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An Exploration of the Factors That Support Improved Pro-Social Outcomes for Young People in Detention: Social Care Practitioners' Perspectives.

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'Supporting outcomes from behind the walls'

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by

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the material which is submitted in this thesis towards the award of Masters (M.A.) in Criminology is entirely my own work and has not been submitted for any academic assessment other than part fulfilment of the award named above:

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Abstract

Youth detention facilities like many other services funded by public money need to be able to demonstrate the difference it makes to the lives of the small cohort of young people who are detained. In a world which has become more security and safety conscious, evidencing the difference made to the lives of these 'troubled youths' is of particular interest to society today. This study aimed to explore the factors that support improved pro social outcomes for young people detained. As key agents of change having access to a formative time in young people's lives while in detention, social care practitioners were purposefully chosen as the research sample to inform this research.

A qualitative approach using semi structured interviews was used. The factors that support pro social outcomes were noted as; the quality of the relationship between the young person and staff, the organisational support of staff and interagency cooperation and planning for reintegration of a young person back into the community. The interview data was analysed and coded. The findings suggested that the relational properties of the total institution has a cumulative and prevailing effect on pro-social outcomes for young people in detention. Relationships between the care staff and young people can mirror the relational experience between care staff and management. This combined with current experiences of change and reform is experienced has the potential to destabilise the balance between care and control, resulting in a climate that is less conducive to supporting improved pro social outcomes for young people detained.

This research is timely in that Irelands National Detention Facility is undergoing historical and unprecedented change. As part of this change a new and revised evidence informed and hopeful 'way forward' is being developed to provide the best possible standard of care for young people in the context of the governments overarching National framework 'Better Outcomes Brighter futures'. This facility will be referred to as Oberstown for the remainder of the thesis. This study addresses the gap in research in identifying the factors that support improved pro social outcomes for young people detained. It is envisaged that the research will add to the debate which needs to be held on the future of children's services generally in Ireland and the type of interventions used to divert young people

away from crime.

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Context

This research is conducted within the context of the Irish Youth Justice system. It looks particularly at the perspectives of social care practitioners and the factors that lead to improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility. Under the Children Act 2001 the main objective of the facility is to provide care, education, training and other programmes with a view to reintegrating young people back into the community and society. The facility known as Oberstown is undergoing a process of significant and unprecedented change. This change is driven by the need to bring together three former centres under one campus director.

Research into youth crime is focused primarily on explaining why young people start offending with less emphasis placed on understanding the pathways away from such behaviour (Seymour, 2013). Equally, there is a paucity of research on how to facilitate detained young people in their achievement of pro-social outcomes which forms part of the pathway away from crime. Oberstown's 'new way forward' proposes a model of seven interlinked clusters of social and emotional capabilities that are of value to all young people, supported by a strong evidence base demonstrating their link to outcomes such as educational attainment, employment, and health (Bamber et al., 2015). These are discussed in more detail in chapter two.

The front line residential care teams in Oberstown have a key role in influencing these outcomes. Despite the central role of Social Care practitioners and the significant contact time spent with young people in detention, little is written about their unique perspective of the most relevant factors in enhancing outcomes for young people in such a setting.

1.2 Aim of study

The aim of this research is to explore the social care practitioner's perspectives of the various factors that support detained young people to achieve improved pro-social outcomes in life.

1.2.1 Objectives

➢ To have an informed understanding of the factors that influence improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained from the perspective of the social care practitioner.

➢ To address the dearth of research that exists on this topic.

➢ To identify implications for consideration in respect of future policy and practice within the system of detention.

1.2.2 Research Question

What are the factors that promote improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained from the perspective of social care practitioners who work within this setting?

1.2.3 Sub questions

1. What aspects of the relationship between the social care practitioner and the young person may lead to improved pro-social outcomes?

2. What are the organisational factors that support improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained?

3. What are the challenges to achieving pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained?

1.3 Rationale

Social care practitioners have a key role in informing the delivery of care and influencing pro-social outcomes for young people who have been detained. Living in the life space of others provides practitioners with valuable opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with young people (Digney & Smart as cited in Howard & Lyons, 2014). Their valuable role as change agents and their close interactions with both young people and the organisation as a whole should provide an understanding of what aids improved pro-social outcomes from within a system of detention. Despite this unique lens there is a notable lack of research in this area informed by the discipline of social care.

The findings from this research may provide insights into the systemic and the relational factors involved in supporting change behaviour while a young person is in detention and may add to the Irish Youth Justice Service goal which aims 'to review and strengthen targeted interventions to reduce offending and divert young people from the criminal justice system' (IYJS, 2013). The findings should also add value to the current drive to deliver an evidence- informed and more hopeful 'way forward' in Oberstown.

1.4 Research Methodology

In order to achieve the aim of the study a qualitative methodological approach using semi structured interviews was applied. The participants involved in this study had the job title of '[1]residential care workers'. The findings of these interviews were subjected to a process of thematic analysis.

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[1] This is the job title of care staff who are employed to provide care and support to young people on the Oberstown campus. Selection criteria for this research was based on those who would qualify either as practicing social care workers or under a schedule 3 qualifications in line with the eligibility to register with the Social Care Work Registration Board.

1.5 Organisation of Chapters

Chapter 2 will outline some essential background information on the role and influences on youth detention today and finally conclude with an over view of the theoretical frame work informing the research study.

Chapter 3 will provide the reader with an overview of the relevant literature to support and contribute to the understanding of the research question beginning with an understanding of the causes of delinquency and followed by an overview of the various understandings of what constitutes improved outcomes. The chapter then develops some of the key factors arising from the literature which influence improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained.

Chapter 4 outlines the methods that were employed in this study. The chapter begins by addressing the research method and research design before moving onto issues with access, sampling and the data collection procedure. Ethical considerations in this research and a short reflexive piece by the researcher conclude this chapter.

Chapter 5 presents the findings from this research and draws on the insights of five social care practitioners. An analysis of the empirical data outlines the key factors that aid improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are or have been detained.

Chapter 6 discusses the research findings outlined in chapter five in the context of the literature review and gives due regard to the aims and objectives of the study. It also provides an in depth analyses the main themes presented in Chapter 5. Implications of the findings are then considered.

Chapter 7 concludes the research by seeking to specifically answer the research questions and suggest possible avenues for further study.

Chapter 2: Background and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

Social care practitioners occupy a key position in the youth justice system and their potential to act as pro-social role models and provide practical and emotional support is an important aspect of their work (Seymour, 2012). Social care has faced some challenges in reaching a standard definition to describe the practice and profession. The definition outlined by the Joint Committee on Social Care professionals (JCSCP) will be used for the purpose of this research defining social care as *the professional provision of care, protection, support, welfare and advocacy for vulnerable or dependent clients, individually or in groups* (JCSCP, 2002. p. 9).

At the time of this research there were 125 'residential care workers' on campus most of whom will qualify either as practicing social care workers or under a schedule 3 qualifications in line with the eligibility to register with the Social Care Work Registration Board. The capacity of the campus for young people was 54.

2.2 A time of change

Detention and Youth Justice in Ireland has a long and chequered history as the publication of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse demonstrated in 2009. Today the principle of detention as a last resort underpins Ireland's legislation and policy, resulting in a small number of young people being detained.

The new national detention facility was first announced in March 2008 (CAAB, 2010). Originally there were four separate detention schools in which remanded and committed children were detained. These included Finglas Child and Adolescent Centre, Oberstown Boys School, Oberstown Girls School and Trinity House School. Since that period to date there has been significant structural, systemic, procedural and legislative changes. As recent as the 24th May 2016 in accordance with section 14 of the Children (Amendment) Act 2015 orders were signed by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Katherine Zappone which gave effect to the amalgamation of the National Detention Schools from the 1st June 2016 (Oberstown, 2016).

This historical change is a welcome change in the area of youth detention and brings with it the opportunity to improve the outcomes of young people detained.

2.3 Purpose and function of Oberstown

[2]The mission of Oberstown is to provide appropriate residential care, educational and training programmes and facilities for young people referred to them by a court having regard to their health, safety, welfare and interests, including their physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing. They deliver this service through a framework called CEHOP which focus on providing care, education, health and well-being interventions, offending behaviour programmes and preparation for leaving (Oberstown, 2016).

[3]Oberstown now refer to a list of seven evidence based measurable pro-social outcome areas providing Oberstown with a mechanism to measure its own progress using a relationship model of care. These outcome areas include:

Communication skills

Confidence and agency

Planning and problem solving

Relationships

Creativity and imagination

Self-control

Health and well-being

(Bamber et al., 2015)

2.4 Legislative influences in youth detention

The Irish Youth Justice Service is influenced by both international and European standards relating to children in conflict with the law. As outlined by Kilkelly (2006: 194) international standard (e.g. the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the relevant UN Rules; the European Convention on Human Rights; the Guidelines on child-friendly justice; and the

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[2] Vision of Oberstown is to provide safe, secure and appropriate care for young people to meet their health and education needs to support them to address their offending behaviour and prepare them to return to their families and communities following release from detention.

[3] In December 2014, as part of the change process, the Centre for Effective Services (CES) was commissioned by Department Children Youth Affairs (DYCA) to help Oberstown to develop a 'way forward' that would support the young person's journey through detention. Seven evidence based measurable pro-social outcome clusters were identified based on effective routine relationship building.

European Directive on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings) state that where detention is required it should be used to the maximum advantage to address the child's educational, health and behaviour problems and prepare him/her to participate in society in a constructive manner on release. Beijing Rules contain detailed minimum rules regulating the administration of juvenile justice at the domestic level and the Havana Rules contain guidelines for all minors deprived of their liberty (IIJO, 2016). These international standards influence all standards in youth detention.

This principle of last resort is enshrined in the Children Act 2001 which is the statutory framework for youth justice in Ireland. Amendments were made to the Children Act 2001 in the form of the Criminal Justice Act 2006 resulting in the establishment of the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS). IYJS has the responsibility to drive reform in the youth justice sector in Ireland and Oberstown forms part of this remit.

The Health Information and Quality Authority(HIQA) is an independent body established in May 2007 under the Health Act 2007. HIQA inspect the Children Detention Schools against the National Standards for the protection and Welfare of Children. HIQA, ultimately report to the Minister for Health (DCYA, 2016) inspecting the operation and management of youth detention in Ireland.

2.5 Theoretical framework: Constructs of attachment and offending in the context of an ecological framework

Criminological theory and child care literature tend to exist in two separate intellectual and professional domains despite the fact that in many ways the overlap that exists between care and control within the context of youth detention, brings together the interpretation and delivery of both perspectives into practice. This cross over is further emphasised as the research is informed from the perspectives of social care practitioners who in this setting, draw from both domains in practice.

Travis Hirschi (1969) coming from a criminological perspective has made significant contributions to the development of what is referred to as control theory. In its simplest form, (Hirschi, 1969.p.16) describes delinquent acts as those that result when an individual's bond to society is weak or broken. Literature informing child care practice is heavily influenced by the area of attachment theory and an appreciation for the inner working model of

a child's world as developed by Bowlby (1973). The inner working model refers to how a child expresses and interprets relationships which are shaped by early attachment experiences and is an 'organisation of attitudes feelings and expectations about the self and others and relationships' (De Roiste, as cited in Lalor and Share, 2013, p. 78).

