



Governing marginalised women: Gendered dimensions of the 'carceral-assistential net'

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Governing Marginalised Women: Gendered Dimensions of the ‘Carceral-Assistential Net’

Larissa Povey

-

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

December 2022

Candidate Declaration

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2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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Abstract

This doctoral thesis examines the dual penal and welfare aims or ‘arms’ of the ‘state’, foregrounding the often-neglected experiences of marginalised women who are caught between these two mechanisms of governance. This thesis re-examines Wacquant’s (2009a) conceptualisation of the state and addresses gaps in our understanding of how marginalised women experience and respond to penal and welfare interventions aimed at poor and ‘problematic’ populations.

By centring the experiences of marginalised women this thesis highlights how they experience punishment differently to men throughout the life course, this difference is most obvious when it comes to the surveillance and management of pregnant bodies, birth and child removal.

Findings are based on a combination of in-depth qualitative interviews, participant-generated photographs and subsequent photo-elicitation interviews with 23 women accessing day centre services in the community in two northern English cities. It is also based on semi-structured qualitative interviews with 13 women working within the day centre organisations. Data was generated by drawing on feminist-informed modes of inquiry and analysis.

This thesis makes an important contribution to debates on the efficacy and ethicality of recurrent child removal, and the threat of it, from poor and ‘vulnerable’ mothers. It advances our understanding of how the state and in particular street-level organisations can be conceptualised, particularly important as the boundaries between the state, private sector and third sector become increasingly blurred in the provision of welfare and criminal justice services and interventions. It also furthers our understanding of the day centres, that marginalised women engage with, and their hybridity in form, function and the way that they are experienced, in that they act as marginal welfare services of last resort for those unable to access mainstream socio-welfare provision while also being extensions of the (penal) state.

This thesis shows how women, often ignored or side-lined in contemporary theories on the governance of the poor, experience the tutelary and therapeutic mechanisms of the state. Rarely has the cumulative nature of the adversities marginalised women face over the life course been documented and explored in this way and the state’s role within these processes examined. The use of creative and participatory research methods, and the presentation of data in case vignettes and lifeline diagrams provides novel means of collecting and synthesising the complex and detailed qualitative empirical data. This thesis demonstrates the collective and cumulative struggles of a specific group of marginalised women who have been abandoned and then criminalised by the state either for their failures as mothers, coming into conflict with the law or both.

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Of course, any remaining errors, mistakes or shortcomings are my own.

For Aurora and Max

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Abstract | ii |
| Contents | v |
| 1. Introduction | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.2 Marginalised women at the penal-welfare nexus | 2 |
| 1.3 Research objective and questions | 5 |
| 1.4 Contributions to Knowledge | 6 |
| 1.5 Structure of the Thesis | 9 |
| 2. Developing a Theoretical Framework | 12 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 12 |
| 2.2 Rationale for developing a theoretical framework | 12 |
| 2.2 Theoretical inspiration: Points of departure | 14 |
| 2.3 Women as targets of the centaur state | 16 |
| 2.3.1 Putting Wacquant to work | 20 |
| 2.4 Theorizing women's involvement in crime: feminist perspectives | 25 |
| 2.4.1 Women, Crime and Feminisms | 26 |
| 2.5 Conclusion | 32 |
| 3. Women, the criminal justice system, and welfare: a literature review | 35 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 35 |
| 3.2 Punishing women: prison and the development of the diversion approach | 38 |
| 3.3 Family interventions and child removal: working-class mothers and the 'wrong' way to parent | 52 |
| 3.4 Towards a punitive welfare state | 60 |
| 3.5 Conclusion | 66 |
| 4. Methodology and Research Methods | 68 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 68 |
| 4.2 Research Rationale, Aims and Objectives and Research Questions | 68 |
| 4.3 Epistemological and ontological priors | 70 |
| 4.3.1 Traditions and advances in ways of knowing | 71 |
| 4.3.2 The epistemological and ontological research problem | 72 |
| 4.4 The Research Process | 75 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.4.1 Identifying suitable gatekeeper organisations | 76 |
| 4.4.2 Recruitment and Access | 77 |
| 4.4.3 Participants | 80 |
| 4.5 Research Methods..... | 83 |
| 4.5.1 Auto-photography and photo-elicitation as research methods | 84 |
| 4.5.2 Initial meetings and 'doing' visual methods | 87 |
| 4.5.3 Semi-structured interviews | 92 |
| 4.5.4 Ethnographic methods: participant observation | 94 |
| 4.5.5 Analytical processes | 95 |
| Transcription and coding..... | 96 |
| 4.5.6 Ethical Considerations | 98 |
| Confidentiality and anonymity | 98 |
| Consent and safeguarding Participants | 99 |
| 4.5.7 Opening up about sensitive topics | 100 |
| 4.5.8 Compensating participants..... | 102 |
| 4.5.9 Researcher wellbeing and safety | 103 |
| 4.5.10 Positional reflections | 105 |
| 4.8 Conclusion..... | 107 |
| 5. Lives in Adversity | 109 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 109 |
| 5.2 Cumulative adversity | 111 |
| 5.3 'Troubled' childhoods | 117 |
| 5.4 Care system interventions and children's homes..... | 122 |
| 5.5 Lifeline reflection and identity change: Looking back and looking forward.... | 128 |
| 5.6 Discussion | 136 |
| 5.7 Conclusion..... | 141 |
| 6. Helping or hindering? Welfare conditionality and women who have been in conflict with the law | 143 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 143 |
| 6.2 Participants' engagement with social assistance | 146 |
| 6.3 Efforts to move towards work..... | 147 |
| 6.4 Trapped on the margins: navigating a punitive welfare system..... | 154 |
| 6.4.1 The impact of sanctions | 154 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 6.4.2 Trying to get by on the margins..... | 159 |
| 6.4.3 Wider impacts of being on benefits under a more conditional regime | 164 |
| 6.5 Discussion | 169 |
| 6.7 Conclusion..... | 174 |
| 7. Mothers and the ‘maloptic’ Penal State | 176 |
| 7.1 Introduction | 176 |
| 7.2 The ‘vulnerability-transgression nexus’: troubled or in trouble? | 178 |
| 7.2.1 Women’s rehabilitation: an extension of penal control | 185 |
| 7.3 Motherhood and disciplinary interventions: the ‘Malopticon’ and producing ‘maternal outcasts’ | 190 |
| 7.3.1 Pregnant with a baby marked for the care system | 193 |
| 7.3.2 Experiencing child removal: punishment and cumulative trauma | 196 |
| 7.3.3 Haunted futures: child removal, a gateway to further adversity | 200 |
| 7.4 The Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) – intense surveillance and carcerality in the community | 203 |
| 7.5 Discussion | 210 |
| 7.6 Conclusion..... | 215 |
| 8. Hybrid institutional environments and the governance of marginalised women . | 218 |
| 8.1 Introduction | 218 |
| 8.2 Moving on from binaries: Introducing (and conceptualising) the hybrid institutions..... | 220 |
| 8.3 “Too many noses that's what it is... Nothing's private here”: Surveillance and Disciplinary Elements in Day Centre Practice..... | 228 |
| 8.4 Working with marginalised women: practitioners’ perspectives | 231 |
| 8.4.1 “Bringing men home that you don’t know”: responsabilising women in the context of domestic abuse services | 231 |
| 8.4.2 “It goes back to their upbringing, their parent’s upbringing, their grandparent’s upbringing, it is just patterns repeating themselves...”: dilemmas of practice in women’s centres | 234 |
| 8.5 Sheltering marginalised women from the centaur state | 238 |
| 8.5.1 Day centres: spaces of kindness, emotional support and surveillance .. | 239 |
| 8.5.2 Supported housing as a hybrid institutional space | 245 |
| 8.6 Providing space to renegotiate the self: day centres and identity change | 249 |
| 8.7 Discussion | 254 |
| 8.8 Conclusion | 261 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 9. Conclusion | 264 |
| 9.1 Introduction | 264 |
| 9.2 Key findings of the study | 265 |
| 9.3 Key contributions to knowledge | 279 |
| 9.3.1 Empirical contributions | 279 |
| 9.3.2 Theoretical contributions | 281 |
| 9.3.3 Methodological contributions | 284 |
| 9.4 Policy implications: Where do we go from here? | 285 |
| 9.5 Future directions | 289 |
| 10. References | 291 |
| Appendix 1: Email to managers of gatekeeping organisations | 347 |
| Appendix 2: Centre manager invite and information sheet | 348 |
| Appendix 3: Participant recruitment poster and flyer | 350 |
| Appendix 4: Participant information Sheet | 351 |
| Appendix 5: Consent form for service user participants | 352 |
| Appendix 6: Consent form for staff participants | 353 |
| Appendix 7: Auto-photography information and guidance sheet | 354 |
| Appendix 8: Participants attributes form for initial interviews | 355 |
| Appendix 9: Interview topic guide for service user participants for photo-elicitation and follow-up interviews | 357 |
| Appendix 10: Interview topic guide for staff | 362 |
| Appendix 11: Participant profiles | 365 |
| Appendix 12: N-Vivo Coding Nodes | 372 |
| Appendix 13: Information on participants' children and the experiences of child removal | 373 |

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Women make up 4% of the prison population and 9% of the probation caseload (National Audit Office, 2022). While a minority, women who come into conflict with the law often have poorer outcomes when compared to men e.g., the reoffending rate (71% versus 63%) (Prison Reform Trust, 2022). In terms of reliance on the state for support through the welfare benefits system, women account for just over half (55%) of those on Universal Credit (Department for Work and Pensions, 2022a).

This thesis explores how women make sense of and respond to penal and welfare interventions of the contemporary state. It engages with marginalised women who have either been in conflict with the law (have been charged with an offence, convicted and completed their sentence) as well as those considered to be ‘at risk of offending’, for example those categorised as ‘vulnerable’ or ‘in crisis’ within criminal justice policy (Ministry of Justice, 2018a; Ministry of Justice, 2018b).

This study examines the experiences of a specific group of women caught on the edges of the British criminal justice system (CJS). These are women who have taken one of three main paths into the scrutiny of criminal justice institutions and associated street-level agents: i) those who have completed a prison sentence or community sentence, ii) those who have undertaken (or are undertaking) rehabilitative interventions in the community; and iii) those subject to preventative ‘early interventions’ or ‘diversion’ from custody such as police triage or out of court disposals (OOCDS) – used as an alternative to a prosecution (Ministry of Justice, 2018b). Research participants were recruited from four gatekeeping organisations: two women’s day centres (GO1, GO2), a homeless day centre (GO3) and a fortnightly domestic abuse support group (GO4) (see Chapter 8, Table 8.1 for further information).

Using a gendered lens, this thesis explores who the women within this group are, how they make sense of and navigate their engagement with the dual disciplinary and assistive interventions from various street-level agents of the state and third sector, as

they experience being subject to multi-agency interventions in the community. Moreover, it looks at the extent to which they experience these multi-agency mechanisms as punitive and / or therapeutic across different agencies involved in enacting social policy.

In considering women as targets of the 'centaur state', Wacquant (2009a) draws attention to increasing levels of precarity for poor women and the use of 'workfare' rather than welfare to control and discipline this group (for in depth discussion see Chapter 2, section 2.3). But women are not, and never have been, solely subject to the welfare arm of the state. Feminist scholars have shown just how ubiquitous the dispersal of penal interventions has always been for women and girls (Burman, 1979; Evers, 1981; Oakley, 1979; Smart, 1981).

This thesis contributes to knowledge by presenting new empirical work which extends Wacquant's (2010a) analyses of the 'double (social-cum-penal) regulation of the poor' with a specific focus on how women experience this process. As such, it brings into view the web of institutional arrangements that are used to control, punish and support women, and it highlights the hybrid institutional spaces that provide welfare and assistance within the disciplinary landscape.

1.2 Marginalised women at the penal-welfare nexus

This section draws attention to women in advanced marginality and their being subject to welfare and penal interventions, in particular women at the sharp end of both systems. Historically, working-class women and girls have been subject to surveillance, moral judgement and tutelage (Cain, 1989; Rose, 1999). This intensifies when working-class women become mothers and are made responsible for the moral tutelage and regulation of their children (Arnup, 1994; Badinter, 1981; Donzelot, 1979). Working-class mothers struggle to meet the 'gold standard of parenting' (Choi et al., 2005; Newman and Henderson, 2014) and normative ideals of femininity and motherhood (Ball et al., 2016; Gillies, 2006; Hunter et al., 2010). Social reproduction (the raising of children) can therefore be exclusionary, as Roberts (2017, p. 29) asserts

"idealized notions of femininity and motherhood have always excluded certain groups of women considered to be unsuited for domesticity".

Women in receipt of state welfare benefits constitute one such group, ostracised as 'benefits mums' or 'welfare queens', as 'lazy' and 'fat' (Allen et al., 2014; Fraser and Gordon, 1994; Raisborough et al., 2018; Wacquant, 2008). They are vilified by politicians and the media through a careful crafting and intensification of 'anti-welfare commonsense' which has conflated welfare dependency with social disorder and moral breakdown (Allen et al., 2014; Jensen, 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

Alongside this we have witnessed a transformation of the British welfare system to a regime characterised by 'ubiquitous conditionality' (Dwyer and Wright, 2014) on the one hand and 'a secret penal system' (of sanctioning) (Webster, 2014) on the other; a pincer movement which serves to make it harder to firstly claim benefits and secondly to live on them (Fletcher and Wright, 2017) with a disproportionate impact on women (Beatty and Fothergill, 2017; Women's Budget Group, 2020).

Since 2010, women have faced receding support in the community due to funding cuts under austerity which makes day-to-day life harder (Reis, 2018). Poverty and destitution are on the rise in the UK, child poverty is heading towards levels last seen in the 1980s under the Thatcher government (Thane, 2018; Fitzpatrick et al., 2020; Hirsch and Lee, 2021; Francis-Devine et al., 2022). Relative poverty is predicted to undergo the largest single-year rise since 1987 in 2021-22 to just over 33% (Handscomb et al., 2021).

One side effect of increasing precarity and 'moral' surveillance is that there has been a rise in the number of women involved in the CJS. From the mid-1990s to 2012, the average growth rate of the British prison population was 5.2% per year for women compared to 3.5% for men (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Since 2012 the prison population has been falling, more quickly for men at -4.4% per year versus -1.9% for women (Ministry of Justice, 2020). There are now 2,800 more women in prison than there were 25 years ago, an increase of 141% (Prison Reform Trust, 2014; Prison Reform Trust, 2022), with 12,000 women across the UK imprisoned annually (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). Females currently constitute 4% of the prison population (Sturge, 2021). The proportion of women being sent to prison to serve a very short sentence

(of six months or less) has risen sharply from a third of custodial sentences in 1993 to 62% in 2019 (Prison Reform Trust, 2021) and 10% of those supervised in the community (HMIP, 2021). In addition, women who have experienced poverty, poor mental health, a learning difficulty, domestic violence victimisation are over-represented in the CJS (Hammond et al., 2018).

With more mothers in crisis, the rising number of children entering the care system should not come as a surprise. This has gone from 64,470 children in 2010 to 80,080 in 2021, an increase of 24% (Foster, 2021). In recent years there has been a concerning rise in the successive and permanent removal of children from 'vulnerable birth mothers' (Broadhurst et al., 2015; Broadhurst et al., 2018). A quarter of mothers who lose custody of a child through a court order will return to the family court with a case involving a subsequent child; and younger mothers face a higher chance (one in three) of this happening (Broadhurst et al., 2015). The small body of work on this group of mothers highlights the multiple challenges they face, such as homelessness, poverty, and problems with mental health and / or mental capacity (Broadhurst and Mason, 2017; Povey, 2019). The rising number of 'maternal outcasts' is costly both morally and economically at an individual and family level, and for wider society (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013).

Criminalised women face high levels of discrimination generally. This is even more acute when they are separated from dependents and lose the right to care for their children; care being an important means through which to express their citizenship (Lister, 2007). For mothers with a criminal record there is no private sphere; the human right to a private and family life essentially is denied. These 'failed mothers', oppressed by various systems of power, have limited means to reconcile with children removed from their care. Decisions to permanently remove children deny them the redemptive potential of motherhood (Sharpe, 2015).

For mothers and pregnant women on the edges of the CJS, the odds stacked against them are high, and surveillance intensifies once they are pregnant. Afterwards, maternal outcasts are often abandoned by the agencies involved, with no recourse for rehabilitation or restoration of their children (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013). It is via

this process that the state inadvertently (re)produces some of the most 'precarious factions' of the working class through successive removal of children, as "children in care are more likely to experience a subsequent lifetime of disadvantage" (Wacquant, 2001b; Oakley et al., 2018, p. 6).

There has been broad agreement that prisons are unsuitable for the majority of women sent there (Corston, 2007; Hedderman, 2010; Women's Budget Group, 2020). Yet despite the growth of diversionary projects, the use of prison sentences for women remains stubbornly high (Baldwin and Epstein, 2017). When mothers have been involved in the CJS they are viewed as maternally deficient, and this label can stick with them for the rest of their lives (Sharpe, 2015). McNeill's (2019) conceptualisation of the 'maloptical state' is useful in understanding the use of successive child removal from mothers, who the state 'sees' as 'bad'. Removing children is a life-long sentence if children are adopted rather than taken into temporary care. Failed motherhood serves as a marker for increased stigma, surveillance and intervention. Despite women within this group being subject to high levels of formal social control, this area has received limited criminological or sociological attention. There is a need to explore the specific experiences of women at the sharp end of both penal and welfare interventions, particularly mothers, to better understand the range of institutions involved in governing women's lives in advanced marginality.

1.3 Research objective and questions

This thesis foregrounds marginalised women's voices in order to extend our understanding of how women experience life at the intersection of the welfare and penal arms of the state. It re-examines Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of the contemporary state by employing a feminist lens and focusing on the lived realities of criminalised and 'at risk' women - and those who work with them - and the gendered character of social disciplining. In doing so, it seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. What forms and frequency of adversity are present in the lives of marginalised women and how does this shape or interact with their coming into conflict with the law?
2. What is the range of institutions/interventions governing marginalised women and how, specifically, do they experience and respond to: i) the conditional welfare system ii) penal institutions and iii) organisations outside of the penal-welfare arms of the state?
3. How might we understand and theorise the range of state and street-level institutions governing marginal women's lives?

1.4 Contributions to Knowledge

This thesis adds to the existing knowledge base and addresses some gaps in our understanding of how marginalised women experience and respond to interventions aimed at governing poor populations deemed 'problematic'. It also furthers our understanding of how the state and street-level organisations can be conceptualised.

Firstly, the research explores the treatment of marginalised women, and especially mothers, within the most precarious factions of the British, urban working class. This group remains under-researched despite the disciplinary and punitive methods employed. Piven (2010, p. 111) argues that "politics and the state have become more important instruments in the age-old capitalist project of class domination". As such this thesis deepens our empirical understanding of the institutional mechanisms at work in the management of poor and vulnerable mothers and in the production of 'maternal outcasts' (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013) under austerity. Namely, it draws out the specific ways in which women experience 'tutelary' – normalising interventions to target marginalised populations and correct behaviours that do not meet middle class standards (Donzelot, 1979; Polsky, 1989) – and therapeutic interventions from the state and its intermediaries. It provides much needed insights from the women themselves as to how they experience and respond to interventions that have not been considered in 'grand' theories of social control and punishment. This thesis addresses this gap by foregrounding women's experiences to provide a gendered picture of the social phenomena taking place.

While Broadhurst and Mason (2013) focus on ‘vulnerable mothers’, there is a dearth of knowledge on women’s experiences of motherhood and the loss of children from their care when they are subject to penal control in the community. This thesis addresses this gap through the collection of empirical data from marginalised women at the intersection of gender, criminal justice, and welfare (among other techniques of state governance) and how they navigate this in complex ways because of their identities and practices as women, mothers and carers.

While there is an established body of work on women's experiences in the UK prison context by feminist criminologists (see Carlen, 1985, 2002; Condry, 2007; Corston, 2007), less is known of how women navigate the post-release landscape, community-based interventions and how broader social and family policies intersect to impact their lives. Much of the research on prison populations and those under community supervision focuses on men who make up the majority in both contexts – 95% and 85% respectively (Ministry of Justice, 2018b). However, women constitute a significant minority particularly of those supervised in the community where much less is known about their experiences of punishment, supervision and rehabilitation. As Hannah-Moffatt (2001, p. 72) asserts “small numbers are not insignificant if those small and growing populations become the objects of novel forms of governance”. In the UK, as in other countries, women are indeed treated differently to men within the CJS; and face unique challenges (see Chapter 3).

This thesis therefore makes several further related contributions as follows: it shows, empirically, the need to foreground life histories and cumulative adversity within understandings of pathways towards criminalisation particularly for women. Furthermore, it highlights the need to broaden the institutional terrain on which women’s marginality/criminality is explored to include community-based day centres. Theoretically, drawing on new empirical work, this thesis challenges the simple ‘masculine’ / ‘feminine’ and ‘prisonfare’ / ‘workfare’ binaries within Wacquant’s (2009a; 2010a) conceptualisations of the state. Underpinning these binaries is the notion of a one-directional public policy drift from social to penal. Though tempting in its simplicity this perspective cannot account for all the complexities experienced by women subject to regulation by institutions of the state, and the potential spaces of resistance that

exist. Finally, it introduces a new notion of hybrid institutions through which interventions combine welfare and punishment in specifically gendered ways.

Wacquant's analysis of both sexes is constrained by its placing of women under the management of the 'feminine' (welfare) arm and men by the 'masculine' (penal) arm (Wacquant, 2009a). This thesis shows empirically that marginalised women are often subject to *both* penal and welfare interventions. This work provides novel insights from a population of marginalised women subject to a web of tutelary and therapeutic interventions from various institutions of the state. A gendered lens has proven to be useful in revealing the different expectations that the state places on its female carceral subjects, uncovering the specific difficulties that marginalised women face. As Fraser (2003) argues, definitions of what is normal and what is deviant deny certain groups full membership as legitimate citizens in a society. Women who have been in the CJS face a steep challenge, as their offending breaks not only the law but also societal gender norms (Allen, 2015; Gelsthorpe, 2004, p. 8; Lloyd, 1995). Less is known about gendered insecurity within the context of Wacquant's (2009a) 'carceral-assistential net' and how women are pushed to the margins and in some cases towards criminalised activities. This thesis addresses this gap through engaging with women and charting their experiences in and out of the institutions over their life course to date.

This thesis suggests that for women the concept of the 'carceral-assistential net' can be expanded to encompass the experience of social services and court-ordered child removal; such experiences affect mothers deeply not just during the interventions but over the life course. This is particularly useful when examining the (third sector) day centres that marginalised women were engaged with while undergoing social worker assessments and / or probation supervision. Empirical data showed the day centres as hybrid institutional environments within which the day-to-day regulation of marginalised women takes place. For example, it was clear that support is conditional on exhibiting the right behaviours and attitudes; punishments could be given such as temporary barring from the centre, or a negative report from the relevant social worker or probation officer.

Yet while day centres display elements of 'workfarist' and 'prisonfarist' practice, importantly, they *also* have a strong 'maternalistic' and protective social function. The

day centres use a form of welfarist intervention that has been declared all but extinct by Wacquant (2009a) and other social commentators. As such Wacquant's model of the state as a workfare-prisonfare binary oversimplifies the governance of the 'troublesome poor'; it does not reflect the work being done in day centres and other assistive organisations within the web of the 'tutelary state' (Fletcher and Flint, 2018).

In putting Wacquant's concepts to work, this thesis provides rich contextual data on the everyday experiences of marginalised women subject to disciplinary techniques of the CJS, the benefits (or welfare) system and family interventions or social work. The research provides insights into the lived experience of interventions and services that affect a specific group of women at the nexus of these social policy areas.

The research fills a gap in our understanding of whether such conceptual tools are useful for understanding women's experiences and whether they can be adapted. As Gilligan (1993, p. 100) suggests "only when substance is given to the skeletal lives of hypothetical people is it possible to consider the social injustice that their moral problems may reflect and to imagine the individual suffering their occurrence may signify or their resolution engender". Micro-level data produced with the participants involved in this thesis enhances Wacquant's conceptual renderings of the state and its management of those in advanced marginality.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

The remainder of this thesis consists of eight chapters. Chapter two draws on the theoretical underpinnings of Loïc Wacquant's scholarly work linking social and penal policies in the state's governance of those in advanced marginality. In particular, the 'carceral-net' is shown to be useful, though in need of refinement, in framing the interventions that poor, marginalised women are subject to as targets of the 'centaur state' (Wacquant, 2009a). It re-examines these key concepts and employs a feminist lens to bridge the gaps where women have been overlooked in contemporary theories of social control and punishment. Chapter three provides a discussion of literature relevant to this study of marginalised women engaged with the CJS that aims to

capture policy development, government discourse and academic conceptualisations of welfare and punishment.

Chapter four presents the methodological approach selected to undertake the research. It outlines how the study was conducted explaining its epistemology, methodological choices, as well as participant selection, recruitment, data collection, analysis and ethical considerations. This includes the rationale for selecting a qualitative approach which draws on participatory, and creative methods. This chapter also discusses issues that proved challenging from practical and ethical standpoints, including my positionality in the research and how I managed my role as researcher, and challenges exclusive to visual methods.

The thesis proceeds to present the analysis of the research findings in four chapters, which focus primarily on the women's accounts, considering their journeys and the impact of interventions. A key aim of this thesis is to understand *how* women experience adversity and make sense of their lives in advanced marginality and this is the focus of chapter five. The first analysis chapter (Chapter five) emerged from the data in more of a grounded fashion than coming directly from the theoretical framework. It introduces the research participants' complex life histories from their earliest memories of critical events, key interventions in their lives and their understandings of how these events have impacted them, cumulatively, over their life course to date.

The second findings chapter (Chapter six) explores how women subject to community-based penal interventions make sense of and respond to the welfare arm of the state. The problem for this group is not so much the behaviour change agenda and sanctions that underpin the UK's increasingly conditional social security system; many make attempts to live a 'good life' and move closer to work, and many are somewhat shielded from the tougher demands of conditionality through the health-related benefit of Employment Support Allowance (ESA). ESA is being phased out in the transition to the harsher Universal Credit (UC) regime. Rather, for women in advanced marginality, it is the dearth of support available to help them overcome structural and personal disadvantages and move on that is the issue.

The next findings chapter (Chapter 7) focuses on how marginalised girls and women experience interventions from the penal arm of the state where vulnerability is often conflated with transgression. It foregrounds the overlooked gendered dimensions of the “double (social cum-penal) regulation of the poor” (Wacquant, 2010a, p. 203). It also highlights how compulsory child removal is experienced by participants as ‘the worst’ form of punishment; the gendered dimensions of this type of penalty are not reflected in contemporary conceptualisations of the penal state and its management of the poor. This chapter provides micro-level data on the gendered dimensions of discipline and punishment and as such extends Wacquant’s conceptualisation of the governance of people in poverty to encompass the creation and management of ‘maternal outcasts’.

The final findings chapter (Chapter 8) examines the four gatekeeping organisations and the broader ‘web’ (see Section 8.2) of organisations in which participants were entwined. It highlights how intensively participants were engaged with and regulated by an array of community-based organisations. It draws out the hybridity of these institutions that simultaneously played important social, welfare, therapeutic roles in participants’ lives. While some of the organisations in this web were highly valued by participants, support they received was highly conditional on their behaviours and attitudes. Engagement could also be experienced as penal, particularly when the hybrid institutions monitored ‘problem populations’ for the state.

Chapter nine presents the thesis conclusions, reflecting on the empirical, methodological and theoretical findings. It pinpoints the key original contributions to knowledge; draws findings together; considers policy and practice implications and outlines recommendations for further research.

2. Developing a Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the main theoretical framework and key concepts which have informed this thesis. Firstly, the purpose of a theoretical framework is set out and the importance of being transparent about the choices made, from inception through to analyses. The journey through design, conduct and write up of this theoretical framework is made explicit. The chapter goes on to highlight key theorists and concepts which inspire the research, principally the work of sociologist Loïc Wacquant on how the state governs those on the margins. It then marks out the point of departure, theoretically, from existing works. In doing so, gaps in Wacquant's theory which do not reflect women's experiences are highlighted, and the development of a more nuanced and gender-sensitive interpretation that uses an assemblage of theories and concepts to make sense of my empirical data is outlined. Next, key perspectives within feminist thought which informed the methodological and analytical approach to this thesis are presented. Building on this, the chapter then turns towards feminist understandings of women's involvement in the criminal justice system and how punishment intersects with gender, class and other systems of power. Finally, the chapter returns to the key theories outlined at the start of the chapter, to show how a feminist lens highlights the ways in which conceptual models, that have on the whole ignored women, can be extended through the empirical research conducted in the course of this study.

2.2 Rationale for developing a theoretical framework

Maxwell (1996, p. 25) defines a theoretical framework as "the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informs your research". This framework is not an existing template to be adopted. It is something that the researcher develops through drawing on theories and concepts throughout the research process, and ideas that emerge from empirical data which crystallise during analysis and interpretation, in an iterative process. As Strauss and Corbin

(1990, p. 23) suggest, “data collection, analysis, and theory should stand in a reciprocal relationship with each other”. There is a balance to be found between drawing a particular position and using an assemblage of theories to ensure the framework chosen fits the empirical data.

Transparency around the thinking underpinning the research process and how this is influenced theoretically is important since “a researcher’s choice of framework is not arbitrary but reflects important personal beliefs and understandings about the nature of knowledge, how it exists (in the metaphysical sense) in relation to the observer, and the possible roles to be adopted, and tools to be employed consequently, by the researcher in his/her work” (Lysaght, 2011, p. 572). Research is purposeful and conducted with intention, and individuals come with their own ontological and epistemological positions which should be made explicit.

Strauss (1995, p. 17) suggests that a general theory should work to synthesise different theories that are relevant to the phenomena under study. This need to generalise is not the focus of this thesis, as building a general theory of state interventions with marginalised women is not the aim here. A general theory can be flawed because of its inflexibilities and assumptions of a dominant perspective, lacking the scope to reflect the fluidity and nuance within and between participants’ accounts.

Instead, I take a “feminist-informed” approach which draws on a variety of perspectives; it is “versed in multiple theoretical frameworks” and aims to make visible “those people and processes lost in gaps, silences, margins, and peripheries” (Ackerly and True, 2010, p. 22). I adopt an approach outlined by Jackson and Mazzei (2018, p. 717) called ‘thinking with theory’ which requires a “willingness to borrow and reconfigure concepts, invent approaches, and create new assemblages that demonstrate a range of analytic practices of thought, creativity, and intervention”.

