiences had by fathers through the lack of accountability fathers can have while reconnecting with their children with less time and access to them.

Imprisonment creates very challenging times for fathers, especially when children have been taken away, significantly challenging their overall ability to be a father. Fathers who lose custody of their children further emphasise this challenge, and fathers start to lose their self-identity due to their loss of connections. Reasons for the custody of children are to be taken away may include abuse, alienation and drug or alcohol abuse (Meier, 2020). Situations such as these can diminish a father's self-identity as due to incarceration, he has lost sense of a meaningful family relationship

and affects the man's confirmation of his roles as a father, which affects his self-identity (Dyer, 2005).

Within the post-release stage, informal support systems can often provide informative feedback in terms of behaviour, for example, giving the father praise when gaining a new skill or improving his ability to be a father (Dyer, 2005). However, when approval is taken away due to their partner not being involved in men's lives anymore, the father's self-identity is lost as they have lost their sense of accountability (Dyer, 2005). This issue becomes worse when fathers also do not have access to their children to ensure they can be the best father for them.

The hard work of fathers trying to utilise their newly learnt parenting skills received during incarceration is taken away by child custody as fathers no longer can practise these skills with the children if they are not around (Tripp, 2009). This greatly impacts the reconnection fathers may have with their children as they are stigmatised by their old abuse habits and could not show their children they have changed for the better. Fathers who have weaker informal support systems are more likely to reoffend and go back to unhelpful habits, which further impacts the possibility of having a positive reconnection with their children (Martinez & Christian, 2009). The combination of the lack of informal support from partners and the lack of access to their children can significantly affect the father emotional wellbeing. Fathers often get depressed post-release from prison due to these common factors of not being involved in their child's life and being unable to establish reconnections with them (Martinez & Christian, 2009). Overall, affecting the father's self-identity as a father as their roles have been taken away from them altogether and leading to greater chances of reoffending. This vicious cycle does not allow fathers enough time to re-establish their fathering roles or to make a reconnection with their children before they are reincarcerated.

Positive experiences of informal support services post-release for men as fathers

During the post-release stage, positive support from friends and family is needed throughout the post-release stage from prison. The REA identified a common positive theme of informal support for men as the support provided by close family and friends in assisting them with learning employable skills. For example, in the work of Martinez & Christina (2009), they have identified how these skills allow fathers to become

productive citizens in terms of employment and interpersonal skills for the benefit of the community (Martinez & Christina, 2009). Families who are supportive in these environments can also significantly reduce depression for fathers while they learn to resettle back into the community (Martinez & Christina, 2009). This illustrates the aims of informal support systems in employment, and emotional help is met by the supportive reactions from family and friends by providing fathers with resources and skills.

Informal support systems provide fathers with the benefits of supporting them with accommodation, employment and job-ready skills. Markson et al. (2015) had noted that positive informal support systems are essential in supporting fathers with crucial needs such as accommodation, reducing the use of drugs and alcohol, providing better family relationships and helping with the ability to cope in the post-release stage (Markson et al., 2015). Informal support from family and friends may also come in support to help find fathers employment or provide them with job-ready skills. During the post-release stage, this can be seen through informal support systems offering to help them find work or offering employment to them through their own business or connections (Markson et al., 2015). This reduces the barriers of finding employment and allows fathers to gain a steady income to provide for themselves and their families (Kane, Nelson & Edin, 2015). Fathers given the opportunity of employment allows them to gain valuable work experience and skills that will enable them to resettle back into the community successfully as productive citizens (Markson et al., 2015). Being employed helps fathers gain practical interpersonal skills such as communication with others within the workplace (Dennison, Smallbone & Occhipinti, 2017).

Employment and interpersonal skills can allow fathers to become valuable community citizens and enable fathers to feel productive, leading to less reoffending (Markson et al., 2015). The employment and interpersonal skills gain can reflect positively on the reconnections with children. Fathers often comment on the struggles of communicating with their children; however, if fathers receive access to informal support services that allow them to gain access to employment and interpersonal skills, this struggle is reduced (Dennison, Smallbone & Occhipinti, 2017). Improved interpersonal skills reflect the reconnection fathers have with their children as they can communicate better with them, allowing them to gain a positive relationship with them (Dennison, Smallbone & Occhipinti, 2017). Overall, gaining employment from informal

support systems will enable fathers to earn employable skills and a steady income to provide for themselves and their families. Employment also allows fathers to gain critical interpersonal skills that will benefit the father in communicating well with their children, in particular when trying to reconnect with them post-release.

Section Four: Women's Experiences Post-release from Prison

This section considers formal and informal support services provided to women during their post-release stages of prison release. This section draws on 33 articles to inform this work. This information informs an understanding of how these experiences affect the resettlement and reconnection process between women as mothers and their children in the post-release process.

The aims of formal support services and understanding the positives and negatives

Understanding what formal support services aim to achieve for women post-release is essential as this will reflect how successful the throughcare programs are in achieving successful resettlement of women. These aims of what formal support services offer will reflect on women's positive and negative experiences post-release from prison concerning their resettlement and reconnections with their children. Formal support services are run by institutional or government agencies include support in specific issues such as educational, employment, cognitive behavioural, sex offender treatment, mental health, domestic violence, and prisoner re-entry programmes (Duwe, 2017). For women as mothers, this often involves support for specific issues such as unemployment, the likelihood of reoffending, socio-economic issues, custody issues with children, drug and alcohol use, physical and mental health issues, victimisation from family and partners (Opsal & Foley, 2013). Formal throughcare programmes for housing and employment will be explored to identify the effectiveness through women's positive and negative experiences as mothers and how this affects their reconnection with their children.