The assessment of attachment patterns and bonding is an important skill for those involved in the work of social care in order to understand the nature of the attachment patterns and to understand what might need to change to strengthen relations (Fahlberg, 1994). However, when a child comes to a place of detention their interpretation of relationships will be further influenced by a larger system around them. Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) 'bio-ecological model' provides a developmental systemic framework in which to consider the various layers in a child's life that will influence their development and ultimately shape outcomes. (Appendix 4)

The framework provides a systemic perspective using concentric rings, each layer representing a level in the child's ecology. They range from micro systems, which refers to the developing young person and their immediate environment such as the parent child relationship to the macro system that refers to institutional patterns of culture such as economic conditions, policy and cultural values (Bronfenbrenner and Evans, 2000).

Many might argue that Hirschi's claims around attachment and Bowlby's contrast significantly (Hayslett and McCall, 2002). Namely Hirschi views attachment as something that one is socialised into; while Bowlby's psychological perspective of attachment is something which is innate and natural. However, the literature from social work and social care indicates that people who come to the attention of welfare services tend to be people involved in disturbed, hostile, unstable or insecure relationships, the consequence of which impacts their bonds with society in some way or other (Taylor, 2006).

The researcher is proposing that the findings of this research are understood in the context of both criminological and child care theories through the lens of relationships in the context of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework, forming a clearer theoretical basis for this research to draw on the rich breadth of knowledge of the 'residential care workers' who have first-hand experience of what works.

Chapter 3: Literature review

3.1 Introduction

Evidence based practice has become a theme across social policy with education, criminal justice and social care all being encouraged to be evidence based and outcome focused (Stephenson et al.,2014). Despite this there is little relevant research with a focus on how to help detained young people to achieve pro-social outcomes (Bamber et al., 2015). Research has been preoccupied with the residents of closed institutions where the care staff who work with these young people, daily, have attracted comparatively little interest. As far back as (1978) Millham was found questioning the fact that many studies explore the inmate world and its responses to the pains of imprisonment almost to the exclusion of the equally important world of staff, interestingly is an accurate reflection of youth detention today.

This chapter begins by initially considering some of the key factors that lead to delinquency followed by a brief reflection on how outcomes for young people are defined. The relevant literature of what aids improved pro-social outcomes under three key areas that influence change, role of relationships, organisational factors and external agencies are considered.

3.2 Understanding the causes and correlates of delinquency

This section reviews the existing literature to ascertain what is known about the individual factors which may potentially play a role in leading to detention and therefore assist in understanding the factors that may lead to improved outcomes and in some way counter the root causes (Nugent, 2015).

Interestingly from an Irish perspective there is a dearth of official statistics and empirical research that provides us with data that would inform us of the characteristics and circumstances that have led some of these young people to offend (Kilkelly, 2006). According to IPRT (2009) some of the limited research in Ireland suggests that these young people come from low socioeconomic backgrounds; many have lived out of home or have been in care; they have weak attachment to family and have problems with drugs and or alcohol. Structural disadvantage and impoverished communities are consistent themes that present

in research as part of the background profiles of the young people entering custody (Jacobson et al., 2010; Howard League for Penal Reform, 2010).

Unstable family life is common in the biographies of children in trouble with the law and family breakdown is a prominent feature illustrated by the high numbers of children who offend who have been under the supervision of social services (Jacobson, 2010). These unstable and dysfunctional familial environments can create many difficulties for young people impacting their connections generally to micro and macro systems in their lives (Graham, 1999; Seymour, 2008). Another significant factor that impacts the micro system is that of education. Learning difficulties, poor educational outcomes low attainment, persistent truancy, exclusion from school are serious problems amongst children in trouble with the law (Stephenson, 2007; Tye, 2009; HMIP, 2010).

According to Hagell, (2002) mental health is a key concern where the rates of mental health problems are at least three times for those within the criminal justice system as within the general population and suggests that even if a mental health issue was not present upon admission to a secure setting exposure to it causes a source of stress resulting in mental health issues. Children in detention have disproportionately high levels of substance use (Jacobson, 2010) which can further exacerbate mental health concerns. McAra and McVie (2010) identified an increase in alcohol use as one of three key factors in the lives of young offenders, while international research shows that alcohol is involved in up to 85% of assaults and homicides (Mayock and Corr, 2014). The relationship between substance use and offending behaviour is complex but is a dynamic factor that should not be ignored.

The causes of delinquency are viewed as being multi-factorial with general agreement that not one factor alone can cause delinquency rather (Agnew, 2005; Chung & Steinberg, 2006) it is an accumulation of risk factors over time and across contexts that most directly leads to offending.

3.3 Positive pro-social outcomes

Understanding the profiles and contexts of young people who offend is critical when considering the outcomes, a service might like to achieve. However, articulating and evidencing the value of a service both for the young people who are detained and to the community from which they have come from is challenging at best. 'Better outcomes brighter futures' has established a shared set of outcomes for all young people in Ireland which all government department and agencies are to ensure a coherent response to children. These outcome areas include:

- Active and healthy with positive physical and mental wellbeing
- Achieving their full potential in all areas of learning and development
- Safe and protected from harm
- Economic security and opportunity
- Connected respected and contributing to their world

Measuring outcomes is not straight forward particularly when dealing with a complex profile of young people in detention. One of the ways in which outcomes are measured in the Children's detention schools is through the Standards and Criteria for Children Detention Schools which are produced by the Irish Youth Justice Service (IYJS). Inspections are conducted by the Health Inspection Quality Authority. The overall purpose of monitoring is to safeguard vulnerable children living in detention schools. Monitoring provides assurance to the public that children are receiving a service that meets the requirements of quality standards. This process also seeks to ensure that the wellbeing, welfare and safety of children is promoted and protected (HIQA, 2015). The standards set out a number of detailed guidelines in the following areas:

- Purpose and function
- Care of young people
- Child protection
- Children's rights
- Planning for young people
- Staffing and management
- Education

- Health in care of young people
- Premises, safety and security
- Tackling offending behaviour

<center>(Irish Youth Justice Service November, 2008)</center>

The above mentioned standards are informed by the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989), standards and best practice, developed internationally.

However, it could be argued that these standards measure to a degree hard outcomes such as number of significant incidences, educational attainment and participation and don't pay enough attention to the softer social and emotional skills such as resilience self-esteem and thinking skills all of which can add value and support longer term hard outcomes (Mc Neil et al., 2012). There is substantial and growing evidence that developing social and emotional capabilities support the achievement of positive life outcomes for young people (McNeil et al.,2012). This fits with Irelands overarching strategy 'Better outcomes brighter futures' which places more emphasis on personal and social development for young people.

The term 'prosocial behavior' in the context of young people detained means positive actions that benefit others, prompted by empathy, moral values, and a sense of personal responsibility rather than a desire for personal gain. These behaviors are achieved through the development of social and emotional capabilities and can be achieved, as demonstrated by Schubert et al. (2012) by gaining positive perceptions in and across the care setting in which young people reside.

The outcome framework by Bamber et al., 2015 as discussed in chapter two are a list of social and emotional capabilities that are of value to all young people, supported by a strong evidence base demonstrating their link to outcomes such as educational attainment, employment, and health. (Appendix 5). When reviewing the research on what supports improved pro-social outcomes in youth detention facilities literature points to the relevance of the role of the structures, conditions and staff resources of the facility in acting as a potential buffer against the possible harms detention itself can cause a young person. (Farrent, 2001: Goldson, 2002; Goldson & Coles 2005; Frazier, 1989).

3.4 Role of relationship supporting outcomes

Mc Neill and Weaver (2010) highlight that offenders are most influenced to change by those whose advice they respect and whose support they value. Interestingly an established research base that demonstrates or identifies what works when building a relationship with young people who are involved in offending is poor (Burnett, 2004; Mason & Prior 2008; Bamber et al., 2015) yet we are left in no doubt that that the relationship between the service user and the practitioner is central to change and improving outcomes (Trevithick, 2005). For this reason, the practice literature that will inform this research is drawn from a number of caring disciplines including probation, social work, youth justice, youth work, and social care.

Relationships between social care practitioners and the young person are central to positive outcomes. Research indicates that good working relationships can act as a catalyst for change. However, many of the young people in detention are typically at an involuntary starting point of their journey and are therefore pre-contemplative about change and sometimes challenging to engage (Mc Murran, 2002; Mason & Prior, 2008). Rapport is one of the key building blocks in the development of a relationship for change and is described by Barker (2003, p. 59) as 'the state of harmony, compatibility and empathy that permits mutual understanding and a working relationship between the client and the social worker'. (Barry, 2007) adds that young people also place importance on the experience of being listened to and having their views taken into account.

3.4.1 Opportunities to connect with young people

Mason & Prior (2008) in their review of effective practice in interventions in youth justice context's, are strongly critical of the absence of research that focuses on the features of intervention and staff practices that engage young offenders which ultimately can result in positive outcomes. In the emerging field of positive youth work there has been a number of studies which have explored youth perceptions of mentoring relationships and outcomes. Overall relationship quality and the characteristics' and contexts of relationships particularly as perceived by youth appear to play a role in mentoring interventions and associated outcomes (de Anda, 2001; Rhodes, 2002; Grossman and Johnson, 1999).

Relationship quality needs to begin with some form of a connection or contact. In a review of the literature conducted by (Bamber et al., 2015.p.3) the importance of staff having contact opportunities with young people in order to develop relationships was identified as an essential feature. Bamber et al., 2015 identify three purposeful inter related opportunities to build relationships with young people in detention:

Level 1 involves relatively informal yet still constructive face to face interactions, for example during meal times, between staff and young people.

Level 2 involves young people and staff participating together in specific, planned and structured activities involving, for example, arts or sport. These purposeful opportunities help to equip young people with both knowledge and skills

Level 3 consists of participation in more specialised interventions, for example specific therapeutic approaches or off-the-peg evidence-based programmes

There is no doubt in the value of ensuring a young person has at least one person who takes a special interest in them. This factor alone presented as a significant theme in the findings of the National Survey of Youth Mental Health in Ireland (2012) by Head Strong and UCD which stated;

> 'The presence of *one good adult* is a key indicator of how well a young person is connected, self-confident and future-looking, and can cope with problem's.
>
> (Dooley & Fitzgerald, 2012)

Key-working is an activity that takes place in care settings, where each child is assigned a specific staff member who has responsibility for coordinating and working with that child to meet the young person's specific needs. Holt and Kirwin (2012) have under taken a review of international literature on the subject of key working and highlight the practice of key-working is a core concept associated with good practice with young people and is firmly embedded in both the policy and practice of residential care. It is within the existence of such relationships within the micro-system, as outlined by Bronfenbrenner, that change and growth can take place. It is then within these relationships that act as containers that the real work can then begin (Buggle, as cited in Lalor & Perry, 2009).

3.4.2 The role of relationships in promoting Resilience

Attachment theory as referred to earlier states the importance of secure relationships for the development of resilience and well-being. Rutter et al (1998) has written extensively on the area of resilience and identifies four key mechanisms that carers should promote particularly for young people who are found within the care system. These include:

➢ Reduction of negative chain reaction (e.g. avoidance of negative coping strategies such as drug/ alcohol use)

➢ Promotion of self-esteem and self-worth (such as through secure and supportive relationships)

➢ Opening up of positive opportunities (as through educational /career opportunities)

➢ Positive cognition processing of negative experiences (acceptance rather than denial or distorted)

(Rutter et al., 1998 cited in Smith, D. 2006).