The research takes inspiration from a multiplicity of theoretical frameworks, which may be divergent or even contradictory but have been selected on their analytical potential in explaining the differing and complex social processes that shape the multifaceted lives and experiences of this study’s participants, which one single theory would struggle to make sense of. While this approach can be ‘messy’ and carries a risk of “blundering feminist theories and methodologies in chaotic and unbridled ways”

(Childers et al., 2013, p. 508), it also opens up opportunities for “a diffractive process of data analysis, a reading of data *with* theoretical concepts (and/or multiple theoretical concepts) produces an emergent and unpredictable series of readings as data and theory make themselves intelligible to one another” (Mazzei, 2014, p. 743, emphasis in original).

As women are so often absent or an afterthought in grand theories and conceptualisations, it is important to draw on feminist informed theories which challenge assumptions embedded within mainstream or ‘malestream’ contemporary theories of welfare and punishment (Gelsthorpe, 1988; Heidensohn, 2012). A feminist lens enables the gendered character of social welfare, control and punishment to be made visible, uncovering “the deeper, structural condition of hegemonic masculinity” and “the gendered character of disciplinary power” (Gelsthorpe, 2002, p. 117).

As a starting point the theoretical framework of this thesis is outlined in terms of the perspectives and concepts which inspired the research and inform its ontological and epistemological grounding. Next, the utility of Wacquant’s work is explored in relation to the population recruited in the research, marginalised women, and understanding the targeted governance of this group. Its shortcomings are subsequently discussed with reference to the work of feminist criminologists and sociologists who have developed theories that challenge dominant histories of social control, punishment, and the welfare system, and who have begun to extend existing theories through the addition of gendered analyses.

2.2 Theoretical inspiration: Points of departure

This thesis draws on insights from a number of disciplines (predominantly criminology and sociology) and theoretical perspectives and is therefore not bound solely to one perspective. In the early phases of the research design three seminal works on social control and punishment came to foreground my work.

Firstly, Wacquant’s (2009a, p. 312) *Punishing the Poor* which includes conceptualisations of the ‘centaur state’ which displays a “fearsome and frowning mug towards the lower class”, and by means of a ‘carceral-assistential net’ regulates and

incapacitates the 'precariat' (the poorest at the lower echelons of society). Secondly, the work of Foucault (1977) on punishment and social control is useful, in particular the idea of a 'disciplinary society' where power, as both productive and repressive, is dispersed throughout society and its institutions creating self-governing individuals. Foucault's (1977) work focuses on the expansive nature of surveillance and punishment, the metaphor of a 'carceral archipelago' in which the panoptic gaze extends beyond penal institutions into all areas of social life and is particularly relevant when considering targeted governing of specific marginalised populations. Third, David Garland's (2001, p. 27) detailed historical-cultural mapping of crime management from the fall of 'penal welfarism' – the hybrid institutional arrangement combining the "liberal legalism of due process and proportionate punishment with a correctionalist commitment to rehabilitation, welfare and criminological expertise" – and the 'culture of control' that supplanted it provides a framework for understanding phenomena such as rising imprisonment levels and pervasive surveillance. Like Wacquant, Garland's (2001, p. 175) model focuses on a one-directional shift "from the welfare to the penal modality". However, Garland's work hones in on crime management whereas Wacquant's expansive conceptualisation in *Punishing the Poor* encompasses both the welfare and the penal systems.

The treatment of women by social institutions, which is the focus of this thesis, illustrates well some of the dualisms that these models speak to (e.g., the 'masculine' and 'feminine' arms of the state and the 'prisonfare-workfare' pincer that creates a figurative 'carceral-assistential net') which are discussed at length in Chapter 8. Still, it also highlights some limitations of these models which leave little room for empirical nuance particularly in gendered experiences of women subject to different and additional layers of social control both formal and informal.

These works, important as they are, have received critique for at best under-theorising the intersection of gender and at worst ignoring women completely (Sawicki, 1991; Hedderman, 2010; Gelsthorpe, 2004). Leonard's critique of mainstream criminology as "theories that are frequently hailed as explanations of human behaviour are, in fact, discussions of male behaviour and male criminality...We cannot simply apply these theories to women, nor can we modify them with a brief addition or subtraction here and there" thus remains salient (1982, p. 181).

Ultimately, of the three 'grand theorists' Wacquant's thesis linking penal and social policy is most pertinent through its focus on the most marginalised and its emphasis on statecraft. It also provides a useful macro-level backdrop when putting my empirical data on women's experiences in the UK context to work. This thesis considers key concepts from Wacquant's *Punishing the Poor* and extends their reach to criminalised and marginalised women.

2.3 Women as targets of the centaur state

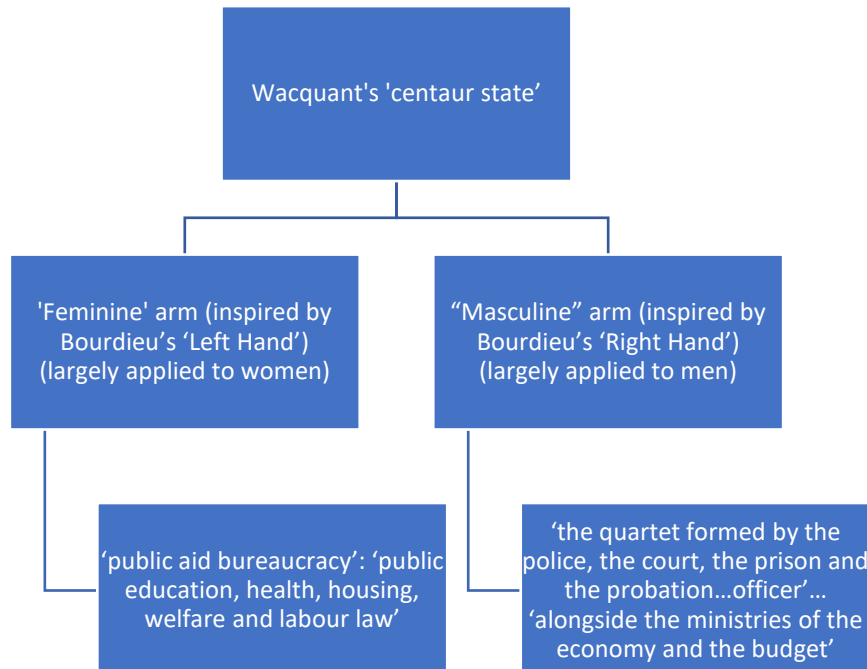
A state does not "exist in majestic isolation overseeing the rest of society but is embedded in a wider political system, other institutional orders, and civil society" (Jessop, 2004, p. 336). Despite the external constraints imposed on governments, domestic state institutions continue to regulate 'territorially centred' facets of social life and society (Mann, 1986/1997). Moreover, Jessop (2004, p. 337) portrays the state as a "crucial site where power relations can be crystallized in different forms...the state can operate primarily as a capitalist state, a military power, a theocratic regime, a representative state accountable to civil society, etc". There are different and contesting conceptions of 'the state' in social science dependent on the theorizing framework.

Wacquant's work provides useful, cross-disciplinary insights into the transformation of the state over the last four decades; with a focus on the United States (US) and to a lesser extent France. He explicitly links neoliberalism with the decline of the Keynesian welfare state and the evolution of the expansive penal state. Within this conceptualisation the 'centaur state', "guided by a liberal head mounted on an authoritarian body", utilises social and penal policy in the 'double regulation' - namely the criminalisation and incapacitation - of the poor (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 43). The 'centaur state' is experienced as "an expansive and disciplining 'mesh' thrown over marginalised groups to 'correct' their conduct" (Flint, 2018, p. 2), contrasted with laissez-faire deregulation for social and economic elites and financial systems (Wacquant, 2009a; Flint, 2018).

Borrowing Bourdieu's metaphor of the Left and Right hands of the state, Wacquant's (2009a, pp. 15 & 289) model of the state (see Figure 2.1) has two arms, the 'feminine'

welfare arm (comprising the ‘public aid bureaucracy’ namely ‘public education, health, housing, welfare and labour law’) and the ‘masculine’ penal arm (namely the ‘quartet’ of the police, the court, the prison and probation which he inserts alongside the ‘ministries of the economy and the budget’ present in Bourdieu’s original envisioning). According to Wacquant (2010b, p. 83) “the monitoring of the precarious segments of the working class is no longer handled solely by the maternal social arm of the welfare state”. Wacquant (2009a) describes the retrenching welfare arm and the associated growth of the penal arm of the state, with the latter bearing down on the social disorders produced by mass unemployment, de-socialised wage labour and declining living standards associated with the erosion of the Keynesian social compact and its replacement with a ‘workfare state’ (Jessop, 1993; Fletcher, 2013). Wacquant’s acknowledgement of the differential governance of women (by the ‘feminine’ ‘left hand’ of the state) - who have often been ignored in mainstream social theorizing - is appreciated.

Figure 2.1 Summary of Wacquant’s model of the state which draws on and extends Bourdieu’s work, adapted from Wacquant (2009a, pp. 15 & 289)



Wacquant (2014, p. 1699) provides a useful framework for the study of the relations between marginalised individuals, the state and social forces which he has described in the following way: “the structure of social space becomes... embodied in the

cognitive, affective and conative categories that steer the practical strategies of agents in everyday life, in their social circles, on the labour market, in their dealings with public institutions (police staff, welfare offices, housing and fiscal authorities, etc.), and therefore shape their subjective relationship to the state (which is part and parcel of the objective reality of that same state)". The pre-eminence of Wacquant's structural analyses of the state spans both the sociological and criminological disciplines. In drawing together these two key policy areas his model provides a useful starting point to frame the governance of marginalised women.

Wacquant's (2009a) broad model of the state assumes that the welfare system controls poor women, 'inculcating' them and their children with the duty to work for work's sake. In contrast the 'virile and controlling' penal arm polices poor men, that is the brothers, boyfriends or husbands of poor women (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 14-15). The two arms create a "carceral-assistential net" that traps and punitively contains "two gender sides of the same population coin drawn from the marginalised fractions of the post-industrial working class", women under 'workfare', men under 'prisonfare' (Wacquant, 2010b, pp. 83-84). Wacquant (2009a, p. 295) continues: "[w]ith the shift from the one-handed maternalist to the two-handed paternalist modality of poverty policy, the bright line between the deserving and the undeserving poor, the wholesome 'working families' and the corrupt and fearsome 'underclass', is drawn in concert by workfare and prisonfare".

Wacquant addresses women specifically in the third chapter of *Punishing the Poor*, in which he focuses on mothers as welfare subjects. He outlines the program of welfare policy reform in the US context in the mid-1990s namely the retrenchment of state assistance from "the most vulnerable" and the discursive construction of the (black) 'welfare queen' and 'teenage mother' (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 84). It is important to note that the welfare state is much less developed in the US context when compared to the UK (Alesina et al., 2001), where women rely more on social security payments than men and have witnessed (albeit inconsistent and ineffective) measures to keep them out of prison.

There is a long history of the management of (poor) families and the women within those families (Arnup, 1994; Badinter, 1981; Donzelot, 1979). Families, and in particular mothers, bear the burden of embodying motherhood and caring for children,

reproducing the labour force and “the reproduction and provisioning of caring needs” (Bakker, 2007, p. 541). Wacquant's work has been used in interesting ways to look at young welfare mothers resisting disapproving discourse (Measor, 2012) and to highlight the development of gender sensitive approaches in the penal system following the Corston Report (Martin and Wilcox, 2012).

Wacquant suggests that his model provides “a single conceptual framework for the various sectors of the state that administer the life conditions and chances of the lower class, and to view these sectors as enmeshed in relations of antagonistic cooperation as they vie for pre-eminence inside the bureaucratic field” which “has helped us map the ongoing shift from the social to the penal treatment of urban marginality” (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 289).

Wacquant's (2009a) thesis of the expansive penal state provides a useful mechanism to understand experiences both at the individual level *and* situated within the context of an austere, neoliberal state. In particular, this thesis draws on the conceptual tools of the 'centaur state' and the 'carceral-assistential net' (Wacquant, 2009a). These theoretical constructs provide a scaffold to make sense of the experiences of marginalised women who took part in the research, and in particular the mothers involved with the criminal justice system (CJS) and associated social and welfare services.

Wacquant (2016, p. 1078) advises those researching marginal populations “to avoid falling into the false realism of the ordinary and scholarly common sense of the moment, the sociology of marginality must fasten not on vulnerable ‘groups’ (which often exist merely on paper, if that) but on the institutional mechanisms that produce, reproduce and transform the network of positions to which its supposed members are dispatched and attached”. The institutions that are the focus of this thesis consist of the four ‘street-level’ gatekeeper organisations through which participants were recruited (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.2 and Chapter 8, Table 8.1), as well as the web of ancillary organisations that participants were engaged with, providing variously welfarist and / or disciplinary interventions (see Chapter 8, Figure 8.2). As appealing as it is in its simplicity, Wacquant’s model does not leave much room for nuance, and it does not convey the blurring of penal and welfare policy nor the hybridity in form, function and the way that gatekeeper organisations are experienced at the street-level

(see Chapter 8 for in depth exploration of hybridity). The next section foregrounds the key feminist critique of Wacquant's thesis and highlights the utility in applying a feminist-informed approach to extend Wacquant's work.

2.3.1 Putting Wacquant to work

While Wacquant does address women in his conceptualisations, his analyses of both sexes is constrained by its placing of women under the management of the 'feminine' or 'maternal' arm and men by the 'masculine' or 'paternalistic' arm. This reinforces heteronormative gender roles, based on the assumption that men commit crimes and women claim welfare and care for dependents. In this sense women are affected by the penal system only *by association* as the mother, partner, or daughter of an offender, *contra* the sustained rise in the number of women in the CJS (despite policy advocating for diversion from custody or the courts). Wacquant (2009a) effectively draws attention to the plight of women in the face of a retrenching social safety net but fails to highlight the extent to which the 'feminine' welfare arm now resembles a "secret penal system which is more severe than the mainstream judicial system" but without its safeguards, particularly in the UK context of benefits conditionality and sanctions (Webster, 2014, p. 8).

The assumption that women are handled solely by the receding, 'maternal' arm of the state is problematic, and the term itself is subject to debate. There are different applications for the term 'maternalism', within feminist theory it is often applied as a gendered dimension of an action (Koven & Michel, 1993; Staab, 2012; Jenson, 2015). Sullivan (2016, p. 442) suggests maternalism can also be used to understand decision-making of a specific group of cancer doctors, where they are working in an autonomous individual's best interests which are likely to be aligned with their will or 'emerging interests', "but in the absence of the affected individual's expression of consent or assent". Gjersøe et al. (2019, p. 495) suggest that "while paternalism applies to a relationship between an individual and a state, maternalism applies to interpersonal relationships" extending this particular use of maternalism to the street-

level bureaucrats carrying out 'activation policy'¹ with those in receipt of welfare benefits in Norway.

Bumiller (2013) also queries the extent to which Wacquant (2009) understates the impact of punitive shifts towards a 'carceral state' on women who become carceral subjects. This extends to their employability after leaving the criminal justice system, with Bumiller's political economy analysis highlighting the disadvantaged position women inhabit within the 'post-release' labour market where they are pushed into low paid roles with poor working conditions. There is a small body of work that puts Wacquant's concepts to work empirically in research with women (see Measor, 2012; Martin and Wilcox, 2012; Povey, 2017). Nevertheless, theoretical engagement or substantive empirical work to support an extension of Wacquant's work which foregrounds women has been limited.

Female prison populations continue to rise in many countries and regions worldwide (Penal Reform International, 2020). For example, in the US women constitute the fastest growing segment of the prison population (Kajstura, 2019), with contributing factors including the neoliberal reform of social policies, policy transfer of the US-led war on drugs and 'law and order' policing (Allen, 2015; Sudbury, 2005, 2014). Wacquant's (2009a) work bridges the gap between these high-level trends and how this impacts people along lines of class, race and gender. However, his analyses have ignored rising women's imprisonment (as he views them solely as welfare subjects, not penal ones) and do not problematize the heterogeneity within and between welfare and penal policies. Similarly, there are problems with the assumption that men experience the state via solely the penal arm. For example, men constitute a significant number of welfare benefit recipients, and they also use mental health services among other areas that come under the 'feminine' arm. The concept of the 'feminine' and 'masculine' hands of the 'neoliberal Leviathan' may be tempting in its simplicity (and familiarity) but, it cannot account for all the complexities experienced by women subject to both arms of the state, and the potential spaces of resistance that elude its grasp (Wacquant, 2009; 2010). As Gelsthorpe (2010, p. 377) outlines,

¹ Activation policy refers to the linking of behavioural conditionality with active labour market policy in 'welfare-to-work' regimes (Kaufman, 2020).

influential though it may be, Wacquant's thesis "would have benefited from some of the work of feminist criminologists".

Discussions on the treatment of women and gender in Wacquant's work include those by a number of prominent sociologists and criminologists. Piven (2010) highlights Wacquant's misreading of the gendered impact of welfare reforms; for example, mothers' receipt of social assistance² within the US context had always been subject to work and behavioural conditions; and had been decades before the reforms of the 1990s. Furthermore, Piven (2010, p. 114) also suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the agency of those subject to penal control, to ensure they are not portrayed as 'witless objects' of social control.

Gelsthorpe (2010) points to Wacquant's superficial exploration of the state's management and surveillance of poor women and how, his analysis belies the micro-level techniques of governance which served to make their lives harder. Gelsthorpe (2010, p. 378) encourages "closer attention to empirical studies of women, welfare, and penalty on the ground" which "add to or extend his analysis of the ways in which economic, race, class, and gender relations are anchored across state structures. We know too little about the coupling of the state structures in practice; we do not know if punitive moves have been resisted on the ground. Moreover, we lack empirical detail on how the moves have been experienced by consumers...we need to hear more from women themselves...so that we can better interrogate [Wacquant's] conceptualisation of new and combined forms of control". This thesis sets out to address this directly by providing empirical data from women subject to the coupling of the penal and welfare arms of the state.

Largely, critics suggest that Wacquant's conceptual models deprive those subject to the 'carceral-assistential net' of agency. Indeed, under neoliberal individualism, individuals may be denied agency while simultaneously being responsibilised for their position. Micro-level data is therefore required to explore this further and to counter the "privileging of macro-level, relatively monolithic analyses" within Wacquant's work (Lynch, 2011, p. 240). Whilst Wacquant has conducted micro- and meso-level

² Social assistance has been defined as "benefits for which individual need is the main criterion for eligibility, without any requirement of affiliation to a social security scheme aimed to cover a particular risk, or any requirement of professional activity or payment of contributions" (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 143).

empirical work with young men in a Chicago boxing gym (Wacquant, 1995, 1998, 2003), he has not sought equivalent insights from women despite intimating that his concepts are reflective of a population of two halves – male and females – both of whom are targets of the ‘centaur state’.

Wacquant (2008; 2009a) presents the young, black men that America ‘warehouses’ between the ghetto and the prison as inheritors of policies of penalisation that began as a reaction to the political activism related to the civil rights movement and urban inner-city riots of the 1960s. In this way he infers an identity of the politically active, thinking, subject onto the men subject to penal control. Yet, the focus is solely on the structures bearing down upon the “precarious and ‘deproletarianized’ fractions of the black working class” (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 208). There is limited detail in his work of the view ‘from below’ (bar the works focused on the boxing gym). Similarly, in his discussion on women, Wacquant (2009a) explores instrumental changes to welfare policy, rather than the perspectives of women as welfare subjects experiencing such changes. Furthermore, he overlooks the heterogeneity within certain groups, for example, poorer women have always had to work (Piven, 2010).

A focus on the agency of criminalised women, their resistance to structural constraints and social control, efforts to manage their own lives under extreme or complex conditions, is one such concern of feminist criminologists (see Turnbull and Hannah-Moffatt, 2009; Measor, 2012). This focus on the micro-level of everyday life, and how women carve out space for agency in unexpected ways, is often ignored by mainstream theorists and social researchers (Chesney-Lind and Morash, 2013).

Wacquant (2009a) explores retrenching welfare policy (mainly in the US context); however, he does not look at the broader picture of the political economy of the domestic sphere, specifically the work of unpaid care and social reproduction in the private sphere, which remains gendered and undervalued in economic terms. There is little problematisation of issues regarding the gender role socialisation of women as mothers, workers or both, and how this intersects with the ‘penalization of poverty’ (LeBaron and Roberts, 2010). LeBaron and Roberts (2010, p. 27) highlight how “neoliberal social and economic policies have intensified the demands placed on women as caregivers in the family and community and as workers in a highly precarious, gendered, and sex-segregated labour market, they have contributed to the

feminization of poverty and to an emerging crisis in social reproduction". Less is known about gendered insecurity within the context of Wacquant's (2009a) 'carceral-assistential net' and how women are pushed to the margins and in some cases towards criminalised activities.

When mothers have been involved in the CJS they are viewed as maternally deficient, and this label can stick with them (Sharpe, 2015). Removing children is a punishment that leaves scars and can be a life-long sentence if children are adopted rather than taken into temporary care. Failed motherhood serves as a marker for increased stigma, surveillance and intervention, yet despite women within this group being subject to high levels of social control, this area has received limited criminological or sociological attention.

Clearly, there are gendered, classed and racialised effects of a neoliberal penal state. Whilst Wacquant (2009b, p. 87) emphasises race-related structural oppression of the new "ethnoracial order" being established, his analysis could be developed further by drawing on a feminist perspective to bring complex gender power relations and intersecting structures of oppression into focus. The experience of poor women is often overlooked, particularly those who are mothers or have caring responsibilities, who are often treated differently by the state and market, and this ill-treatment is magnified for those who are criminalised. The lived experiences of women subject to carceral or penal conditions, or to the criminalisation of poor women through punitive welfare are not problematised.

A gendered lens is useful as it reveals the different expectations that the welfare and penal systems place on male and female subjects, uncovering the specific difficulties that marginalised women, among others, face as commodified citizens under market forces. Wacquant's binary and largely US-centred perspective does not do justice to the complex nature of changing social and penal policy and the wide-ranging gendered impact on men and women in the UK context.

As later chapters show, many of the women experiencing state intervention over the life course and in some cases successive child removal, have complex needs, and have often been subject to multiple interventions from both the penal and welfare branches of the state. This thesis aims to re-examine Wacquant's concepts through a

feminist-informed lens and to make a theoretical contribution through the refinement and extension of his work.

2.4 Theorizing women's involvement in crime: feminist perspectives

There is a long history within criminology of women being omitted within 'malestream' criminological thought; or they have been measured against men with implicit androcentric assumptions. In the few early works where women were considered (see Lombroso's *The Female Offender*), they were examined against the male norm (Smart, 2012). Despite the advancement of feminist theories of gender and crime over the past 60 years, meaningful engagement by the most influential and legitimised scholarly voices remains limited. Heidensohn (2012, pp. 127-128) highlights the "indifference to questions raised by gender perspectives [that] persists in the work of contemporary scholars such as...Wacquant... [and]...the continued failure of some of the major writers in the field to give more than token acknowledgement to gender in their work remains a limitation - for them and for the subject".

This thesis places the perspectives of marginalised and criminalised women - their counter-images and counter-narratives - centre stage. It produces knowledge that is 'on' women, but also, importantly, 'for' the women themselves through the use of auto-photography (see Chapter 4, section 4.5.1). The research builds on the work of feminist criminologists who have pioneered gender perspectives within criminology. As suggested, there is not one monolithic feminist theory, but an assortment of feminist-informed theories underpinned by an array of epistemological approaches (Fonow and Cook, 2005; Ackerly and True, 2010; Stanley, 2013). There are, however, a number of established feminist perspectives critiquing malestream criminology which are useful to consider in relation to women's deviance and involvement in crime. In this section I explore the most useful of the feminist theoretical approaches for framing my empirical work.

The social construction of femininity is significant; women who exhibit 'masculine' traits such as breaking the law are considered 'doubly, deviant' and punished more harshly for having broken not only the law but societal gender norms – hence double jeopardy

(Lloyd, 1995). The stigma associated with a criminal record is often experienced differently by women particularly when they also have caring responsibilities, as this places another layer of normative and gendered behavioural expectations on women. Though women are statistically more likely to commit less serious or non-violent crimes than men, research has shown that women are twice as likely to be sentenced to custody than men for a first offence (Prison Reform Trust, 2013). This is not limited to the courts and women experience punishment and carcerality in the community *and* beyond the realms of the CJS for example, via welfare conditionality, benefit sanctions and children's social care services (see Chapters 7 and 8).

2.4.1 Women, Crime and Feminisms

When emphasising the structural locations of women and crime, two threads of feminist theory come to the foreground: Marxist feminism and standpoint feminism (Maidment, 2006). Marxist feminism has traditionally been concerned with a macro-level inquiry of the social transformation brought by the advent of capitalism, particularly how this takes place along gendered lines, *and* the relationship between production and reproduction (Chesney-Lind and Faith, 2001). More recently the Marxist feminist literature has been invigorated by the work of feminist political economists connecting these broader mechanisms to matters of everyday life as well as gendered experiences of punishment and contemporary social policy (LeBaron and Roberts, 2010; Roberts, 2016). The carcerality³ of precarity, debt and the household, in the context of retrenching social assistance, have been explored in tandem; “all three spaces can be conceived as carceral since each involves disciplinary mechanisms that operate to lock people's current and future life choices and possibilities...and...limit their social and physical mobility” (LeBaron and Roberts, 2010, p. 20). These non-punitive spaces are experienced as carceral and warrant consideration. A gendered analysis of the penalization of poverty is important in understanding the experiences of marginalised women who participated in this study.

While not completely interchangeable, socialist feminist theory is substantively aligned with the core tenets of Marxist theory although it places a higher importance on gender

³ Carcerality here refers to the prison-like nature of precarity, debt, and the household experienced under neoliberal and austerity policies (see LeBaron and Roberts, 2010).

for example capitalism exploits and oppresses women differently and more flagrantly than men (see Maidment, 2006; Tong, 2014). However, this perspective remains focused on structural accounts and fails to adequately problematise agential forces across the state-citizen divide, for example, the actors and ideologies influencing policymaking, and those involved in delivering policy at the 'street-level'. It also is blind to the spaces of resistance carved out by those impacted by social policies. For example, Marxist feminists link women's involvement in crime to class-based socio-economic inequalities. The forces imposed by the class structure leave women from the lowest echelons of the social strata with few options, those who take part in criminal activity do so as a means of economic survival or as a response to their subordination related to their class, gender or racial position. The material deprivation experienced by participants warrants the utility of the feminist Marxist perspective for this group. However, by focusing on the macro-level, it does not examine the motivations at the individual level, and while choice may be more limited towards the lower reaches of the social structure, arguably, individuals have some level of free will, or perceive that to be so. For example, families subject to child protection interventions still have "strengths as well as...vulnerabilities" even in a "context of considerable adversities" (Featherstone et al., 2014, p. 1737).

Radical feminism recognises "patriarchy, or male dominance, as the root cause of women's oppression" (Burgess-Proctor, 2006, p. 29). A radical feminist understanding of criminological social relations might focus on how gendered imbalances of power and privilege manifest in crimes where women are over-represented as victim and men as perpetrators, for example, rape, domestic or sexual violence, domestic homicides, human trafficking, pornography. Statistically, women are more likely to be a victim of intimate violence than men (Office for National Statistics, 2021); a radical feminist reading of this would be that embedded societal norms, policies and institutional processes assist the victimisation of women. It would also provide a lens through which to critique the idea that women's centres are sites of feminist praxis if feminism cannot be institutionalised: "Implicit in them is the assumption that any entry into formalized institutions, particularly those of the state and, more recently, in that of the market, is perforce a loss of radicality" (Roy, 2009, p. 103). There is debate within feminist theoretical thinking around whether we have seen a death of 'purer' forms of radical feminism, where radicality is understood as "anti-institutionalism" (Roy, 2009;

Dean, 2008, p. 284). As outlined in Chapters 4 and 8, the women's centres involved in the research, where participants access services, receive blended funding streams, and exist within marketised and hybridised social welfare services. There is a question of co-option of women's centres by the centaur state and loss of autonomy and political performativity.

A radical feminist perspective can be used to make sense of changes to the criminal and legal system which impedes the way for marginalised women to access justice and legal support. In the UK, non-governmental organisations have warned that changes to legal aid which have removed much of the social, welfare and family law that was once in scope will leave the most vulnerable and disadvantaged with little recourse to free legal aid, with a specific gendered dimension (Prison Reform Trust, 2014; Women's Aid, 2014). According to Mayo and Koessl (2015, p. 9) changes to legal aid "raise[s] disturbing questions about the state's failure to protect women, especially those at risk of – and those who have already experienced – domestic violence". From this perspective another important link is identified between women's victimization and their subsequent involvement in crime. Consistent with these comments are the findings of the Femicide Census which has shown that the number of women killed by male intimate violence is increasing each year, rising from 134 in 2009 to 154 in 2018 (McVeigh and Colley, 2015; Wertams et al., 2020). Women's victimhood has been viewed as an enduring, life-long experience, with harsher and abusive experiences in childhood linked to a continuation of violence in adult relationships, so-called 'double jeopardy' (Simons et al., 1993). Chapter 5 offers an in-depth discussion of the impact of adverse childhood experiences.

A strand of feminist theory which foregrounds epistemology and explores knowledge production is postmodern feminism (Carrington, 2008). Carol Smart (1995, p. 8) defines this approach as one which should "make us rethink and reconsider the foundations of what we think we know". In short, rather than a concern with what the 'truth' is postmodernists stress the importance of considering the ways in which these 'truths' are produced and also legitimized. Legitimized knowledge is of particular concern, having been created – or the ground rules of what can constitute 'knowledge' set selectively – by members of dominant groups; therefore "deconstructing Truth and analysing power effects that such claims to truth entail" (Smart, 1995, p. 45) is the

focus of the postmodernist project. There is also an understanding that the subject is discursively constructed. Gendered identities are formed through practice, as such there is no 'normal' or 'natural' female character (Bessant, 2013; Walby, 1992). Identities are formed. Feminist criminologists using a postmodern lens are concerned with the social construction of knowledge, particularly around gender, crime and deviance (Ugwudike, 2015). Identity is explored in the desistance literature (Maruna, 2011), but this often focuses on the perspective of men. This study highlights the importance of participants' identities as mothers and the lived experience of being a 'failed' mother.

Many women in contact with the CJS in the community are mothers or carers, yet there is limited qualitative empirical research on this particular intersection, the literature more often focuses on women's experiences in prison and is focused on statistics. This means there is a dearth of knowledge on the lived impact of sentences on motherhood. Minson (2015) highlights these gaps and contributes prison-based empirical findings alongside putting forward several policy and practice recommendations, although this area remains under-researched and certainly under-theorised. There is some research on the impact on children separated from their birth mothers (see Beresford, 2018), however, birth mothers' experiences and perspectives of being separated from their children often go overlooked. Even less is known about women's experiences of motherhood and the loss of children from their care when they are subject to penal control in the community. This thesis addresses this gap through the collection of empirical data from marginalised women at the intersection of gender, criminal justice, and welfare (among other techniques of state governance) and how they navigate this in complex ways because of their identities and practices as women, mothers and carers.