Negative housing and employment experiences for women post-release from prison

Formal services commonly focus on women more broadly, rather than on women who are mothers. This can be seen through the lack of connections between post-release and transitional needs for individuals, especially for short-term prisoners, negatively impacting women (Baldry, 2010). This is further reflected through the lack of information provided to short-term women prisoners regarding their throughcare plan, often leaving women less time to organise critical needs such as housing and

employment (Carlton & Segrave, 2016). One throughcare programme that understands the needs of women with short-term sentences is the Community Restorative Centre (CRC), as they provide women with safe and accessible accommodation before they are released into the community (Davis, 2008). Their programme provides individuals with short-term accommodation to support the risk of homelessness once released from prison and reduce the stresses and barriers faced when finding accommodation post-release (Davis, 2008). The importance of housing is to provide women and their families a safe space to establish the resettlement process and reconnect with their children (Davis, 2008). However, when throughcare support systems cannot provide these basic needs, issues and struggles of homelessness commence. Homelessness affects the reconnections with children as lack of housing would not allow the mother and children the space to reunite and recover from emotional, physical and financial hardships from their mother being in prison (Baldry & McCausland, 2018).

The theme of housing has been identified throughout the REA and stated by the CRC as a common struggle woman experience post-release from prison. However, there is still an issue regarding the disadvantage women with short-term sentences face as there is difficulty finding housing due to the short time frame to plan for their basic needs (Baldry, 2010). Without appropriate housing support services, it can force women back to unhealthy partner relationships where the mother experienced domestic violence leading to where she started and how the offence occurred (Farmer, 2019). Some of these offences may include women victimised by policy laws meant to protect them in domestic violence situations (Hamberger, 2008). Women experiencing difficult situations with their partner can lead to unstable relationships with their children as the mother is trying to deal with the stresses of domestic violence (Farmer, 2019). The lack of a safe housing option for mothers post-release from prison makes it more challenging for mothers to reconnect with their children.

Employment is essential in providing the basic needs for themselves and their family to create an environment where positive reconnections can be established. Women experiencing a lack of employment opportunities often lead to stress, struggling to provide for their families, reconnect with children, and maintain housing services (Morrison & Bowman, 2017). The negative experiences relating to unemployment can stem from further mental health issues and reoffending (Brown & Stewart, 2008). For

example, the distress and marginalisation experiences post-release due to the lack of access to basic needs lead to mental health issues such as depression and anxiety, leading to further problems such as self-medicating with drugs and alcohol (Stansfield, Mowen, Napolitano & Bowen, 2020). This is also often on top of previous untreated mental health issues that the individual had before imprisonment or during the prison sentence (Kinner, 2006). This not only affects the mother but also affects the opportunities for reconnection with their children. The mother may spend more time trying to provide for the family by finding employment, often leaving her with a missed opportunity for re-establishing a reconnection with her children, overall creating a further strain on the relationship (Ellem, 2012).

Overall, challenges with finding housing and employment create barriers to the reconnection mothers can establish with their children post-release. Throughcare provides women with plans and resources to develop these basic needs for post-release. However, women who are only sentenced for a short term struggle the most when re-establishing these basic needs such as housing and employment, creating further issues such as reoffending and lack of skills to provide for themselves and their families (Morrison & Bowman, 2017). Hence, post-release approaches should be reviewed to include individuals from short term sentencing who can achieve their goals such as housing and employment equally to women of long-term sentences (Baldry, 2010). The lack of housing provided for women with a short sentence affects their reconnections with their children as they are not provided with the safe space to reunite and recover from emotional, physical, and financial hardships from their mother being in prisons (Baldry & McCausland). Similar to the women experiencing a lack of employment opportunities, this can create missed opportunities to re-establish a connection with their children, adding further strain onto the family situation (Ellem, 2012). Overall, programmes should be available for all mothers, regardless of sentence time, to provide resources to reconnect with their children. The following section will examine how formal support services are successful in throughcare programmes supporting women in their resettlement and allowing mothers to reconnect with their children successfully.

Positive housing and employment experiences for women post-release from prison

This section will now move on to examine the positive aspects of formal support services throughout the post-release process for women and reflect on their experiences. When formal support services are correctly followed through and maintained throughout the post-release process for women, this can lead to positive post-release experiences, and they can gain knowledge and access to their needs. For example, an interview conducted by Sheehan & Trotter (2017) of 4 women with different criminal histories and reasons for conviction found that the women involved with formal support services did not re-offend and felt optimistic in their situations in post-release from prison. One of the women within the study had five children, and after gaining access to parole and rehabilitation programmes, she successfully reconnected with her children with additional support from her mother (Sheehan & Trotter, 2017). The women who could not resettle post-release may not have had access to the same programmes due to not choosing to or because they served a short sentence (Burke, Mair & Ragonese, 2006). Overall, this can show the positive impact of formal support services when the correct services have been provided to all women no matter the length of sentence as without this access (Burke, Mair & Ragonese, 2006). It can quickly turn into an individual reoffending again as they have not been taught the essential skills the throughcare programmes teach mothers to support them in the post-release process (Burke, Mair & Ragonese, 2006).

Regarding lack of access to housing and employment, formal support programmes have been developed specifically for mothers to support these needs. For example, a programme called Parents Under Pressure (PUP) has been developed specifically to help mothers reconnect with their children (Frye & Dawe, 2008). The benefit of specifically made programmes focusing on the reconnection between mothers and their children includes developing more vital problem-solving skills, lifestyle improvements, and emotional wellbeing and reducing stress (Frye & Dawe, 2008). To support this, mothers are primarily motivated to improve outcomes for their children and find improvements for themselves and that motivation, in general, significantly enhances the results of such programmes (Doherty et al., 2014). This overall shows the benefits of specifically made formal programmes for mothers supporting their reconnections with their children. Parents Under Pressure is a programme that is

successful in aiding parents with the specific tools needed to reconnect with children post-release from prison, and other programmes like this are required for particular situations such as parenting. The following section will examine how informal support services can help formal support services in the post-release stage and how the pressures of resettlement can fall onto the informal support service system if formal support services are unsuccessful or not followed through.