Staff, key-workers and teams in detention have an opportunity to promote these key mechanisms. Schofield et al. (2012) argues that repairing harm and promoting resilience through high quality care can occur at all stages in a child's development, and especially in adolescence, thus providing windows of opportunity for change, something which is very relevant to the role of social care practice.

3.4.3 Role of hope and motivation in promoting improved outcomes

Research indicates that young people engaged in offending behaviour attribute the encouragement given by professionals as being important in the process of behaviour change and moving away from offending (Nugent, 2015; Barry, 2009). 'Hope' provided by workers also stood out as being hugely significant factor for young people particularly when their external family and peers may not be in favour of their new found behaviour change. This view of hope is developed further by (Farrell & Calverley, 2006) who related the concept of hope and motivation suggesting that the provision of hope for the future can help promote and sustain motivation for change and is essential in assisting offenders who are contemplating change in believing that an alternative future is possible.

3.5 Role of family in promoting improved outcomes

In addition to relationships with staff family connections are considered another factor which influences pro-social outcomes (IYJS, 2013). When young people are detained they are removed from their homes and communities 'during a period of development when their sense of well-being and their coping skills are still highly influenced by parents and other family members' (Dmitrieva et al., 2012). Literature points to the role of family involvement and the establishment of strong and diverse support systems in aiding better outcomes for young people particularly those involved in the justice system (Article 8 of the ECHR; Shanahan and diZerega, 2016; IYJS, 2013). This can be a challenging concept for some to accept as families are often blamed for a young person's involvement in offending behaviour to begin with. Shanahan and diZerega, (2016) argue that by accepting this perception of families the potential to learn from the literature which speaks to the positive influences family can have on young people's offending behaviours is blocked. Research indicates that family contact during incarceration is associated with lower recidivism rates (Adams & Fischer,1976; Glaser,1969; Hairston, 2002; Holt & Miller, 1972; Klein, Bartholomew, & Hibbert, 2002).

3.6 Impact of organisational behaviour on improved outcomes

Detention for a small minority of young people represents one of the multiple environments which will shape their outcomes and impact their trajectory. Bronfenbrenner states;

> 'the characteristics of the person at a given time in his or her life are a joint function of the characteristics of the person and of the environment over the course of that person's life up to that time' (1992. p. 190).

For this reason, the contextual, group, structural, process and managerial factors in the organisation of detention and beyond need to be considered. The study of organisational behaviour 'has direct practical implications for those who work in, manage, seek to subvert, or interact in other ways with organizations' (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010, p.6).

3.6.1 Role of culture

In addition to relationships Liebling (2004) has identified a variety of factors which influence the moral performance of penal institutions and include: respect, humanity, relationships, trust, fairness, order, safety and wellbeing' such dimensions also provide for a safe penal environment. Research has shown that incarcerated youth can change their behaviour if they experience more positive perceptions of the setting they live in (Schubert et al., 2012). Those who work in youth detention settings play a central role in the creation of the living group climate.

Literature in this field refers to two types of climates one which can be defined as open (responsive) and the second defined as closed (repressive) (Liebling & Maruna, 2005). According to Van der Helm et al., (2011) an 'open' living group climate is characterized by support, clear opportunities for growth, safety, structure and flexibility, and can increase treatment motivation, internal locus of control and decrease criminal cognitions. An open climate can also result in advanced social cognition, social learning and increased empathy. Suggesting, that the group living climate has a significant impact on change behaviours.

Being reluctant about being involved or feeling coerced into participating with the practitioner are issues of relevance in maintaining the balance and in seeking to engage young people who offend generally. Here, skills of 'persuasion' and 'being directive' become important for the practitioner. Trotter (1999) points out that practitioners working with involuntary clients have a dual role; on the one hand they have a legal enforcement role, ensuring that the client fulfils the requirements of any court order, and on the other hand they have 'a caring and therapeutic role which in detention focuses on reducing offending behaviours. According to Cooper et al. (2007, p. 128) the key factors in working successfully with a young person centred upon the worker's ability to communicate. Communication however is not solely relevant to the adult child relationship it is also a key factor in organisational performance influencing everything that happens in organisations ranging from hiring and training staff to problem solving and dealing with strategies. Every layer of ecological system is influenced by communication.

3.6.2 Factors which influence the effectiveness of staff in their role

The literature outlined above, points to the role of relationship between the care staff and the young person which invariably influences the group living climate (Van der Helm, 2011). For this reason, it is important to therefore consider the factors that can impact staff's ability to be effective and influence outcomes for young people.

3.6.2.1 Staff ratios and competency

The issue of the suitability and ratio of staff to young people are key components of effective practice in youth detention settings and this is reflected in international standards. Emphasis is placed on the organisations role to not only recruit competent qualified staff but also places responsibility on the organisation to continue to improve and develop these skills (Havana Rules, 1990; IPRT, 2009).

Likewise having suitably qualified staff is not enough on its own if the ratio of staff to young people is not sufficient to allow for adequate individual attention for each young person as meaningful interaction and relationship building takes time and energy (Ellison, 2013.)

3.6.2.2 Staff support

The benefits of relationships go beyond the inter-personal dynamic between the young person and the care staff. (Millham et al., 1978) highlights that the shifting relationships in secure units between staff and a child's world and the strength of these relationships affects both the institution as well as the personal consequences for the staff. Working in youth detention settings brings with it many challenges for staff having consequences for their physical, mental and social health and wellbeing (Cooper, 2006; Taylor, 2011).

The small minority of young people found within Irelands detention facility as outlined earlier in the chapter, are some of the most troubled young people in our society. In the context of staff being an organisation's most valuable asset and the provision of consistent, regular and quality support for the staff group cannot be overstated. The importance of this is recognised in Standards and Criteria for Children's Detention Centre (IYJS, 2007) under standard six linking staff support with the delivery of the best possible care and protection to young people.

One of the many ways of providing support is through the provision of professional supervision. (O' Neill, 2004. p.180) describes supervision as;

'a reflective space to help identify the satisfactions and help manage the challenges. It provides opportunities to step back from the immediate demands and complexities of daily situations and to review practice, response and experiences'.

Training and the provision of professional supervision were two of a number of recommendations arising from Keogh and Byrne, (2016) research on the extent, impact and management of workplace violence and assault on social care workers. This research shone a light on the prevalence of workplace violence across the sector of social care clearing highlighting the impact of these experiences on staff.

Factors such as job stress, training, efficacy in dealing with detainees and commitment to the institution based on the level of control one has within the role, all influence the attitudes of staff towards their role (Gordon, 1994). Staff attitudes towards the young person and the organisation influence the relationship between the young person and staff placing value on the systematic support for staff through mentoring, coaching and peer review process (Bamber, 2015).

3.6.2.3 Management processes

Leadership appears to be a determining factor in the effectiveness of an organisation and is defined by (Buchanan and Huczynski, 2010, p. 596) as the

> 'process of influencing the activities of an organised group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement'.

When working with vulnerable and challenging youth good leadership of teams is essential for both the young people and the organisation. This is particularly relevant at a time of change.

Change in Oberstown has involved change at every level. Change is a relational and dynamic process however caring for young people in an environment set up to detain is a difficult task, some might argue impossible (Goldson & Cole, 2005). Change within large institutions has the capacity to impact staff morale and therefore has potential influence on outcomes for young people, requiring more from the role of management and leaders. Contemporary leadership theory places emphasis on the interrelationships between leaders and teams. A core principal of transformational leadership according to Anderson et al., (2013) is that people follow them when they see a connection between their own sense of purpose and identity and the wider organisations vision. Making those connections is a primary goal for such a leader.

3.7 Contact with external agencies and reintegration with outside world

As highlighted earlier in this chapter the importance of maintaining social ties throughout incarceration is identified as even more vital for youth as for adults. Such social ties can be difficult to negotiate for young people coming from detention. The family however form one aspect of the social and structural barriers to change and reintegration back into society. Article 40 of the UN Convention on the rights of the child sets reintegration as a 'desirable goal' of juvenile justice systems recognising the right:

> 'Of every child alleged, accused, or recognised as having infringed the penal law to be treated in a manner consistent with the promotion of the child's sense of dignity and worth, which reinforces the child's respect for the human rights and fundamen-

tal freedoms of others and which takes into account the child's age and the desirability of promoting the child's reintegration and the child's assuming a constructive role in society'

UN Convention on the rights of the Child Article 40.1.

The competing objectives of youth detention settings can result in a fragmented response to the reintegration needs of young people. According to Lampron and Gonsoulin (2013), re-entry/transition planning and provision of integrated supports and services, aids successful outcomes for young people leaving restrictive settings.

Planning for reintegration, informed by an engaging assessment when the young person enters detention ensures key opportunities are not missed (IIJO, 2011; UNICEF, 2013; Mc Neill and Batchelor, 2002). For such a system to operate efficiently, 'the continuous exchange of ideas based on dialogue and communication between stakeholders is fundamental' (IIJO, 2011.p. 31; Trotter, 1999).

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter presented the key constructs which emerged from a review of the literature pertaining to the factors that influence pro-social outcomes for young people in detention. This review exposed the requirement for the theoretical and empirical advancement of research into this area highlighting an absence of research developed by social care practitioners generally and limited research that informs us of the characteristics of effective (social care) practices in the delivery of interventions (Dowden and Andrews, 2004).

Drawing from a variety of research sources, the role of relationship is considered an intrinsic dimension in the process of change behaviour and acts as a thread connecting the young person, social care staff and the system within the confines of detention and the system of stakeholders that exist outside of detention. However, the expert voice of social care practitioner with experience of youth detention is absent from the literature. The application of semi- structured interviews outlined in the literature review hopes to capture rich data from this expert lens and bridge some of the gaps in research. The following chapter will provide information on the research design and methods used in this study.

Chapter 4: Methodology

4.1 Chapter Introduction

The following chapter will outline a detailed account of the methods of research employed within this study. The purpose of the research was to explore the social care practitioner's perspectives of the various factors that support detained young people to achieve improved pro-social outcomes in life. The chapter begins by addressing the research method and research design before moving onto issues with access, sampling and the data collection procedure. The chapter will conclude with the ethical considerations in this research and a short reflexive piece by the researcher.

4.2 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach to gain insights into social care practitioners understanding of the factors that improve pro-social outcomes for young people who have been detained in Oberstown. As this study was explorative in nature a qualitative approach was the most appropriate strategy (Robson, 2011). Dawson (2012) notes that 'qualitative research explores attitudes, behaviour and experience' all of which allows the researcher build abstractions, concepts and theories from the data collected. A qualitative research method was considered most appropriate as opposed to quantitative research which seeks to measure rather than understand. A qualitative approach allows the researcher to 'examine phenomena that impact on the lived realities of individuals or groups in a particular cultural and social context' (Mills & Bricks, 2014).

The study was approached from an interpretative perspective which is concerned with interpreting and understanding phenomena through the meanings that people attach to them (Greenhalgh, 2001). This perspective advocates the theoretical belief that reality is socially constructed and fluid. Therefore, what we know is negotiated within cultures, social contexts and relationships with other people. The knowledge generated from the research using this approach derives meaning which is relative to the time, context and culture within which the research was conducted. A broadly interpretivist frame is utilised as 'it emphasises the importance of understanding people's perspectives in the context of the conditions and circumstances of their lives' (Ritchie et al., 2014, p. 22).