In the UK the rate of child removal has increased steadily over the past twelve years (Department for Education, 2020a). Relatedly we have seen the development of the recurrent removal of multiple children from mothers experiencing poverty, victimisation and involvement with the CJS. Skeggs (2004) highlights the importance of motherhood in identity formation and self-efficacy for the white, working-class women in her study. The 'Vulnerable birth mothers and recurrent care proceedings' project highlights the little-known issue of vulnerable mothers and their experiences of repeat removals to

care (see Broadhurst et al., 2015). More recently within social work there has been research around stigma that has focused on mothers' experiences of child removal (see Morriss, 2018). It is useful to draw on McNeill's (2019) conceptualisation of the 'maloptical state' for this particular group of women subject to successive child removal, who experience being 'seen as bad' by the child welfare bureaucracy. This highlights an important intersection for such women and a particular experience of punishment that reaches beyond the realms of the criminal justice system, into the family and with a significant impact on women's lives and identity.

Employing an intersectional lens is therefore useful in understanding the experiences of women involved with the CJS, making visible their specific marginal social location and the combined effects of their various status markers at their particular intersection of inequalities. However, this does not preclude other groups from the analysis. Indeed, Daly and Tonry (1997, p. 237) highlight the usefulness of an intersectional approach in conceptualizing how "race and gender relations structure criminal law and justice system practices". The individual experiences of women within the criminal justice system will vary dramatically, as axes of inequality dynamically intersect.

An intersectional lens can provide a helpful theoretical and analytical tool to explore important dimensions of women's experiences of contemporary carcerality from their specific location within dynamic matrices of oppression. Additionally, the intersectional approach allows for the study of both structuring forces and women's agency through its "reliance on a variety of methodological approaches, and an emphasis on understandings grounded in the lived experiences of dynamic groups of women" (Burgess-Proctor, 2006, p. 37). Themes can be explored using intersectionality *alongside* other concepts. In a special issue in *Signs*, the development of a field of intersectionality is explored. The collection highlights the diversity of ways in which intersectionality is being used, illustrating its utility as a nodal point rather than a restrictive ontological or epistemological bounding which has been a critique of the road intersection metaphor (Cho et al., 2013). The works included illustrate how practice informs theory and makes the case that in an ideal scenario theory should inform best practice in which case intersectionality can become a political tool, reaching beyond comprehension towards transformation. As well as being of theoretical and analytical value an intersectional lens aligns epistemologically with a

feminist-informed pluralist participatory methodology (see Chapter 4), which aims to include “women’s own perspectives and experiences” (Presser, 2005, p. 2067).

Novel perspectives continue to emerge in the field of feminist theory which challenge both mainstream and feminist criminology, bringing fresh insights, often from an interdisciplinary perspective, which help to make visible new dimensions within the complex social relations that connect crime, gender and justice. The various feminist perspectives discussed, arguably can be united under the broader banner of the critical criminological paradigm. Chesney-Lind and Morash (2013, p. 287) articulate a potential future of the feminist project, a “transformative critical feminist criminology” that pays attention not only to gender but social justice more broadly and looks to have impact beyond the borders of the nation state. In this way “gender as a key force that shapes crime and social control, towards research methods that recognize power differentials between the researcher and the researched, and give relatively powerless people voice to express their standpoints, and towards action-oriented research to reveal and promote justice...[this] perspective calls attention to gender (and thus masculinity) as something that is enacted in the context of patriarchal privilege, class privilege, and racism” (Chesney-Lind and Morash, 2013, pp. 288-292).

In seeking to apply a feminist pluralist lens, it is important to recognise that there is not one monolithic feminist theory, but a multiplicity of feminist-informed perspectives underpinned by a spectrum of epistemological and methodological positions (Fonow and Cook, 2005; Stanley and Wise, 2013). As a result, some of the theoretical frameworks this thesis draws on contain contradictions that reflect the complex, multi-faceted nature of social control and punishment as well as the challenge feminist theories pose to established, often parsimonious ideas within academic disciplines.

Despite the multiplicity of positions and the wide spectrum of ontological and epistemological principles underpinning them, there are a number of underlying concepts that are central to the feminist theoretical landscape and are particularly salient to this thesis. These themes, include femininities, masculinities and the deconstruction of gender, agency - particularly of the oppressed, double deviancy, victimhood and double jeopardy, intersectionality of gender and other systems of power, innovations in epistemology and research methods and critical reflexivity (see Chapter 4 for an in-depth discussion on research methods and reflexivity).

This thesis seeks to spotlight the punishments reserved for poorer women at the intersection of the welfare and penal policy of the state among other policy intersections. Using a feminist informed approach, it seeks to test the conceptual tools developed by sociologist Loïc Wacquant. It extends this body of work by foregrounding the experiences and voices of women and applies a number of feminist perspectives, taking a pluralist approach to allow for ‘thinking with theory’. In framing the empirical work within this thesis, liberal, Marxist, postmodern and intersectional feminisms make the most useful contributions to analyses.

2.5 Conclusion

As the researcher, I am ultimately responsible for the choice of theory (or theories) that frame my research, and the knowledge produced; what it highlights and includes, what it erases or excludes. Foucault (1977, 1978) emphasises the close link between knowledge and power, therefore in my aim to produce knowledge I aim to do so in a way which does not reinforce the dominant discursive framings of marginalised women as ‘mad, bad or sad’ (Kennedy, 2018). As such the departures made are twofold, firstly in challenging ‘malestream’ analysis of social policy and secondly in questioning the nature of knowledge produced through conventional criminological approaches.

This theoretical framework provides a scaffolding through which to organise and make sense of the data. By ‘thinking with theory’ (Jackson and Mazzei, 2018) it seeks to test and extend Wacquant’s conceptual framings of the relationship between marginalised individuals and the penal state. It seeks to borrow and reconfigure concepts, drawing on feminist-informed perspectives to show how this is experienced by an overlooked group of women (accessing marginal socio-welfare services, most of whom have been in conflict with the law and subject to child removal). It is grounded in a broad feminist approach (outlined in Chapter 4, section 4.3.2) that seeks micro-level insights from women who want to share their stories, using methods that invoke collaboration to give participants more control over that which they pass on to me, balancing the notion of participants as ‘experts by experience’ and my being an experienced social researcher, trained in research methods and analysis while, adhering to a feminist ethics of care. It does not seek to build a new ‘grand theory’ of social control and punishment that includes women but rather to “create new assemblages that

demonstrate a range of analytic practices of thought” (Jackson and Mazzei, 2018, 7171).

Wacquant’s structural analyses of the state linking penal and social policy with a focus on those in advanced marginality provides a useful starting point to frame the governance of marginalised women. It also provides a useful macro-level backdrop when putting my empirical data on women’s experiences in the UK context to work. My aim is to reimagine Wacquant’s seminal conceptualisations of state governance of those on the margins and to extend them through my empirical work. Namely, his conceptualisations of the ‘centaur state’ and the two arms of the state that function to doubly regulate the poor through a ‘carceral-assistential net’ or wedding of ‘workfare’ and ‘prisonfare’. Rather than a ‘grand’ theoretical framework, my research will be held together by the feminist lens through which I understand the social world. In this chapter I have highlighted the approaches that prove useful in framing my empirical work and in challenging and extending Wacquant’s work, namely an assemblage of Marxist, postmodern and intersectional feminisms. The subsequent chapters show how I apply and develop these theoretical insights alongside the empirical data.

I situate the knowledge produced through an awareness and examination of my positionality: “A researcher cannot tease herself apart from the world because she is part of and results from the ongoing interaction of the world” (Roulston and Shelton 2015, p. 394). As a reflexive researcher my specific combination of experiential and theoretical knowledge should be made explicit and critically reflected upon, which this chapter sets out to do.

Central to this thesis then is reflexivity on a number of levels, firstly that of the researcher, secondly the text with its “rhetorics...and...politics embedded” within it, and thirdly the epistemic in terms of “the social conditions and techniques of production of the scientific object”, as well as an awareness of the political economy of criminological knowledge (Wacquant, 2011, p. 441). Underpinned by an awareness of the folly of presenting knowledge as all-seeing and all-knowing I cannot promise to produce anything more than specific and contextualised knowledge that provides partial, but nonetheless important, insights of the world from the perspectives of criminalised women, whose voices are often unheard, ignored or de-legitimised.

According to Maxwell (1996, p. 36) taking into account the views of those under study is integral to "qualitative research", and particularly useful in guarding against the "ideological hegemony" of prevailing theories. Women in conflict with both the law and gendered normative behavioural expectations are at the heart of this thesis. It is concerned with their experiences and how we can learn from them to produce criminological and sociological knowledges that highlight their experiences on the social margins. Its purpose is to make visible the experiences, perspectives and theories of such women while remaining transparent about my interpretations as the researcher.

3. Women, the criminal justice system, and welfare: a literature review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a critical review of the existing literature and contemporary policy context concerning the governance of marginalised women in, or on the edges of, the criminal justice system (CJS). As outlined in Chapter 2, the ‘carceral-assistential net’ (Wacquant, 2009a) – formed by the penal and welfare arms of the state - is important in understanding how those in poverty and living on the margins are governed. As such this chapter highlights and reviews relevant works that consider these institutional systems and the politics and practices that shaped them, which marginalised women find themselves subject to.

The ‘tutelary state’ was described by De Tocqueville (2003 [1835]) as the emerging form of governance via ‘administrative centralization’ or governmental centralization’ and reflected a new kind of ‘despotism’. Over the 20th century the tutelary state “deployed forms of therapeutic intervention aimed at normalising targeted population groups, involving the imposition of defined standards of well-adjusted family life and individual conduct on targeted working class and marginalised groups” (Fletcher and Flint, 2018, p. 772).

From the end of the 1970s the management of crime began to shift away from what sociologist David Garland (1990; 2001) termed ‘penal-welfarism’ – a more interventionist and less punitive approach which at least partially acknowledged that some factors external to individuals contributed to poverty or criminality. At the same time economic management via the Keynesian approach was unravelling in advanced liberal democracies, as the Fordist labour-capital pact of the welfare state became unstable (Harvey, 2007; Jessop, 2002) and ‘stagflationary tendencies (stagnation plus

inflation)' fuelled an economic crisis which led to the breakdown of The Bretton Woods accord⁴ (Jamieson, 2012).

Where it was established, the Keynesian welfare state transformed into a 'hollowed-out' Schumpeterian workfare state⁵, where social policy is subordinate to the demands of labour flexibility and structural competitiveness (Jessop, 1993). This shift has been prominent in Britain where "a discursively-constructed crisis of the welfare state" (Jessop, 2004) has been accompanied by overt policy change to push forward "the shift from a welfare to a workfare state" (Jessop, 2018, p. 1736). Wacquant (2009a) suggests that the dissolution of the Keynesian-welfarist-full employment paradigm and the economic and social discontent that entailed, saw the introduction of workfare and prisonfare as a means of governance via divide-and-rule tactics and the repression of dissent.

In the UK iterative welfare restructuring has seen the advancement of 'creeping conditionality' (included in welfare reforms of the 1990s and 2000s) to 'ubiquitous' conditionality, where conditionality and sanctions comprise a central part of the Welfare Reform Act (2012) (Dwyer, 2004; Dwyer and Wright, 2014). The "ubiquitous conditionality" of the current UC regime sees "unemployed and low paid citizens ... held ... solely responsible, not only for a lack of paid employment, but also partial engagement with the paid labour market and the levels of remuneration they may receive" (Dwyer and Wright, 2014, p. 33).

Authors have noted a similar toughening within penal policy, since the fall of the 'rehabilitative ideal' (Garland, 2001) and 'new punitiveness' (Pratt, 2013). The expansion of penal policies and weakening of social protections, explored conceptually in the previous chapter, has been accompanied by a deepening of poverty, widening of inequality and a burgeoning prison population (Hood and Waters, 2017; Sturge, 2021). Wacquant (2009a; 2010a) argues that these changes, within welfare (social) and penal policy, and their effects, need to be looked at together, as

⁴ Following the Great Depression and as WW2 was coming to an end, there was impetus of over 40 countries to meet in Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, to develop institutions that would encourage international trade via the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and subsequently the World Bank (WB) (IMF, 2020; Bretton Woods Project, 2019).

⁵ Jessop's (1993) Schumpeterian workfare state is denoted by the changing governance of welfare, which he argues has become workfare, at the same time the importance of welfare policy has declined and economic policy, specifically marketisation, international competitiveness and international relations, foregrounded.

a 'dynamic coupling' used to punish the poor. While the majority of households in poverty include at least one person who is in paid employment, this thesis focuses on those nearer the bottom end who are unemployed⁶, many of whom have been swept up by the criminal justice system.

It is important to emphasise the role of the state in creating and reproducing paternalistic penal-welfare policies (Roberts, 2016), and its function as "a stratification and classification agency" (Wacquant, 2016, p. 1079) shaping the life options and strategies available to the poor. Wacquant (2016, p. 1079) points to government policies of 'abandonment' as an objective "pursued across the gamut of employment, welfare, education, housing and health". For those on the sharp end of interventions which can be alienating, disempowering and destructive the state can be perceived as a 'fearsome', 'frowning' 'centaur state' (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 312). This is reserved for those most marginalised in society; specifically, the unemployed, poor and those involved with the criminal justice system.

It is worth noting that the dual penal and welfare aims or 'arms' of the 'state' are not as neatly delineated in practice as popular conceptual renderings (see Sections 2.2 and 2.3.1) would suggest. The criminal justice system has rehabilitative and restorative elements just as the welfare system has disciplinary and punitive ones. Furthermore, the boundaries between the state, private sector and third sector have become blurred in the provision of welfare and penal services and interventions. This 'hybridisation' whereby social providers of services adapt their forms and behaviours to meet shifts in political and economic contexts is ongoing (Corcoran and Fox, 2012).

In critically reviewing the literature this chapter firstly focuses on the penal system not just in terms of prison and reintegration, but also the use of community-based sentences and diversionary interventions and their effects on women. Secondly, it looks at family interventions and in particular child removal, which involves the penal system with its use of disciplinary measures, surveillance and the courts but is also closely linked to the welfare state in terms of social work and child protection. This is an especially neglected dimension of the penal-welfare net which is hugely significant for some women (see Chapter 7). Thirdly, it examines the welfare system which

⁶ All participants were not in paid work on recruitment; however, many were involved in voluntary roles or voluntary work experience often via the centre where they were recruited.

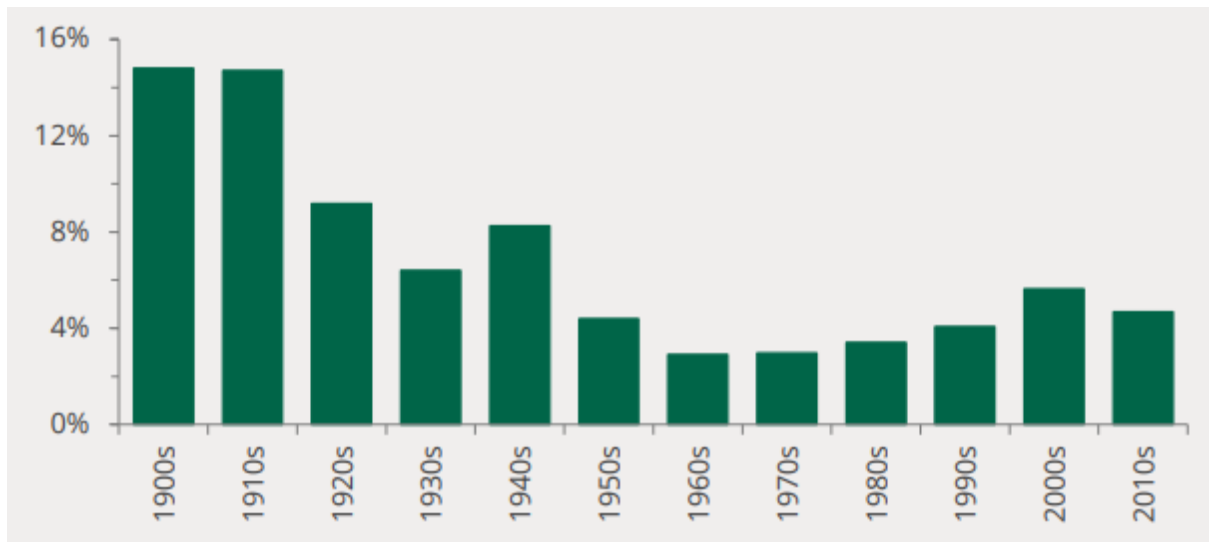
through its disregard for gender inequality, penalises poor women some of whom may turn to acquisitive or survival crime and are thus funnelled towards the penal dragnet. And underpinning these elements are issues of access to justice for these women or the lack thereof.

The gendered nature of punishment exemplified in the discourses and institutions of penalty cannot be separated from the gendered nature of welfarism (Roberts, 2016). However, the nuanced relationship between new forms of penal-welfare interventions and how they impact marginalised women is under-researched. As such there is a need to explore empirically women's experiences of state institutions of welfare and penalty which is the focus of this thesis.

3.2 Punishing women: prison and the development of the diversion approach

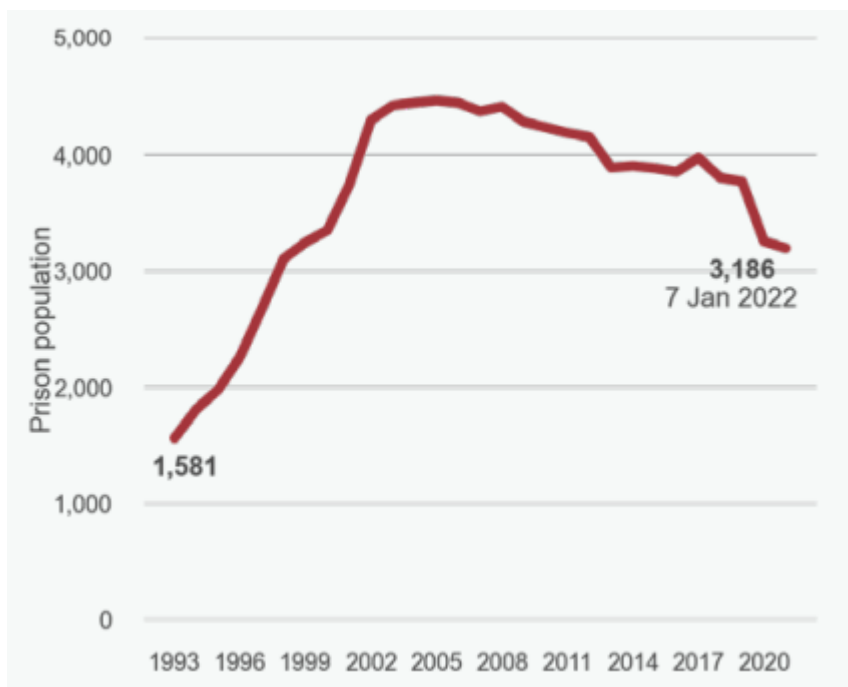
Until recently, the female prison population had been growing at a faster rate than for males rising by 114% between 2010 and 2015 (Prison Reform Trust, 2019). This increase was driven partly by increasing penalty and compounded by growing levels of economic and social deprivation (Gelsthorpe and Morris, 2002). Kruttschnitt et al. (2013) highlight the absence or marginalisation of women in research on the gendered implications of 'new punitiveness'. There are currently 3,129 women in prison in England and Wales, around 4% of the total prison population (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2022).

Chart 1: Women as a proportion of the prison population historically (England and Wales, decades averages)



(Source: Sturge, 2021)

Chart 2: Increase in number of women in prison over time (despite the recent decline there are still twice as many women in prison as there were 30 years ago).



(Source: Prison Reform Trust, 2022)

In line with global trends, most women in prison have been sentenced for non-violent crimes, imprisonment is often related to poverty; women with longer sentences often have histories of abuse and trauma (Penal Reform International, 2022). The number

of women in prison in England and Wales is due to rise from 3,217 in September 2020 to 4,500⁷ by September 2026 (Clinks, 2021).

In response to the increasing number of women entering prisons, there have been calls to address this issue. Pat Carlen's (1989) seminal research in the Scottish women's prison HMP Cornton Vale highlighted the need for a "women-wise" penal strategy which should extend the development of non-custodial alternatives for women. It also highlighted the importance of ensuring that other related policy systems such as welfare, employment, housing and education assisted these aims. Since this work there has been a strong consensus both in academic and practice-based circles that prison is inappropriate for majority of women sent there who are often victims themselves with offending linked to trauma (Worrall and Gelsthorpe, 2009; Hedderman, 2010; Clinks, 2021; Prison Reform Trust, 2022).

Despite this the number of women being sent to prison continued to rise. It was not until the 2000s during the then New Labour government's second term in office that a strategy to reduce the number of women in prison was published: The Women's Offending Reduction Programme Action Plan which set out to decrease women's involvement in crime and divert them from custody" (Home Office, 2004; Hedderman, 2010). It aimed to focus on meeting the needs of marginalised women in the community and the factors that contributed to their social exclusion⁸ (Newburn, 2007; Hedderman et al., 2011).

The deaths of six women at HMP Styal in a period of just over a year led to the commissioning of the Corston Report (2007, p. 9), a review of women's prisons. It was influential in the direction of policy at this time, and confirmed what the research evidence suggested, namely that "community solutions for non-violent women offenders should be the norm". It highlighted the differences between male and female offenders, characterising the latter as more a risk to themselves than to society. It provided further weight to the calls to address women's needs or 'specific vulnerabilities' in the community, the importance of diverting them from prison, and called for "a distinct, radically different, visibly-led, strategic, proportionate, holistic,

⁷ Figures based on MoJ and ONS prison population projections, increases are linked to the recruitment of 20,000 new police officers.

⁸ Here 'social exclusion' is used as a collective term which includes structural factors such as class, race, gender, poverty, debt, education, mental health issues etc. rather than a way to individualise social problems.

woman-centred, integrated approach” (Corston, 2007, p. 79). Its vision of decarceration called for state support to bolster and expand community-level actors who provide social and welfare support to "vulnerable, at risk and offending women" (Corcoran and Fox, 2013, p. 136). This direction was much more aligned to the 'rehabilitative ideal', but with responsibility dispersed from the state to local (mainly third sector) organisations and initiatives.

Most criminal justice settings are designed for males – single sex, coercive institutions...to hold men in a secure environment. “Women’s prisons are a poor adaptation of this model” (Penal Reform International, 2008, p. 2) – this is the case in the UK and in many other countries. Problems include inequality in terms of access to services and facilities and not being equipped for women’s different needs, the geographical and security disadvantages of there being fewer women’s prisons so women inmates tend to be further away from home and family, and the mixing of categories of inmate with the regime utilising a security regime to fit the maximum-security requirement (Penal Reform International, 2008).

Around the time of the Corston Report (2007) there was a renewed scholarly interest in how to design CJS services in light of women’s “particular vulnerabilities”. The literature suggested that a holistic, trauma-informed and woman-centred approach in the community is the best way to address the needs of women within the CJS (Bloom et al., 2003; Parry-Crooke and Stafford, 2009). However, there has also been critique of women-focused ‘targeted governance’ which may be portrayed as a benign intervention but can work to expand the behavioural expectations placed on women to meet pro-social norms rather than addressing the wider structural inequalities at play (Turnbull and Hannah-Moffatt, 2009). This thesis presents empirical findings which speak to this ongoing debate in foregrounding women’s experiences of undergoing diversionary interventions. Given the paucity of research into the role diversionary projects play in the governance of women in the UK, it addresses this gap by focusing on the hybridised institutional environment of this sector, how it interacts with the state and its role in the governance of marginalised lives (see Chapter 8).

Corston’s recommendations resulted in the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) demonstration project of community-based women’s centres initially in five locations to explore how women’s needs could be more effectively addressed via holistic ‘one-stop shop’

women's centres (Jolliffe et al., 2011). These centres aimed to reduce re-offending and to address the needs of women 'at risk' of offending, shaped by local demand. Attendance was voluntary and focused on issues linked to offending such as substance or alcohol misuse, domestic abuse and other abuse or trauma, homelessness, poverty and mental health (Jolliffe et al., 2011). Subsequently, limited funding was made available to support other women's community projects that aimed to divert them from crime, but not the comprehensive coverage recommended by Corston (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Provision of such diversion schemes is patchy, with each region having a different approach according to its legacy of local community organisations, whether it received MoJ funding and the working relationships with statutory agencies. For example, the Greater Manchester region's 'Whole System Approach' towards women offenders and those at risk of offending and provides a good example of gender specific support that has positive outcomes in terms of diversion from courts and custody and reducing recidivism (Kinsella et al., 2018). Overall, the legacy of the reforms by the New Labour government "in relation to the escalating use of custody for women, is a matter of doing too little, too late" (Hedderman, 2010, p. 495).

In practice 'diversion' can take place via several pathways. Early intervention is one such route, for example referrals from primary health care professionals to divert women towards community support and to address their needs before they get into trouble. Early intervention can also take place via the police, who can refer women to their local women's centres where this resource exists, instead of a formal notice or arrest. These informal arrangements rely on knowledge of diversionary approaches in local policing and healthcare teams and the level of support they have for this work within their organisations. Diversion can also take place more formally during the sentencing process, where it can be recommended in a pre-sentence report for the magistrate or judge. For example, the probation service may suggest a community sentence alongside specific rehabilitation activity requirements (RAR) which could include mandatory attendance at a women's centre for specific workshops or courses together with other appropriate interventions such as drug or alcohol counselling (Ministry of Justice, 2010). Common activities that those on probation may be required to undertake include unpaid work, completing an education or training course, getting treatment for addictions, like drugs or alcohol, and having regular meetings with an

‘offender manager’ (UK Government, 2022). Judges’ perspectives on the effectiveness of alternatives to prison are important as these play a part in how willing they are to use these instead of custody (Hedderman and Gunby, 2013).

While efforts to divert women from custody aimed to reduce reoffending and support ‘at risk’ women, in practice ‘at risk’ was not clearly defined (Jolliffe et al., 2011). For staff who took part in interviews for this thesis, ‘at risk’ was understood broadly and could indicate experiencing domestic abuse, having offended in the past, homelessness, poverty or mental health issues. In one of the gatekeeping organisations (GO1) the centre manager disclosed that they did not turn women away who needed their help. In the two women’s centres (GO1 & GO2) from which I recruited participants most of the women who attended the centre initially did so as part of a RAR attached to a community sentence, though many continued to attend after their mandatory sessions were completed (see Chapter 8).

In three areas in London, an ‘alternatives to custodial remand for women’ (ACRW) initiative ran between 2012 and 2014 and aimed to link up local NHS and voluntary sector services to provide quick screening for mental health issues as part of existing liaison and diversion schemes. The evaluation of this scheme reports success not only in flagging up women who have been engaged with mental health services but also shows a willingness of sentencers to act on diversionary recommendations from the services involved (Forrester et al., 2020). Women’s charity Advance, and its partners, launched the London Women’s Diversion Service in 2019.

Despite the growth of diversionary projects, the use of prison sentences for women remains stubbornly high (Prison Reform Trust, 2017c; Kennedy, 2018). Research and advocacy groups highlight the need to address sentencers’ beliefs around the ethicality and effectiveness of diversionary alternatives to custody and the purpose of women’s centres, which magistrates mainly use as an add-on to community orders (Jolliffe et al., 2011; Hedderman and Gunby, 2013).

The role of probation, and punishment in the community, is important when considering women in conflict with the law as they make up a more substantial minority (10%) of this population (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021). Despite this, women *in* prison remains the focus of existing research (Carlen and Worrall, 2013). Woolford

(2021) provides novel insights into the experiences of women under probation during the first Covid-19 lockdown, however, it focuses only on supervision by probation rather than taking the broader approach that this thesis takes.

Women exiting prison and the conditions of release are an emerging area of research though it remains practitioner-focused and under-theorised (Kendall, 2013; Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat, 2009). Research on community-based punishment for women is limited and focuses mainly on project evaluations to better understand 'what works' (Easton, 2010; Granville, 2009; Hedderman et al., 2008; Jolliffe et al., 2011; Malin, 2013) or policy (Kendall, 2013). A deeper understanding of the lived experiences of women on the periphery of the criminal justice system is therefore required. Malloch and McIvor (2011) outline a need for more research on experiences of community-based sentences as an increasingly prevalent form of punishment for women. Similarly, Jamieson (2012) highlights a dearth of research on female offenders' experiences in the community, particularly those engaged in supported accommodation or court-ordered activities. This thesis addresses this gap by providing direct insights from women subject to these conditions.

3.2.1 A new direction...or doubling back?

When the Coalition government came to power in 2010 the momentum for diverting convicted women from custody and addressing their needs was lost. Since 2010 there has been a distinct toughening of policy language towards female offenders even though evidence shows that women commit overall minor or non-violent crimes, often acquisitive in nature and linked to addiction or survival (Beresford, 2018). Under the Coalition government there was a distinct shift in tone away from acknowledgement of the differential experiences and needs of women within the CJS as well as push back on the unsuitability of prison for women as highlighted in the following policy statement:

Whilst women have some different needs to men, the Government believes that there should be one justice system for all offenders who commit crimes. It does not agree that prison is ineffective. The sentencing of offenders is rightly a matter for the independent judiciary and it is important for

sentencers to be able to use custody where necessary. (MoJ, 2013b)
(Government response to the Justice Committee's Second Report of
Session 2013-14 Female Offenders)

Here the different experiences by gender are downplayed, in doing so the direction of policy undermined the Corston Report and the aims of diverting women from prison. Women are twice as likely than men to be sent to prison by a magistrate for a non-violent first offence – 23% of women compared to 14% of men (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Indeed, most women entering prison (72%) are sent there for a non-violent offence such as theft or handling of stolen goods, whereas around 18% of men are given prison sentences for non-violent crimes (Prison Reform Trust 2021). Many women are being imprisoned needlessly. In the magistrates' courts 60% of women who are remanded into custody to await trial go on to receive a non-custodial sentence (Halliday et al., 2019). Women make up around 10% of those supervised in the community (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2021). Women are increasingly subject to short sentences which are more harmful than community-based interventions and ineffective in terms of reducing reoffending. The proportion of women serving very short sentences (under six months) has doubled from around a third in the late 1990s to 62% in 2017 (Hewson and Knight, 2018). Around 70% of women sentenced in 2020 were given a sentence of less than 12 months (Prison Reform Trust, 2021). Intersections like ethnicity are important, in 2020, black women were twice as likely to be arrested as white women (Race Disparity Unit, 2022).

Despite women making up only 5% of the prison population they account for a quarter of all self-harming incidents recorded in prisons. As they remain a minority compared to men, criminal justice institutions are often not equipped to meet their needs, and on leaving prison women are three times less likely to find work; 4% of women compared to 11% of men were in employment six weeks after release (Prison Reform Trust, 2020). With many women having dependents, the effects have a far wider reach with over 17,000 dependent children separated from their mothers each year (Beresford, 2018). As these statistics show, 15 years on from the Corston Report many of the issues highlighted remain. Its core aim "to radically reduce the use of custody for only the few women that pose a danger to others has yet to be achieved" (Women in Prison, 2017, p. 27).