The aims of informal support services and understanding the positives and negatives

Understanding what informal support services aim to achieve for women post-release is essential understand as these aims will reflect how successful this support system is achieving these aims. These aims from informal support systems will be broken down to reflect on the positive and negative experiences had by women post-release from prison concerning their resettlement, like the examination of formal support services.

Informal support services include support from friends, parents, partners, neighbours, and the community to help individuals with information and skills (Peer Connect, n.d.). The aims of informal support systems include providing help with changing routines, reducing negative relationships, creating positive identities, and increasing social skills (Cobbina, 2010). Post-release family support can often be seen through housing, financial and emotional support for women, which significantly provides short-term solutions for common struggles women experience post-release as understood above (Cobbina, 2010). As that is one of the positive experiences for women regarding informal support service, the negatives can often be seen through the opposite actions. For example, informal support services can often lead women back to the same issues that lead them into prison in the first place, such as drug and alcohol abuse (Brown & Stewart, 2008). Informal support systems can also leave women returning to unhealthy environments for their rehabilitation processes, such as exposure to domestic violence and toxic family relationships (Pettus-Davis et al., 2018).

Negative drug and alcohol informal support for women post-release, and domestic violence issues

Experiences with informal support systems for women often relate to two main issues such as drug and alcohol abuse and domestic violence. This section will break down how informal support systems can increase the involvement of these issues and how such as adversely affect the throughcare and reconnection process for women with their children. Relationships with friends and family can become negative due to the individual being now associated with criminal behaviour, which leads to the individual feeling alone and isolated once released (Deakin, 2011). This increased stress can influence the use of drugs and alcohol and crime during the reintegration back into the community (Pettus-Davis et al., 2018).

For women involved within the criminal justice system, added drug-seeking behaviours often increase, heightening the chances of reoffending due to this disrupted behaviour changing brain triggers with repeated drug use (Chandler, Fletcher & Volkow, 2009). Therefore, negative, informal experiences through families involved in drug and alcohol abuse make it challenging for the women to make positive changes for themselves and their children (Pettus-Davis et al., 2018). This environment would make it challenging to create reconnections with children due to the possibility of reoffending due to drug-related crimes or authorities deeming it unsafe for children to live in (Segrave, Carlton, 2018). This creates repeated drug use through self-medicating for mental health issues such as depression (Brown & Stewart, 2008). These unsafe and unstable environments between parents and children can create challenging environments for the mother to reconnect with their child. For example, without the mother creating positive changes for herself, it is less likely she would make similar changes for the relationship with her children, often leaving them in environments where parents rely on government benefits and leading to poor education. The personal struggles mothers have with themselves, and their bad habits often reflect how they accept informal help from friends and family, often rejecting it (Frye & Dawe, 2008).

This section will now reflect on the domestic violence experiences of women and the struggles they experience gaining informal support from family and friends, inhibiting the ability for women to reconnect with their children. Domestic violence includes

experiences of psychological, verbal, physical or sexual violence towards them inflicted by their partners (Macy, Renz & Pelino, 2013). Women also state that partners who threaten them, control them and isolate them from others, create unsafe living environments and tend to be unable to access informal care from others such as their own parents (Evans & Feder, 2014; Macy, Renz & Pelino, 2013).

Considering drug use and domestic violence together presents evidence of an isolating experience for women negatively impacting on the mother-child relationship (Macy, Renz & Pelino, 2013). With drug use and domestic violence inhibiting the ability to create a positive reconnection process between the mother upon release from prison and their children as authorities view a household involved with drug use and domestic violence as unsafe.

Positive informal support system experiences for women post-release

Positive informal experiences for women post-release can create very encouraging environments when seeking throughcare and resettlement. Informal support care can support women in gaining the social factors needed to support the transition from prison to back into the community (Liem & Garcin, 2014). For example, having a traditional family role, such as being a mother, can benefit the re-entry into the community by developing pro-social identities (Liem & Garcin, 2014). This informal support can also be beneficial in moving away from criminal behaviour such as drug and alcohol abuse (Liem & Garcin, 2014). This can be seen through the family's encouragement of a caregiver role to ensure the recovery process begins for them and they are encouraged to stay on the right path (Chan, Barnard & Ng, 2021). Therefore, it provides women with accountability to ensure they are making positive changes for themselves and providing them with healthy environments to reconnect with children; furthermore, added informal support provides children with extra immediate support from grandparents, aunties, and uncles for practical and emotional support (Chan, Barnard & Ng, 2021). Overall, creating a joint effort to reconnect the mother and children to ensure children are motivated to make the right choices for their future. While also giving the mother opportunities to make positive changes for her future and reduce the chance of reoffending by turning to old drug and alcohol habits.

For domestic violence, informal support systems are beneficial in providing support and information. This process is only effective though if families support women and do not resort to victim-blaming (Skylaska & Edwards, 2014). Family reactions to domestic violence information by supporting the mother emotionally and providing them with information to help keep them motivated to pursue a positive change for themselves, reflect positively on the mother's relationships with her children (Martinez & Christian, 2009). It has been shown that friends and female family members are the most utilised informal support systems in providing support and helpful information (Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). Overall, these supportive moments between family and friends can strengthen relationships between one another, strengthening long-term relationships with informal support systems (Martinez & Christian, 2009). These relationships established with informal support systems are strongly linked in the success of throughcare of formal and informal support systems when both are applied together as the support from both caseworkers, family, and friends all greatly encourage the individual to make positive changes for themselves (Martinez & Christian, 2009). This can also reflect on the reconnections of children, as a supportive and safe environment is crucial in the relationships between mother and children (Chan, Barnard & Ng, 2021). These safe environments allow mothers and their children to reconnect with their relationship as the stresses of domestic violence are taken away by informal support systems immediately offering formal support systems that would benefit the mother and children (Martinez & Christian, 2009).