The context of this study is set at a time where the Irish landscape for the detention of young offenders is changing. Some of these historic changes include the bringing together of three individual former centres under a single campus director and the bringing to an end the detention of 16 and 17 year olds under adult prison authorities. Despite the fact that these changes and plans for change have been in place for a number of years change within any system brings opportunities and challenges. A qualitative approach from an interpretative perspective allowed the researcher to not only gain an in depth understanding of the participants experiences it also allowed for greater understanding of the meaning attributed to such experiences in the context of change.

4.3 Research Method

The data collection method chosen was semi structured interviews which provides the balance between a standardized structured survey and the variability of an unstructured interview (Bell, 1999). Structured interviews may have restricted the emergence of rich and meaningful data which is considered central to the research question. Semi structured interviews allow for comparability between interviews which is essential to this study in understanding the depth and potential variation in approach to young people in detention settings (May, 2001).

For this study the researcher explored a range of qualitative options such as interviews, focus groups and observations. Due to time limitations and the complexity of the systemic change at the time of this research semi structured interviews were chosen. In keeping with Denscombe (2010) suggestions, interviews are particularly appropriate for the collection of privileged and sensitive data which requires insights into people's opinions, emotions and experiences.

Leading and double barrelled questions were avoided and open ended questions were used to support the collection of rich detailed data. The interview content was grounded in the factors which influence pro-social outcomes and youth detention. An interview schedule was devised and informed by the key constructs that emerged from the review of relevant literature. (Appendix 1). The questions covered were in line with the theoretical framework outlined in chapter two of attachment and offending in the context of an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Evans 2000, Hirschi, 1969; Bowlby, 1973).

Questions in the interview schedule were divided into four main sections, intentionally designed to reflect a natural progression of Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework moving from the relationships within the micro system and through to the macro system helping participants to focus on the separate levels of the system. These sections included of questions relating to the demographics and the participants' backgrounds and work experiences, the attitudes and role of social care practitioners with young people who are detained, the role of relationship in supporting pro-social outcomes and the final section invited participants to add any final/further comments relating to the research.

4.4 Sampling issues and techniques

It has been noted that few studies have focused on the perspectives of social care practitioners working in youth detention facilities. Due to the significant wave of change, taking place, systemically across the campus of Oberstown a decision was made by the researcher to seek the perspectives of those who were newer to the system of detention combined with the perspectives of those who had experience greater than three years, spanning the crucial period of change on campus. This was to allow for greater depth to the findings recognising the complexity of changes within and around the service.

The target sample for this research was 'residential care workers' who will qualify either as practicing social care workers or under a schedule 3 qualification in line with the eligibility to register with the Social Care Work Registration Board. Therefore, the sample is purposive in that the selection of those surveyed and invited to participate in the research held similar characteristics and were therefore fit for the purpose of this research (Dawson, 2011). The determination of the sample size was guided by the limitations of the research design and method chosen.

The research strategy involved conducting five semi structured interviews with social care practitioners working in Oberstown and one pilot interview. Five of those interviewed were front line staff with the job title of 'residential care workers' none of whom were known to the researcher. One participant who was utilised as the pilot interview had previous experience working in Oberstown. All five participants had between 3 months and 18 years' experience of working in youth detention. All participants worked across the campus reporting to different unit managers.

Of the five participants interviewed two were male and three were female. Two participants were working in Oberstown three years and under and three participants had worked there for three years and more. Three of the five participants had previous experience working in the area of social care prior to coming to work in Oberstown. There was a mix of staff working night and days shifts. The competencies and broad range of experience of the participants spanned such areas as addiction, domestic violence, mental health, child protection, homelessness and residential child care to name just a few.

4.5 Recruitment process

Access to the sample was obtained by applying to the Director of Oberstown for consent to carry out the research. A meeting took place between the researcher and the Director followed by participation at the second part of a strategy and planning day for management across the campus and external agencies working with Oberstown. Consent was granted following submission of the research proposal and attendance at this strategy planning event.

Initially consideration was given to seeking the perspectives of social care practitioner who worked for three years or longer in Oberstown. On reflection and following exposure to the strategic process of change in Oberstown the researcher was of the view that inclusion of newer members to the campus was equally relevant and would allow for a more in depth understanding of the practitioner's experiences and understandings of the factors that support young people to achieve improved outcomes.

Voluntary participation was supported by campus management at Oberstown. Communication outlining the research proposal was disseminated across the campus by the Director of the campus and participants were invited to volunteer for the research if they so wished. Participants communicated directly with the researcher using the Dublin Institute of Technology (D.I.T) email address and interviews were planned and conducted at times and locations which suited participants. Industrial relation issues were taking place on the campus which may have impacted the numbers volunteering to participate.

4.6 Data collection procedure

Extensive preparation took place in advance of the interviews this included testing of the recording equipment, reviewing the literature and research questions along with a review of the notes taken from a strategy event which the researcher was invited to attend on the 19th of May 2016 which reviewed the progress of reform in Oberstown. Part of this preparation included a pilot interview which took place in advance of arranging the remaining five interviews. The pilot study proved to be a highly valuable and suggested some useful information which informed adaptations to the interview questions and process that followed. It revealed the value of bringing along a copy of the 'seven outcome clusters' (Bamber et al., 2015) to support the participants understanding of pro-social outcomes and the necessity to clarify the different layers of influence on the young people that supported their outcomes. All adaptations were integrated into the interview schedule before the data collection phase began.

The interpretivist paradigm recognises the role of the context where the research study takes place however a number of factors had to be considered. These included pressure on staff ratio's, shift pattern's, recent movement of staff between units and the existence of high ceilings which was not conducive to good sound quality. The room chosen to conduct the interviews was comfortable, well ventilated free from interruptions and suitable for participants to feel at ease. This essential preparatory work maximised the possibility of the interviews being a positive experience. The majority of the interviews were conducted in an office space on the Oberstown Campus but separate to the detention facility itself. One interview was conducted in the participant's home at their request.

Data collection phase took ten weeks in total. The time scale was prolonged due to participant's annual leave during the summer months, industrial action and coordination around shift work rotas. All interviews were digitally recorded to aid greater interaction and increased opportunity to develop rapport with the participants and to allow for the recoding of direct quotes from the participants. Interviews lasted on average of 60 minutes. The interviews were transcribed soon after each interview to facilitate accurate recollection of the data.

4.7 Data management, analysis and coding

The researcher approached the analysis of the data gathered with attention to detail and rigour as recommended by (Denscombe, 2010). To protect the anonymity of the participants coding process was applied. Participants were allocated a number in order of the interviews, e.g. 1,2,3, etc. and to assist in distinguishing male from female participant's letters F or M were placed beside each participant's name. Field notes were read Once the data was transcribed it was proof read and reviewed rigorously along with field notes allowing familiarity with the data. rigorously. Thematic analysis was the qualitative analytic method used as;

'its theoretical freedom provides a flexible and useful research tool, which can potentially provide a rich and detailed, yet complex account of data'

(Braun, V. and Clarke, V., 2006. p.5).

Following rigorous review of the data, coding of themes took place consistently fine tuning broad and narrow codes where similar themes were then combined. Codes were developed whereby the wording of the codes was informed by relevant words obtained from the research questions and the review of related literature. These themes were further analysed in line with the research questions and the literature collated which involved a constant moving back and forth between the entire data set. Quotes within their original context were maintained to signify their original meaning in keeping with an interpretivist approach.

4.8 Ethics, access and consent

The research conducted gained ethical approval from the Head of School Dr. Kevin Lalor before any field work commenced. A research proposal and ethical application were submitted as part of this process. The research was ethically compliant with the ethical guidelines of the British Society of Criminology, the Psychological Society of Ireland and Sociological Association of Ireland in addition to Dublin Institute of Technology.
Gaining access to Oberstown was fundamental to the success of this study, thus gaining consent with key gatekeepers at the earliest opportunity was essential. Once permission to undertake the research at Oberstown was approved the campus director informed all staff

across campus of the research through their work emails providing an overview of the research and contact details to arrange to meet with the researcher if they so wished.

Informed consent was an imperative aspect of the procedure, as participants needed to understand what was involved before they made the decision to cooperate (Bryman, 2012). Participants were provided with an information letter as part of the initial communication with the campus staff inviting self-nominated voluntary participants which outlined the purpose of the study and the proposed time to conclude the interview. (Appendix 2). Participants were also informed that the interviews would be recorded and would be disposed of immediately post-transcription. The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants was guaranteed. Such assurances coupled with the voluntary nature of the research was particularly important in light of the prevailing industrial unrest. Enabling participants to speak freely adds to the validity of the research.

These key issues were further reflected upon prior to the interview process commencing to ensure clarity. All participants were informed of the exceptions to confidentiality in keeping with Children First: National Guidance before they agreed to take part and were made aware that the researcher had to abide by these exceptions for safety reasons and best practice. Participants then signed the consent form indicating their consent to participate. (Appendix 3). All participants were informed that they could withdraw from the process at any time, without consequence and could decline to answer any of the questions.

A key issue in this study was that the researcher is employed by TUSLA, Child and Family Agency as an Addiction Counsellor and works as part of the clinical team ACTS (Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Services) that in reaches into Oberstown. This role required the researcher to interface with the centre and related agencies on a regular basis. The researcher recognised that this posed a risk to the validity of the research.

Based on the above considerations it was possible to request as part of the criteria that participants who came forward for interview were those who have had no immediate contact with the researcher and were participants who self-selected themselves. The researcher purposefully had limited direct involvement with Oberstown for a few months prior to gaining consent to conduct the research by campus management.

Recognising the potential tensions across the campus resulting in industrial unrest informed consent was imperative, as participants must understand what is involved before they make the decision to cooperate (Bryman, 2012). In the context of this the researcher was mindful of the impact the interview may have on staffs well- being and therefore clarified the system of supports available in Oberstown in advance of the interviews taking place.

4.9 Reflexivity

The timing of this research made it particularly challenging. Realising the impact of reform and watching it unfold over the duration of the research brought with it an extra layer of pressure and responsibility to try to ensure that research was accurate, balanced and truly reflective of what was helpful or hindering improved outcomes for young people detained. I was particularly impressed with the openness and support of the management of Oberstown in allowing the research to proceed in light of the challenges. There are many organisations who may have said no.

Despite my exposure to Oberstown and experience of working with this cohort I had genuinely underestimated the magnitude and depth of complexity in managing the intricacies of change. What has struck me most however was that despite the realities of industrial unrest the passion and commitment of both management and the residential care staff to the improved outcomes for young people was without question remarkable and something both sides agree on.

I believe my educational and professional background particularly having worked as a social care practitioner in the past helped participants feel comfortable in the interviews many thanking me for the opportunity to reflect and talk in general about their work. It also enabled me to have a solid base to support both the process of data collection and analysis.