An explanation for this heavy handedness can be found through the deconstruction of social gender roles. The image of the female offender maintains the power to shock by defying deeply embedded gendered societal norms. From childhood and into adulthood, girls and women are policed differently to boys and men (Donzelot, 1979; Cain, 1989). What is considered 'criminal' or 'deviant' has a gendered dimension. The image of women as law breakers jars with the dominant construction of "femininity that is associated with symbols of virtue, beauty, nurture and justice" (Puwar, 2004, p. 6). When women offend, they are seen to act outside of this naturalized social identity, and the reaction is therefore more severe than would be for a male whose law-breaking is comparatively less deviant.

In 2018 the Conservative government set out its flagship Female Offender Strategy stating three key areas of focus for women: early intervention, community-based solutions and improving custody (MoJ, 2018b). These priorities align with the Corston recommendations and there is some acknowledgment of the link between women who come into conflict with the law having experienced victimisation themselves within the updated Victims Strategy (MoJ, 2018a, p. 24) which aims to "use trauma-informed approaches to support female offenders who are also victims". Under then Justice Secretary David Gauke the policy direction for women in contact with the CJS moved back towards exploring diversion and community-based approaches alongside the use of the prison. To date policy promises seem little more than that with still very little practical effect for the difficulties faced by women involved with the CJS (Booth et al., 2019; Gelsthorpe, 2022).

3.2.2 Gendered pathways into crime and gendered responses within a punishment paradigm

There is consensus in the research and practice literature that women differ to men in both the types of offences committed as well as the drivers behind them. Covington (2008) argues that "gender differences are neither innate nor unchangeable; they are ascribed by society and relate to expected social roles". Women's offending is often linked to their inhabiting a social context in which the male gender is dominant, therefore drivers can include domestic abuse, sexual abuse, poverty, social exclusion,

and problematic use of alcohol or drugs (Covington, 2008; Prison Reform Trust, 2019). As Worrall (2002, p. 144) contends, women who come into conflict with the law are more likely to have offended not because of 'cognitive behavioural deficits' but through the complexity of stresses placed upon them, they "not only believe that they have few legitimate options, but in reality, they have few positive options".

Women in contact with the CJS will also often have specific needs relating to their individual histories and experiences. These can be complex and may be linked to long-standing trauma from childhood. Within the prison population Ministry of Justice statistical reports show that "53% of women reported experiencing emotional, physical or sexual abuse as a child, compared to 27% of men" (Prison Reform Trust, 2017c, p. 11; Prison Reform Trust, 2019). More than half of the women surveyed also had experienced domestic violence as adults (57%) (ibid.). These figures are likely to be higher as disclosing abuse is difficult as there are various complex factors influencing this process such as feelings of self-blame and shame (Crisma et al., 2004; Gelsthorpe et al., 2007; Hershkowitz et al., 2007).

Psychological perspectives have drawn attention to the importance of negative life events or experiences particularly in childhood (Bowlby, 1988). There is now an abundance of research into early adversity and how it contributes to the development of both psychological and physiological problems as adolescents and adults (Felitti et al., 1998a, Chapman et al., 2013; Larkin et al., 2014; Levenson, 2017).

These adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) have been described and defined in various ways. In their landmark ACE study Felitti et al., (1998, p. 245) categorized the experiences as "psychological, physical or sexual abuse; violence against mother; or living with household members who were substance abusers, mentally ill or suicidal, or ever imprisoned". Lloyd and Turner (2008) developed a 41-item adverse event checklist in their research with young adults and how this related to risk behaviours such as alcohol dependence. Furthermore, they examined the *cumulative* impact of multiple events over participants' lifetimes. A high level of lifetime social stressors linked to alcohol dependence. Padgett et al. (2012) adapted this list to include a further 10 items to capture additional adult adversities and focused on the impact of chronic stress within a group of homeless people with mental health issues.

More recently, ideas around how these early traumas impact current behaviours has been a growing area of research on both sides of the Atlantic (though is still dominated by studies in the US), and has seeped into practice within mental health, child welfare, social work, youth justice and women offender arenas (Messina et al., 2007; Covington, 2008; Brown et al., 2012; Messina, 2014; DeCandia and Guarino, 2015; Kaysen et al., 2017; Sweeney, 2016; Youth Justice Board, 2017). In terms of prevalence and gender split in recorded cases of child sexual abuse, the majority of victims are girls; in their systematic review Barth et al. (2013, p. 469) found that "nine girls and three boys out of 100 are victims of forced intercourse." ACEs and cumulative traumas have been linked to various problems including adolescent alcohol dependence (Lloyd and Turner, 2008), alcohol abuse in adult life (Guzman, 2013) and homelessness (Padgett et al., 2012).

Statistical information highlights a disproportionate number of early and cumulative adverse experiences for women when compared to men within the criminal justice system, and the general population (see Table 3.1). It follows that if women have different experiences of childhood and early years than men, they will have different pathways into the criminal justice system, and likewise different needs and requirements of service use. Gendered pathways into crime are discussed in further depth in Chapter 7 which reflects on participants' experiences with penal institutions.

This thesis provides highly detailed and contextual data on ACEs and subsequent life courses of participants in this study (see Chapter 5), which suggests that the cumulative impact is an important yet overlooked factor in understanding why marginalised women come into conflict with the law or struggle to meet behavioural conditions set out by the systems and services they are engaged with.

Table 3.1 Early years characteristics of male and female prisoners in England and Wales, 2021-2022

| Characteristic | Prison population | Female prisoners | Male prisoners | General population |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Taken into care as a child | 24% | 31% | 24% | 2% |

| | | | | |
|--|-----|---------|---------|--|
| Experienced abuse as a child | 29% | 53% | 27% | 20% |
| Observed violence in the home as a child | 41% | 50% | 40% | 14% |
| Regularly truant from school | 59% | Unknown | Unknown | 5.2% (England) and 4.8% (Wales) |
| Expelled or permanently excluded from school | 42% | 32% | 43% | In 2005 >1% of school pupils were permanently excluded (England) |
| No qualifications | 47% | Unknown | Unknown | 15% of working age population |

Source: (Halliday and Hewson, 2022, p. 26-27)

As the table shows experiences of trauma are prevalent in the female prison population. Covington (2008, p. 379) defines “trauma as a response to violence or some other overwhelmingly negative experience (e.g., abuse). Trauma is both an event and a particular response to an event. The response is one of overwhelming fear, helplessness, or horror. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is one type of disorder that results from trauma”. It can also be understood as “situations where abuse, death, criminalisation and imprisonment are constants from an early age” (Segrave and Carlton, 2010, p. 292). There is a strong correlation between women with underlying trauma, addiction and other physical and mental health issues and being at risk of contact with the CJS (Covington, 2008; Sarkar and Lustro, 2011). These feminist-informed contextual understandings of trauma have not necessarily translated into policy and practice where instead an individualised and pathologised perspective is often employed. This has been critiqued by feminist criminologists as

“alienating and disempowering” for women with a history of trauma (Player, 2017, p. 577).

Some argue that gender responsive approaches are a better way to work with women within the CJS. Such approaches are often strengths-based and with a focus on trauma-informed care where women are treated holistically (Bloom et al., 2006; Day et al., 2014). Research by Corcoran and Fox (2012; 2013) highlights the potential for the alignment of ‘business’ and ‘social’ aims within support specifically for vulnerable women within community-based CJS interventions in the UK, specifically in the ‘voluntary sector turn in criminal justice’ and the ‘Diversion Programme’.

Conversely, research has also shown that gender informed practice can unintentionally provide new and different ways of controlling women. In her study of Canada's National Parole Board, Hannah-Moffat (2004) emphasizes the way this counterintuitively leads to placing responsibility at the feet of women as though they have let themselves become victims via an irrational choice. Much like moral individualism, responsibility, as a bedrock of neoliberalism, serves to “downplay the social structures and relationships in which female offenders are embedded” (Haney, 2004, p. 345). Behavioural conditions placed on women who leave prison under conditional release can serve to fast-track women back to jail often for minor non-compliance issues.

Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat (2009) critiqued gender-responsive programming within the Canadian parole system in that the conditions imposed on women re-entering the community after prison are contradictory, prescribing normative, pro-social behaviours whilst simultaneously expecting the women to exhibit independent self-governance. In England and Wales whilst the Female Offender Strategy (MoJ, 2018b) broadly supports a ‘distinct’, ‘gender-responsive’ approach for women, it lacks clarity and accountability and there is little substantive support behind it in terms of ring-fenced permanent funding to ensure even provision (Booth et al., 2018). Furthermore, the language used within the strategy shifts the focus onto the individual becoming a ‘productive’ citizen obscuring the wider social context and causes of women’s specific ‘vulnerabilities’ (Booth et al., 2018). One of the key priorities of the strategy is ‘earlier intervention’, this, alongside ongoing austerity measures (budgetary cuts) and rising

poverty, runs the risk of drawing more women into the CJS (Hine, 2019). Rather than preventative, earlier interventions could be viewed as an extension of surveillance and control into the lives of women 'with vulnerabilities' who should not be in contact with the CJS.

This section has shown that a reduction in the use of prisons for women is strongly advocated in the academic literature in many countries. The CJS and, in particular, the prison can be seen as a perpetuator of gender-based injustice and violence; this has been a long-standing theme in feminist criminological research and a campaigning topic for advocacy groups. In the UK, despite shifts towards diversion within criminal justice policy rhetoric and the development of women's centres, the continued use of very short sentences shows the endurance of prison as a form of punishment for marginalised women. They are still being punished rather than supported to address their needs. Women in conflict with the law, and those deemed 'at risk' of offending, constitute a vilified, hyper-vulnerable and voiceless group (Lloyd, 1995; Corston, 2007; Prison Reform Trust, 2014). The following section focuses on family interventions and how child removal is experienced as a form of punishment, a neglected dimension of the penal-welfare net which is significant for women.

3.2.3 Mothers in contact with or on the edges of the criminal justice system

Many of the women entering prison have dependent children; in the UK, the Prison Reform Trust (2016) estimates that imprisonment separates over 17,000 children from their mothers each year. The Ministry of Justice's own cautious figures suggest that around 31-40% of women in the CJS have one or more dependents (Ministry of Justice, 2018). Many women lose their homes when they go to prison, and 60% of women leaving custody have no accommodation to return to on release (Prison Reform Trust, 2016, 2017c). This means the odds are stacked against mothers who find themselves in conflict with the law. Despite advocacy of alternatives to prison for mothers the use of short prison sentences has remained stable over the past 10 years, the use of community sentences has halved and suspended sentences account for only 3% of all sentences (Hewson and Knight, 2018). There are limited places to keep mothers and babies together in custody; in 2017-18 70 women were moved into

prison-based Mother and Baby Units; the number of applications has fallen by 54% since 2011; and applications were only successful in around two thirds of cases (61%) (Hewson and Knight, 2018).

The literature suggests that non-custodial options for women with dependent children and pregnant women should be supported by policy and encouraged in practice. However, this suggestion has seen inconsistent uptake by magistrates (Hedderman and Gunby, 2013), and has been undermined by the failed privatisation of probation and its impact on the quality of pre-sentence reports (Burke and Collett, 2016; Annison, 2019; Committee of Public Affairs, 2019; NAO, 2019). Policy impetus for the diversion approach has been waning since 2010, and despite the female offender strategy (MoJ, 2018b) coming out progress has stalled (as outlined in the previous sections). Additionally, it is important to recognise that being in contact with the CJS in the community does not necessarily mean that women will be able to keep their dependants with them. Community sentences also place mothers under the spotlight of family intervention. Women face high levels of scrutiny and surveillance whether in contact with the CJS or not, particularly if they face structural barriers such as poverty and are in receipt of social assistance (Bumiller, 2013).

3.3 Family interventions and child removal: working-class mothers and the 'wrong' way to parent

Over the past twenty years there has been a revival in family intervention projects (FIPs), most recently through an intensified focus on 'troubled' families by the Coalition and Conservative governments (Ball et al., 2016; Flint, 2006b). Following the 2011 riots, the Troubled Families Programme (TFP) was set up to 'turn around' the estimated 120,000 families who without intervention were deemed by the government as being likely to produce the rioters and youth gang members of the future (DCCLG, 2012, p. 1). This highlights a successful conflation within public discourse of 'anti-social behaviour' with parental deficit. More specifically politicians linked the riots to

‘dadlessness’, placing the blame for social unrest on single mothers rather than on complex structural inequalities (Ashe, 2014; Muncie 2009).

Gillies (2011) highlights the gendered impact on mothers who perennially bear the brunt of family intervention policies despite the use of gender-neutral terms like ‘lone parent’ or ‘single parent’. Although family interventions may provide short-term improvements, based on limited criteria (see Flint, 2012; Parr, 2011), the gendered criminalization of marginalised families, particularly lone mothers, is often the broader outcome (Jensen, 2013; Wenham et al., 2015; Wenham, 2016). More often, interventions are associated with coercion and control (see Gillies, 2011; Crossley, 2016), with families associating interventions with putting them at risk of losing their children to the care system.

While the family, and in particular the mother, as a site for blame, intervention and change has a long history (Donzelot, 1979), parenting under permanent austerity conjures up a specific image of the ‘good’ parent along with its antithesis - the ‘feckless’ parent (Jensen, 2013). Jensen (2013, p. 62) emphasises how the continued undermining of social protections ‘coalesces more substantively and intensively around the institution of the family and parenting than any other site’. Cain (2011, p 72) stresses the expectations placed on mothers to be ‘responsible citizen-workers’ *and* to also devote themselves to producing pro-social citizen-workers of the future. For women of working-class backgrounds who have been marginalised and face an added layer of discrimination having been criminalised too, meeting these societal expectations can be particularly challenging. This is explored empirically later in this thesis (see Chapters 6 and 7).

Ringrose and Walkerdine (2008) highlight the fallacy underpinning the idea that women can and should ‘have it all’. This myth is reliant on structural inequality and the hidden outsourced labour of working-class women:

The feminist political dilemmas of housewife versus career woman [...] have been replaced by narratives of renaissance women who juggle thriving careers (attained through the right modes of education) with motherhood. And although she may buy maternal services from the less

successful and pathologised working-class woman, this depends on her own (or family's) financial power to do so, devolving responsibility increasingly onto the individual (Ringrose and Walkerdine 2008, p. 232).

It is also reliant on social distancing and invoking disgust from the middle classes. Skeggs (1997; 2004, p. 103) outlines the long history of othering that working-class women have been subject to; they constitute a group associated with excess (both in their sexuality and aesthetics), laziness (unemployed 'welfare queens') and waste (the image of the spendthrift and the 'feminized couch potato'). Although this may be the dominant imagery, this is certainly not the reality for most working-class women, including those who have experienced criminal justice interventions. A more nuanced picture of this experience is shown in the empirical sections of this thesis. Most of the research participants in this study were engaged in activities they saw as meaningful; many were volunteering within the centres where they received ongoing support while others were engaged in self-improvement activities for their children or were caring for children or relatives.

Allen and Osgood (2009) highlight that there are 'right' and 'wrong' ways to be a mother both within policy and public discourse. On the one hand there is the middle-class 'Yummy Mummy' who "embodies self-responsibility and self-sufficiency...motherhood is postponed, planned and follows full participation in the labour market", whereas the 'Chav Mum' is the "contemporary manifestation of a historical vilification and abjection of white working-class femininity and motherhood" (Allen and Osgood, 2009, p. 8).

In dominant political and media discourse, child protection is hegemonic, parents need to 'shape up' or the child will be 'shipped out'; child removal has become 'doxic' in the Bourdieusian sense that is it is viewed as necessary and uncontentious, something taken for granted (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68). This is especially the case when the parent(s) are those already considered societal outcasts; those variously and multiply deprived, in receipt of benefits or who have been through the criminal justice system (Featherstone et al., 2014, p. 9). Child removal often takes place essentially

unchallenged by those affected due to limited resources and no recourse to legal aid, while the practice is condoned by wider society.

This child-centred approach pits the state against parents rather than alongside them as 'necessary partners with the state', 'academic debates...miss the mark and methods of intervention...are often counterproductive' (Huntington, 2008, p. 131). Namely, the child welfare system does not see that an effective way to support the child would be by supporting the parents. It is important to place this form of 'child rescue' in a broader historical context; the management of 'surplus populations' by the state can be 'extremely dangerous, especially in very unequal societies' as evidenced by racial assimilation policies and the removal of children from unmarried mothers (Featherstone et al., 2014, p. 1742; O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, 2007; Thane and Evans, 2012). Indeed, the media-based demonisation of 'bad' parents, namely single mothers, places them as the cause of many social problems (de Benedictis, 2012). Media spotlighting high profile child abuse cases might suggest that the child protection system is not doing enough (Warner, 2014; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

For working-class women motherhood can present itself as an "acute site for value production" (Skeggs, 2002); caring is perceived as important and there is a reversal of moral value; being a mum is more important than returning to work and 'shipping out' children to nursery (Walkerdine and Lucey, 1989; Lawler, 2000; Gillies, 2008). Walkerdine et al. (2001) have shown that motherhood can present a more attractive route for young working-class women than other potentially more intimidating settings such as further or higher education. They also argue that they do not fear having a family first and career later and their families are often supportive of this pathway. Despite this, research has also shown working-class mothers to be intensely aware of the normative discourses which demonise them (Hey and Bradford, 2006; Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

A working-class mother who also bears a criminal conviction thus finds herself at a challenging intersection which has received limited scholarly attention. The research addresses this gap by investigating how mothers experience being 'carceral-assistential' subjects.

3.3.1 Families in crisis: looked after children and newborns in care

Retrenching welfare and increasing inequality have intensified the precariousness of those already marginalised in society. The tougher welfare regime under austerity has been shown to impact women and lone mothers particularly hard, affecting community services such as the closure of women's refuges and both in and out-of-work benefits (De Henau and Reed, 2016). These changes are likely to have exacerbated the number of families in crisis. Against this backdrop, the intensification of the policing of 'troubled families', and the shift towards 'early intervention' within child protection policy and practice, has seen the number of publicly cared for children in England continue to rise (Featherstone et al., 2014).

In recent years the number of looked after children has increased sharply. For example, between 2015/16 and 2020/2021 the number of looked after children increased by 13% (from 70,440 to 80,850) (Department for Education, 2022). The number of mothers with recurrent care applications against them is also rising. The first attempt to measure the scale of this issue in England found that in the sample a notable proportion (7,143 or 15.5%) of 'vulnerable birth mothers'; these women were linked to almost a third (29%) of all care applications (Broadhurst et al., 2015). A quarter of mothers who lose custody of a child through a court order will return to the family court with a case involving a subsequent child; younger mothers (aged 14 to 24) face a higher chance (one in three) of this happening (Broadhurst et al., 2015).

More recently, Broadhurst et al. (2018) have turned their focus to understanding the scale of newborns entering the care system. The 'Born into care' report states that between 2007/8 and 2016/17 there was a 136% increase (from 1,039 to 2,447) in the number of newborns (within one week of birth) subject to care proceedings. The rate of newborns within all infants (aged up to 52 weeks) coming before the courts rose from 32% to 42%. "If the categories "newborns" and "1-3 weeks" are combined, proceedings were being issued in less than 4 weeks from birth for at least 50% of all infants in the sample" (Broadhurst et al., 2018, p. 21). Although this report sets out the scale of the problem in England and Wales and raises some important questions with

regards to maternal welfare, it mainly focuses on outcomes of cases and does not provide insights into the experience of mothers who go through the removal of a newborn from their care. To understand this better, section 7.4 presents findings from the maternal perspective of child removal and of undergoing newborn removal are presented.

There are complex reasons behind these developments. Long-term variations in social work and legal practice, a number of high-profile child deaths and a focus on risk management have influenced the shift towards early and recurrent child removal (Parton, 2011; Rogowski, 2013; Featherstone et al., 2014; Dickens and Masson, 2016).

Many cases are not clear cut. Emerson et al. (2005) estimate that 40-60% of parents involved in child removal proceedings have a learning difficulty and of these children 10% are newborns into care. Parents with learning disabilities are over-represented in families involved with child protection; rather than being cases of deliberate abuse they more often cite neglect or poor parenting skills (Morgan, 2016). UK mothers with learning disabilities who have had their children removed have reported experiencing high levels of scrutiny and 'presumed incompetence' (Gould and Dodd, 2014). Ultimately, the 'maloptical' penal state continues to 'see' them negatively (McNeill, 2019).

For this group high levels of recurrent removal are prevalent (Mayes and Lewellyn, 2012). The high structural challenges this group face are identified by Emerson et al. (2015) and include being socio-economically and geographically disadvantaged. Women with learning disabilities are also over-represented in the CJS (Hammond et al., 2018). Research outside of the UK shows that mothers with learning difficulties make up a significant proportion (20-25%) of those with children removed from their custody, even in countries with a less conditional or punitive welfare state such as Norway (Tøssebro et al. 2017).

Women with learning disabilities are more at risk of domestic violence from an intimate partner and less likely to be aware of ways to seek help. As such, domestic violence from a partner can also be a common factor in child protection interventions, with

mothers scared to report it for fear of losing their children (McCarthy et al., 2017). Learning disabilities and domestic abuse were also prevalent in the group of women recruited to take part in this study (see Appendix 12 for participant profiles).

In many developed countries there is increasing concern surrounding the number of children taken into care by the state (Cummins, 2019) and the related, and often overlooked, problem of 'vulnerable' mothers experiencing successive pregnancies and removals into care. This development is observable in the UK and states with cognate social-welfare systems, as well as those with differing approaches such as the Scandinavian countries (Fokken, 2016; Ubbesen et al., 2012).

There is limited research into the child removal experience from the perspective of birth parents, especially birth mothers who have experienced successive removals of children from their care. Some insights on parents living without their children are provided by the international post-adoption literature which highlights parents' loss, grief, stigma and shame, with lasting psychological trauma for those unable to put the loss of children behind them. Some studies focus on parents who have given up their children for adoption (Winkler and Van Keppel 1984; Wells 1994; Smith and Logan 2002), others on mandated removal from parents involved in child protection cases (Neil 2007; Cossar and Neil 2010; Schofield et al. 2011). Similar trends for rising numbers of younger children and newborns entering the care system can be seen in Australia and the US.

Broadhurst and Mason (2017) argue for the need for a focus on 'parent rehabilitation', placing responsibility on the state following state sanctioned child removal to address the cumulative issues parents face. The idea of 'parent rehabilitation' is not only problematic in that it makes an association with offenders within the criminal justice system - which Broadhurst and Mason (2017) concede – but also that it frames the problem as that of the individual. It distracts from structural problems such as deepening inequality and poverty linked to austerity reforms of welfare and local services which increases the number of families, and particularly mothers, in crisis. This is unfair for those whose parenting has come into question due to, for example,

a learning disability or a health issue, or from being a victim of domestic abuse, when services are under pressure.

Criminalised women face high levels of discrimination and loss of the right to care for their children as an expression of their citizenship (Lister, 2007). For such mothers there is no private sphere; the human right to a private and family life⁹ is denied potentially again and again. Failed mothers have limited means to reconcile with lost children. Decisions to permanently remove children negate the redemptive potential of motherhood (Sharpe, 2015). This thesis suggests that for women the concept of the 'penal dragnet' - used by Wacquant (2001a) to reflect the 'tens of millions of Americans' kept under judicial supervision and within criminal databanks - can be broadened to encompass the experience of court-ordered child removal. Such experiences affect mothers deeply and over the life course as well as their children whose futures are likely to feature extreme hardship and become entwined with the CJS, as outlined in the next section.

Broadhurst and Mason (2012; 2013) highlight the plight of 'maternal outcasts' subject to successive and permanent removal of children. They note that the scrutiny and interventions during the child removal process, is often followed by mothers subsequently falling through the net, unable to take up support in the instances that it is available. Broadhurst and Mason (2013, p. 292) summarise the issues facing this group as "multiple problems of homelessness, mental health and mental capacity". This development is costly both at an individual level and for wider society: "A lack of attention to parents' needs following child removal is detrimental not just for parents, but also for children, broader family networks, civil society and the public purse" (Broadhurst and Mason, 2017, p. 45). An approach which acknowledges the 'additive burden' of child removal as well as 'histories of disadvantage' is suggested; supporting mothers after removal, and where possible finding ways for children to maintain some relationship with birth families (Broadhurst and Mason, 2017).

Though more auto-ethnographical in nature, Morriss' (2018) reflections on her research project work into the child protection process shed light on the way in which

⁹ Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

living apart from children can affect birth mothers. She likens the experience to being 'haunted'; the children are not physically with their mothers and it is their very absence which mothers cannot escape from. Mothers are trapped temporally with only past memories or imagined futures where they are reunited with their children. Thus, their pasts, presents and futures are 'haunted' by the spectre of absent children with many women fearful of subsequent pregnancies and having further children removed. Morriss (2018) was unable to publish quotes from materials in the case files, so further research which foregrounds birth mothers' voices would deepen our understanding of these processes from the maternal perspective. This study builds on this small body of research through in-depth insights into the experiences and perspectives of a group of mothers who have experienced child removal in the UK.

In recent years, research has highlighted poor outcomes for young people who have been 'looked after' (Sands, 2016; Oakley et al., 2018). The government has acknowledged the difficult transition from being 'looked after' to being a 'care leaver' (DCLG, 2012). At the end of 2018 the government published a tri-ministerial protocol on reducing the unnecessary criminalisation of looked-after children and care leavers (DfE, 2018). In providing a solution to one problem, child removal is also productive of new ones. Brown's (2014, p. 377) work on young people at the "vulnerability-transgression nexus", a concept which reflects the "close relationship between 'vulnerability' and 'challenging' or 'difficult' behaviours", highlights the nuance in care policy practice. Brown's work brings to the fore the idea that the label 'vulnerable' can bring with it disciplinary control rather than support.

This thesis presents empirical findings on the experiences of being judged as 'bad' mothers by the state, how it feels to be marked as failed mothers and the barriers this creates to future hopes of having a family, despite marked changes in attitudes, behaviours and circumstance (see Chapter 7). It also contributes to the literature on the links between welfare, child removal and penal policy in the UK context.

3.4 Towards a punitive welfare state

There is a large body of work that explores the relationship between contemporary social-welfare and penal policies in neoliberal societies. Beckett and Western (2001) investigated an association between lower welfare spending and higher rates of incarceration in the US. Downes and Hansen (2006) found that higher spending on welfare (per GDP) was related to lower rates of imprisonment in 18 countries.

In the UK Thatcher's government introduced activation policies reinvigorating the obligation to search for work and to get work-ready for those in receipt of welfare benefits. Subsequent administrations on both sides of the political divide have adjusted policy but the trajectory towards growing conditionality remains, paving the way for the emergence of a highly conditional welfare state linked to behavioural and attitudinal conditions enforced by benefit sanctions for non-compliance (Crisp and Powell, 2016; Dwyer, 2004). This "creeping conditionality" was supported by the dependency discourse of freeing those 'trapped on benefits' (Dwyer, 2004, p. 271). The Coalition Government and subsequent Conservative Governments have intensified conditionality, which is now "ubiquitous", with an expanded sanctions regime (Dwyer and Wright, 2014).

The use of conditionality and sanctions has grown as a means of inducing correct behaviour in welfare recipients in the UK (Barker and Lamble, 2009; Dwyer and Wright, 2014; Webster, 2014; Wright et al., 2020). These neoliberal "activation" reforms target the socially marginalised groups that rely most on the state (Betzelt and Bothfeld, 2011, p. 73). Women, in particular, are adversely affected by these policies, with policy failing to take into account the legacy of inequalitarian division of labour in the private sphere, as expanded on in the subsequent section.

Government discourse has consistently framed welfare dependency as an individualised lifestyle choice of the 'never deserving' poor. This is echoed in the mass media, particularly evidenced by the proliferation of 'poverty porn' – television programmes which voyeuristically package poor people and promotes a 'commonsense' that the welfare system is not working and requires reform – fostering a politics of resentment and paving the way for intensified punitive conditionality (Bochel, 2011; Slater, 2014; Jensen, 2014; Dwyer and Wright, 2014; Fletcher and Wright, 2017; Edmiston, 2018). Commentators have observed a 'sanction first, investigate later' ethos, applied regardless of whether those sanctioned had good

reason to explain the behaviour they were sanctioned for, or are able to meet their basic needs following a benefit sanction (Butler, 2015). As such the UK has a punitive welfare state which acts as a 'secret penal system' (Webster, 2015).

The lack of universal support for social assistance benefits divides those who pay taxes and those in receipt of benefits, with the former "increasingly likely to regard welfare as a burden unfairly borne by them...while provoking anger and resentment at those who it seemed to unduly favour" (Pratt, 2011, p. 262).

Research, largely from the US, emphasises the link between welfare reform and child protective services involvement. These studies highlight how increasing economic hardship associated with retrenching welfare support exacerbates the stressors related to family abuse and neglect (Berrick et al., 2006). Moreover, the experience of childhood maltreatment has been linked to those individuals having welfare dependency later in life (Spratt, 2008). Unsurprisingly, care proceedings are more prevalent among those parents who experienced abuse either as a child, adult or both (Barrett, 2009; Derr and Taylor, 2004).

3.4.1 Workfare, austerity and gender

In the twentieth century, welfare policies in the UK as in other 'strong male-breadwinner states' have served to reinforce patriarchal social relations and "disadvantage women both in the home and in the workplace" (Roberts, 2016, p. 116). Moreover, there has been a "deepening of state control over processes of social reproduction via the disciplining of women as mothers and housewives and the stigmatisation and criminalisation of those who failed to perform these duties according to established norms" (Roberts, 2016, p. 116). Roberts (2016, p. 116) adapts Garland's (2001) 'penal-welfarism' concept to 'paternal penal-welfarism' in order to bring women into focus and integrate the welfare system into a previously crime management focused model of governance. For women, the direction of policy can be characterised as a shift to 'equality with a vengeance' in that criminal justice and welfare institutions fail to acknowledge the distinct characteristics and specific

vulnerabilities of women (Chesney-Lind, 1995; Corston, 2007; Kerr and Shackel, 2018).

The impact of welfare reform over the past few decades has fallen disproportionately onto women who rely more on social assistance payments and who use public services more intensively (Hills, 2014); as such there is a gendered dimension to welfare conditionality and sanctions (Women's Budget Group, 2021). Formerly protected groups such as lone parents, the majority of whom are women, are increasingly subject to surveillance, moral scrutiny and the threat of punishment through the social security system. Lone parents have been heavily impacted by the shift towards ubiquitous conditionality (Dwyer and Wright, 2014).