Section Five: Children's Experiences with Parents Post-release from Prison

This section explores the child's experience from when the parent is first incarcerated, effects of long-term issues during a parents absence and when children are reunited with their parents post-release from prison. These themes have been yielded from the articles drawn from the REA, and centres on 29 articles.

The experiences children have when parent are incarcerated

When parents are separated from their children due to incarceration, there is a sudden change in the child's life as they lose a primary caregiver and get introduced to formal and informal support services as a replacement. For children, formal support services come in agencies such as SHINE for Kids, CRC services and Bridging Families to provide children and their carers with information and support their needs. These agencies also support children in maintaining contact with their parents while they are in prison. Children's informal support services come from their current carers, grandparents, guardians, or other family ties. This section will examine children's positive and negative experiences when introduced to formal and informal support services.

Introducing children to formal support services

Formal support services offered to children during the absence of a parent include provisions such as transport to visit parents, caregivers and educational programmes. Similar to their incarcerated parents' experiences, children experience both positive and negative experiences when introduced to formal support services. Benefits include improved parent-child relationships, communication improvements, decreased behavioural problems in school, improved grades, lower feelings of sadness and anger (Hoffmann et al., 2010). Formal support services such as SHINE for Kids and Bridging Families provide children and their caregivers with services such as transport to visit parents within the prison and help them stay connected (Hyslop, 2009). These programmes offer parents and children activities within the prison to help parents develop skills to carry onto the post-release stage (Hyslop, 2009). However, most programmes are only offered to parents as programmes involving children only would include security concerns and added costs to the prison infrastructure (Hoffmann et al., 2010). Out-of-home care is one example of a formal support system directly offered

to children with imprisoned parents. Out-of-home care is incredibly beneficial for children as it provides children with a positive relationship with carers and foster families and contributes to a positive example of healthy family environments (McDowell, 2013). Hence, it is essential to ensure parents are provided with formal throughcare support programmes as parents often have to use those same skills and knowledge to provide to their children post-release from prison. Positive out-of-home care experiences are also essential in teaching children how to be treated and supporting parents in knowing children are being looked after while imprisoned.

Children who are caught up in the criminal justice system through their parents are often neglected by the system due to the lack of protocols. While the process of arrest or sentencing is happening for parents, children are often forgotten, and authorities usually do not organise what will happen with children next once their parent/s have been incarcerated (Flynn et al., 2016). During these early stages of a parents sentencing, children are their most vulnerable, yet there is a lack of protocols and guidelines for children in these situations, particularly for the police to follow during arrest or parents when children are present or involved (Flynn et al., 2016). Children are often limited with agency intervention, and the child's responsibility is often poorly coordinated with what happens next for them (Trotter et al., 2015). It is staggering to understand that there is limited policy attention between Family and Community Service (FaCS) and the police concerning the response that should be taken for children of parents who are in arrest, remand or imprisonment (Trotter et al., 2015). Children losing a parent to the criminal justice system often leave them feeling lost, hurt, angry and often blame themselves for their parent getting arrested (Neville, 2010). If a child has witnessed their parent getting arrested, children may often experience post-traumatic stress, issues with sleeping or concentration, and experience flashbacks of the event (Neville, 2010). Within this stage, children are often introduced to a new primary caregiver, either another parent, out of home care, or grandparents (Trotter et al., 2015). Overall, it is evident that children are exposed to a massive shift in their lifestyle and experience new emotions towards their parents and themselves. Psychological issues such as PTSD are introduced to the children, which leaves the child with long-term effects. The long-term psychological problems a child experiences and how it affects them will be explored separately later in this section. Children are also quickly introduced to formal support services such as out of home

care or informal services such as grandparents. This report will now move on to examine the positive and negative experiences children have in the informal support of their grandparents.

Introducing children to informal care with other family members

Informal support systems for children provided by their family members such as grandparents can create safe and positive environments for children having a familiar face around them. Grandparents are typically the most common family caregiver for children whose parents are incarcerated (Silverstein, 2008), even if this is for a short space of time prior to children being placed in out-of-home-care (Trotter et al., 2015). Grandparents can provide children with the opportunities to be raised properly while enjoying the love and companionship children offer (Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose, 2007). With grandparents being the primary caregivers of children, they can offer children educational and emotional support, with it being reported that children with grandparents as their primary caregivers often have the same educational and emotional outcomes as biological parents do (Silverstein, 2008). Therefore, giving children the opportunities they may have been lacking while under the care of their parents, as illustrated by the work of Hanlon, Carswell, & Rose (2007). However, this is only true in positive informal environments, as grandparents with high-stress levels reflect on the child's increased levels of social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Dunne & Kettler, 2008).

Informal support services may expose children to negative experiences while parents are incarcerated, which can create emotional and behavioural issues among the children. As mentioned earlier, grandparents with high stress, anxiety and depression of their own can reflect onto the child's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Dunne & Kettler, 2008). A child experiencing their parents being incarcerated is the key contributor to the problems children face (Wildeman & Turney, 2014). However, if children also share negative experiences while under their grandparents' primary care, this can lead to little improvement in the child's emotional and behavioural issues (Hairston, 2007). Negative experiences from informal support services can include involvement in their own criminal behaviour, alcohol abuse, drug use and neglecting the child (Dijk, Kleemans, & Eichelsheim, 2019). These negative environments cause emotional issues such as aggression, guilt, sadness, depression, anxiety, and withdrawals (Hairston, 2007). Which can reflect on behavioural issues such as

defiance, disobedience, hostility towards caregivers, and antisocial behaviour (Hairston, 2007). Grandparents involved in their own stressful issues only increase children's chances of exhibiting these issues mentioned (Dunne & Kettler, 2008). Overall, these negative issues from informal support services do not allow children to improve their emotional and behavioural issues like formal support systems would improve through skill educational programmes. They further emphasised the importance of more child-specific programming for children with incarcerated parents and formal support services for the grandparents who are taking on the parental role as primary caregivers to the child. This section will now continue to analyse the long-term implications of the two themes of psychological and emotional impacts and how they affect incarcerated parents' children.