4.10 Conclusion

This chapter provided the reader with a detailed account of the research methods employed within the current study. To ensure that the appropriate methods were used in the research

a significant body of literature was consulted and considered. Meticulous preparation took place at each and every stage. Securing voluntary participation and informed consent were imperative to the validity of the research outcomes. The interpretive approach to the study was an integral component to the research strategy adopted. A detailed account of the findings will be presented in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This study explored the factors that lead to improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility from the perspectives of social care practitioners. The findings presented draw on the insights of five social care practitioners. The analysis of the empirical data found a number of significant key factors that aid improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are or have been detained. The findings presented in this chapter include the role of relationships, organisational factors and external agencies in supporting improved pro-social outcomes. These themes will be further divided into sub-themes, to outline particular aspects of the themes which emerged from the narratives.

5.2 Social Care practitioner's definitions of a positive/ pro-social outcome.

It was important to understand what participants deemed to be a good outcome for young people detained. Findings found that participant's measurement of outcomes was based on the experiences the young person might have while in detention in particular experiences of safety and having positive experiences of relationships with caring adults;

> *'a good outcome I think is that they feel safe, they were happy and they built relationships with people while they were here'.* (PF3)

5.3 The role of relationships in supporting positive outcomes

Not surprisingly the theme of relationship emerged as a significant finding viewed as being pivotal in supporting pro-social outcomes. Attitudes of care staff towards the young person and contact time opportunities are factors that appear to have a positive impact on the relationship held with the young people in detention.

5.3.1 Attitudes towards young people and detention

The findings of the research suggested that the attitudes of all the participants were positively exposed to the young people in detention. The participants had the ability to see beyond the offending behaviour *'seeing the whole person and their history'* (PF3) and recog-

nising and valuing how young people have developmentally *'different perspectives on life'* (PM1).

Oberstown was viewed by all participants as a place of rehabilitation and as a place which *'has been and still is for the betterment of young people'* (PM1);

> *'as an opportunity to make time in detention count… and an opportunity to change their trajectory'. 'The function is to rehabilitate young offenders and get them back into society'.* (PM1)

The findings demonstrate that participants held a balanced view of the purpose and function of detention whilst recognising the importance of maintaining a balance between care and control as (PM4) reflects *'we can care for these kids and keep them safe'*. Relationship was emphasised consistently as a conduit in achieving the purpose and function of detention using a care approach;

> *'Safety is the goal but can only be achieved through relationship and the existence of both lead to improved pro-social outcomes without one or the other progress won't happen'.* (PF2)

Having a hopeful attitude and enjoying one's work was also a consistent theme recognising that with *'the right nurture and care is in place.* (PF3) change was achievable. Oberstown was *'good for the spirit… on good days it can be great fun and uplifting and rewarding'.* (PM1)

5.3.2 Engaging and maintaining relationships between the social care practitioner and the young person.

When asked about their role in working with young people who have been detained all participants referred to the pivotal importance of relationship in achieving improved outcomes viewing the relationship as providing a necessary basis from which change can be achieved;

> *'It's around the relationship that's the heart of social care and the heart of what I do…. establishing good quality relationships for the quality of care of the young people'. (*PM1)

When asked why developing rapport was important one participant explained it was '*so that they know …. if they get bad news they have somebody they can talk to'*. (PF2). Having a rapport facilitated better assessment of needs and responses to potential risks to the young person or the group broadly;

> '*You would know if somebody was off form… looking at his features… you just know by their demeanour and that they don't want to be there and you say "listen", come on down here and bring them away'*. (PF2)

Key factors were identified to aid engagement and the development of a solid relationship. A variety of methods were referred to and included active listening, being respectful, being available, being open and not judging things, spending time with the young person.

> '*just conversation, just trying to find out a bit about them and what they like, what they don't like'……. spend time. could be playing board games, cards, just watching telly, or out on the yard playing football... joining them in the activity*' (PF5)

> '*active listening, showing you care… being open, not to judge things… showing interest'*. (PM1)

Participants highlighted the importance of being genuine and honest whilst having an appreciation for their difficulties and challenging life stories including the young person's journey through detention.

> *My thing is the honesty with the boys… I do care … and they are opening up about huge things in life*'. (PM4)

> '*If a lad comes in I would hope that I can put him at ease just by showing interest, you don't be flippant about things, be upfront and honest in everything you do, break everything down, simplify stuff, reassure lads you know where they are coming from'*. (PM1)

Trust and respect were identified as key components in the relationship dynamic that influences positive outcomes and something which takes time to develop. The following was reflective of similar comments;

> '*I think it was trust… it was treating her with respect, treating her in a consistent way… it was just a positive adult child relationship'*. (PF3)

'as long as I show them respect and that they know that if they have any problems they can ask me and they know I will deal with it… I'll stop and I'll listen'. (PF2)

5.3.3 Contact time with young people

Analysis of findings identified three distinct ways in which time was spent with the young people allowing relationships to build. The first form of contact with a young person was based around informal routine tasks the second form of contact involving more purposeful joint participation through activity and the third type of contact was in the form of specialist interventions was identified.

'you're teaching them little things like doing their laundry themselves. encouraging them with school'. (PF5)

'sometimes you could end up playing cards with the lads, you could be doing a jigsaw, you could be in watching T.V. with them', (PM1)

'some young people in here have different disabilities, some have addiction, some have other issue's. it's our job to put interventions in place to keep control and keep the relationship'(PM4).

Many participants were of the view that the most important *'core work that needs to be done is around the offending behaviour and reasons why they are here'* (PF2)*.*

5.3.4 Challenges establishing and maintaining relationships

The findings identify some key challenges to maintaining positive relationships with young people impacting the delivery of interventions therefore impacting pro-social outcomes. These factors are complex and for ease of analysis will be divided further into sub factors:

5.3.4.1 Sentence length

Sentence length arose as a potential challenge to relationships highlighting that there has been some recent changes where young people are generally coming in on shorter sentences. Findings suggest two implications the first suggesting that shorter sentences mean less time to develop rapport and the second suggest that shorter sentences impact mobility's typically used to incentivise a young person to buy into programmes;

> *'it's a detriment that the sentences have become shorter'* describing it as a *'revolving door'*. (PM4)

> *'with the shorter orders you can't offer trips out, no talk about home leave'*. (PM1)

5.3.4.2 Approach to challenging behaviour

Participants highlighted grave concerns around a [4]change in practice in response to young people engaged in property damage highlighting that the consequence of this for staff is they feel disempowered and don't believe it's in the best interests of the young person or the wider campus;

> *'that the morale of staff is very down because of interventions like when you're not able to intervene'* and the consequence for the young person is they receive a message that *'it is alright for a young person to bust up somewhere'. (PM4)*

> *'I am not advocating physical restraint however there are times a young person needs to know that they can be minded'. (PM1)*

Of note one participant with experience in other settings outside of secure care noted;

> *'I've been faced with more dangerous situations in residential than here… it's a completely different setting, I suppose it just gets a bad name'*. (PF5)

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[4]In November 2015 a directive was issued from management in Oberstown requesting staff to use the approved physical intervention in line with policy. The training states that in times of crisis staff should verbally engage and where necessary and safe to do so physically intervene (Oberstown, 2016).

This participant was positively reflecting on the strengths of Oberstown in terms of the frequency and level of violence and highlighted in particular the availability of extra staff on shift which is very different to community residential settings.

References were made generally to the fact that young people coming to Oberstown now are more likely to be engaged in problematic substance use making them more violent and sometimes harder to engage. (PM1) referred to the fact that *'drug culture is far more normalised now, its normal to pop tablets, if a lad is not smoking weed there is something wrong'*.

5.3.4.3 Security and safety measures in detention

The theme of safety and security prevailed throughout all interviews. Safety concerns were high on participant's agendas. Some felt over the last few years the control element has become more important *'because kids are more violent and there's a lot more chaos'*. (PM1) Conversations between staff are dominated by the issue of safety, as evidenced in the following remark,

> *'Conversations you have with colleagues is purely about safety and getting to the end of the shift in a safe manner'*. (PM1)

Findings indicated that with the new building came tighter expectations around security in general in terms of movement within the facility and movement in and out of the campus. *'you have to radio up all movements now'*. (PF2)

New guidelines have been introduced around young people's movement off the campus, known as [5]'mobility's'. Staff reported that young people now have to serve 40% of their sentence before having an activity mobility and 80% of their total sentence complete before home leave will be granted. The introduction of [6]screened visits raised mixed feelings for the practitioners.

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[5] The recent introduction of the guide in the determining whether a young person should be considered for mobility's, permitted absence or temporary release. It is to ensure fairness and transparency in decision making within the Placement Planning Process.
[6] Screened visits are a protective measure introduced with the new building to protect against contraband coming into the detention facility.

All participants expressed concern around the risks and lack of safety mixing young people who were remanded to Oberstown with young people who had received their sentence. This was reflected in the following comments;

> *'You can't have committal and remand together because it doesn't work'.* (PM4)

> *'It becomes a very frustrating environment for long term kids'.* (PF3)

It's important to note that there are plans to develop an intake unit, separating then young people who were on sentence from those on remand.

5.4 Role of family relationship in supporting outcomes

Three of the five participants expressed concerns around the current lack of emphasis on family work recognising the value and its correlation with improved pro-social outcomes for the young person generally, highlighting it was something they used to do;

> *'there is no point in doing work with the lads and nobody doing work with the family out there . you have to have them linked'.* (PF2)

> *'there is no family work being done…..something that got lost somewhere along the way that it has become about the high walls and the gates'.* (PF3)

The analysis of the findings suggests that some of the operational changes within Oberstown mean that now families who come to visit see their children in a visitor's section of the campus supervised by staff who they may not know. Visits are no longer on the units as had been the practice previous to reforms;

> *'the families came in you met them and they knew all the staff…..you know they would have always gone down to the units and the lads would have shown their mammies and daddies their rooms… they don't go past admin block now'.* (PF3)

5.5 Role of organisational factors in improving outcomes for young people detained

The literature suggests that the impact of youth detention facilities goes beyond the relationships between staff and the young people and also includes contextual, group, structural, process and managerial factors in the organisation which need to also be considered.

5.5.1 Staff support

One aspect of the organisational role is that of the support provided for the staff to allow them to carry out their role professionally. The factor of staff support came through in all participant narratives as an important factor influencing pro-social outcomes for young people who have been detained. As one participant put it;

> *'everything should be put in place to support the care staff to support the boys… if you invest more in the staff in terms of time and space you will see a kick in the quality of work and outputs'.* (PM1)

Participants expressed strong views around the importance of this factor and identified four key areas relevant to the cumulative experience of staff support. These included opportunities for debriefing following incidents, supervision, staff training and general team building opportunities. Examples of staff support included the introduction of a three-week induction process that involved essential training on a number of topics. The provision of a 'buddy system' for new staff,

> *'the person I'm linked in with is very good and I can go to him with anything… it's very helpful'.* (PF5)

Participants referred to a new procedure for debriefing following serious incidents on the unit. (PF5) reported having participated in one recently and stated,

> *'it was quite good.. it was formal as well… the incident was kind of laid out and they went around each person kind of getting everyone's take on the incident.. I found it quite positive'.*

All participants referred to the importance of supervision. Analysis of the findings in this research study suggested varying levels of dissatisfaction with the frequency, quality and management understanding of the supervision model being delivered. Four of the five participants had not received professional supervision in the

length of time they have worked in Oberstown. The one participant who had received supervision experienced such a process for the first time in over 17 years. There was limited evidence or reports of reflective practice in fact all staff concurred that reflective practice was an essential component of staff support and learning. When discussing reflective practice one participant highlighted;

> *'there's huge research that suggests this is the way we learn, we look back at our mistakes… social care, that's what it is, its reflective practice'* (PM5
>
> *it was for .. number of years I didn't have any supervision at all'.* (PF2)

Despite the reported absence of certain supports, some evidence of reforms did come through and this is highlighted in the following narrative,

> *'It's a hell of a lot better than what it used to be'* (PF2).