Lone parents have been increasingly mandated to look for paid employment when they were previously able to receive benefits while looking after children up to the age of 16. Successive 'activation' reforms have introduced work focused interviews (introduced between 2001-2004), mandatory action plans (in 2005) for lone parents with a youngest child aged one to four. Lone Parent Obligations, incrementally introduced from 2008, removed eligibility for Income Support and introduced work-related activities conditions earlier (Johnsen, 2014). Furthermore, lone parents were made financially worse off under UC (Brewer and De Agostini, 2015; Cain, 2016; Dewar and Ben-Galim, 2017). Dependency (an ideologically charged term) on the state is no longer tenable even for lone parents (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). Taking stock of the cumulative effect of successive welfare budgets, 86% of net savings in the period 2010-2020 will have been made at the expense of women (Cracknell and Keen, 2016).

A feminist lens is useful as it reveals the different expectations of the state from its male and female subjects, uncovering the specific difficulties that women at the bottom of the social order face as commodified citizens under market forces. As Fraser (2003, p. 73) argues these definitions of what is normal and what is deviant denies certain groups full membership as legitimate citizens in a society for example the normative idea that "male-headed households are proper...female-headed are not". What can be observed is not merely a withdrawing of the so-called 'maternalistic arm' of the welfare state but a paternalist reworking of it.

Women, particularly working-class women in receipt of social security benefits, find themselves subject to high levels of surveillance, moral scrutiny and tutelage and punishment (Gillies, 2007; Hunter et al., 2010; Bumiller, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Moreover, the treatment of marginalised mothers within the most precarious factions of the working classes remains under-researched despite the disciplinary and punitive methods employed towards them. Poor mothers have faced receding support in the community due to funding cuts under austerity which makes life harder (Reis, 2018). With receding support issues become more difficult to cope with such as precarity, debt, problems with housing, a learning disability, mental health issues, domestic violence victimisation, or a combination.

Piven (2010, p. 111) argues that "neoliberalism means that politics and the state have become more important instruments in the age-old capitalist project of class domination". This has a very real impact on mothers; 44,000 lone parents were sanctioned in Great Britain in 2013 (Webster, 2015). The shift to 'ubiquitous' conditionality highlights the blurring of welfare and penal policy in the UK (Dwyer and Wright, 2014, 33; Fletcher, 2013).

Recent research highlights that the double-edged sword of retrenching social assistance and increased conditionality is felt most keenly by the poorest people. Areas of high unemployment and sanction use have been linked to rising food bank usage (Butler, 2015; Lambie-Mumford and Dowler, 2014). Seemingly permanent austerity sees Britain characterised by rising inequality with people experiencing more extreme poverty, relying on food banks, informal networks and survival crime to get by, furthermore research suggesting that benefit sanctions can be a causal factor in people becoming homeless (McCarthy et al, 2015; Garthwaite, 2017; Edmiston et al, 2017; Fitzpatrick, et al. 2018; McKeever, et al. 2018).

As the welfare system takes on characteristics of the penal system and becomes more punitive, it is unsurprising that the women involved with the CJS have experienced "long-term poverty, debts and loans with high interest" and that their crimes are often linked to economic survival (NOMS, 2012, p. 36; Prison Reform Trust, 2014). Women in contact with or on the edges of the CJS are subject to an explicitly gender-responsive 'doxa' within policy hence the 'Female offender Strategy', this contrasts

with the gender-neutral terms in which welfare policy is couched (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Hedderman et al., 2011; Salisbury and Van Voorhis, 2009).

In public discourse, women as 'welfare dependent' or 'criminal' are both constructed as social problems with responsibility laid at the feet of the individual. The solution to these problems, underpinned by Charles Murray's influential 'underclass' thesis¹⁰, lies with the individual reforming themselves (with support), and then becoming self-reliant via the panacea of paid employment. The responsabilisation of women on diversionary programmes in a sense sets them up for failure as the well-meaning "interventions do not change the larger socio-political environments" that they inhabit (Shaylor and Meiners, 2013, p. 189). As Wacquant (2016) argues the roll back of the social safety net, is accompanied by a widening of the 'penal dragnet', in this context it is actively supported by the punitive turn in welfare and its disregard of distinct characteristics of women which pushes them further towards social precarity. The linking in policy of the criminal justice and welfare systems via the referral of ex-offenders to the Work Programme on release via 'day one mandation' may drive the revolving door between prison and the welfare system (Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), 2012).

Discursively, we have seen the criminalization of female poverty through the construction of 'welfare as fraud' (Chunn and Gavigan, 2004) where receipt of social assistance has become a 'privilege' not a 'right' (Brown, 2012). Roberts (2016, p. 177) argues that we can anticipate an ongoing rise in female criminality due to the "restructuring of welfare in the context of a precarious labour market, which has had disproportionately negative effects on women (and single-headed households with children)". The neoliberal state not only punishes more but does so in new and different ways, thus constituting a gendered 'carceral-assistential' subject and (re)producing marginalised populations. The empirical chapters of this thesis provide novel contextualised insights into the gendered dimensions of the state's carceral-assistential net and puts forward nuanced understanding of the state's management of marginalised women across both the welfare and penal arms.

¹⁰ Charles Murray (1989; 1990) highlighted 'illegitimacy', marriage and the state of the British family as the main contributors to the growing 'underclass', a term he used to describe the undesirable or threatening poor.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a critical review of the relevant literature which has framed the research design and empirical work reported in this thesis. It has specifically focused on three important areas in which experiences of the CJS is gendered: penal system, family or community interventions, and punitive welfare approaches. The exploration of the literature shows that there is a good evidence base for understanding some of the issues that women who are in contact with or on the edges of the CJS face. Despite this, there has been ambivalence in enacting recommendations from academics, advocacy groups and official reviews. Within agencies of the CJS there has been resistance to diverting women from prison in practice as shown in the stubbornly high figure of women in prison and use of very short prison sentences for women and there has been a reduction in the use of alternatives to custody such as community sentences. We have also seen that diversion schemes have been used as add-ons to community sentences rather than *instead of* punishment, as first designed in the initial diversion demonstration project (Jolliffe et al., 2011). Moreover, the impacts of community interventions are under-researched in the UK; we know from Canadian feminist criminologists that supervision in the community can provide new and different ways of controlling and punishing women (Hannah-Moffatt, 2009; Maidment, 2006).

The small body of qualitative work available suggests that women are intensely affected by family interventions such as child removal, which involves the penal system with its use of disciplinary measures, surveillance and the courts but is also closely linked to the welfare state in terms of social work and child protection. An area which has faced less scrutiny is the removal of children from criminalised women with multiple adversities, particularly the successive removal of children from this group.

There is a large body of work that has highlighted the changes made both to welfare policy and criminal justice policy over the past decade, evidence has shown this has intensified under the austerity regime of the past ten resulting in extremes of poverty and hardship. In particular, women and families have been acutely affected by the retrenchment of welfare and the tougher regime of conditionality, as well as cutbacks to local services. Common across both welfare and penal systems is that they are

highly interventionist, more often punitive than assistive. The 'commonsense' distinctions between welfare (as support) and penal interventions (as punishment) are often blurred.

Juxtaposing the emotionally devastating experience of child removal as a family intervention within this review of penal and welfare shifts is important. From the perspective of many of the participants within this thesis, as shown later, child welfare services would be categorised as a punitive intervention. By bringing together women, welfare and criminal justice this critical literature review has shown that both policy arms of the state, intentionally or not, serve to push women to the extremes of hardship and through fragmented interventions ultimately (re)produces the precarious populations it seeks to manage. This thesis will address a gap in our understanding through the collection of direct insights from marginalised women subject to these disciplinary techniques in the community, and from the practitioners delivering these interventions.

4. Methodology and Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on my position, as the researcher, in the field and the processes behind the production of empirical findings reported in this thesis. It provides an honest, accessible and reflexive account of how the research was conducted. In doing so it outlines the research rationale and overall aim of the research. Details on the underpinning methodological positions which have guided the research design, implementation and analysis are also explained. The chapter expands on details of the research process including the decision-making processes which guided the choice of research methods and reflects on how well they were received by participants and gatekeepers. I draw attention to issues surrounding qualitative social research praxis and issues of access and recruitment of participants. Finally, I reflexively explore how I made sense of the field on entry in terms of my position within the study and with respect to my participants and the analytical process.

This study is grounded in a feminist epistemology; as such, the inclusion of women's own perspectives and experiences is integral in this approach (Presser, 2005). I wanted to conduct research which would counter the androcentrism of the criminology discipline (Daly and Chesney-Lind, 1988; Smart, 2012). Therefore, it made sense both ethically and methodologically to focus on the voices of women who have limited means of accessing or influencing those who make policy which impacts them or to the media which represents them, and those professionals working with them.

4.2 Research Rationale, Aims and Objectives and Research Questions

There are considerable conceptual gaps within contemporary theoretical models of the state's governance of social marginalisation, namely that they often fail to reflect women's experiences (see Chapter 2, Section 2.4). This thesis foregrounds marginalised women's voices in order to extend our understanding of how the welfare

and penal arms of the state govern this group. The previous chapter (Chapter 3, Section 3.2) highlighted an under researched nexus of social policy where the management of women intersects along the following policy lines: the criminal justice system (CJS), the benefits (or welfare) system and family interventions or social work. The research aims to provide insights into the lived experience of interventions and services that affect a specific group of women at the nexus of these social policy areas.

As outlined initially in section 1.3, the aim of the research is to re-examine Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of the contemporary state through employing a feminist lens and focusing on the lived realities of criminalised and 'at risk' women - and those who work with them - and the gendered character of social disciplining. In doing so, it seeks to answer the following three research questions:

1. What forms and frequency of adversity are present in the lives of marginalised women and how does this shape or interact with their coming into conflict with the law?
2. What is the range of institutions/interventions governing marginalised women and how, specifically, do they experience and respond to: i) the conditional welfare system ii) penal institutions and iii) organisations outside of the penal-welfare arms of the state?
3. How might we understand and theorise the range of state and street-level institutions governing marginal women's lives?

This thesis is concerned with the everyday lived experiences and processes of sense-making of women who have offended, and women considered to be 'at risk' of offending or reoffending (Corston, 2007). It examines the experiences of women in a specific part of the British CJS outside of the prison walls. It purposefully engages with women who are subject to 'diversionary' alternatives to custody and engaged on the periphery of the CJS in order to gain insights into their lived experience of being subject to the raft of interventions at the penal-welfare nexus. These included women's centres enacting 'early intervention' strategies, receiving referrals via police-based triage or out of court disposals and other referral pathways. It also engaged with women accessing a homeless day centre which provided a wide range of services which aimed to keep service users out of the CJS. Additionally, it also involved those

attending a women-only peer support group for victims and survivors of domestic abuse.

The penal character of community sanctions and diversionary services from the perspective of women is explored, and how they make sense of the conditions, surveillance and supervisory sanctions they experience. I am interested in the exercise of penal power and punishment outside of the prison system and the layers of both formal and informal control, from the obvious to the unexpected, that these women experience. It is likely that the conditions of their diversion from court or prison are part of an array of expectations from multiple agencies, how the women navigate and respond to these demands is also of interest.

4.3 Epistemological and ontological priors

The aim of this section is to set out the epistemological and ontological priors which have influenced the way the research was designed, outlining where this thesis sits within the histories and developments of approaches to social science research. Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and ways of knowing and learning about the world. It is philosophical and considers “the appropriate foundation for the study of society and its manifestations” (Bryman, 1984, p. 75). It challenges the researcher to make decisions around “what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable knowledge in a discipline” (Bryman, 2016, p. 24).

Ontology is concerned with what is ‘out there’ to be studied (Hay, 2002), in particular, whether “social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors” (Bryman, 2016, p. 28).

4.3.1 Traditions and advances in ways of knowing

Historically, there has been a large epistemological divide, with positivism on one side and interpretivism on the other. Positivism affirms that you can apply the same approach from the natural sciences to the social world (Bryman, 2016). This thesis sits on the other side of the epistemological divide and is grounded in interpretivism where knowledge is deemed subjective (Bryman, 2016); social actors are a part of the knowledge making process, and there is no external or objective ‘truth’ to uncover.

The interpretive turn in the social sciences suggests that knowledge is socially constructed (‘constructivism’) and that there is an interplay between social science and those whose activities constitute it (Giddens, 1984). The researcher collecting data is a social actor engaged in ‘double hermeneutics’ (Giddens, 1982); where the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant who is also trying to make sense of their lived experience and the social world around them. This is the ontological assumption that underpins the research in this thesis. As such, the knowledge I present reflects specific versions of co-constructed social reality, rather than a definitive one.

Some forms of feminist epistemology, such as standpoint feminism theory and feminist empiricism, are committed to social constructivism (Ashton and McKenna, 2018). Ultimately, feminist epistemologies are concerned with the social location of the researcher, the acknowledgement that knowledge production is never neutral; whomever is *doing* the research will be reflected in epistemic differences.

Qualitative approaches – which underpin this thesis – “have a long and distinguished history in the social sciences, arising in part from dissatisfaction with quantitative approaches” (Noaks and Wincup, 2004, p. 3). It is concerned with words rather than numbers but can also take the form of other kinds of media – artwork, pictures, music and so on. Qualitative methodologies are better suited to the messiness and complexities of the social world, for example subjectivities in human consciousness, experiences, and perceptions (Bryman, 2016). This approach also brings with it some representational and interpretive challenges namely, acknowledgement that the researcher is present within the data alongside participants and that research can never be a perfect window into intended meanings. In qualitative research, some

established methods for collecting data include ethnography or participant observation, qualitative interviewing, interviews, focus groups, and more recently walking methods or photovoice, and it tends to be much more open-ended than quantitative research.

More recently we have seen the emergence of 'post-interpretive' paradigms (Kuntz, 2016). Kuntz (2016, p. 48) urges social researchers to reassess the utility and political role of research tools such as the traditional structured interview. This is heavily linguistic and "represents a hyper-fragmented, manipulated version of reality, one that isolates and separates materially situated experiences from the very contexts in which they emerge". The research methods I selected included participant-led auto-photography (participants take photos of their choosing), photo-elicitation (integrating the photographs into the research interview) and in-depth semi-structured interviews. Utilising creative and participatory visual methods was an attempt to overcome some of the aforementioned issues with structured, talk-only interviews.

The post-interpretive paradigm is also one which seeks to question underlying assumptions as well as problematise the practices and conditions that have normalised them. It invites creativity and vision. The selection of a creative visual method such as auto-photography within this thesis acknowledges Kuntz's (2016) call for qualitative researchers to be 'responsible methodologists'. Using a method which encourages participants' agency, reflexivity and collaboration with the researcher fosters change, in both the participant and researcher. Though I do not go as far as 'post qualitative' researchers in throwing methodology and methods out of the window (St. Pierre, 2021), I felt that in my own way by resisting pressure to alter my research focus and methods as per feedback from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) (see Section 4.4.1), and to use methods the women would enjoy, I was being a 'responsible methodologist'. The next section focuses on the feminist-informed interpretive epistemology and ontology and why it underpins the research conducted within this thesis.

4.3.2 The epistemological and ontological research problem

This thesis seeks to make visible the everyday lived experiences and sense-making of women who have offended or who are considered to be at risk of offending, including “women’s own perspectives and experiences” is integral to feminist research (Presser, 2005, p. 2067). It is underpinned by a feminist epistemology and as such “includes the belief that knowledge (truth) is produced, not simply found, and that the conditions of its production should be studied, critiqued if necessary, and certainly be made explicit and exposed” (Ackerly and True, 2010, p. 27). The methodological framework of the research is grounded in a qualitative feminist-informed ontology and epistemology.

Knowledge is not ‘objective’ in nature, there is not some truth ‘out there’ in the field to be ‘discovered’, instead ‘reality’ is something that is socially experienced and interpreted (Gubrium and Holstein, 2008; Schwandt, 2000). A researcher who enters the field does not do so as an empty or neutral vessel, therefore reflexivity is key. A researcher is immersed in the research encounter, meaning it is important to recognise what the researcher brings to that encounter. According to Harding and Norberg (2005, p. 2010) “value-free research is an unachievable ideal”, nor a prerequisite of ‘good’ research. Mies (1983, p. 123) suggests that feminist researchers should aim instead for “conscious partiality”, this means consciousness of participants’ contexts, identification with struggles and holding themselves politically accountable for the knowledge they produce.

Feminist research does not shy away from emotion; indeed learning can be enhanced by remaining open both intellectually and emotionally (McDonald, 2001). Consequently, my goal is to capture the various, context-specific interpretations of the women’s lived experiences as well as my own interpretations in the research context. This aim is underpinned by an ontology which regards the character of the social and political world as socially constructed, and aims to deconstruct dominant, and often ideologically inspired, criminological ideas about female deviance and offending and to focus on the gendered nature of control.

Postmodern feminism which encourages “questioning the foundations of what we think we know” (Smart, 1995, p. 8) speaks expressly to the ontological and epistemological assumptions underpinning the research. Therefore, the positionality and subjectivities of the researcher and those taking part in the research are made explicit and critiqued.

Reflexivity, attentiveness to relations of power, boundaries and margins are required throughout from research design to fieldwork and interpretation of data. This helps in producing knowledge that is aware of itself, accountable for its impact and where possible helpful to women. It is not pre-occupied with producing an all-encompassing theory of women and crime, which would undoubtedly struggle to reflect the diversity of women's experiences. However, as intimated in Chapter 2, the research took a pluralistic approach drawing on an array of perspectives, to make sense of the empirical data.

My ontological framework seeks to take into account “the access to, and discursive positions available to, different groups that are likely to produce different knowledge. This applies just as much to the researcher as those being researched” (Skeggs, 1994, p. 78). As Skeggs (1994) explains knowledge and knowledge claims are context-specific, the position of the researcher or the ‘knower to the known’ should be acknowledged within the research process. As the researcher, I attempted to see the world from the perspective of my participants, and while I will never be ‘in their shoes’, I aim to grasp the meanings and sense-making of my participants by conducting “sustained empathetic inquiry” (Yanow, 2003, p. 11) that acknowledges hierarchy and strives to minimise power asymmetry by decentring expertise to the participant in the research encounter.

While I do not want to ‘speak for’ my participants I am acutely aware that it is my interpretations and ultimately my research outputs that discursively represent the lives and experiences of the women who took part. A participatory, feminist-informed methodology and reflexivity is integral to reducing the potential for epistemic violence, inflicting harm through discourse in the Foucauldian sense of the term. My interpretation similarly cannot (and should not) claim to present some objective truths but a context specific co-creation of meaning with participants; valued for its contextual significance. As Skeggs (2002, p. 79) asserts “unlocatable knowledge...is irresponsible knowledge”.

Reflexivity and transparency regarding the choices I made throughout the research process are key, including the selection of relevant literature, forming and re-forming research questions, the selection of research participants, the context of the interview, which elements of participants’ lives were explored in more depth, the data I deemed

important, the analytic frame I selected, and the resources that made this possible. Attentiveness to the choices I made, self-reflection on their meaning, and making these steps apparent were important in carrying out the research systematically, logically and with philosophical rigor.

I sought to be attentive to the power of knowledge and epistemology, relationships and power imbalances, my position and the “boundaries, marginalisation, silences, and intersection” throughout the entire research process (Ackerly and True, 2010, p.22). My methodological approach involved recruiting participants who often had previous experience within the criminal justice system, as offender or victim or both, or who were considered to be 'at risk' of offending or future victimisation. Many had multiple and complex needs and most had current or recent experience of social exclusion factors, including homelessness, substance abuse, mental illness or sexual / domestic victimizations. This meant that the relationship and power balance between the researcher and participant was of particular importance. Participants were treated as the experts on their experiences.

My methodological approach challenges the more traditional positivist assumptions about objectivity, emotional detachment, and the position of the researcher, and is foregrounded in the methodological ‘interpretive turn’ in social science research (Rabinow and Sullivan 1979, p. 1985). It is also a “dynamic epistemology” which is flexible and changes through reflection and through findings that emerge (Ackerly and True, 2010, p. 10). In addition to attending to ways of knowing, it also looks to ways of seeing. The research methods chosen reflect these methodological and epistemological presuppositions.

4.4 The Research Process

I used a qualitative exploratory design, contextualised with a literature review. In line with the feminist-informed, interpretive epistemological approach outlined in section 4.3, I used a mixture of visual methods, semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods. The qualitative methods selected were ideal for participatory research involving marginalised women in supporting them to share their experiences. The

empirical data produced came from in-depth qualitative interviews with 23 women who had been involved with the criminal justice system, diversionary services and marginal social welfare services. I interviewed each service user participant up to four times (64 interviews in total). The research was conducted in two UK cities between January 2016 and February 2017. The following subsections outline the initial stages of the research process from identifying suitable gatekeeper organisations, access and recruitment, and some information on the 'set of participants'.

4.4.1 Identifying suitable gatekeeper organisations

To recruit women experiencing the penal arm of the state and in particular diversionary criminal justice interventions in the community, I identified four 'women's community centres' set up following the Corston Report as the gatekeeper organisations from which participants were initially to be drawn. These women-only services or 'one-stop-shops' provided activities attached to community-based sentences and services for those considered 'at risk of offending' or re-offending (House of Commons Justice Committee, 2013). There were a number of referral routes; through the local courts, probation service or police, or more informally through providers of services such as the local NHS drug and alcohol support service and non-statutory organisations, such as local homeless and domestic abuse charities. Women could also self-refer if they were experiencing domestic abuse, homelessness, mental health problems, had been in trouble with the police or problem drug or alcohol use. In practice, the women's centres did not turn away anyone who was in need of support.

In using gatekeepers with funding from the Ministry of Justice, I was advised by my institution's ethics committee to apply for National Offender Management Service (NOMS) research approval. During this process, NOMS stated initially that my research was not needed as enough research had been done on community based criminal justice interventions with women. NOMS advised that I would need to change my research design so that it aligned with the strategic priorities of the NOMS and the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). This raised a number of dilemmas in terms of academic integrity. For example, it was clear from the feminist criminology literature that this was an under-researched group, and a focus on lived experience and collecting data via

participatory methods was key epistemologically. NOMS preferred that I use a large sample and aim for generalisability. I put forward my case for a small qualitative study, but my revised application was rejected.

I discussed this development with my supervisory team, and we decided to amend the eligibility to those who had completed supervision under the MoJ agencies. I obtained a written statement from NOMS that the research could go ahead as long as participants had completed their community orders and were no longer under the National Probation Service (NPS) or Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) supervision. This impacted my recruitment of participants as I had to set these criteria and, this meant in some cases delaying the invitation of a potential participant for a few months until their official supervision order was over.

4.4.2 Recruitment and Access

Initially, I contacted four women's community centres that were geographically closest to where I was based: all within a two-hour journey via public transport. Of these, two centres were willing to facilitate my research. In doing so, these centres agreed to act as 'gatekeeper' to signpost potential participants capable of giving informed consent, and to let me spend time in the centres to recruit participants. I label these women's centres gatekeeper organisation 1 (GO1) and gatekeeper organisation 2 (GO2) (see Table 8.1 for full table on the gatekeeper organisations). The venues provided a space which participants were already familiar with for the initial meetings and interviews, as well as staff able to provide aftercare support following interviews when participants needed to talk to someone.

The first point of contact with organisations involved an initial phone call followed up by an email with more information on who I was, what I was researching and what participation would entail (see Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). Following this, where there was interest in being a gatekeeper organisation, I arranged a meeting to discuss participation in further detail with a manager or coordinator at the centre. It was important to gain service providers' perspectives on my research and the research methods I planned to use to ensure they would be suitable, and ensure they were

comfortable with what I would be doing. This enabled me to ascertain a number of important criteria: that I would be able to recruit marginalised women who met the eligibility criteria; that my approach to recruitment would be successful; that the research methods I proposed to use would work for participants; and that the level of engagement required would fit around their lives and the organisations' ways of working. The eligibility criteria utilised was as follows: women, aged 18 or over, able to give voluntary consent, accessing gatekeeper organisation, experience of contact with the welfare system and criminal justice system and no longer supervised by the NOMS.

Next, I created the recruitment and research participation materials, including: recruitment poster and leaflet; participant contact details form; information sheet; consent form for data and use of photography; topic guide for initial interviews; photography task briefing sheet; voucher receipt form (see Appendices 3-8). The recruitment materials advertised what the research was about, who I was as 'the researcher', what being involved would entail, and how to contact me to find out more. The research participation materials enabled me to have a visual aid for describing the research and, in particular, the photography element with participants in more detail. In addition to putting flyers and posters in the organisations' centres, I also made myself available to speak with through attendance at the organisations, participating in weekly or fortnightly group sessions which ranged from attending breakfast club, attending support groups, and spending time in the break time and lunch areas before and after sessions, so I was a familiar face.

When I first attended the centres a member of staff who let me in would introduce me to the women who were in using the services that day – saying my name and that I was a university student conducting research into women's experiences. They would then return to their desk, and I would chat with the women and hand out my leaflets to those interested in taking part. The number of women present on the day varied, but if there was more than one then I would give a quick introduction to myself and an overview of my research, take questions and then give everyone a flyer to take away with them. I would then wait for them to let me know if they were interested and then have one-to-one discussions to answer any questions.

Those eager to speak to me, would come over and confirm that they wanted to take part right away, I reminded participants that they could take a leaflet and think about it and that there was no pressure to sign up straight away. Sometimes participants began to talk to me about their experiences during these first chats. In these cases, I would listen to what they wanted to say and then at as early a time as possible gently ask them if they would like to go through the paperwork first so that I would be able to chat with them for the research. I remember feeling nervous for some of these first meetings but often left feeling happy that I was received positively by potential participants.

I noticed that there were different motivations for taking part in the research. Some told me they liked having someone listening to them, for others it was signing up to an activity that would 'keep them busy'.

Once I had started to recruit my first tranche of participants (6 women), I began to record field notes of the experiences of spending time in the centres (see Chapter 5, section 5.3). The use of ethnographic methods such as these helped me to gain some insight into the interactions between staff and marginalised women using their services, and the peer and friendship groups formed at the organisations, as well as some staff and volunteer working practices. This helped to increase 'understanding between social researcher and subjects of study' uncovering more facets of context (Ferrell, 1998, p. 27).

In the course of the research, it became clear that I would need to expand my recruitment to achieve my target number of participants, as I did not want to ask staff for further support with centres already being stretched in terms of resources. Therefore, I broadened my sampling criteria to include women who were accessing social-welfare services at two local organisations, one a homeless day centre (GO3) and the other a domestic abuse (DA) survivor peer-support group (GO4). GO3 was an organisation that my research supervisor recommended, which had women accessing its services, and I was made aware of GO4 by a domestic abuse support worker who had seen one of my recruitment leaflets in one of the women's centres where I was already recruiting who thought her service users fit the eligibility criteria. Thus, the

fieldwork took place across four gatekeeper organisations in total, in two northern UK cities.

Once I became a regular face at a particular time of day at all four organisations, I was buzzed in at the door by a staff member, went to the breaktime area and was able to introduce myself to any new faces in the centre. The exception was the domestic support group (GO4) as due to anonymity and safeguarding requirements staff always let group members know who I was to allay any fears. Most participants were excited about the idea of completing a photography task as part of research involvement. One woman who did not like the sound of the photography element, and though I said she did not have to complete that part if she did not wish to, she decided not to take part in the research.

In recruiting from day centres where some participants knew each other very well and where they were supported by various staff in the day centre and other support services such as drug or domestic abuse counselling, it became apparent that participants were drawn from a group negotiating various structures and institutional environments alongside one another. These relationships overlapped and individuals variously co-operated, supported or struggled against one another. The four gatekeeping organisations comprised both statutory and voluntary organisations though these distinctions were harder to discern due to 'hybridisation' of state, market and civil society actors in public service provision.

4.4.3 Participants

The research that this thesis is based on is a small qualitative study of women accessing marginal services and subject to the penal and welfare arms of the state. It aimed to facilitate the production of rich, contextual data through verbal and visual channels. As such I set out to recruit no more than 25 women. While I did initially recruit 23, one withdrew; she began the research process, had her initial interview and received a camera. She returned her camera to me but then decided she did not want

to carry on with the research any more due to needing to focus on her family and finding work. By limiting the number of participants to the 23 that completed the research process, I was able to build up rapport with those who took part. This facilitated the use of qualitative participatory methods, namely auto-photography, photo-elicitation and in-depth interviews.

At the beginning of the recruitment process, it was considered beneficial to select women for their diversity in order to reflect the heterogeneity of service users whilst making sure that they met the basic eligibility criteria: women, aged 18 or over, able to give voluntary consent, accessing gatekeeper organisation, experience of contact with the welfare system and criminal justice system and no longer supervised by the NOMS. Where possible, I purposefully accepted women of different ages, ethnic backgrounds and life experience to enable a diversity of experiences and interventions from the penal and welfare arms of the state to be captured.

The short biographies presented in Appendix 11 highlight the different ages, backgrounds and recent experiences of participants. All identified as female and were aged between 18 and 67 (see Table 4.1 for age distribution). The majority - 22 women - identified as White British, one as Other White, and one as Black (this participant dropped out of the research process, leaving a final figure of 23 participants). All participants bar two were in receipt of benefits at the time of recruitment. One whose conviction had been related to benefit fraud was not in receipt of out-of-work benefits and the second relied on her family and boyfriend for financial support.

There was a range of experiences of the CJS: some had long histories of persistent criminalisation - of these six had experienced multiple short prison sentences and community-based punishments while others had one conviction for minor offences and had only been punished in the community. Of the 10 women who had received formal convictions, the offence types included more serious crimes; of these three disclosed child neglect/abuse convictions, one had been convicted of arson and one had a conviction of being an accessory to a murder committed by an ex-partner. The majority, however, disclosed less serious crimes which are more commonly associated with women including benefit fraud, possession of a controlled drug,

prostitution, theft or breaching of conditions. Some had been in contact with the police and the courts as victims of domestic abuse.

Table 4.1: Age range of participant ages

| Age bracket | Number of participants |
|-------------|------------------------|
| 18-24 | 2 |
| 25-34 | 8 |
| 35-44 | 4 |
| 45-54 | 6 |
| 55-64 | 2 |
| 65-74 | 1 |

Largely, participants approached me independently to take part; a quarter of participants were referred by centre staff who directed participants to me when I was in the centre. These staff did not subsequently check which service users had gone on to take part in the research.