The long-term Impacts for children with imprisoned parents

As identified by the REA, psychological and emotional problems were the most common issues faced by children who have parents in prison. These two themes can significantly impact a child's life, both short-term and long-term. However, the long-term issues can create harsher consequences to a child's life and development. This section of the report will explore the long-term effects of psychological and emotional impacts on children with parents in prison. While also examining how formal and informal support services may support or further impact these issues.

Long-term Psychological Impacts for Children

Children experiencing a parent or both parents leaving due to imprisonment can cause children to have lasting psychological impacts. Psychological impacts include PTSD and trauma and can be compared to the same severity of a child experiencing divorce, abuse, or a parent's death (Skinner-Osei & Levenson, 2018). PTSD and trauma can cause issues with sleeping or concentration and experience flashbacks of the event (Neville, 2010). The psychological impacts of PTSD and trauma for a child can cause long-term developmental and wellbeing leading to poor behaviour and delinquency (Skinner-Osei & Levenson, 2018). Children exposed to long-term psychological issues such as PTSD and trauma may become their own illegal behaviours when adolescents (Morgan-mullane, 2018). Adolescents may turn to substance abuse to cope with the stresses PTSD and trauma bring, such as trying to self-medicate for the flashbacks (Morgan-mullane, 2018). Showing the spark of the interesting concept of children following in their parent's footsteps falling into the same issues and habits their parents

had that may have caused the parents imprisonment. According to Dijk, Kleemans, & Eichelsheim (2019), delinquent behaviour is not transmitted from generation to generation but is transmitted by the same risk factors parents experienced, such as poverty and drug use. Serious psychological issues such as PTSD and trauma that are left untreated can severely increase the chances of the child themselves also turning to criminal behaviour just like their parents (Skinner-Osei & Levenson, 2018). Hence, the early intervention of formal support service is important to teach children the skills needed to manage the symptoms to improve their education and well-being.

Formal support services such as the Community Restorative Centre understand the risks of children falling into the cycle of offending and offer children the support programmes they need to teach them how to manage the removal of their parents and the psychological effects that may come to follow. The CRC provides family caseworkers to families in need of counselling services to help those looking after children the support needed when feeling scared, anxious or angry (CRC, 2011). Counselling is crucial for grandparents who may be looking after children as they can access this support for themselves to allow uncertainties to be resolved and allow grandparents to focus back on the caring of the child (CRC, 2011). While CRC is a formal support service that supports the family as a whole, SHINE for Kids focuses more specifically on the children themselves. SHINE for Kids supports children specifically in aiding them with their psychological needs by providing mentoring programmes for children and young people (Robinson, 2011). These mentoring programmes aid children and young people by providing supportive, caring and non-judgemental relationships with a professional adult mentor (Robinson, 2011). These support services provide children with the formal support needed to improve and maintain their development and self-esteem. Which we can see would be beneficial for children suffering from PTSD and trauma as one of the symptoms is child self-isolating from others. Therefore, these programmes will ensure children can break the barriers of their psychological issues to improve their well-being to reduce the overall chance of children coming into contact with the criminal justice system themselves.

Long-term Emotional Impacts for Children

The emotional impacts children experience can closely relate to psychological impacts as PTSD and trauma can cause the children to feel emotions they have not

experienced before. Children may show emotional issues such as isolating themselves from peers, anxiety, withdrawals from family members and shame (Morgan-Mullane, 2018). The impacts of a child's emotional issues can affect the child's schooling, living situations, and social activities (Robertson, 2007). With emotional issues affecting such important aspects of a child's life as schooling, caregivers and formal support systems emphasise addressing these issues quickly. If left untreated, it can greatly affect a child's education as they struggle to engage with others and the content taught in school (Morgan-Mullane, 2018). Informal caregivers also have a crucial role in supporting a child's emotional needs during the new emotional experiences (Folk et al., 2012). Informal support services need to encourage the children to break the feelings of isolating themselves from peers to ensure their education is not affected (Folk et al., 2012). Caregivers should also seek formal support services to ensure the children get the best overall emotional care possible. The collaboration of both informal and formal support services gives the child the best opportunity to overcome these strong emotional issues. Informal support systems allow children to feel supported during their emotional issues, while formal support systems offer children the support needed to maintain their education due to the effects of emotional problems.

A recent study has identified the importance of teachers identifying the issues of anxiety and isolation within the classroom and understanding that these issues may stem from children experiencing the loss of their parents due to incarceration (Tracey & Barker, 2020). The evidence from this study provides schoolteachers the strategies needed to identify the emotional needs of a child within the classroom and how to appropriately manage them (Tracey & Barker, 2020). While also educating teachers on how to access information and understand the criminal justice system more (Tracey & Barker, 2020). The programme is supported by SHINE for Kids as one of the first programmes of its kind to focus on the needs of children within schools (Tracey & Barker, 2020). SHINE for Kids has its own service to offer children, offering contact service to children to maintain contact with their incarcerated parents (Robinson, 2011). Maintaining contact with their parents allows them to stay motivated with education to reach their potential (Robinson, 2011). Contact support has many great benefits for a child, and seeing their parents in a child-friendly environment made by SHINE for Kids allows emotions to be boosted by a positive visit to see their parents

(Robinson, 2011). Emotional issues such as anxiety and isolation can quickly affect a child's education and can have long-term implications for their learning if left untreated. Therefore, the teacher planning programme is essential in ensuring the child's education does not slip within these emotionally stressful times of a child's parents being taken away for incarceration as well as contact support that allows children to visit their parents to boost emotional moods and will enable them to maintain focus during school with the help of their teachers.