However, this positivity was not a consistent experience across campus, the weight of which is reflected in the following;

> *'supervision is a box ticking exercise… debriefing just doesn't exist'.*
>
> (PF3)
>
> *'some people need to go through what supervision is in training.. because all managers would not have ….an understanding that it is a two-way process and you sit down, you iron out issues, it's a reflective piece… it's not you did abc wrong'.* (PM4)

All participants referred to the introduction of new training schedules and identified this as a welcome and long awaited change which would positively impact improved pro-social outcomes for young people detained. Training initiatives that were highlighted as being most helpful were on areas relating to problematic substance use and offending behaviour programmes.

Team work emerged as an important feature for all participants impacting practices that influence outcomes suggesting this was a factor that could be improved. This related to team meetings, team debriefings, exercises that bring the team together as a group to get to

know each other '*because of the type of environment they were working in*'. (PM4). Staff expressed concerns of not knowing one another seen in the following comments;

> '*you can be so stressed out working all the time that you might not actually get a chance to sit down with your team and discuss certain stuff*'. (PM5)

> '*operationally the key thing is having a core group of people in each unit who know each other… its more than just a connection its more that you're all in tune with one another …. things can kick off so quickly in here, when you're working with people that you know you're comfortable and safe*'. (PF3)

Participants acknowledged the invaluable role unit managers play however, due to the demands on them in terms of administrative duties their availability is compromised resulting in a loss of opportunities to support staff;

> '*it's hard for a manager to take that role of reflective practice because they're not on the floor so they don't actually see my intervention*'. (PM4)

> '*every unit needs a manager who supports the team and knows the team*'. (PF3)

Analysis and findings demonstrated a number of organisational challenges to effective team communication and planning having the potential to impact improved pro-social outcomes for young people.

5.5.2 Change process

All participants clearly expressed a commitment to the new overarching framework for detention of young people in Ireland, recognising a need for structure which is streamlined and more evidence informed than previously existed. However, all participants acknowledged that change has been a constant and challenging experience;

> *'there is a lot of talk about change at the moment…it will take a while'.* (PF5)

> *'the change is for the better'* experiencing the system as *'having more barriers now to achieving positive outcomes than ever before'*. (PF2)

One of the challenges raised was the integration of old and new practice. The example was given by (PM4) who explained that certain schools in Oberstown previously were considered as having *'strict regimes'* while others schools were considered to have a more caring approach referred to as *'sesame street'* encapsulating the reality of the challenge in developing a consistent model of care across the campus which consists of a mix of experiences.

Staff in service three years and longer expressed a feeling of not being valued holding a belief that the organisation *'never wanted to bring the old staff with them'.* (PF2) recognising the importance of *'bringing the care team with you as part of the change'.*

Findings suggest the larger system of Oberstown is experienced as multi layered and challenging to negotiate where a lack of autonomy in terms of decision making is experienced. One participant summed up the narratives of the collective group by saying that there are aspects of the system of Oberstown that are *'more cumbersome and less flexible'* experiencing the smaller nature of the units prior to amalgamation as being *'more flexible and responsive to the needs.* (PM1)

Staff shortages was a pivotal factor impacting delivery of improved pro-social outcomes for the young people detained.

> *'there are times you go on shift and you're in a different unit… you'll be there an hour and a half before you know the names of the other staff.. its*

> *chaos…we don't even have enough staff to get the lads up in the morning'.*
> (PM1)

5.6 Role of detention and external agencies in reintegration

Participants were strongly of the view that making available to young people structural opportunities and community based supports was an essential factor that will assist in the process of change.

Both older and newer staff referred to the value of a step down unit which was previously available in Oberstown. It was described as a service which supported slow reintegration back into the community in a gradual way whilst learning key skills along the way such as *'self-care skills, budgeting and general life skills'.* (PF3)

The practitioner's identified the continuity of the attachment already developed in detention as a useful method of supporting reintegration back into community supports.

> *'what we do here, I'd like to see that relationship carried on into the community'.*
(PM1)

> *'I think there is a huge after care piece that we in Oberstown need to follow through on'.* (PM4)

The concerns expressed by staff around the continuum of care for these detained young people may have reinforced by the belief that external community agencies and services simply stop at the gates of Oberstown and go no further.

> *'phew job done now it's out of our hands… it's almost as if detention itself was the agencies aim and is seen as 'the end of the journey'…. I think agencies are reluctant to take on extra work loads of lads who haven't left yet'.* (PM1)

[7]ACTS was identified by all participants as being helpful in supporting the reintegration of young people back into the community.

> *'ACTS is of much benefit because it is the first time there has been something here that is out there'.* (PF3)

Staff however highlighted the need for more planning and integration of young people into a number of community services namely drug and alcohol services, education and training

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[7] The Assessment, Consultation and Therapy Service (an in reach multi-disciplinary clinical service) Child and Family Agency: TUSLA

services nationally and that this process should begin while the young person is in deten-tion.

5.7 Conclusion

The present study highlighted the most significant factors that support pro-social outcomes for young people detained. These factors are informed through the lens of the 'residential care staff'. These findings clearly demonstrate that relationships are an essential ingredient in supporting improved outcomes generally. The findings also highlight that it is the inter-dependent reciprocal dynamic of a respectful and trusting relationship that needs to form part of all interactions between and within the system of detention and this goes beyond the social care worker and young person's relationships. The study revealed a strong link between the current change processes and the potential for improved pro-social outcomes. Although these findings cannot be generalised, they do provide for an enhanced conceptu-alisation of the practitioner's experiences and perspectives of the necessary conditions to best provide for improved outcomes. The findings raise some important considerations, which will be addressed in the following chapter, in the form of a discussion.

Chapter six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research findings and draws conclusions based on those findings in light of prevailing literature. The findings suggest that the relational properties of the total institution have a cumulative and prevailing effect on pro-social outcomes for young people in detention.

Applying these findings in the theoretical framework informed by Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory is beneficial in helping to understand the interdependent nature of detention and its influence on the developing young person. If one aspect of the system is out of balance or difficult to negotiate in some way it will influence the outcomes of the young people detained. In this chapter the findings will be addressed and the limitations of the research will be examined.

6.2 Factors that influence pro-social outcomes

As identified in the literature review outcome definitions or measurements tend to be influenced by the agency or professionals doing the measuring. Findings revealed that positive outcomes identified were more broadly in line with the national strategy of Better Outcomes Brighter futures and the Standards and Criteria for Children Detention Schools (IYJS).

In particular being 'safe and protected from harm' along with being 'active and healthy with positive physical and mental wellbeing' in line with 'Better Outcomes Brighter futures' was highlighted in the findings. In addition, factors relating to the purpose and function of detention, care of young people, planning for young people, staffing and management, premises safety and security and tackling offending behaviour were factors identified in the findings which did relate closely to the Standards and Criteria for Children Detention Schools (IYJS). The definitions tended to be guided by the unique relationship that's developed between the residential care worker and the young person in detention.

6.2.1 Relationship factors

The most significant theme arising from this research was that outcomes are influenced with the existence of a meaningful dyadic relationship between the care staff and the young person. Relationships with young people were described as the

foundation of any progress that can occur while a young person is detained. Achieving a positive relationship was identified as a key 'goal' from the moment a young person arrives in Oberstown and emerged as an integrated way of working with these young people through daily life events adding to the understanding of both the operation and effects of these relationships in youth justice which according to Burnett (2004) is not understood.

Daily life events as referred to by (Stuart, 2008) are those moments which are open to therapeutic use when the practitioner and young person engage in exploring its meaning together and in learning from each other. In line with Bamber (et al 2015) the use of contact opportunities was heavily evidenced in the findings facilitating staff to support such issues as problem solving, stressful life events and general coping skills. It was through these therapeutic moments the young people were contained and offered the opportunities to reflect and grow.

As outlined in the literature review Hirschi (1969) reinforces the value of attachment to others in the society suggesting a positive and protective factor that almost buffers individuals from committing deviant acts. One such bond is that of family and findings placed significant value on the role of detention in cultivating a family culture which can support pro-social outcomes for young people a view supported by (Shanahan & DiGerega, 2016). However, participants expressed concerns around a general lack of emphasis around family work and family participation in Oberstown citing this as a change in practice from the past when family work formed a more significant part of the role of detention. These concerns were raised despite the existence of newly revised procedures such as the participation of families in placement planning meetings and the existence of newly designed visitor's area for families to visit.

6.2.2 Organisational factors

The findings demonstrated that certain associated factors can impact the depth of the relationship and in turn influence the outcomes for young people in detention delineating a more nuanced understanding of practice relationships. Findings suggested important links between the availability of staff, overall campus safety for young people and the system of staff support in place to maintain equilibrium in a risky environment.

6.2.2.1 Staffing

In identifying the significant value of contact time with the young person, participants referred to the availability of staff to be able to facilitate contact with the young people, suggesting staff ratios were not adequate to allow for as much contact as was thought necessary. Staffing is a basic indicator often used to measure capacities for effective intervention in custody (IIJO, Green paper: 2011. p.21). However, staff shortages and industrial relations has been a persistent cloud over shadowing and hindering progress in Oberstown recently (Irish Examiner, 19th September, 2016). It is difficult for managers and staff to implement any change if staff shortages prevail. Many might argue that resources are not a defence against practice that's compromised however if staff are reporting that there are not enough staff for basic routine practices such as getting young people up out of bed in the morning it might suggest that basic infrastructure to do the job is compromised.

6.2.2.2 Safety

The importance of a positive and stable environment with a focus on positive relationships, as referred to by Van der Helm et al (2011) and Lipsey (2009) in the literature review, were findings which were supported in this research. Suggesting that the flexibility of group living is an essential ingredient in aiding pro-social outcomes for young people and experiences of safety and security in general can impact flexibility of this climate. The presence of this factor is not surprising in the context of the study being based around youth detention and managing high risk youth's but suggests there is a risk that living group climate is at risk of becoming a closed setting.

There are four key issues influencing this factor the first related to structural issues in terms of the building and campus layout, the second related concerns over behaviour management approaches and the third involved mixing of young people who were on remand with those who had received a sentence and the fourth involved the impact of staff turnover and movement of staff around the campus resulting in staff not knowing one another, adding to safety risks on shift.

Bronfenbrenner's model assumes that the causes of behaviour interconnect, whereby the environment and the person engage interactively and to understand behaviour an examination of both the environment and the individual's perception of it, should be considered. The delicate and paradoxical balance between care and control as referred to by Brierly (2010) presents strongly in the findings which suggest that the delicate balance between care and control has been ruptured. Where on one hand findings suggest that the lay out of the new building lends itself to a more prison like experience where movements in and out of the campus are too tightly controlled and yet on the other hand new approaches to challenging behaviours is perceived as more of a hands off approach leading to a loss of control. The constant experience of change amplifies this experience further. These challenges to progressing pro-social outcomes for young people highlight the paradoxes that exist in secure settings around ideology, objectives and practices and have the potential to permeate the child's environment (Harris and Timms 1993; Kelly, 1992; Brierly, 2010).