Table 4.2: Stages of research completed by participants

| Pseudonym | Recruitment interview | Auto-photography completed | Camera collection debrief | Photo-elicitation interview | Follow up interview |
|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Amy | X | X | X | X | |
| Camille | X | X | dropped out of research | | |
| Carly | X | X | X | X | X |
| Bethany | X | was not interested in photo task | | | X |
| Sylvia | X | X | X | X | X |
| Annie | X | X | | X | |
| Alice | X | X | | X | X |

| | | | | | |
|-----------|---|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Carol | X | X | | X | |
| Caitlin | X | X | X | X | X |
| Frankie | X | was not able to return camera | | | X |
| Gillian | X | X | | X | X |
| Jane | X | X | | X | |
| Lola | X | X | | X | X |
| Christina | X | X | | X | |
| Ros | X | X | | X | |
| Donna | X | X | X | X | X |
| Bella | X | X | | X | X |
| Sally | X | X | X | X | X |
| Whitney | X | X | X | X | X |
| Anita | X | X | | X | X |
| Evie | X | X | | X | X |
| Jessica | X | X | | X | X |
| Laura | X | X | X | X | X |
| Vivien | X | X | | X | X |

Semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 11) were also conducted with 13 female staff members or volunteers working in the gatekeeping organisations (11 frontline workers / volunteers and two managers). These interviews enabled me to gain further insights into the kinds of support that were required by the service users from the perspective of centre staff and volunteers, and some insight into organisation culture (see section 6.4.1). There was an overall consensus that changes to the welfare system were having a perceptible impact across their service users. Their perspectives will be presented where their reflections resonated with service users' experiences.

4.5 Research Methods

The research involved using qualitative methods to collect data. These included participatory visual methodologies; semi-structured interviews; and keeping ethnographic fieldnotes as a participant observer. This section firstly provides an introduction and rationale for the use of visually mediated methods, before going on to outline the approach used for semi-structured interviews and ethnographic methods.

4.5.1 Auto-photography and photo-elicitation as research methods

This thesis foregrounds the visual through the use of auto-photography as a research method. Photographs were taken by the research participants themselves. The photographs then became the focus of photo-elicitation interviews as the participants described, explained and reflected upon the images they had created. The importance of the visual is outlined by Berger (1972, p. 7): “Seeing comes before words...It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it...[T]he relation between what we see and what we know is never settled...The knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight”.

Collier (1957) found that the use of photographs in ‘photo interviews’ enabled the elicitation of deep insights from interviewees during interviews. His subsequent works developed photo-elicitation praxis. These later works are often a staple of introductory textbooks and courses on visual anthropology and sociology (Harper, 2002). The use of participant-generated images has dispersed right across the social sciences disciplines including *inter alia* psychology (Dollinger, 2001; Noland, 2006; Ziller, 1990), anthropology (Worth and Adair, 1972; Wang et al., 1996), sociology (Jenkins and Jenkins, 1998), urban studies (Dodman, 2003; Johnsen et al., 2008), critical security studies (Vastapuu, 2018), gender studies (Bilsky, 1998) and the multidisciplinary sub-field of visual sociology (Becker, 1995).

According to Jenks (1995, p. 2) “the modern world is very much a ‘seen’ phenomenon”. And as a social research method “photo-elicitation mines deeper shafts of different parts of the human consciousness than do words-alone interviews” (Harper, 2002, p.

22). While used widely, little attention has been paid to it in the methodological literature (Johnsen et al., 2008). Its development across disciplines has been “uneven and fragmented”. It is an undervalued and, in some cases, “mistrusted” method, for example there is concern that it can generate misleading data if participants are disingenuous (Balomenou and Garrod, 2015, p. 1).

While visual images can facilitate the production of rich data in a way that supports participant wellbeing and even empowerment, they can also be instruments of “surveillance, punishment, or voyeurism” (Teti, 2019, p. 3). Although visual methods may be growing in popularity across some areas of social science, their use is still marginal compared with more established research methods. Yanow (2014, p. 168) notes the irony of the “prominence of ‘observation’ in methods talk”, which continues to privilege words, and especially numbers, over visual elements.

The neglect of the visual is particularly apparent in criminological research where, for all the talk of a ‘visual turn in criminology’ the use of the visual as a method or for interpretive purposes is sparse (West, 2017). In recent years, the use of visual methods has begun to grow in popularity (see Fitzgibbon and Dealy, 2017; Fitzgibbon and Stengel, 2018; Turnbull, 2019). This thesis aims to facilitate the production of participant-created ‘just images’ (Carrabine, 2012a), ‘counter-images’ (Brown, 2014b) to challenge the demonisation of marginal groups.

The application of visual methods in this thesis demonstrates the utility of auto-photography as both an engagement and rapport building tool. The creative element was particularly attractive to managers at the gatekeeper organisations who value these types of activities for their service users. It also supported getting participants interested in research involvement. Using participant created photos in the photo-elicitation interviews highlights this method as providing insightful and useful perspectives. As such, it adds to the small body of literature on visual methods with marginalised populations and contributed to our understanding of how these can be used with women who have been in crisis.

My methodological preferences identify with the practice of using the photos as a tool for in-depth interviews, giving the participants the opportunity to impart their aim – why

they chose to take the photograph – and to make clear their own interpretation of the visual images. While the photos themselves are important, they do not ‘speak for themselves’ rather, they are a medium, a method to support the participants in illustrating through their personal photographs and reflections, their lifeworld (Husserl, 1970). There may be multiple meanings and symbols attached to the photographs, and the “audiencing” of the images and the discussion between the participant and researcher can provide rich data for interpretation and analysis (Rose, 2012, p. 30).

The risks of such participatory methods should also be taken into account, with scholars embarking on this type of research warning of the deceptive nature of the quest for more egalitarian relationships and that “attempting to create a more equal relationship can paradoxically become exploitation and use” (Acker et al., 1996, p. 141). The benefits associated with close, interactive research encounters come with risks such as “the potential for relationships to end abruptly and for participants to feel that they have been misunderstood or betrayed, especially in moments when participants’ and researchers’ priorities diverge” (Kirsch, 2005, p. 2163).

Auto-photography provides a way to disperse some of the power from the researcher to the researched, which is important in feminist-informed research. It aims to de-centre expertise and empower participants to choose the subjects of their photographs that relate to elements of their life and experiences that they wish to reflect upon in the research encounter. This act is important as it causes “a shift from a researcher-centric construction of the social world to that of the participants’ as their first-order constructs are given a visual rendering” (Prosser, 2008, p. 18). It also facilitates an additional channel of communication for the participants to convey their feelings which adds a new dimension to the verbal exchanges of “talk-only interviews” and the opportunity for new and different insights (Rose, 2012, p. 305; Stedman et al., 2004).

Auto-photography enables space for reflexivity on the part of the participant, giving them “a distance from what they are usually immersed in” allowing them to “articulate thoughts and feelings that usually remain implicit” and lets them ‘set the agenda’ to an extent in the subsequent photo-elicitation interviews, thus exerting a measure of control over the research (Dodman, 2003; Rose, 2012, p. 306). Turnbull (2015) notes the “affective and communicative power of visualisations”. Similarly, ‘auto-photography’ or ‘photovoice’ has been shown to be useful in engaging marginalised or

hard to reach groups including those experiencing homelessness (McCarthy, 2018; Johnsen et al., 2008), offenders under supervision (Healy and Fitzgibbon, 2020) and urban youth (Delgado, 2015).

Furthermore, as participants in the research had experienced many interview-like interactions with various state agencies, visual methods provided an alternative way to engage with them that was different from their previous interview experiences.

4.5.2 Initial meetings and ‘doing’ visual methods

When a potential participant expressed an interest in taking part in the research, I arranged an initial meeting. These first meetings were face-to-face at the gatekeeper premises in a private room or space. The purpose of these first meetings was to provide an opportunity for me to explain the research in more detail and for participants to ask questions. This ensured that they fully understood what was involved and were therefore able to give informed consent to take part. If any participants had reservations about any aspect of the research process, we discussed this and adapted their involvement accordingly. For example, if participants indicated any worries around starting the photography task, I would offer a shared walk where they could show me places that held any significance for them. One participant took me up on this offer and during the walk they found they felt comfortable to start to choose subjects for their photographs. These early meetings also presented an opportunity to begin building rapport with participants.

Once recruited, each participant would be taken through the following stages, for as long as they wished to continue participation:

- 1) Initial information session and recruitment interview: I provided information on taking part, answered questions, went through and signed the consent form. We discussed why they wanted to take part and I collected some personal details using an Attributes Sheet as a prompt (see Appendix 9). Finally, I briefed them on the next stage, gave them an auto-photography pack including a

disposable camera and offered to show them how to use it, and answered any subsequent questions.

- 2) Auto-photography by participant: The participant carried out a photography project in which they decided what to use as their subject and thus control the production of the photographs and ultimately what they documented of their lives. I gave a very simple, flexible brief to support participants in selecting photography subjects. Example prompts included: Your experience with the police, courts, legal system. Your experiences of work and the welfare system. The day centre you attend. Places, people or events that are important to you. Any challenges you are working to overcome? Hope for the future?
- 3) Camera collection: Once the participant felt they had completed the auto-photography I arranged to collect the camera from them (they usually had the camera for around two weeks but up to a month was allowed if they required more time. Where possible, I collected the camera directly from the participant, this was either a quick handover of the camera, or we had a short camera collection interview to debrief how participants found the task if they felt they wanted to do this. On the rare occasion that a participant could not meet me, I was happy to collect the camera from the reception at the centre.
- 4) Photo-elicitation interview: During this we discussed the photos that the participant had produced and their experiences of interactions with the state and the services that they accessed. I used an interview topic guide (see Appendix 10). Examples of questions included: How did you find the task? Was it easy to choose what to take photos of? Do you want to put the photos into any kind of order? Ask participant to explain what each photo depicts / why they chose to take it / what it means to them. Is there anything you didn't get a chance to take a photo of?
- 5) Follow up interview: During this interview we were able to go over any topics that we did not have time to discuss in the previous interview. It also provided an opportunity to gain insights into participants' changing circumstances over time from the recruitment interview to exiting the research process (see Appendix 10). I individually tailored questions to reflect the previous research encounters. Examples questions included: How are you? How has everything been since we last spoke? Any big changes? I remember you told me

previously that you had a fairly good / bad relationship with your last probation officer, can you tell me anything about how you feel about other criminal justice agencies e.g., the police, the courts etc? How are things going with the social worker now?

I used a £5 high street voucher as a 'thank you' gesture for steps 3-5 of the research, a voucher for completing the photography task and subsequent interviews which meant a potential total of £15 of vouchers for participating in full. Participants were also given a printed set of their photos to keep (see Section 4.5.8).

Taking each participant through the five stages took up to six months depending on the participant and how quickly they completed the photography task and how frequently they agreed to meet with me. Not all participants completed all five stages of the research process. In these cases, it was often due to facing challenging circumstances in their personal lives.

Stage 1 often took place over two meetings. This ensured participants understood participation and gave consent, enabled me to collect some basic information about them and brief them on the auto-photography task so that they were feeling comfortable with the camera and with some ideas as to the purpose of their photographs and what they might want to choose as subjects.

Each participant was given a camera pack which included a disposable camera with flash, a guidance sheet, and they were briefed on how to use the camera. Participants were advised not to put themselves at any additional risk by taking part in this task, for example, to abide by UK law and by asking for permission before taking photographs of any human subjects. In terms of getting consent for the human subjects photographed, I explained to participants that getting consent is essential. I made it clear that I would anonymise all photos produced by electronically scanning the photos to a secure computer and editing them by blurring identifiable elements such as faces.

In doing auto-photography, I asked participants to generate images that represented them, their lived experiences and realities, and though I provided basic guidance (see

Appendix 8) I also reassured them that they would have the opportunity to talk through the ideas behind their photos in the subsequent photo-elicitation interviews. A collaborative approach recognises that images will have different meanings depending on who is looking, and by using photo-elicitation, I aimed to foster the co-creation of knowledge. Banks and Zeitlyn (2001, p. 179) suggest this benefits the collection of empirical evidence because “swooping god-like into other people’s lives and gathering ‘data’ (including ‘visual data’) according to a predetermined theoretical agenda strikes me as not simply morally dubious but intellectually flawed”.

In discussing the use of this method with participants, it also provided a less formal way of getting to know the participants than through a traditional interview. By creating photographs, the women conducted what Bloustein (2003) terms a type of 'ethnography by proxy'. In practice it provided a creative task that participants said they enjoyed and enabled them to reflexively select photographic subjects and influence their interpretation. For participants accustomed to surveillance from various state agencies it turns the cameras focus outward from the surveillance subject back to the society that judges them as in need of state interventions. Although they received some guidance, the choice of photographic subject was at their discretion enabling the development of their own personal narratives about the social reality of their lived experiences.

Overall, most of the steps of the research process were conducted face-to-face. Two interviews were conducted over the telephone when it was not possible to arrange a convenient time to meet the participant at the gatekeeper organisation. One participant moved during the research process, so we kept in touch via email as this was the most convenient method for her for follow up contact. Where possible, interviews were conducted on gatekeeper premises; where resource constraints did not allow this, interviews were conducted in quiet areas of nearby public libraries or cafes, or, if the participant was comfortable with this, a private room on the university campus.

Three participants expressed preferences for their photo-elicitation and follow-up interviews to take place at their homes to save them from having to pay public transport travel costs for participation. When this occurred, I followed my university’s established

'ring in, ring out' procedure¹¹. One participant wanted to show me places that held meaning for her. Due to this I also decided to offer a shared walk or 'walking methods', this was also used as a way to offer participants support in getting started with the photography exercise if they required it (O'Neill and Hubbard, 2010).

Participants were asked to take part in subsequent 'photo-elicitation', through 'audiencing' the photos in an interview, participants were able to influence their interpretation, an important aspect in feminist-informed research. Photographs provided insights which may otherwise have remained hidden (Rose, 2012). For example, one participant had tried to take a picture of her cat but she said that it kept moving around her flat (see Figure 4.1), as such we got to talking about her home and the issues she had with other residents and the problems she was having in getting her landlord to sort out the walls, which flowed naturally from the initial topic of her cat.

Figure 4.1: Photo by Jane



¹¹ Before the interview, I informed a specific member of University staff within my department as my 'ring in, ring out' person. The nominated person was informed of my travel route, location and the expected time of return. On arrival at the fieldwork location, I made a telephone call to check in with my nominated person stating the expected finish time of the interview and that I would call again on leaving. I explained to participants that this was the standard procedure that I must follow as a solo researcher, though I did feel awkward doing this process in terms of finding it a barrier to openness and rapport-building.

4.5.3 Semi-structured interviews

One of the most common ways of producing knowledge is through the research interview. Interviews can take different forms; on one end of the continuum is the structured interview and at the other we have “the qualitative research interview, with its much more flexible and dialogical form” (Brinkmann, 2018, p. 577). Interviews played an important role in the data collection process, being the forum for photo-elicitation conversations and discussions about participants’ broader experiences and perceptions.

Semi-structured interviews, now widely used in the social sciences, are sometimes equated with qualitative research methods (Warren, 2002; Punch, 2005). Brinkmann and Kvale (2015, p. 6) define semi-structured interviews as “an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee in order to interpret the meaning of the described phenomena”. In short, they are used to “explore people's experiences, practices, values and attitudes in depth and to establish their meaning for those concerned” (Devine, 2002, p. 207).

The interviews I conducted with participants were loosely structured. During the initial recruitment interview I went through a list of standard questions to collect some basic background information from participants (see Appendix 9). However, this was approached as a conversation and I was happy to let participants naturally deviate from the list I had in front of me, as we were building rapport in these early stages. The next set of interviews were loosely structured around the photographs that had been taken (photo-elicitation). Again, I approached these interviews as conversations, for which the auto-photography task and resulting photos provided a starting point. I used open-ended questions to encourage participants’ narratives to emerge and to create space for new topics to be identified (Valentine and Clifford, 2003). For example, ‘How did you find the photography task?’ and ‘Do you want to put the photos into any kind of order?’ ‘What message is this photo saying?’ (see Appendix 10). The topic guide supported the interviews, though I aimed to let the participant lead the conversation as much as possible.

While the use of open-ended questions and creating space for more natural and in-depth conversation takes more time, it was an important aspect of feminist-informed research praxis. Fontana and Frey (2005) suggest that feminist researchers can circumvent the traditional interview into something more sensitive and reciprocal, covering topics important to both interviewer and participant. Indeed, participants may benefit in some way “from being able to speak their stories and have them reflected back in a way that enables them to be owned... ..through the coherent articulation of subjugated narratives... ..oppressed groups become empowered” (Frosh, 2007, p. 637). Frosh (2007, p. 638) continues “it may be consoling, therapeutic even, to have sense made of one’s mystifying miseries, one’s uncertainties and partial understandings. It can indeed be empowering: we are made into agents; we are subjects with something to talk about”. Although I hoped to use my skills as a researcher to create an environment which supported the agency of participants, it is important to acknowledge the inherent power differential present.

There are inherent weaknesses to the research interview format. Through conscious or unconscious facial expressions, body language, social cues and conventions, the interviewer may influence the participant and cause them to adjust their answers to make them more socially desirable (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, Brinkmann (2019, p. 581) warns that “the stories people tell are ambiguous and full of cracks”. There is a great deal of nuance within research relationships, “the human subject is never a whole, is always riven with partial drives, social discourses that frame available modes of experience, ways of being that are contradictory and reflect the shifting allegiances of power as they play across the body and the mind” (Frosh, 2007, p. 638).

During the research encounters, I could sense the contradictory and fluid nature of participants’ presentations of the self; both service user and staff alike. I was aware that they were likely to be presenting their best self to me. For participants who had been in conflict with the law, and or who had experience of alcohol or other drug problems how they saw themselves in their past and present was subject to change (see section 5.5). Their views on their treatment by state agencies would clash with their need to sometimes distance themselves from the marginal groups they were part of (see section 5.4). It was not my place to point out these inconsistencies or to try to

'educate' them, but I did try to provide a space for philosophical discussion which I hoped they enjoyed.

With permission from participants all interviews were audio-recorded on a password-protected dictation recorder, transferred to a secure computer and then transcribed (see section 4.5.5).

4.5.4 Ethnographic methods: participant observation

Participant observation was also chosen as a research method. All social research is arguably a form of participant observation since researchers are not removed from the social world (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). I spent a lot of time in the gatekeeper organisations initially for recruitment purposes, and as time went on, to meet up with participants and to take part in some sessions such as breakfast club, self-esteem workshops and so on. As such, it is important to recognise these research encounters outside the one-on-one interviews and to be as transparent as possible.

Gans (1999, p. 540) states that "participant observation allows researchers to observe what people do, while all the other empirical methods are limited to reporting what people say about what they do". Essentially, it enabled me to gain an in situ understanding of the different contexts of the gatekeeping organisations, including behaviours, opinions, actions, interactions and social processes in a live environment that I experienced first-hand alongside participants, although from my position as a researcher temporarily granted access.

Participant observation has been described as a continuum that ranges from complete observer to observer as participant, to participant as observer, to complete participant (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1998, p. 248). I would say I moved between the observer as participant and participant as observer roles depending on the activities and the particular group of women in on a given day. For example, once I became a regular face at the breakfast club I was expected to help out with serving and clearing up plates like the rest of the group. In group meetings at GO4 I was often expected to take part in the activities of the session.

It has been suggested that participant observation goes some way towards reducing the imposition of the researcher's reality on the social processes being explored (May, 2001). Yet it has also been deemed a deceptive method in which the researcher alters their behaviours to fit in and is engaged in a process of impression management; blending in enough for participants to act naturally (Bernard, 1994). I made it clear that I was a researcher and introduced myself as such each time I attended a session, I also carried flyers with me to hand out to those wondering why I was there. Likewise, participants may amend their behaviour because they are being observed; the 'Hawthorne effect' (Oswald et al., 2014).

I kept fieldnotes to document first impressions, rapport building and relationship development, and activities and behaviours during sessions.

4.5.5 Analytical processes

A researcher conducting fieldwork is not an empty or value-free vessel, and as such, it is impossible to carry out research which is completely free from researcher bias and subjective interpretation (Harding and Norberg (2005). Therefore, there are potential risks of the researcher imposing their subjectivities and logics onto the data and the participant narratives, given the different backgrounds of my participants, it is pertinent to be mindful of explaining "the working class in relation to academics' own (middle-class) lifestyles" (Flint, 2011, p. 82). In acknowledging the impossibility of being a neutral, objective and detached researcher, I have made explicit my theoretical framework (Chapter 2), my epistemological position (section 4.3), and my personal 'baggage' or positionality (section 4.5.10) that I bring with me into the analytical processes and the wider research project, in order to be as transparent as possible.

As outlined in Chapter 2, I attempted to apply a pluralist and feminist lens - versed in multiple theoretical frameworks and concepts and focused on people and processes often pushed to the margins - to the analytical process. My analytical approach was also informed by Jackson and Mazzei's (2018, p. 743, emphasis in original) 'thinking with theory' where "a reading of data *with* theoretical concepts (and/or multiple theoretical concepts)" takes place. While I had ideas on what some of the key themes

of the research would be, I also looked for emerging themes in an iterative process (see the next section on transcription and coding).

This way of reading the data provided flexibility to consider it against a number of theoretical perspectives and concepts, to create new assemblages of data and theory. I found this approach to be best suited to my overarching methodological approach, as it avoided 'forcing' the data onto a rigid theoretical framework while still acknowledging the impact that the literature and theory has had on me as a researcher.

Transcription and coding

Transforming audio and visual data into a written form is an interpretive process and, as such, is the first step in the analysis of data (Bailey, 2008). I did see the transcription process as the start of the analytical process; it meant that I could get an early sense of the data before the next stage of thematic coding. I kept as much detail as possible in the transcripts for example, including participants' pauses, demeanours and gestures that I remembered from the interview to preserve the conversation as authentically as I could. I also remember noticing that my interviewer praxis could be improved. For example, I felt that I needed to pause more and be comfortable with silence to give participants more of a chance to elaborate on their points. As the fieldwork progressed, I tried to make small changes such as this.

Interview transcripts of the photo-elicitation and semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldnotes were thematically analysed, which has been described as "a form of pattern recognition within the data, with emerging themes becoming the categories for analysis" (Bowen, 2009, p. 32). This was a multi-stage process in which I read through the transcripts and fieldnotes many times. Firstly, I looked for, and coded against, themes that connected to the broader a priori themes raised in the literature, such as gender and the penal and welfare arms of the state, and techniques of governance such as surveillance, individualisation, responsibilisation, criminalisation, and conditionality. This preliminary framework was augmented by coding of themes which came from further close and multiple readings of the data.

Many codes emerged from this inductive and open coding approach as I got to know the data in a high level of detail.

I used NVivo software to support the coding process as a tool to declutter and order the coding frame, which I found to be a messy and overwhelming process at times. I then went through the codes again and again and analysed for common issues and patterns. NVivo supported this re-organisation of the codes or 'sub-nodes', as it provided an easier visual way to group together similar codes and merge ones where there was lots of overlap under a broader theme or 'parent node' (see Appendix 13 for a screenshot of the list of parent nodes and sub-nodes that I organised using NVivo). In the process of re-analysing the sub-nodes and organising them into categories some sub-nodes were linked to more than one node. The boundaries of codes were fuzzy and difficult to delineate as is often the case in qualitative analysis (Saldana, 2008).

As outlined in Chapter 2, this thesis aimed to test and extend Wacquant's conceptual framings of the relationship between marginalised individuals and the penal state to reflect the experiences of the women who participated in my research. The codes and categories were then revisited, refined and reorganised as I arranged them against my theoretical framework. This started with Wacquant's conceptualisation of the relationship between the two arms of the state and marginalised citizens. Where there were explanatory gaps I turned to other theories and concepts in order to create cogent assemblages of codes and categories linked to theory and theoretical concepts.

I then repeated this process until the expansive lists of codes and categories were organised under three main themes which focused on: Lives in adversity (which became Chapter 5); Welfare conditionality and women ex-offenders (Chapter 6); and Penal institutions (Chapter 7).

Once these themes were defined, I then returned to the data to seek further empirical evidence to ensure the appropriate themes had been selected. In revisiting the codes and categories, and as the findings chapters began to take shape, it became clear that an additional theme was required to reflect findings around the hybridity of the

institutions and methods of governance that participants were involved with, and so Hybrid institutional environments (Chapter 8) became the final theme. The flexibility in using a theoretical frame but allowing a new theme to emerge more organically from the analytical process meant that the final themes had deductive as well as inductive elements.

The final stages of analysis took place as I took the codes, categories and themes and wrote these up as extensive findings chapters, which underwent an extended drafting process. As will be explained in the next few chapters, I analysed and presented data in different ways in the empirical chapters using a mix of written thematic analysis and different forms of visual representations of participant data.

4.5.6 Ethical Considerations

Gilligan (2011) defines a feminist ethics of care as “grounded in voice and relationships, in the importance of everyone having a voice, being listened to carefully (in their own right and on their own terms) and heard with respect”. In line with this, research encounters focused on the use of participatory and creative research methods, listening to participants’ voices, and fostering positive research relationships.

Ethical approval for the research was obtained in line with Sheffield Hallam University's robust research ethics process. Given the complexities of participants' everyday lives, histories of abuse and trauma and the ongoing vulnerabilities they were experiencing, ethical considerations were a chief concern. Consent and capacity to give consent was continuously sought throughout the research process. Confidentiality was also a key concern.

Confidentiality and anonymity

Participants were reassured that I would not be discussing our conversations with anyone else unless there was a safeguarding issue. Individual participants were given pseudonyms from the first research meeting, and all associated files were stored in a password protected folder on a password protected computer. Paper documents were kept in a locked cabinet in a university campus key card protected staff office that

complies with robust data security processes. Any information that would implicate an individual was also changed to ensure anonymity. This was explained to participants at the initial meetings and in participant materials.

Consent and safeguarding Participants

I underwent an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check and evidenced this when I approached potential gatekeepers. In line with the University's ethical guidance, I only conducted research with adult participants, over the age of 18, who were able to give voluntary, informed consent after understanding the purpose of my research.

Working closely with gatekeepers was necessary in order to seek advice around recruiting women who would be in a position to give informed consent in line with the Mental Capacity Act (2005). Most practitioners viewed the study and research participation positively, and some promoted participation to their service users as a means of finding a constructive activity for participants who had free time or limited social networks.

However, in practice, gatekeeper staff did not perceive capacity for consent to be an issue because all service users were able to give consent. In the course of the research, it later became clear that participants were dealing with multiple and complex problems, including mental health issues which made me question whether I should be expecting them to take part in the research and let me in to their lives in some way. When balancing this with ethical considerations I felt it was important to give women who wished to take part the opportunity to do so. It would not be fair to remove the chance to participate from those who are already severely marginalised within society. In the initial meetings with participants, I made it clear that where a disclosure indicated they were in need of immediate safeguarding from harm I would advise them to speak to their key worker and that I would have to approach their key worker to let them know about the risk.

I sought advice and feedback on the promotional materials to ensure that the materials were easy to understand, on which days of the week and times of day were the best

for participants, and options for interview location. This was from gatekeeper staff where possible and where they were unavailable from my PhD supervisors. Prior to participation, I explained the nature and purpose of the research in terms meaningful to participants. I gave participants a comprehensive information sheet and consent form (See Appendices 5-6).

While participants may not have the same background in terms of social science research training or experience, I consider them to be the experts on their lived experiences. I made this explicit in my interactions with them, and participants were encouraged to put forward their perspectives which I valued. My expertise comes in the ongoing analytical process and in linking my findings to the literature.

Many participants' accounts contained some traumatic stories, particularly from their childhoods, which were in some cases painful to recount. Despite this, participants still chose to tell me their stories which I was grateful for. While I wanted to give women the opportunity to take part, I was aware of the need to continually assess and to be alert to any changes that suggest that capacity has been lost or if taking part caused distress. I did not feel that any participants lost the capacity to give consent during the research process.

On a few occasions, when participants were upset about talking about past traumas, I offered to bring the research encounter to a close, but all decided to continue. On one occasion when a participant who was going through the child removal process became very distressed, I decided that it was right to bring the interview to a gentle close and stayed with her until a member of staff was able to come and speak with her about her situation. In that situation, I felt it would have been unethical to carry on with the research encounter at that stage and with the participant's consent I arranged for her to have a chat with a trained staff member. This was important for me to feel that I could leave the participant.

4.5.7 Opening up about sensitive topics

The degree to which participants wanted to talk about what had happened in their lives

varied greatly. While most were frank and open on most aspects of their lives, including traumatic events, some became uncomfortable or much more guarded when they talked about the past, childhood experiences of abuse and other sensitive topics. Some days it depended on their mood as to how open they were and which topics they wanted to discuss. This was something I had to respect as a researcher aiming to carry out ethical research. An ethical approach is a pre-requisite in any research project but becomes even more significant in research with women who have been subject to state surveillance and control. Kirsch (2005) discusses the importance of paying close attention to friendliness, friendship and closeness within the research relationship. She highlights the importance of not becoming overly friendly because ultimately you have to end the relationship once the research is completed, and then write about and potentially publish your research findings – all of which has potential to leave participants feeling betrayed.

For participants who wanted to talk about such experiences, though it was not easy, they gave an impression of wanting to have their stories heard:

I think I do need to sit down with someone though and talk about it... I would rather it be you Larissa... (Carly)

In some cases, I was asked for reassurance that things they disclosed would be confidential - *'I don't want anyone to know about this'* (Lola). All interview data was anonymised but, in this instance, I also left out much of the detail of the story she shared that after that statement in order to protect her privacy. Despite the stigma attached to 'audiencing' such experiences, many participants spoke openly about abusive experiences. I sensed that it was being listened to which attracted many participants to take part in the research. I was often thanked for listening and reassured that despite covering difficult topics participants had enjoyed talking to me: *'It has been helpful having a chat'* (Alice).

The degree of openness I encountered, where participants were willing to let a relative stranger 'in', was beneficial to me in my position as a researcher. It also made me consider whether women who have been subject to state intervention throughout their lives were more practised in this kind of divulging, presenting their 'troubled' pasts and

saying what they believe I, like other professionals or researchers before me, want to hear. It may have become routine-like for participants to disclose such experiences.

However, this did not feel the case in many of the research relationships, and another explanation is that it might have been indicative of the impact events have had on participants, which they are still processing and wanted to speak about. It seemed that participants may have been trying to understand the reverberations these events had on their lives. In some cases, it might have been that they appeared unmoved to retelling traumatic events because they were emotionally de-sensitised to the topic. This felt the case in some of the research encounters and may have reflected a choice between being haunted and dragged down by their experiences or switching off emotionally in a self-preservation strategy. For others being candid highlighted their reaching a stage where they identified as being a survivor or having changed their lives for the better.

While traumatic events and their pathways into crime may not have been participants' preferred choice of topic, it was something they wanted me to take into account when presenting their life histories in the research interview. During interviews I was often surprised by the matter-of-fact way in which some of these accounts were delivered, and once disclosed, they often preferred to move the conversation on to current day-to-day experiences or future plans.

4.5.8 Compensating participants

All participants were given a printed set of photographs to keep. They also received compensation for their time and efforts, in the form of love2shop vouchers up to the value of £15. Research incentives may have an impact on informed voluntary consent, but their use can also be seen as fairer and less exploitative. The use of vouchers was discussed in initial meetings with gatekeeping organisation managers, all of whom supported their use.