The experiences children have when parents return from prison

Once parents return from prison, there could be three common situations that could happen found from the REA. Firstly, parents and children can make positive reconnections, or parents cannot provide for their children and quickly return to the criminal justice system. Secondly, some parents returning may not have strong relationships with their own parents who have been looking after their children. This may cause further disruption within the family and can further impact a child's emotional state. Finally, the worst scenario is for a child is to follow in the footsteps of their parents and turn to their own experiences of criminal behaviour in their stages of young adulthood. This following section will explore all three scenarios and examine the experiences for children and the formal and informal support systems offered to help support children in these situations.

Parents post-release from prison making positive reconnections with children

Parents returning from prison who can make positive reconnections with their children demonstrate that formal throughcare services have successfully provided parents with the skills and knowledge needed to make strong reconnections with children. For example, with throughcare services successfully teaching mothers and fathers the skills needed to apply for jobs and be job interview-ready, the parents can gain a sense of accomplishment (Montgomery, 2021). Having a secure job that they are interested in can allow parents to feel accomplished and build a sense of purpose for life (Montgomery, 2021). Parents providing support to children through employment will make them feel less excluded from society and remain connected with their parents (Kale, 2020). It is noted that parents having employment may take time away from children; however, the help of informal support systems in providing childcare allows children to have family connections while eliminating the chances of childcare worries

for the parents working (Kale, 2020). The goal of the post-release stage is to ensure parents do not re-offend, therefore ensure parents have all that they need, such as finding work, housing, drug or alcohol treatment, counselling, health care, and childcare are all required to ensure a successful reconnection with children and into the community (Poehlmann-Tynan, 2020). A successful reconnection involves all of these elements and ensuring that both parents and the child feel positive about their contributions to society (Montgomery, 2021). Having successful access to all necessities post-release from prison ensures parents have fewer worries and stressors about obtaining them, which positively influences the environment for children (Montgomery, 2021). To ensure positive reconnections with children, formal throughcare support services need to start immediately after a parent is imprisoned. This allows enough time to provide parents with the skills and information necessary to reintegrate back into society and reconnect with children successfully. Throughcare support services should also ensure parents can find and continue with formal or informal programmes to ensure support is continued to reduce reoffending.

Parents Having Poor Relationships with their own Parents

Parents returning from prison is often not a smooth transition; one of the issues may be if parents returning have a poor relationship with their own parents, the grandparents who have most likely been looking after their children. During a parents incarceration, children may be under the care of their grandparents, and as a caregiver, it is essential for grandparents to transport and allow children to visit their parents (Folk et al., 2012). However, if the relationship is poor with the incarcerated parents, they may take it out on the children by not seeing their parents in prison (Folk et al., 2012). It has been mentioned that children being able to continue to see their parents during incarceration reduces the effect on the children and allows a smoother reconnection post-release from prison (Patulny, 2012). Caregivers such as grandparents need to emotionally support children during this visitation process instead of depriving them of it (Folk et al., 2012). Issues may also arise when parents are released and have to pick up their children from the primary care of the grandparents. Arguments may arise and disturb any progress made to the child psychologically and emotionally, as arguments may trigger similar situations that happened before parent incarceration (Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzl, 2019). Grandparents who allow children to visit less frequently create higher chances of

arguments or feelings of stress than children and grandparents who frequently visit (Poehlmann-Tynan & Pritzel, 2019). SHINE for Kids run programmes for children visiting their parents within the prison, and with this positive environment, they create fewer chances for children and grandparents to feel stressed (Hyslop, 2009). Parents having poor relationships with their own parents create further strains on the grandparents' children. As well as take away opportunities for children to visit their parents and maintain connections during a parents incarceration. Grandparents and parents should think about the implication of continued arguments regarding a child's mental health and wellbeing. Therefore, they should intrust formal support services such as SHINE for Kids to maintain positive attitudes during visitation times with activities and learning programmes offered.

The risks for children who have parents in prison

Parents becoming incarcerated leaves children in a vulnerable position that they too may follow in their parent's footsteps and become delinquent or imprisoned themselves. The cycle of delinquent behaviour is not transmitted through generation to generation but is transmitted through the children being exposed to the same risks their parents were exposed to, for example, poverty and drug use (Dijk, Kleemans, & Eichelsheim, 2019). Within Australia, children with incarcerated fathers showed more antisocial behaviour and substance use than children who did not have incarcerated fathers (Hairston, 2007). Within the United Kingdom, a similar study found that boys who were separated from their parents at the age of 10 from their parents being imprisoned showed that 48% of them would then convict themselves as adults (Hairston, 2007). These studies show the high risks when children become exposed to parents involved within the criminal justice system themselves. Parents that are involved in substance use will often influence their children to follow down the same path. Hence, formal support systems need to provide drug and alcohol support for parents with addictions and support parents with finding suitable housing to reduce the risks of children falling into poverty. SHINE for Kids undertakes continued research and advocacy to ensure the needs of children are met, and risks such as these are found before too many children are affected by the imprisonment of their parents (Robinson, 2011). The advocacy SHINE for Kids ensures children have a voice to express their concerns and needs when experiencing this vulnerable time in their lives (Robinson, 2011). Overall, parents leave children in a highly vulnerable position when

their parents have been incarcerated. This vulnerability opens up the opportunity for children to be exposed to similar risks as their parents, such as poverty and drug use, which is why SHINE for Kids provide them with the help offered and conduct continued research to prevent the vulnerability of children.