As identified by Keogh & Byrne (2016) work place violence is cause for concern across the sector of social care practitioners nationally and is something that can impact relationship building having a knock on negative impact on outcomes generally for young people. In contrast to this research violence per say did not present as a specific theme in its own right, rather suggestions came forward from participants around how the organisation could better protect against escalating and potential safety risks which could result in harm to themselves and others. These recommendations came under the theme of staff supports and mirrored many of the recommendations arising from their most recent research.

In line with O' Neill (2004) the factor of staff support and supervision was identified as key in supporting improved outcomes for young people who are detained. However, findings suggested that 'reflection on practice' be it through supervision, team meetings or debriefing is not a practice that is embedded into the workings of the detention system and participants did not believe it was an organisational priority. Despite this some participants did acknowledge that this was beginning to change where more training was being made available generally across the campus and debriefings and supervision was experienced recently by some participants. Indicating that it is an area that is important as part of the new 'way forward' but has a way to go in becoming an integrated way of supporting staff.

6.2.2.3 Staff attitudes

Staff play a key role in facilitating or hindering interventions and willingness to adopt evidence-based practices all of which can influence the success or failure of the detention facility (Bazemore, et al., 1994). Despite the generally pessimistic prognosis about working with young people who are being detained as suggested by (Hoge et al 2008), the findings of this research indicate that staff who participated in the study were passionate about their roles and were positively exposed to young people in detention generally. Not surprisingly as agents of change they held a genuine belief that change was possible. The findings suggest that the nature of the interaction between the staff and the young people is positive creating healthy foundations to facilitate improved outcomes for young people detained.

The findings however do suggest that the attitudes of staff towards the system or organisation of Oberstown warrant's greater attention. These findings are consistent with the expectation that reform would have some impact on staff attitudes (Bazemeore et al., 1994). This is a cause for concern as it suggests such attitudes have the potential to impact negatively on the outcomes of young people detained (Gordon, 1999). All participants viewed the system as being cumbersome, multi-layered and difficult to work with and in.

6.2.2.4 Impact of reform and change

According to Frazier (1989) structures, conditions training and staff resources are all factors that can buffer against the well documented associated physical and psychological potential harms of youth detention. The impact of recent reforms in Oberstown, influenced by both national and international research in the field of youth detention cannot be underestimated despite the fact that the rationale for reforms is unquestionably necessary. Change brings with it many unknowns for the organisation as a whole. Prosci (2007) definition of change management fits well with the type of complex change management that Oberstown has had to face and is defined as follows,

> 'Change management emphasises the people side of change and targets leadership within all levels of the organisation including executives, senior leaders, middle managers and line supervisor's. When change management is done well, people feel engaged in the change process and work collectively towards a common objective, realizing benefits and delivering results'.

Cameron & Green (2015, p. 349) point out however, the challenge for most projects is 'how to bridge the gap between the envisioned product, and a collection of busy stakeholders and users with a variety of starting points, perceptions and needs'. One of the perceptions blocking progress is that longer term staff feel strongly that those who have entered Oberstown within the last three years are valued more and are seen as a greater resource in moving Oberstown closer to this common objective. Reference here to the importance of appreciating the various points of entry into the change process and staff feeling engaged in this process are crucial and certainly relevant to the current climate in Oberstown. Irrespective of the experiential lens of the participant's the complexity of the level of change was recognised by everyone as having an impact on staff and in turn on the outcomes of young people.

6.3 Reintegration

Similar to Lampron and Gonsoulin (2013) recommendations, findings indicated the importance of a planned approach to reintegration. Participants viewed the availability of structural opportunities and community based supports as an essential factor that will assist in supporting outcomes for young people detained as identified by (IIJO, 2011). Many were of the view that the strength of the relationship between the young person and staff should be utilised to support this reintegration back into the community highlighting education/ training options, drug and alcohol services and therapeutic supports as being the most important in terms of supporting improved outcomes. It is possible that staffs experience of services stopping at the gates of Oberstown has left staff feeling somewhat isolated in trying to manage this issue. The challenges to reintegration identified in this study mirrors concerns by UNICEF (2013).

6.4 Implications of findings for the delivery of service in youth detention

The findings of this study have a number of important implications for practice, service delivery and policy particularly during a time of reform. Centralising the practitioner young person relationship is essential to achieving positive outcomes. To do this the necessary infrastructure to allow for opportunities for quality contact time with young people should be in place. This will enable greater and more meaningful contact time to allow for the growth of relationships from which improved outcomes can be supported. Consequences of limited contact time between the residential care staff and the young person mirrored the limited contact time between line management and staff. This combined dynamic in the micro system of the young person life will influence outcomes negatively.

Staff support needs to be an integral way of working in youth detention and recognised as a significant factor in influencing improved outcomes for young people detained. This involves the provision of professional supervision, debriefing following incidents, space to reflect on practice, training and team building opportunities. This is essential to achieving positive pro-social outcomes for young people, if staff don't feel contained and supported how can we expect them to deliver the same care and support to the young people. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on this area in the context of reform.

A policy and procedural review needs to take place on the role of family to consider mechanisms to enhance family engagement in a more comprehensive and integrated manner in youth detention.

Recent changes to behaviour management techniques may require review. These changes appear to have had a knock on effect on staff confidence to intervene at all in some cases and concerns were expressed that the message these changes gave to the wider group of young people was that staff were not in control of the campus creating a dangerous environment. Training and two-way communication are necessary factors in remedying this serious issue which directly affects safety and the provision of an open climate.

The sheer size of Oberstown and ongoing change agenda appears to have impacted significantly the autonomy of staff around decision making where they are experiencing the system as multi-layered and cumbersome. This is an issue to be considered by the organisation as a whole. A staff team who feel disempowered and not permitted to make decisions not only impacts outcomes but increases everyone's risks.

The experience of longer term staff feeling undervalued or not heard as part of the change, is an experience that will hinder reform and needs further consideration. Many feel that the reform is about changing everything 'throwing the baby out with the bath water' a comment made frequently in the interviews. This suggests there is a risk Oberstown will lose sight of what worked well in the past some of which is evidenced to aid positive outcomes. Examples include step down units, work with parents, placing young people on remand separate from those on sentence.

Greater emphasis needs to be placed around the process of reintegrating young people back into the community to support improved outcomes and this process needs to happen while the young person is in detention. The size of Oberstown and its national remit can make this a logistical challenge. Reintegration requires all relevant stakeholders to give effect to the goal of reintegration and to work with Oberstown to develop the necessary infrastructure to make this happen in a more meaningful way. Changes and further developments in inter agency protocols nationally may be necessary to support this goal. This is an area staff feel disempowered, further consultation with staff around their ideas on the types of mechanisms to achieve successful reintegration would be an important step to achieving this task.

The experiences of the residential care workers who have significant contact time with young people in detention inform us change is possible and the lives and outcomes for this cohort of young people can be improved.

6.5 Limitations

While many important findings emerged, several limitations of the study must be acknowledged. This was a small scale study involving a small sample size therefore the findings are not generalizable to the broader population of Oberstown. However, the richness of the extensive data collated coupled with the expertise of those who volunteered to take part means the validity of the findings need to be recognised as holding some relevance in the current context of reform**.**

The researcher's clinical involvement in Oberstown meant that certain biases may have influenced the findings however the researcher would argue that her previous back ground as a social care practitioner, manager and current role providing therapeutic supports to detention and other care settings nationally, provides a unique and informed lens on the research content.

The prevalence of industrial relation issues which prevailed throughout the recruitment and data collection stage may have influenced the numbers volunteering to participate. It may have influenced what the participant's shared in their interviews. However, the depth of material and evidence of strong associations across the sample would suggest that this did not impact the information provided.

The study only looked at the perspectives of the 'residential care staff'. If the research had the capacity to include the perspectives of the young people detained, managers and stakeholders external to Oberstown opportunities to compare and contrast across the ecological layers and disciplines would have added greater depth and validity to the study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to improve our understanding of the factors that lead to improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility from the perspectives of the social care practitioners. It is clear that the factors, which promote improved pro-social outcomes for young people, can also become challenges. The research found that the factors that support improved pro-social outcomes for young people in detention can be divided into three categories;

7.2 The quality of the relationship between the residential care staff and the young person.

Relationship between the residential care worker and the young person is the foundation upon which any change can take place. The absence of a meaningful relationship between a young person and staff is detrimental to their experiences of detention and outcomes leaving detention. The depth and strength of this relationship can be supported by having the opportunity to spend time with the young person. Staff shortages and staff turnover appear to be impacting this key factor currently in Oberstown.

7.3 The organisational support of the care staff.

Organisational leadership and support is pivotal in ensuring the group living climate in Oberstown is open and flexible and conducive to providing a safe environment in which young people be supported therapeutically. The research findings indicated a connection between leadership, experiences of group safety which in turn impacts the young people and their potential for change and growth.

7.4 The interagency cooperation and planning for reintegration of a young person back into the community.

> The findings highlight the essential role of external agencies in aiding improved outcomes for young people. Without strong protocols and recognition of stakeholders honouring their roles in the lives of young people the outcomes of this cohort of young people will be hindered. Reintegration is everyone's concern and more needs to happen to help agencies realise this and take responsibility and not expect youth detention to mend all woes.

The findings of the study highlight the depth of knowledge social care practitioners have on what influences improved pro-social outcomes for young people detained. The central findings indicate that the relational properties of the total institution have a cumulative and prevailing effect on pro-social outcomes for young people in detention. The perspectives of the social care practitioner working in detention are informed by their lived experiences from within and behind the walls of youth detention.

The findings demonstrate the importance of hearing their views particularly at a time when reforms are taking place in the best interests of young people and at a time when the emphasis of the Youth Justice Action Plan 2014 – 2018 is on changing behaviour through the implementation of evidence-informed targeted interventions to achieve better outcomes for young people. Who better to inform these interventions then those who have first-hand experience of trying to implement them as agents of change in the lives of young people.

Reform in Oberstown is still in its embryonic phase of development. The buildings may be built and the operational structures may be amalgamated but cultural change takes time and people are the main influencers of this culture and climate and they need to be listened to and supported to feel part of this reform. The responsibility to develop such an environment which ensures positive outcomes is led by the leaders both within detention and outside detention and is achieved through provision of good team support, positive leadership and professional supervision (Anderson et al., 2013). One thing that is certain the balance is essential to achieving improved outcomes for young people who are detained and without some congruence between the leadership and the workers on the ground the outcomes of this already marginalised and vulnerable group will be further hindered.

7.5 Recommendations for further study

1. An examination of the perspectives of the young people who have experienced detention of what they believe supports improved outcomes.
2. An analysis of the perspectives of families of what they believe to be relevant in informing the approaches used in youth detention to aid better outcomes.
3. An examination of the perspectives of key stakeholders of the role of external agencies in supporting and sustaining improved outcomes for young people detained.
4. A longitudinal study to measure outcomes of young people in detention from the perspective of all key stakeholders.
5. A longitudinal study that allows for the examination of multi-level analysis of how organizational culture and behaviour impacts pro-social outcomes of young people detained.