On a personal level, it felt right to offer to compensate participants in some small way, which was reflective of the collaborative and two-way nature of participatory research. When asked what they thought about the voucher participants had mixed views. Some

said that they would have taken part anyway regardless of whether there had been compensation or not. A couple of participants tried to negotiate for more vouchers which, though I respected, I was unable to agree to due to budget constraints and issues of equality between participants.

For a very small minority the voucher was a motivating factor in their participation in the research; this felt strange ethically. I felt conscious of not wanting to cause any feeling of coercion. As the incentive was a small amount, I hoped that it would ultimately not play too big a part in decision making. Still, other participants told me that they were not bothered about the voucher and just wanted to have their stories heard.

4.5.9 Researcher wellbeing and safety

Within the research environment there is often a strong focus on participant wellbeing and safety. This is as it should be, and in the conduct of ethical research, steps should be taken to address participant vulnerability. The preceding sections go into detail on the ethical considerations which took place in planning the research. Researcher vulnerability is a topic that receives much less attention (Griffin, 2012). O'Reilly and Kiyimba (2015) highlight the risk of 'secondary traumatic stress' in the transcription of difficult interviews while Bloor et al. (2010, p. 45 emphasis in original) state: "Junior researchers and PhD students, the main recipients of such harm, are being let down by some principal investigators and PhD supervisors who are failing to *manage* researcher risks effectively". Furthermore, vulnerability is one of the least examined concepts in research ethics (Levine et al., 2004).

In conducting research with those experiencing extremes of hardship and difficult personal issues, I found that I began to feel stressed; on some occasions this affected my wellbeing as I often felt helpless that I could not get involved in participants' lives. These were linked to situations which came up in the course of fieldwork, and I was not prepared for by any of the research training that I took when preparing for fieldwork. For example, conducting research with women in extreme material hardship and poverty meant that on a few occasions I was asked for money by one particular

participant. The participant had asked me for money to buy food and to top up her electricity for the next couple of days as she said she had nothing left. When I said that I could not give her money she then asked me if I would buy her some food, and at this point I did concede to go to a sandwich shop to buy her a sandwich and a drink.

On a couple of occasions participants wanted to bargain with me for more 'thank you' vouchers. Similarly, this put me in a difficult situation where I was asked to do something that would have gone against the ethical boundaries set when the research was approved. In this situation I was able to say that this was outside of the university ethics policy and would not be possible.

Another participant asked me to vouch for their participation in the research and their conduct within the research relationship. This was something that really left me conflicted as I wanted to do this for her as she had been a very engaged and open research participant. The letter would go towards establishing the participants' character in court as part of care proceedings. Furthermore, because this participant had fled domestic violence and was in a new city, she had few friends or support networks, resulting in her relying heavily on the research relationship. I ultimately agreed to confirm that she had volunteered to participate in the research and that she had been positive and committed during the research process. However, this led to other problematic situations such as her asking me if we could remain in contact beyond the research period; I found it particularly hard to tell her that she could only get in touch with me if it was regarding the research.

On another occasion, where I conducted an interview in a participant's home, I was only made aware that we were not alone in her flat when her partner got up from having been asleep in the bedroom. She had previously disclosed that her partner had been involved in a violent incident in the past. Therefore, I would have wanted to have known that he was going to be there to make an informed decision on whether I wanted to conduct the interview with him in the flat at the same time.

I was able to speak with my supervisory team, an informal mentor and research centre colleagues regarding these issues to be reassured that I had made the right choices and to plan for how to deal with such situations if they arose again. It also provided insights into some of the difficulties junior researchers' face and training on "difficult

interviewing” was developed to support PhD students in the research centre. I have learned that having debriefing sessions - regularly throughout the fieldwork and after challenging research encounters - with supervisors or experienced colleagues is important to deal with feelings of guilt and helplessness that arise from empathetic qualitative research relationships with those experiencing hardship.

4.5.10 Positional reflections

A feminist informed methodology calls for me to acknowledge my position of power (Spivak, 1985), and how I have enacted this power over others. Whether intentional or unconsciously (Flax, 1990), I must also acknowledge that I perceive myself in a certain and most likely idealised way (Maynes and Best, 1997). For example, I bring with me to the field my own normative constructions of what womanhood and motherhood should be, and therefore, it is important to acknowledge this and aim not to judge my participants against internalised norms. The dynamic between researcher and participant is a balancing act, as intimated by Skeggs (2004, p. 131): “I know some things about the women whom I studied that they don’t know, just as they know things about me of which I’m not aware...By virtue of my training, experience, ethnographic labours and time, I have access to explanations and interpretations with epistemological authority but this need not contradict the moral equality between us”. This will be managed by being explicit in my interpretations of data and the balance found in analysis.

Maxwell (1996, p. 29) states "any view is a view from some perspective, and therefore incorporates the stance of the observer". Reflexivity can be understood as a dual gaze; looking both inward onto the researcher and outward to the relationality between the researcher and that which is being researched (Moss, 1995). To present my research design, findings and analysis without first locating the position from which it has developed would weaken my research not merely from an ethical perspective but also from a methodological one. Situating the knowledge produced is essential, both ethically and in terms of academic rigour.

Historically, criminological research has been done "for the powerful, those social control agents and organisations responsible for the creation and maintenance of definitions, labels and boundaries of crime, markers of criminality" (Lumsden and Winter, 2014, p. 1, emphasis in original). This legacy remains influential; normative or positivist epistemologies are undergoing a resurgence both within the academic field, and in the UK policymaking context in the quest for 'evidence-based research' termed the "science-politics nexus in criminology" by Wacquant (2011, p. 441). My aim in this thesis is to make it clear where I, as a researcher, am looking 'from'. As Haraway (1991, pp. 188-189) states "the eyes have been used to signify a perverse capacity - honed to perfection in the history of science tied to militarism, capitalism, colonialism, and male supremacy - to distance the knowing subject from everybody and everything in the interests of unfettered power . . . but of course that view of infinite vision is an illusion, a god-trick".

I have had little experience of poverty and social exclusion, and unlike participants in the research, I have not lived under conditions set by the criminal justice system, the benefits system or child protective services. During the research process I tried to remain continuously attentive to how these experiences would impact the power dynamics and in particular the power asymmetry between myself as the researcher and participants within the research relationships (Ackerly and True, 2010). I wore informal clothes, I did not get out my smartphone and tried to be sensitive to the privileges I had of not being subject to scrutiny, of having safe accommodation and regular income from work.

Relationships were important to participants whether intimate or familial. I found that this was common ground for me with all participants. As we got to know each other they asked about my relationships, and I was happy to share challenges that I had faced and they were able to impart advice from their experiences. I was happy to spend time on these topics that they enjoyed and which set us on a more equal basis, as it gave participants a turn in being the one with 'expertise'. I also used a voucher to acknowledge the time and effort put in by participants as well as incentivising research participation. In doing so, I felt I would be better able to address Levi-Strauss's question 'what right have I to represent *you*?' (2003, p. 8; emphasis in the original).

While I am not part of the CJS, I accessed participants through gatekeeper organisations linked to state agencies through policy alignment or funding. While participants were not incapacitated to the same extent had they been imprisoned, some were mandated to attend the gatekeeper organisation as part of a specified activity of a court order, referred there via police-based triage or as part of a victim support process. It was therefore important to make it clear that participating in the research did not appear as another condition or imposition on their lives, but something to be entered into voluntarily *if* they wished to do so. I made it clear that I was an independent researcher from a university both verbally and on my recruitment materials (see Appendices 3-6). I also reiterated at each meeting that our conversations would be confidential unless there was a safeguarding issue.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the epistemological, methodological and ethical approach utilised in carrying out the fieldwork in order to answer the three research questions devised based on identified gaps in the existing literature.

Although I found being 'in the field' was at times ethically, emotionally and practically challenging, this period was also one of the most enjoyable aspects of carrying out my research. Designing and conducting a solo research project on this scale was a steep learning curve, but I am thankful for the rich experience it has given me in navigating complex practical problems and difficult ethical dilemmas. The methodological approach and research methods used enabled the formation of positive, collaborative research relationships with participants, and in line with the feminist-informed approach taken went some way in tempering the researcher-participant power dynamic asymmetry. In particular, the use of visual methods, including auto-photography and subsequent photo-elicitation interviews, provided an engaging and non-threatening means of data collection which promoted participants' agency and reflexivity. It also provided an alternative to talk-only interviews which provided more opportunity for additional channels of communication. For participants accustomed to

surveillance from state agencies it provided a way for them to be in charge of what is being looked at.

5. Lives in Adversity

5.1 Introduction

This is the first of four chapters that outline the empirical findings. Chapter 5 emerged from the data in more of a grounded fashion than coming directly from the theoretical framework. It explores participants' earliest memories of critical life events and their understandings of how these have impacted them cumulatively over their lives to date.

A key aim of this thesis is to understand how women in advanced marginality experience and make sense of their lives. To enable this understanding, it is important firstly to scrutinise the relationship between participants' past and present situations. In doing so, we can gain a contextualised *and* reflexive picture of each woman's life course to date. This highlights some of their needs, how these have developed over time, how this has led to their being labelled as 'offender', 'addict', 'vulnerable' or 'at risk', and how they came to be recruited to take part in the research. It also deepens our understanding of the (in)ability of the state intervention to fully recognise and support these women in light of their complex and difficult life experiences. Highlighting these experiences is crucial to make sense and critique the way institutions categorise and govern these women.

From a sociological perspective it is important to make sense of participants' life courses to date juxtaposed with their early traumatic experiences. This chapter introduces the research participants' complex life histories. The in-depth and repeat nature of the qualitative interviews (outlined in Chapter 4) elicited a set of highly contextualised and often complicated stories of their lived experiences. Using an approach that took account of each participant's life-course enabled "a spectrum of experiences to emerge - negative and positive - within the context of a person's whole life" (Sosulski et al., 2010, p. 35). It was thus possible to gather rich insights into the personal and social roots of women's 'lives in adversity'. Although each participant's life course was unique to them, in transcribing and analysing the interview data, it became clear that they also had much in common. In particular, the "temporal depth"¹² (Bluedorn, 2002, p. 114), multiplicity, and cumulative nature of exposure to adversities

¹² Temporal depth is distance travelled in time into the past and future that individuals or groups tend to consider when reflecting on events that have happened, may have happened, or may happen.

they had faced were striking, a finding reported in life course research with formerly homeless people (Padgett et al., 2012).

Wider research indicates gendered and classed dimensions to these experiences of marginality. Girls are twice as likely to be victims of child sexual abuse than boys according to available statistics and research (although under-reporting is an issue especially for boys) (Jay, 2013; NSPCC, 2020; ONS, 2020). Research has indicated that those who are subject to adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are much more likely to be diagnosed with mental health issues (Lloyd and Turner, 2008; Guzman, 2013; Padgett et al., 2012). This was reflected in participants, with all those who disclosed ACEs having been identified with anxiety and depression as adults. During the research process, seven participants chose to disclose previous experiences of child neglect/abuse for which they had received and in some cases were still receiving support with. At the gatekeeper organisations, participants accessed a range of support services; specialist, one-to-one and group based. The ability to get support or signposting to specialist support around these experiences was a key aspect of the services for some participants.

This data presented in this chapter shows how the lived effects of traumatic experiences in childhood go beyond the event itself. Furthermore, it shows how these experiences can play a decisive role in how those affected, in particular, 'vulnerable' women, understand and react to life events both in their pasts, presents and times ahead. Participants' early adverse experiences steer and shape their sense of self and their relationship to state agencies. The findings highlight the merits of a broader focus, placing participants' critical experiences within their life context.

The accounts highlight a myriad of adversities faced by many of the women, often from a young age. Understanding what these women have been through is important because of the link between ACEs and the long-term impacts this has on people's lives (Felitti et al., 1998a). An expansive approach to timeframes is useful when exploring the interplay between structural and individual factors, because of the on-going dialectic between the two over time. Looking at participants' life courses to date is key to understanding the needs, emotions, wellbeing and harms experienced by these women and how these interact with perceptions, categorisations and interventions imposed by agencies.

The rest of this chapter is organised as follows: firstly, it presents data on cumulative adversities through four case study vignettes and illustrative lifeline diagrams which begin to introduce some of the participants in more depth and give a sense of what it is like to be in their shoes. It then proceeds to examine common issues for all participants chronologically across the life course and includes: participants' earliest years and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs); family interventions from child welfare services and experiences of children's homes; the shift towards criminalisation as a means of dealing with experiences of marginality as girls; and the transition to adulthood and ongoing interventions.

5.2 Cumulative adversity

Through the repeat interviews what became clear from women's experiences was multiple, complex and cumulative adversities. This section presents a range of case study vignettes and accompanying diagrams of individual life trajectories which illustrate their exposure to multiple and overlapping adverse life events and micro-level insights into the complex raft of governance and interventions that marginalised women navigate. Presenting their data as such attempts to convey how participants reflected on their own lives thus far. These are illustrative, and the lifelines are not to scale with years evenly apart. The diagrams presented are stylised models which summarise a range of key events in selected participants' lives. They are static simplifications intended to provide a broad overview of cumulative adversity. They aim to convey the sense of highs and lows that participants gave me in telling me about the key events in their lives; the ups and downs depicted in the figures are my post-interview assessments of positive and negative life events over time. These were developed during the iterative process of data analysis once the fieldwork had come to an end.

The four participants whose data I have selected to develop lifelines for represent a range of experiences from across the group. They highlight the main trajectories and stages participants went through such as: 'troubled young women' or 'in care', to 'young welfare mother' to 'offender' to 'victim' to 'maternal outcast' and finally to 'volunteer'. Many participants had common experiences, with a trajectory roughly

similar to at least one of the four. One participant stood out from the group, Annie, who presented herself as being on a different trajectory finding a successful career and not having had any children yet and how atypical this was when she compared herself to the other women attending the GO1. The small number of cases was necessarily limited, while it was important to show life histories but it was not possible to do this for all participants.

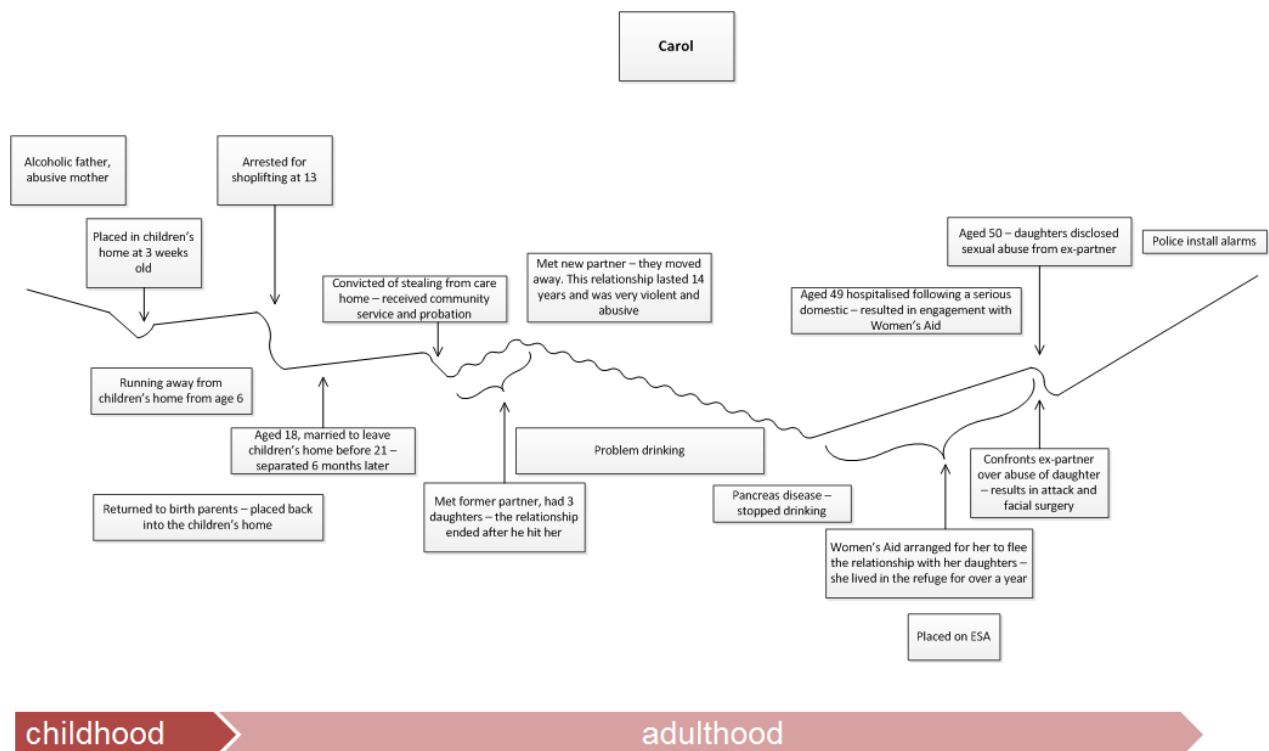
Case vignette 1: Carol

Carol is a 54-year-old white woman whose life story represents an intense accumulation of traumatic events. She is separated from her ex-partner who was physically and emotionally abusive towards her. She had been hospitalised by him after she confronted him following her daughters' disclosure as adults that he had sexually abused them as children. She has three grown up daughters, one of whom lives with her. As shown in Figure 1, Carol was raised by the state in a children's home due to her father being alcohol dependent and her mother being abusive.

I married to get out of the [children's] home... I had broke away from my family because they are all quite criminal minded ...Long story short ended up with my children's dad who was, well he punched me once and I got rid of him erm... then I moved up [north] with a new man, who was then extremely abusive for 14 years I lived with him...Luckily, I ended up in hospital, and that is where I heard of Women's Aid who then spent six weeks trying to get me out of the house without anything happening... which I did. I was then in a refuge for a year and a half, now in this house that I am in now, and going through the same thing because somehow he found out where we were so, we have now just had alarms fitted, in the whole of the house. (Carol)

Figure 5.1: Lifeline diagram: Carol

(Please note: the oscillating line is used to convey that within an overall trajectory; participants made clear there were still ups and downs.)



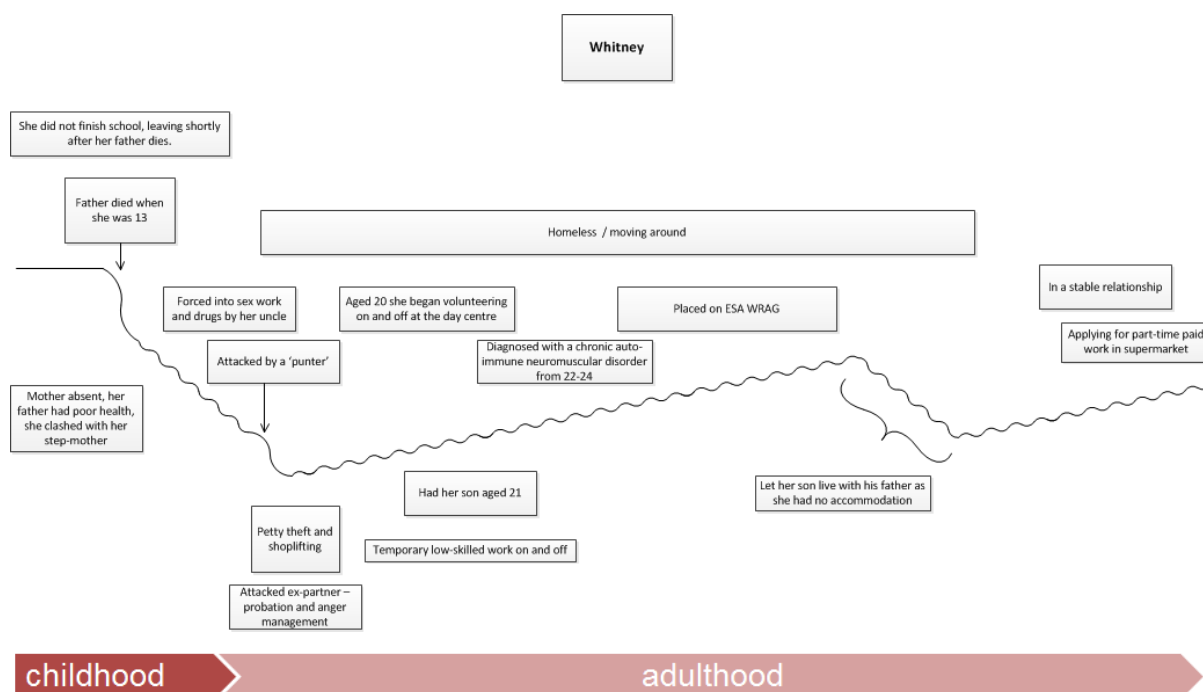
Case vignette 2: Whitney

Whitney is a 26-year-old white woman who had been volunteering on and off for seven years until she recently secured part-time paid work (see Figure 2). She has a chronic auto-immune neuromuscular disease which took two years to diagnose and has been claiming ESA WRAG. She is enjoying a new relationship with a man she met through volunteering. She has one son who was five at the time of interview, who has been living with his father for the past year when she went through a 'bad patch' and was homeless. They had shared custody, but the father was not facilitating contact with her son. She was planning to go to court to address this. She had been in trouble for prostitution, petty theft and domestic altercations with former partners. She said that she had only really begun to turn her life around since her uncle's death.

My real mum is a waste of space. My step-mum, we never got on growing up anyway so we always clashed and then social services...my uncle forced me into a lot of things... I was a working girl... obviously I had to support my habit as well...I got attacked down there once by a punter...I've just got to prove myself...especially with my past history, coming off drugs and everything and all that. I've always kept myself busy. I like to keep myself

busy so I don't do anything stupid. (Whitney)

Figure 5.2: Lifeline diagram: Whitney



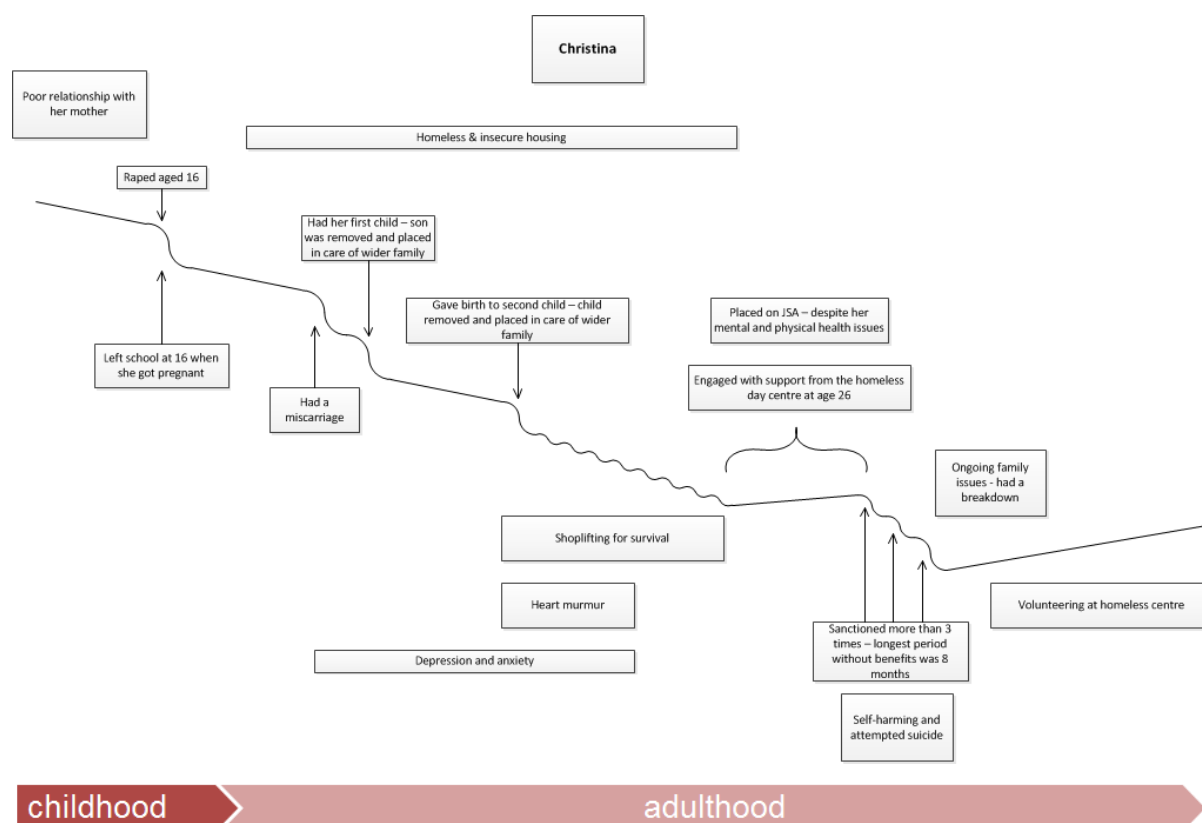
Case vignette 3: Christina

Christina is a 30-year-old white woman who has recently been struggling with her mental health and has ongoing poor mental and physical health. As shown in Figure 3, she has two children who were removed from her care and placed with kin. They know her as an aunty, and she sees them once or twice a year. She claims JSA but has been sanctioned in the past with the longest period being 8 months. During this time, she was able to get food from the homeless centre where she was a service user and volunteer. She is at a more stable point as she has a council flat but she is paying off rent arrears. Her relationship with her mother remains turbulent.

Had my first kid...then [had to] fight for him, and just ended up in depression... I don't know I sort of left [the father], because he raped me so I didn't want him to have owt to do with the child...got pregnant with my second kid. Became homeless and I guess the only time I have actually managed to do anything which is including education wise is when I have been here (GO3), other than

that until I would say about three year ago it was just trying to survive, keep my benefit, not commit suicide. (Christina)

Figure 5.3 Lifeline diagram: Christina



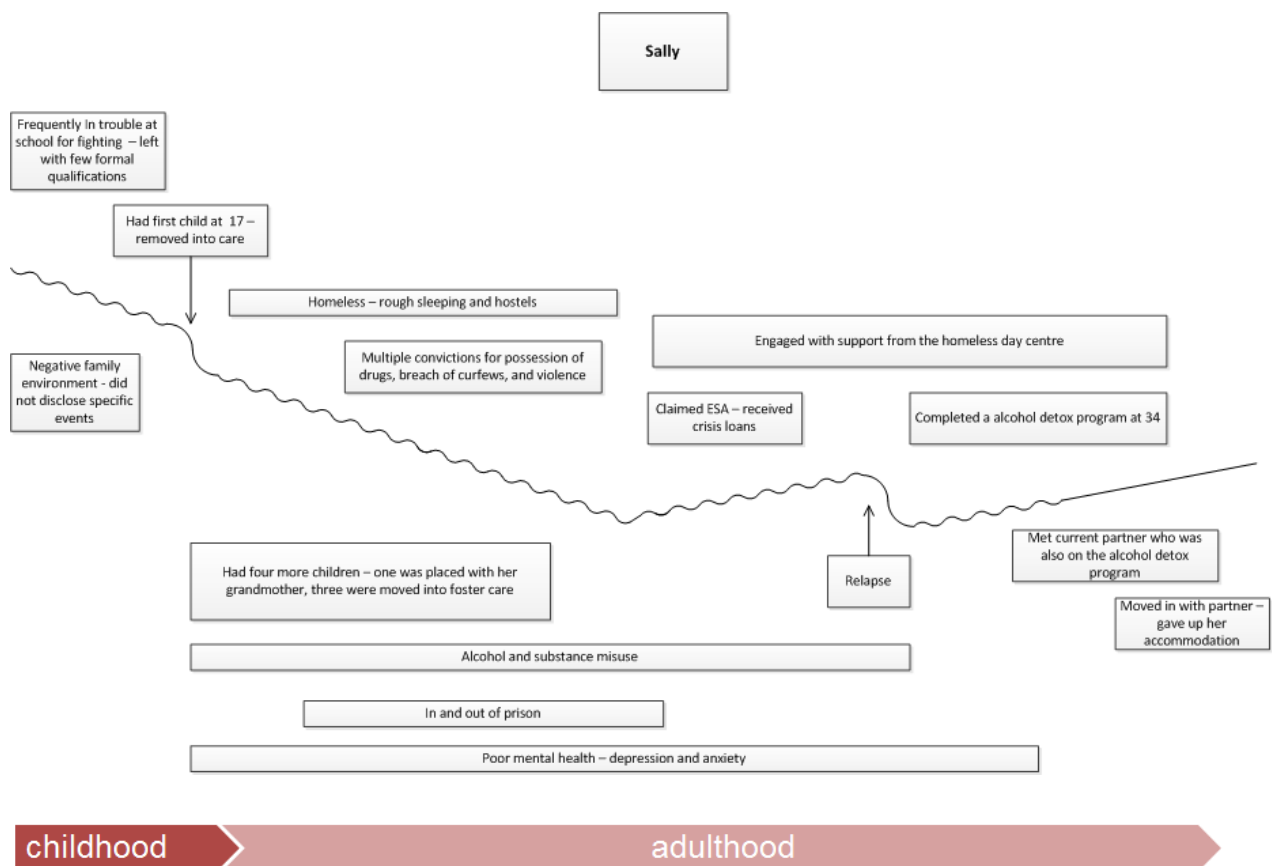
Case vignette 4: Sally

Sally is a 36-year-old white woman who is a chef on a voluntary part-time basis. She has been with her current partner for two years. As Figure 4 shows, Sally's problems began in school where she was in trouble frequently and left with few qualifications. She has five children, none of whom remain in her care. She suffers from depression and anxiety. She no longer uses drugs; she still drinks but feels this is under control. She claims ESA WRAG and has volunteered for many years.

[My partner] was in [detox program] before I went in, he was in for mental health, but we got together and been together for two years. He's just done [another] detox himself cos he got right bad on it, whereas now I can just take

it or leave it, but he's doing good - he's been off drink several weeks now. I didn't even last that long when I came out. I started drinking again, not as much as what I was, and now I'm just doing it when we go out with mates or at weekends basically, when I have a day off work... (Sally)

Figure 5.4: Lifeline diagram: Sally



These vignettes were selected to illustrate the succession of overlapping adverse events that participants recounted, and their cumulative character over time. Childhood abandonment and maltreatment, from minor to very severe, were met with patchy child welfare interventions which gave way to adolescent or adult abuse of alcohol or drugs, and involvement with the criminal justice system and violent intimate relationships. On having children, participants were deemed by professionals to be unable to provide safe home environments and in the majority of cases did not raise their children. Their lives were marred by mental health problems as well as physical

health problems and social losses. Participants often cast their pasts as part of who they used to be, their old life, and not who they were now or what was important to them. This reflected the change in identity that they were seeking. All four have an upward line at the end. This indicated some degree of hope and empowerment, however constrained, and was linked to finding some stability and support within the day centre environments.

5.3 'Troubled' childhoods

Most participants from right across the group recounted adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) which ranged from highly traumatic events, such as childhood sexual victimisation, witnessing domestic violence, other forms of abuse, neglect, having parents with alcohol or drug dependency, to more commonly experienced adversities such as being bullied at school or being in a family that struggled to get by - often there was a combination of these.