Section Six: Discussion & Conclusion

In this final section, the discussion and conclusion will reflect on the research questions that have guided this study and present the key findings yielded through the REA.

Key findings of the Study

1. What is the resettlement process for men and women post-release from prison?

During this research, the REA was able to identify the key issues both men and women face during their resettlement process post-release from prison. The first issue is housing, in particular for women, as women experience difficulties accessing appropriate housing services to support their resettlement process. Women who face difficulties finding suitable housing post-release from prison face additional risks during the resettlement process, such as homelessness. The risk of homelessness increases women's chances of being unable to recover from emotional, physical and financial hardships gained from being imprisoned. The second issue is employment, in particular for men, as men face low self-esteem, poor motivation, lack of training, and poor employment records, leaving men unemployed during their resettlement process. Men cannot learn or gain new skills if employment opportunities are unavailable to them, emphasising the need for outside interventions to be introduced, such as informal and formal support systems to provide them with their needs. The third issue identified by the REA involves the effects of women having poor relationships with family and friends. Negative relationships may arise because the women are associated with the criminal justice system, leading to the individual feeling isolated during the resettlement stage. This increased stress can then influence the use of drugs and alcohol during reintegrating into the community. These are a few of the many issues men and women face during the resettlement process post-release from prison. Both men and women experience complex issues when released from prison, often putting them into situations that may cause them to re-offend again. These issues can then also affect the experiences parents face regarding parent-child reconnections, as some experiences can be both positive and negative.

2. What are the experiences had by parents regarding parent-child reconnection post-release from prison?

As well as the issues raised above, parents post-release from prison issues regarding trying to reconnect with their children successfully. Some of these experiences are positive, as shown through successful parent-child reconnection, while negative experiences are shown through broken relationships between parents and their children. Some parents can have positive reconnections through the added support of formal throughcare support programmes that allow parents to develop vital problem-solving skills, lifestyle improvements, and emotional well-being to reconnect with their children successfully. At the same time, help from friends and family can strengthen long-term relationships with each other and with children, as these positive environments allow for positive reconnections to be made.

On the other hand, some parents may experience negative reconnections with their children, which is shown through the lack of parenting skills to create reconnections with children. One of the skills includes communication with children, as parents who are away from children for long periods of time may find they have communication barriers with their children, making it challenging for them to reconnect. Parents having low self-esteem may also create difficulties for parents trying to reconnect with their children as parents feel unsuccessful as a parent, especially when it is challenging to make reconnections with their children. However, it is also important to recognise that when parents face issues such as lack of housing and employment, it can cause high-stress levels for the parent trying to find their basic needs and making a positive reconnection with their children. Which overall shows the difficulty parents post-release face even before any formal or informal support services are offered.

3. What are the formal and informal support services available for parents in prison and post-release from prison?

First, formal support services provide women with the benefit of specifically made programmes tailored for women as mothers. Specifically made throughcare programmes such as PUP allow mothers to receive information that helps develop problem-solving skills, lifestyle improvements, emotional wellbeing, and reduces stress for women. Women gaining the ability to improve themselves with the support of throughcare programmes allow them to make successful reconnections with their children. The positive formal support services offered to men include contact support programmes created by SHINE for Kids, which would enable parents to maintain

contact with children while in prison. With SHINE for Kids facilitating contact support visits, both fathers and children can be educated on family relationships, parenting skills, support for children, and skills to reconnect with family and children successfully.

Second, informal support services for men and women are shown to encourage women to make positive changes to move away from criminal behaviour through encouragement from family and friends. Informal support services greatly support women who also may be experiencing domestic violence as family members provide emotional support and find relevant formal information on how to handle the situation. Informal support services helping parents find relevant formal information on domestic violence are an example of how both throughcare support services are utilised. Overall, allowing women to make positive changes and reconnect with children when both are applied together. Positive informal support services provide fathers with accommodation, employment, and job-ready skills for men. Informal support services may offer to provide employment through their own business or connections. Informal support services from family and friends provide both women and men the encouragement needed to make positive changes for themselves, reflecting on the positive reconnections made with their children.

4. *What is the efficacy of formal and informal support services as evidenced through experiences during the resettlement process?*

The efficacy of both formal and informal support services is shown through the success of parent-children reconnections. When reconnections are unsuccessful, the support from formal and informal services may not have been provided to parents or have inefficiently been provided to them, causing parents to be unable to reconnect with their children.

Formal support services for women are offered during the imprisonment process to allow mothers to plan their basic needs and learn new skills to help reconnect with their children. Formal support services offer women specifically made programmes that would enable women to develop their vital problem-solving skills, lifestyle improvements, and emotional well-being, which can help reduce the stresses faced post-release from prison. However, mothers who experience only short-term sentences struggle to gain access to formal support services and plan for their post-release stage in a short amount of time. Critical needs such as housing and

employment are challenging to find for a mother, and if unable to find, mothers can experience increased levels of emotional, physical and financial hardships post-release from prison.

Formal support services show efficacy by offering the father's contact support that allows fathers to maintain their fathering skills and allows for a smoother transition from prison to post-release. The benefits of contact support are found in the ability of fathers to strengthen their parenting skills with their children. As well as breaking down communication barriers father's may experience while trying to establish reconnections with their children. However, the struggle for father's is to gain formal throughcare support in prison and during their post-release stage. The limited formal support services available for fathers create the inability to make these improvements for themselves and their reconnections with their children.