Implementing the recommendations arising from this study should go some way to adding value to the lives and outcomes for young people in the future and challenge the discourse of poor outcomes being a recurring penal theme.

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Appendix 1

<div align="center">

Interview Schedule

Research as part of M.A. (Criminology) Dissertation

The factors that support improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained?

</div>

Stage 1 Rapport Building & Back ground

Introductions, back ground to the researcher and the research

The aim of the interview is to explore the social care practitioner's perspectives of the various factors that support detained young people to achieve improved pro-social outcomes in life.

The factors that support pro-social outcomes from the perspective of social care practitioner are key to the research.

Explanation of how the interview will be conducted, information letter reviewed by the participant and consent form signed by the participant.

How long have you been a social care practitioner?

Have you had experience working in other settings with young people?

How long have you worked in Oberstown?

What is your position here in Oberstown?

Stage 2 Attitude & role

Attitude

What do you see as being the overall purpose and function of Oberstown?

Do you think it is helpful to detain young people who are engaged in offending behaviours? What are the advantages of detaining young people who are engaged in offending behaviour?

Thinking back to when you first decided to come to work in Oberstown what was the main reason who u choose to come to work with this cohort of young people?

Role

What do you see as your role as a social care practitioner in Oberstown?

How do you balance this conflicting role between care and control when working with young people in Oberstown?

Is it important to reflect on how you can influence outcomes for young people? Why?

How do you reflect on outcomes in your role as a social care practitioner?

Achieving improved outcomes

In your estimation what is key to supporting improved pro-social outcomes for young people?
>That the practitioner can directly impact?
>That the internal system of Oberstown can impact?
>That the external system supporting Oberstown impact?

Can you give me some examples in your day to day work where you support the outcome areas relevant to Oberstown? (See list provided)

What strategies do you employ to balance the young person's experience of care and control?

What helps you in your role to be as effective as you can be in supporting improved outcomes for young people who are detained? (Training, operational procedures or personally).

What hurdles do you experience in your role in achieving improved pro-social outcomes for young people?

What do you think are the barriers to achieving improved pro-social outcomes for young people?
>At an individual level?
>At an organisational level?
>At the level which is external to Oberstown?

Stage 3 role of relationship

Do you believe there is any connection between the relationship between the social care practitioner and the outcomes achieved for young people who are detained?

How do you engage a young person who arrives to your unit for the first time?

How do you build trust and a rapport with a young person who is detained?

>What strategies do you employ to develop rapport?

Does this change over time?

Have these strategies changed with the changes to sentencing lengths and age profile of young people on remand or sentence?

Have you dealt with conflict which has impacted your relationship with the young person?

How did you adapt your approach?

Did this impact the outcomes for the young person leaving Oberstown?

Stage 4- social care practitioner's recommendations & conclusions

What improvement do you think could be made to supporting improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained generally?

Training (Internally/ externally)

Organisational

External

Would you like to add anything else?

Thank you for your time in participating in this research process.

Appendix 2

Information Letter

Please read this information sheet carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

My name is Emer Loughrey and I am studying my Master's Degree in Criminology at Dublin Institute of Technology. I am required to complete a research dissertation as part of my Master's Degree. I wish to explore the role of social care practitioners in supporting young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility to achieve improved pro-social outcomes. My research supervisor is Dr. Sinead Freeman. This research has received ethical approval from the Head of School Dr. Kevin Lalor. My research will be made available to the National Youth Detention facility upon completion.

Purpose: The research aims to improve our understanding of the factors that lead to improved pro-social outcomes for young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility from the perspectives of the social care practitioner. Very little is written about the role of social care or their unique perspectives of what supports improved outcomes despite the significant contact time they have with young people who are detained.

Time required: The research will be carried out through a semi structured interview between the researcher and research participant. The interview will take up to one hour. The interview will be arranged at a time and a place that suits you.

What is involved?

The interview will cover five main areas:

8   What factors influence practitioner's attitudes towards young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention facility?

9   What are the factors that Social Care Practitioners believe support better outcomes for young people who are detained?

10   What factors influence relationships with young people in detention?

11   What aspects (if any) of the relationship between the social care practitioner and the young person may lead to better outcomes?

12   What challenges (if any) are experienced by social care practitioners in achieving better outcomes for young people who are detained?

Confidentiality

All participants in the research will receive full confidentiality except in the event of child protection concerns being raised, or the threat of harm to oneself or others. The identities of the research participants will remain anonymous. Participant information will be assigned a unique code to maintain confidentiality. The information from the recordings will be included in the Masters Dissertation. The digital recordings and the transcripts from the semi structured interviews will be destroyed after the

transcription has been completed.

The findings from this research may be used for other academic purposes such as journal articles or conferences and will be shared with the National Detention Facility.

Voluntary participation

Participation in this study is <u>entirely voluntary</u> and the participant is free to withdraw at any time and is not required to give an explanation for this.

I hope you can assist me in my research.

Thank You,

_____

Emer Loughrey

Email: emer.loughrey@mydit.ie Telephone: 087 9517194

Research Supervisor: Dr. Sinéad Freeman, Dublin Institute of Technology, Rathdown House, Grangegorman, D.7 Ph: 01-4024210 or sinead.freeman@dit.ie

Appendix 3

Consent Form

I hereby acknowledge that I am aware that Mrs. Emer Loughrey is currently conducting a Dissertation Research Study in part compliance of a Master's Degree Course in Criminology at the Dublin Institute of Technology.

I have read the information and understand the purpose of the research and what is required of me. Mrs. Loughrey has informed me that the aim of the research is to explore the perspectives of the social care practitioner in supporting young people who are detained in Irelands National Detention Facility to achieve improved pro-social outcomes.

- ➢ I have been provided with the opportunity to ask questions that I may have.
- ➢ I voluntarily agree to participate in the study and understand that I can withdraw my consent to participate at any time without consequence.
- ➢ I understand that the information I give will be kept in the strictest of confidence, except in the event of child protection concerns being raised, or the threat of harm to myself or others.
- ➢ I agree to have the interview recorded, via a digital recording device and I understand that no identifying information will be transcribed.
- ➢ I also understand that the recording will be destroyed after the transcription has been completed.
- ➢ I understand that the information from the recordings will be included in the Masters Dissertation.

Please feel free to contact me at any time regarding the study. I can be contacted by email or telephone at emer.loughrey@mydit.ie or 087 9517194

I understand the information contained in this letter and agree to participate in this study:
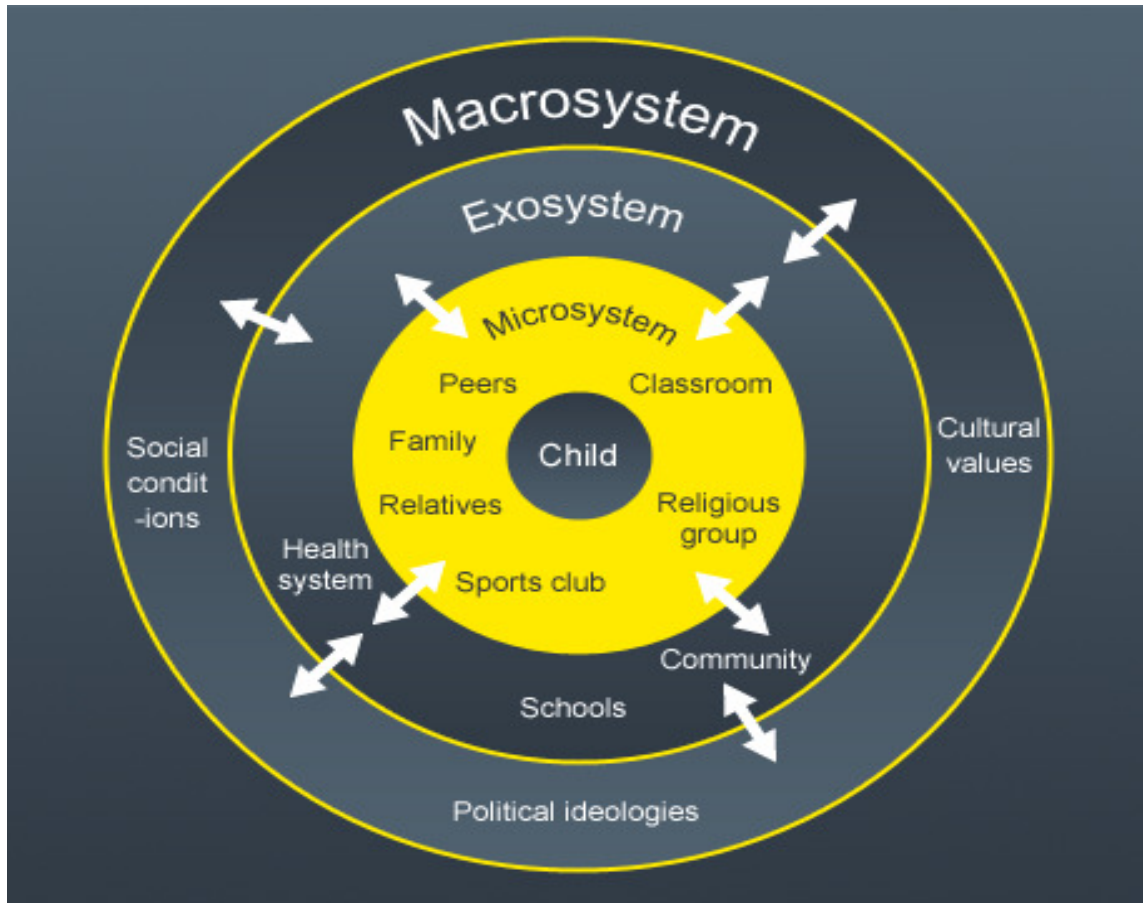
Signed: _____   Date: _____
      (Participant signature)
Signed: _____   Date: _____
      (Researcher signature)
Research Supervisor: Dr. Sinéad Freeman, Dublin Institute of Technology, Rathdown House, Grangegorman, D.7 Ph: 01-4024210 or sinead.freeman@dit.ie

Appendix 4

Bronfenbrenner Ecological theory model

Appendix 5

Seven Outcomes areas relevant to Oberstown

Outcome areas
Communication Skills Self-perception, communication, listening, collaboration, team work and interpersonal skills are essential in forming positive relationships
Confidence and Agency Self-esteem, self-efficacy and positive self-image, confidence and agency enable young people to recognise that they can make a difference to their own lives, and that effort has a purpose. There is evidence of a reciprocal link between positive outcomes and self-confidence.
Planning and problem solving Planning problem solving, critical reasoning and decision making, support resilience in providing young people with positive protective armour against negative outcomes associated with risky life events.
Relationships Greater trust between young people and young people and staff enables participation in productive activities.
Creativity and imagination Developing creative capacities can have a positive impact on self-esteem and overall achievement and is related to resilience and wellbeing. Developing performance skills and musical knowledge, helps to develop persistence and improve knowledge of one's own potential.
Self-control Improved self-discipline leads to reduction in disciplinary incidents and in punitive sanctions and contributes to a safer environment for young people and staff, reductions in impulsivity, a decrease in acting out behaviours, enhanced levels of moral reasoning, less disruptive behaviour increased compliance with the rules and sense of belonging.
Health and well being A greater knowledge of the harmful effects of alcohol tobacco and other drugs, contribute to better health and mental wellbeing.

(Bamber et al., 2015)