The efficacy of informal support services for mothers is shown through the encouragement given by friends and family to allow women to improve themselves in terms of their use of drugs and alcohol. Without the support from informal support services in encouraging women to improve on their drug and alcohol-related issues, it may cause women to fall back into old habits, which may have caused them to offend in the first instance. Overall, this increases the chances of mother's to re-offend post-release from prison as informal support services are unable to intervene in this way. However, informal support services can also provide emotional support during domestic violence situations by aiding mothers in finding formal support services to provide professional information on domestic violence. This example of informal support shows the benefits of informal and formal support services working together to improve a mother's situation. Overall, this collaboration shows the effectiveness of both support services working together to support mothers in making positive changes for themselves and the reconnections made with their children.

The importance of fathers being offered employment is another important factor when considering throughcare provisions. Employment offered through informal support services allows fathers to improve their interpersonal skills, which can help establish reconnections with their children. Improved interpersonal skills through employment allow fathers to communicate better with their children, bonding and making strong reconnections. However, some fathers losing custody of their children due to domestic

violence is a common feature of this cohort, it is increasingly difficult to utilise their new communication skills and reconnect with their children. Further to this, restrictions placed on some men regarding not having contact with female partners they have children with can also negatively impact access some men may have with their children, making it increasingly difficult for them to reconnect with them.

Study Recommendations

1. Formal throughcare support services should provide fathers with greater access to their programmes.

The REA has identified significant disadvantage that fathers face from formal throughcare support services as many men are not offered the same amount of help women have available to them. It is significantly important that greater access to formal throughcare support services allows fathers to resettle and reconnect successfully with their children. Father's without access to formal throughcare support services face the disadvantages of not being able to utilise skills learnt from these services and apply them to find housing or employment post-release from prison. The inability to find these basic needs post-release from prison leaves father's in the vulnerable position of re-offending and unable to reconnect with their children. Hence, it is essential to offer the same amount of formal throughcare support services women have to reduce the chances of fathers' re-offending due to the inability to resettle successfully and reconnect with their children.

2. Formal throughcare support services should conduct further research to better understand the needs of parents during their post-release stage of prison.

To support fathers further with formal throughcare support services, research from services such as Parents Under Pressure would allow them to understand the needs of fathers during their post-release stage from prison. Formal support services have shown that they can complete the research to understand the needs of mother's post-release from prison. Bartlett (2019) emphasises that further developed research is needed to understand the needs of fathers to help support them in the resettlement process and their reconnections with their children. Further research could be done through interviews with fathers within the prison to ask them what their needs are to help in terms of new healthy habits and skills and ask them post-release from prison to reconfirm those needs and if new ones have been raised. Parents Under Pressure

have developed support programmes for women to support their resettlement needs and would be recommended for them to create formal throughcare programmes to help support father's needs in terms of education for parenting skills, employment and housing as the REA has identified these needs for father's. Overall, this would provide a better chance for fathers to reconnect successfully with their children and reduce the chance of re-offending if appropriate formal throughcare programmes are offered.

3. Formal throughcare support services for women should be provided more efficiently during short-term prison sentences.

As shown in the REA, the support from formal throughcare services slips when women are only sentenced for a short term. Women need access to formal throughcare support services no matter how long or short the prison sentence may be. For example, without the security of safe housing, women may be placed back onto an unsafe domestic violence situation that may have sparked the cause of offending in the first instance. Formal support services could develop short-term programmes for women within short-term sentences. This will ensure women are supported for their resettlement process post-release from prison and allow mothers to make reconnections with their children. Short-term programmes would also reduce the stresses for women trying to find appropriate housing with themselves and their children during the short period of the sentencing.

4. Specific protocols for service providers to follow when arresting of parents with children.

The REA has identified a significant flaw regarding service provider protocols following a parent's arrest, particularly when a child is present. Children can be left in a vulnerable position during a parents arrest, and this reflects the lack of protocols to place a child into services such as FaCS appropriately. The importance of this recommendation is to reduce the chances of trauma and PTSD when a child witnesses a parents arrest. A child quickly being provided support from formal and informal support services will reduce the long-term emotional and psychological harm the event can cause. Protocols being made to ensure a child is safely placed into one of these services can significantly benefit a child's long-term outcomes relating to their mental health and help them cope when parents are separated from their children due to incarceration.

5. Research in the form of primary data collection should be conducted to understand first-hand parents' experiences post-release from prison.

Further research on this topic is needed from formal throughcare support services and broader researchers in criminal justice and prisons. The ability to conduct further qualitative research in terms of interviews would be highly beneficial in understanding what mothers and fathers experience during the post-release experience and how they reconnect with their children. It would also be essential to know firsthand what throughcare programmes they have had access to during incarceration and the post-release stage. Further research would be beneficial from father specific experiences as they have disadvantages in accessing formal throughcare support services as there are limited programmes designed for them. Research in what they need from throughcare services as fathers or fathers as primary caregivers would help formal support services create more programmes regarding these needs.

In conclusion, this section of the report has discussed the key points found through the REA process regarding the positive and negative throughcare experiences women, men, and children face. The similarities and differences of the experiences from each group have helped identify what can work within formal and informal throughcare services and what needs improving, as well as determining what recommendations are required for throughcare services to provide women, men, and children with the best post-release care possible. The research topics have helped identify key information to answer the four main research questions, which have been critical for formal and informal throughcare support systems to understand the gaps within the system and what needs to be further improved. Further research into this topic would be strongly recommended for the benefit of the post-release process, specifically for men, as currently, the research into their needs is limited. Further research in the form of a primary research method would be strongly recommended to gain first-hand interview answers from women and men that have experienced these similar situations mentioned within this research. Obtaining first-hand solutions to how women and men experience their post-release stage and reconnect with their children would also strengthen the secondary information gained within this research.

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Appendix 1

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow chart of included studies.