For some participants, a problematic childhood was the first step towards criminalisation. The transition from 'troubled' girl to 'troublesome' young woman is a well-known trope in the literature and popular discourse (Worrall, 1999; Lloyd, 1995); this was a well-trodden path for participants with the most seriously challenging early years experiences. More recently, 'troubled' has been tied to working-class, single parent families by policymakers in an extension of anti-social behaviour policy under the guise of the Troubled Families programme (Ball et al., 2016). Agencies of the state and the media play key roles in the perception shift from troubled to troublesome. These themes will be picked up once more in Chapter 7 which examines interventions by and participants' responses to penal institutions. In this section, the link between a troubled childhood and negative experiences over the life course is introduced and explored.

When I asked Whitney about how she had come to be in trouble with the police in the first place, she directly linked her involvement in criminal activities to early experiences of abuse from a family member. She explained what had happened to her in the following way:

Whitney: Drugs...my uncle forced me into a lot of things, obviously the things he did force me to do was not good, I was a working girl, he used to force me into brothels and things like that, I don't like talking about things like that...

Larissa: No you don't have to talk about anything you don't want to talk about.

Whitney: Things like that, that's how I got in trouble.

Whitney's criminalisation is therefore directly related to her victimhood. She also relayed that her experience of childhood abuse was not known to social services at the time; she was therefore not recognised as a victim and was instead criminalised because of her use of drugs and being a 'working girl'. As Siegel and Williams (2003, 85) suggest "drug offences may be symptomatic...of escape or avoidance behaviour". Whitney's account of abuse and subsequent drug use could therefore reflect her attempts to escape from or avoid the emotional and physical trauma of being abused by a family member and used as a sexual commodity as a child.

Other participants spoke of early experiences of abuse:

My childhood was really bad. My step mum, she used to batter us, she used to lock us in rooms with a bucket, we hardly got fed. And do you know what...I ran away from home at 14 and it were the best day of my life when I went into care. I was so happy. I ran away on the Friday, I sneaked out my uncle's; ran away on the Friday and I slept in a bus shelter over weekend, went to social services on Monday and I told them how bad it were at home.
(Carly)

Another participant, Amy, had told me that she wanted to take part in the research because she was angry; in field notes I recorded that she had told me her mother had had drug problems and that she had had a social worker herself. Amy was vocal about feeling failed by the care system: *'they didn't look after me properly when I was a kid'*. Whitney, Carly and Amy had all experienced abuse at a young age and felt that child protection interventions were patchy. It was also common for participants that childhood experiences of abuse had gone under the radar altogether. For Lola, it was

not until a crisis point as an adult was reached that she was able to open up about what had happened to her:

"During that time my mental health had really gone bad... I would like self-harm ... I lost all my confidence, was frightened to drive a car, frightened to go out on the street, and it was only through the counselling that I eventually disclosed that I was abused by my dad as a child. So she [the counsellor] has put me down as [having] complex post-traumatic stress disorder...and disassociation disorder as well because I do, tend to when it gets too much, I just switch off and go and I don't know where I've gone and I just come to wherever I am... I never told my husband, no...And I certainly wasn't going to tell them [fraud investigators] about my dad, didn't think they needed to know that." (Lola)

Sylvia's abuse was disclosed only when she received psychological assessments when she was convicted of a more serious offence and received a longer prison sentence. Prior to this she had experienced an extended period of cycling through homelessness, problem drinking and short prison sentences.

"When I was younger with my stepdad, I didn't know my real dad but I have got his name on my birth certificate, but what happened with him it's, this is because even the judge at my trial in the report he said, 'if them things hadn't happened to you in the past...' my life could have been a whole lot different...My experience with the police, courts and legal system is linked to the very distressing nature of my background of abuse, and the lifestyle I have lived since leaving home as a teenager...With the psychologist, that I did the assessment [with], different tests and, you know like it was the one part of it where, I cannot discuss it in full but when I was sexually abused by not just my stepdad but his friends." (Sylvia)

The range of accounts presented above highlights some of the breadth and depth of ACEs faced by participants; there were many disturbing accounts of abuse and neglect. For some, ACEs were compounded by subsequent abusive relationships as adults. ACEs matter because research shows they are associated with coming into conflict with the law later life. Siegel and Williams (2003) found that those who had

experienced sexual abuse as a child were more likely to be arrested as adults. Similarly, Grella et al. (2005) found direct links between out-of-home care, and traumatic experiences on the one hand, and adolescent misconduct and adult offending on the other. Their study of 400 women offenders found that foster care was sometimes a precursor for involvement in sex work, and those who witnessed early traumatic events were more likely to be associated with violent crimes, as confirmed by my research participants.

There is evidence which suggests that instances of abuse and neglect are more prevalent among families with low income and in poverty, which reflects a classed line along which these experiences take place (Pelton, 2015). Much of the evidence to support this link is based on research from the US (Bywaters et al., 2016). In this thesis just four participants described coming from backgrounds where their parents had jobs that paid well. The majority of participants were from poorer families with multiple needs and were known to multiple agencies. Carly talked about not having enough food in her family home, and Whitney had been used to make money for her uncle. Common to participants were low levels of educational (cultural), social and economic capital, with most reporting not doing well at - and in some cases not finishing - school.

Larissa: How old were you when you left school?

Whitney: 13. (Whitney)

Larissa: did you finish school?

Carly: No, in prison I did most of me qualifications. (Carly)

I got through [school] but I got bullied...It was horrible. (Evie)

Larissa: What qualifications did you get at school?

Jane: I didn't get any GCSEs. (Jane)

Participants perceived that they had messed up their chance to gain qualifications; some, like Carly, did not gain any formal qualifications until later in life while in prison, where she gained functional qualifications in literacy and numeracy. Being educationally disadvantaged is not unexpected, particularly for those with adverse

family environments and traumatic events ranging from parental death, abandonment or abuse. Many had poor attendance at school and did not have access to a supportive family or resources to address their poor attainment. Their lack of a safe family environment left them ill prepared for life as the following accounts show.

When I was 16... I got my own independency [from the children's home] but because I weren't sure how to live independently that's when I started smoking weed, drinking, and then it just escalated... Well it were like a bedsit and they don't pre-warn you they just say right you are 16 you have to move out. (Carly)

I moved out just before I got pregnant. So, I was also in that little transit moment where [me and my mum] hated each other, because the best way to describe our household was two lionesses trying to rule the same pack, because with my mum having narcolepsy, I had to step up a lot, so, it was I was sort of in charge of certain things and then when my mum actually was awake and trying to do it, it was just clashy, clashy ... I left home... ...he [the man who gave her a place to stay] raped me so I didn't want him to have owt to do with the child... it was a guy that put me up because I became homeless throughout this... (Christina)

As with other participants there is conflict within Christina's family. After her relationship with her mother breaks down completely, she leaves home and at first 'couch surfs' with friends. The instability of her home environment and subsequently becoming homeless leaves her in an unsafe living situation. Christina appears to have fallen through the net in terms of her vulnerability not being picked up by her teachers or social workers and housing support.

It is also important to note that while many participants had adverse experiences in their childhoods and early adulthood, not all did. Some participants reported positive childhoods and family environments.

I always got brought up that you ate at the table and then you sorta discuss what had happened through day with yer family la... not so much strict, but it were always, always a Sunday dinner, it was traditional, 100 per cent, dinner

every night was you had the dinner at table, I mean god forbid there were mobile phones then cos if there were, they wouldn't have been allowed at table. I can remember mum saying go down to garden and get some mint, I'd chop me mum some fresh mint, yeah, I've got some right memories, yeah. (Ros)

As Ros' account shows, she feels there were no obvious ACEs in her childhood or family background underpinning her adult involvement with the CJS. Likewise, not all those from a disadvantaged background end up in care or the criminal justice system. As Hills (2002, p. 236) argues, "there is little evidence in the UK for a permanently excluded 'underclass', doomed from childhood". Similarly, people from a more privileged background do get involved with the criminal justice system.

The data presented within this section showed many participants, though not all, link the problems they have faced as adults with adverse childhood experiences or challenging family environments. These adverse events ranged from having conflict with parents and leaving home, to having absent parents, experiencing parental deaths, to parental neglect or abuse.

For the most part, the spectre of ACEs loomed over participants' life courses, which will be reflected upon further in the later section on cumulative adversity (Section 5.2) and in Chapter 7, which explores penal institutions. For other participants, like Lola and Sylvia, whose accounts are presented earlier in this section, they had taken care to tuck these histories away, building new identities in an attempt to leave these issues in the past. Despite these efforts, historic traumas often came back to haunt them until what they had been through was addressed. Participants were in many cases still coming to terms with ACEs and engaging with services at the day centres was part of that, with the role of the day centres explored in depth in Section 8.5.

5.4 Care system interventions and children's homes

While most participants had experienced trauma in their childhoods, not all had entered the formal care system. Seven chose to disclose past experiences of child abuse, and five had witnessed abuse as children; but of these 12 participants, just four had been taken into formal care (either into a foster home or children's home). It is

important to note that some participants chose not to discuss their childhoods with me in detail, preferring to speak about current lives, so the incidence may have been higher.

Some participants had spent time in the care system, or with foster families or kin; of these, many had been involved again with the care system as adults when they became parents and their children considered at risk. Two participants in particular disclosed that they had spent time in children's homes.

Carol: I was in care from 3 weeks due to abusive parents...My dad was a raging alcoholic...

Larissa: Did your mum also have any problems...?

Carol: Oh she, well not that I was aware of, she had...I mean she was psycho, that is the only word I can think of her, she was really psycho...But I suppose it was a, I suppose my mother was still alive, and my father, and it was just a way of erm... you become a 'government child' I think they call it... I married [when] I was 4 weeks into my 18th birthday, and got married so that I could get out [of the children's home] and then...I had left him within 6 months... Looking back...the whole thing for me it was getting out of there, when you have got a court order saying you are in care until you are 21 and you think you know, people are adults at 21...

Carly: They put me in a children's home.

Larissa: How long were you living there for?

Carly: Up till I was 16. And then I got my own independency but because I weren't sure how to live independently that's when I started smoking weed, drinking, and then it just escalated.

Carol had been in care in a children's home from a very young age until she was 18. Carly was in a children's home for around two years until she reached the age of 16 and was allowed to live independently in her own flat. Their lives to date had taken quite different paths; Carly had a long history of persistent and prolific offending while Carol was in trouble with the police during her time in the children's home. There were

also some commonalities between them, both women had substance misuse issues, and had experienced domestic violence in most of their adult relationships.

Due to her offending history and alcohol and drug misuse which began in care, Carly has not retained the responsibility to care for any of her five children. Carol was only in trouble with the police when in the children's home, though she experienced domestic abuse and subsequent problem drinking this was not picked up by health or social services and she was able to raise her three daughters. Carol was unable to protect her children from what was going on at the time, and later on, one of her daughters disclosed that she had been abused by an ex-partner of Carol's when she was 13. Though Carol eventually left the abusive relationships she was in, she still lives in fear of one of her ex-partners who stalks her and has not been prosecuted by the police.

For younger participants like Amy, aged 18 at the time of interviewing, involvement in the care system was more recent, yet this experience had already impacted how she was treated as a young adult.

"Me and Jack have both been in care as kids, that's what the letter from social services said was the main risk for our baby. That shouldn't be a reason, it's not fair." (Amy)

In this case, having been in care was acutely stigmatising. While Amy was not criminalised by her involvement in the care system, this experience marked her as a risky parent. In Amy's case she felt that this was a marker for observation, and this issue came to the fore when she became pregnant herself. In a later interview Amy did open up about other issues which social services were concerned with.

"I've been told I've got anger issues." (Amy)

Amy had been referred to an anger management course at the day centre where I recruited her, but she did not get along with this particular key worker as the following excerpt illustrates.

Amy: I don't really like her though.

Larissa: No?

Amy: No, cause she was like (puts on higher pitched voice) 'oh you need to take some responsibility for yourself for being there'...Cheeky little fucking bitch.

Despite being referred to the community-based Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) for anger management counselling, Amy was unable to complete this course due to the member of staff with that particular expertise leaving the day centre. Feeling angry about her situation was significant to Amy's decision to take part in the research; she had told me that she wanted to tell someone about what had been done to her. It became clear that she felt 'failed' by the state as she had not been looked after as a young child when her own mother had drug problems. As she grew up, she continued to feel let down as a young adult. In one example, she described having not been allocated a social worker which she said she was entitled to due to the time she had spent in care. She felt so strongly she said it was 'illegal' of the local authority to have not provided her with one.

Taking Amy's past experiences into account, feeling angry was something that one could empathise with. However, it is clear from the previous excerpt that professionals expected her to 'take responsibility' for her situation. The implications of ACE, which include a broad range of mental health 'disorders' and 'maladaptions' (Shaw, 2004; Hornor, 2010), were not being taken into account. Amy's diagnosis of anger problems aligns with the psychological literature. Having been labelled as 'angry' produced a stigmatising effect which saw her ability to live independently with her young family questioned. This quickly led to her being coerced into living far from home and under surveillance in a MBU (see Section 7.4). Amy's lived experience of the care system was one of failure, and by that same system, loss of freedom. She was also pathologised for her reaction to what she perceived as her own poor treatment.

For others, being in care was experienced as a pathway towards criminalisation:

Larissa: So when did you first like come into contact with the police then would you say?

Carly: I think it were when I were 15 drinking, drunk and disorderly and going missing from the children's home.

...You went in [to the children's home] when you're young, in some of them the kids are older, they're teaching you to do things, I mean I was handed my first cigarette at the age of eight, my first drink. It's because you're in that situation, everyone else is doing it. No-one, the staff, I mean you got the odd one that cared. But a lot of them you were just a number with a pay packet at the end of you...You don't do what they want and your pocket money is stopped. Your clothing allowance gets stopped as you get older, so you start, just conforming to the way they want. And then it's just held over your head...I think it's wrong how you're treated in a home... (Carol)

Carly entered the children's home at 14, by 15 she had started drinking alcohol and running away. For Carly, the children's home is where she began getting into trouble with the police and where her problems with alcohol misuse started, which calls into question the ability of children's home to provide 'effective social investment' and 'human capital' for children in need (Churchill, 2011). Many participants had been involved in the care system as children and then had subsequently come into conflict with the law. This echoes wider research which shows that care can act as “a stepping stone to custody” (Blades et al., 2011, p. 6; Sands, 2016). In the UK, around 50% of children in custody have been in the care system (Prison Reform Trust, 2016).

Carol was first taken into care at three weeks old; she was later re-united with her family as a child but ended up back in the home again following further physical abuse and neglect. Carol's engagement with the criminal justice system was less extensive than other participants; she maintained that she had never experienced a custodial sentence. However, as her account suggests this may be down to sheer luck because she was involved in minor crimes such as shoplifting. Carol used one of her photos to convey a sense of how important your early years and family experience are. In this excerpt, Carol reflects on her photo of building blocks which spell out the word 'home'.



Figure 5.1: Photo by Carol, depicts decorative blocks that read HOME

That [photo] was the idea of the blocks, because it's also, my daughter's very - she says things better than me - she says it's the building blocks now, for your home. So that was the idea behind that... If you've got a stable home it tends to help better, in all cases. I think if your home life is unstable to start with, that can depict the line you go down, and I think they need to catch people really, really young... I mean the first thing my mum taught me was how to steal. That was the first lesson... ..Cos I was in care from three weeks... And they, the government and the social services, in their infinite wisdom decided... You should try and let kids be at home... And within three days [of being back at home] my first lesson from mum was stealing - which I didn't do right cause I didn't understand it. She asked me to get... well I'm assuming flowers, but it is apparently carnation milk. That was the first broken nose I had, from her because I'd got it wrong. But that's it, I'm saying if you've got someone that the first lesson they're teaching you is stealing so you don't know any different - that's it, that's your way of living. (Carol)

Carol's account highlights how she had made sense of her experiences. In her reflections on her childhood in and out of care, she felt that where she started in life and particularly the early years were significant for her, in terms of her subsequent life trajectory. This echoed Whitney's words on her and her best friend's starting point,

"me and Sally we started off shit". These accounts reinforce the notion that where you start in life, particularly your childhood experiences and family environment, is very important and can be a strong indicator of opportunities and future pathways. Being in a care home separated Carol from her family who were 'criminal minded', although she did not end up in prison, she was trapped in other ways, in abusive relationships, in addiction to alcohol. For many participants' this was often of cumulative adversities over the life course.

Carol did not have extensive experience of being in conflict with the law which many of the other participants did. She was one of the more successful participants in terms of having a stable place to live, a home of her own. She had maintained custody of her children and had good relationships with them. Carol had managed this in spite of her traumatic childhood and experiencing domestic violence in all of her adult relationships. This was an ongoing issue for her because she was still recovering from being hospitalised by her ex-partner when she took part in the research. Success is subjective and comparatively she was lucky in terms of not losing her own children to the care system. Despite cumulative adversity, participants were finding ways to move forward with their lives, often this meant reconciling their pasts with who they were now.

Cafcass (2014, p. 22) highlighted the risk that 'excessive variation' in practice could cause a 'postcode lottery' for 'the likelihood of the removal of a child from their parent/s'. More recently, the National Children's Bureau (2018, p. 3) suggested that there was "compelling evidence that children face a postcode lottery of protection by children's social care". Looking at experiences of participants, in some accounts where the abuse had been reported the state had intervened, whilst in others went unnoticed or ignored.

5.5 Lifeline reflection and identity change: Looking back and looking forward

This data presented in this chapter shows how the lived effects of traumatic experiences in childhood go beyond the event itself. Participants had many facets to their identities, having been variously victims, survivors, employed, unemployed,

addicted to alcohol or drugs, sober, criminalised, reformed, mothers and in some cases failed mothers. How they viewed themselves shifted within the research interviews. There was a *range* of perceptions, experiences and responses to ACEs both in childhood and in adult life, which shaped participants' sense of self and identity. This varied from feeling permanently tainted and unable to shake off stigma, through to anger at ongoing mistreatment, 'making peace' with past perpetrators, and developing new identities based on feelings of progress and redemption. While there are multiple, varied responses, they illustrate how the past bears on the present (and perceptions of future pathways and possibilities) - and illustrate the importance of understanding life histories.

In reflecting on her peers in the children's home, Carol spoke of others who she felt had had relatively worse life trajectories than her. This meant that she felt somewhat fortunate despite the adversities she had faced.

Carol: People say to me 'I don't know why you say you are lucky' - I am lucky! - I mean I don't know if you have ever heard of [children's home], you can Google it. Which is the children's home I was in...it had a paedophile ring, which...came to light, a few years ago... and the man I complained to...was actually the leader of the paedophile ring, but you don't know that as a kid. So obviously I have gone to tell him what is going on, only he was a judge who ran the home as well... ...growing up in a children's home in itself is difficult because people assume you are in there because you are a criminal, not because you have, you know come from a bad family; that is not very nice... I know that a lot of barriers...that were up as a kid...were because you are in a home or your parents are who they are, it is a stigma that attaches itself to you and I think, I knew I didn't want that for my kids...I had seen what it had done to people...I have to say there was a few good staff that worked in the children's home, that I suppose would just say the right thing...that stayed in my head...I still speak to one of them now [name], I am still friends with her...I have had a lot of friends from there [children's home], who have killed their self because of what happened, or, [some are on] drugs and

alcohol now, and they phone me up...they think I am the snob because...I don't do drugs...or commit crimes ...

How Carol feels about her current position is socially referent; she compares herself to other people who went through her children's home who she perceives as being worse off than her because they killed themselves or have alcohol and other drug disorders. Carol's reflexive assessment of her situation is shaped by social reference, aspirations, expectations and previous experiences (Burchardt, 2004). Carol distinguishes herself from the other former residents of the children's home; she makes it clear that she does not exhibit the same behaviours that they do. She is satisfied with her position as she believes that she is better off than others to whom she refers. Not only does she see herself as different, but her account also reflected her efforts to socially distance herself from being characterised in the same group, which is why her peers called her 'a snob'. Furthermore, this can work as a coping mechanism or at least explain Carol's apparent acceptance of her background of abuse and being in care. This way of making sense of her experiences spills over into her more recent history of being in abusive intimate relationships.

The legacy of traumatic experiences of abuse in childhood made it challenging to reconcile conflicting images of themselves, and the internal battles between engaging in their past abuse and suppressing it. As Tener and Murphy (2015, p. 391) suggest "to disclose the abuse can mean bringing the abused childhood world into the current life, possibly contaminating it forever. On the other hand, to avoid disclosure means carrying a heavy burden and may require a great deal of energy in keeping it secret". Participants wanted to be understood as women who had been through adversity that included highly traumatic events that they had survived. In the performance of sharing their life stories with me, it was important to outline where in their life history they perceived that things had gone wrong, and thus how this had contributed to their recent history of having found themselves being in conflict with the law and accessing support services. For some participants, their pasts weighed heavily on them and it made them feel as though they would never be free from it.

It's me past and I know I've got an horrendous past, but ...well people can change but it's just giving that chance to show that I've changed from just not

being given that chance... You are always labelled, I'll never stop being labelled because of my past. I wish I'd lived a good life and didn't do the things that I did, but I can't change that. (Carly)

Carly shows that it can be hard to move on when you are still seen as the person you were before. Being labelled and unable to shake this off highlights the stigma that she feels for having highly traumatic experiences from childhood and onwards over her life course on the one hand and being involved in drugs and crime on the other. Despite her efforts in the present to live a 'good life' Carly feels that her past casts a negative shadow on her. Those around her do not see her as she is now. A concept that is useful here is 'malopticon'. This has been defined as "a metaphorical penal apparatus or process through which the subject is seen badly, is seen as bad and is projected and represented as bad...it produces experiences of misrecognition and misrepresentation" (McNeill, 2018, p. 3).

McNeill (2018, 2019) uses this concept to great effect in exploring the experience of men under probation supervision, but it is a concept that can be expanded to those under other forms of supervision by state agencies. Carly felt keenly the distortive and denigratory effects of the malopticon, that is the agencies involved in assessing her fitness (or lack thereof) to be a parent. In spite of the weight bearing down upon her during the assessment period, she held on to hope and managed to find pockets of peace through making amends with her family and even in re-building a relationship with her step-mother who had been abusive towards her, and her birth mother:

"my step mum, I did make amends with her on mother's day...I sat there and thought I don't want to be bitter and twisted. I know I've moved on and I've changed, so I texted her and wished her happy mother's day. So she sent one back saying 'thank you, you are the only one'. Well I thought do you know what I'm not bitter, and it's like when it all came out what she had done to us when we were kids, now if she was telling the truth - I know how stubborn she is - she wouldn't have spoke to me. That's how I know I am not lying about what I've said about my past, do you know what I mean? But at least I made amends...Past is the past. Whatever she's done to us when we

were kids, fair enough just move on from that because we fell out over the same thing over and over again. Over the same argument. So we're just never moving on and all I want to do is just move on... And with my real mum, I text her as well and she text back saying thank you, love mum. So that's me making amends. (Carly)

To participants it was important to be perceived by those around them as no longer 'bad'. They often found this recognised within the day centres and in their peers. Having social connections from the past see you as changed was also important. Like Carly, Gillian was planning on reconnecting with her family during the research period.

Larissa: Are you going there to see family?

Gillian: My dad. Not seen my dad, spoke to him for 12 year. I've got a lot to make up for.

Larissa: Have you prepared in case anything doesn't go the way you want it to go?

Gillian: No... if he doesn't want to see me I will just be like, well I am no' losing anything.

Larissa: You have tried then you can say you did everything.

Gillian: Well yes this is what I mean, because at least I have tried. You don't want to see me well do you know it is your loss...He has got to talk to me, at the end of the day I am still his daughter. Do you know what I mean, I am the youngest one as well. And I am the only one that has ever been in trouble I am the black sheep...

...He has got to, he has got to give me a chance to explain, about the beer and whatever do you know what I mean because he is an alcoholic himself, so he, he must...relate to me.

...It's an addiction...but at least I have come through it, with flying colours

Gillian feels ostracised by her family, yet she also places blame on herself stating that she has 'a lot to make up for'. Positive social relationships have been shown to be integral to overcoming addiction and desisting from crime (Best and Lubman, 2012; Best et al., 2015; Maruna, 2012; Weaver, 2015). Gillian was able to find a new pro-social network through the women's centre where she carried out her rehabilitation

activity requirement (RAR) as part of her community order. Pro-social in this context denotes behaviours associated with desistance from crime or recovery from alcohol or other drugs (Kay and Monaghan, 2019). The social bonds between the women accessing services are important, and this echoes findings in Weaver's (2015) research with a male co-offending group.



Figure 5.2: Photo by Gillian, of hospital where she spent time in the ICU, she was hospitalised many times following binge drinking

Gillian views herself as successful in terms of addressing her alcohol misuse: “It was 14 year of that, on and off, until I thought, I’ve had enough, I’m too old for that, I can’t do it anymore...” At the time of interviewing, she felt in control of her drinking and was ready to reconnect with her family. Yet family recognition of this change evades her. External recognition, or ‘certification’ of behaviour change has been shown to be a key stage in those trying to turn their lives around. As Meisenhelder (1977, p. 329) states, “some recognised member(s) of the conventional community must publicly announce and certify that the offender has changed and that he is now to be considered essentially non-criminal”. As self-worth has a relational dimension, the quality and significance of those relationships is important. It is more than just reconnecting with estranged family, it is no longer being seen as bad by those important to them, whether friends, family or a professional (Maruna, 2004). Being seen as good is mutually constitutive of perceiving oneself as good, for participants who achieved this it gave some respite from the 'maloptical' power of cumulative state interventions.

The youngest participant, Amy, felt that she was seen as bad not because of her criminal justice involvement but due to the stigma of her being subject to care interventions as a child (Section 5.3). Unlike many participants, she mistrusted the professionals in the day centre and, reflecting on our research interviews, she was one of the participants with whom it was harder to build up trust and rapport.

Amy: They've said, one of the recommendations is gonna be that I carry on with anger management when I go home. That pissed me off a bit, because the reason that I come here, was because apparently they were qualified people to do things like that, here. And there isn't.

Larissa: Could the psychologist work on anger with you?

Amy: I'd rather not [talk to the psychologist], cause they go too in depth. They tell you things that you don't even know.

Unlike many of the other participants, Amy had not and did not wish to engage with her past. She made it clear that she did not want to receive psychological support to reflect on any past trauma. She distanced herself from topics that they tried to talk about, presenting it as professionals putting things in her head. As the youngest participant, Amy did not have the extent of cumulative adversity as other participants; she preferred to live in the moment. She retained a sense of resistance which was highlighted by her anger that her fitness to be a parent assessment was being tainted by her past. Amy is in a transitional stage of life both in terms of legally being recognised as an adult but also in terms of being able to continue being a mother that can to return home to raise her child – if she is deemed fit to be one at the end of her 12-week stay in the MBU. She does not see herself as bad or wrong; instead, she views the social worker interventions that she has been subjected to as wrong. Her experience of the ‘malopticon’ is limited when compared to other participants with a longer engagement with penal interventions and disciplinary mechanisms of the state.

Whitney, alongside others who had experienced abuse in childhood and cumulative victimisation as adults, was not caught by a social safety net but a ‘penal dragnet’ (Wacquant, 2009a). Participants were often perceived as choosing a particular lifestyle by state agencies, apportioned blame and criminalised. This failure by local authorities and the police to respond appropriately to child protection concerns and child sexual

exploitation has been seen across England and Wales (Arthur and Down, 2019). The idea that being abused is the fault of the victim for making particular lifestyle choices is a powerful narrative and is even internalised by participants like Whitney.

Larissa: Looking back...what do you think was the most important thing in you getting to... where you are now?

Whitney: Just getting my priorities right and making sure I get everything in place... My lifestyle, it were inside me, it's got to be inside you really, to change. It's not what everyone else says or what they do; it's got to be what you want to do. It's one word - choices.

Larissa: To be fair though, if you've got a different start in life, it's not always that easy...

Whitney: It doesn't work like that though; it doesn't work like that at all. I don't know; some people start off shit. Me and Sally we started off shit and look at us now. It just shows you, you've got to want to do it for yourself, not for anyone else.

Even though she had told me about losing her father and being abused by her uncle as a child in a previous interview, she then reframed her history and contested that it is 'just getting...priorities right'. In this sense, she believes that it was her own volition that has enabled her to come out on the other side after having a – in her own words - 'shit' start in life.

Taken at face value, it seems that she perceived her own efforts as the most important factor in her having reached a 'happier' and stable place; that you have to 'do it for yourself'. When I asked her whether her early traumatic experiences should be considered, she clearly rejected this narrative - to Whitney a tough start does not get you any allowances; you are still judged on your 'choices'. She failed to recognise the potential long-lasting impact of her early trauma. Instead, she made sense of her experience of cumulative adversities in terms of individual agency. In her reasoning, if you start off 'shit', to change things you have 'to want to do it for yourself'. In other words, there is no special treatment or allowances for those with traumatic early negative experiences, so there is not utility in dwelling on them.

Unpacking these conversations highlights how Whitney and Sally have come to accept that they were dealt a bad start in life; there is no expectation that a disadvantaged start in life would or should be mediated by the welfare state. This highlights how personal responsibility has become 'doxic' (Bourdieu, 1990). The internalisation of structural disadvantage as personal responsibility is also tied up in the empowerment of participants which takes place at the day centres (see Section 6.4.1).

From the researcher's perspective, it may seem that Whitney and other participants with similar ACEs had received little justice for the abuse experienced as children and young people to which further adversities were accumulated as adults. For some participants, the first stable support they received came from the gatekeeper organisations, this was particularly the case for GO1, GO2 and GO3. The state, in not intervening and protecting participants during adverse childhoods, could be seen at worst culpable of 'state-mediated structural injustice' and at best neglectful (Mantouvalou, 2020).

Whitney has developed her own narrative when looking back at her experiences. Ultimately, she feels that the onus was on her to turn her life around. Her own belief in her individual agency and ability to change her path away from being in conflict with the law is important to her. It is a key part of her new identity, her redemption narrative (Maruna, 2011). Rather than focus on the structural injustice she has encountered she draws on ideas of choice and individual responsibility to frame her story. This reflects the pervasiveness of neoliberal ideology (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb, 2002), which, when internalised, render structural injustice less visible. This point will be returned to in later chapters which examine behavioural interventions which re-enforce individualised narratives.

5.6 Discussion

The data presented in this chapter illustrated the substantial exposure to adverse events that participants have undergone over the life course to date. These events were wide-ranging and included parental death or neglect, childhood abuse, becoming homeless, prison sentences, abusive intimate relationships as adults, and the loss of children from their care. There were chronic stress factors, such as poverty, poor

mental health which ranged from anxiety and depression to being suicidal, alcohol and other substance disorders, and problems with their physical health.

Given the individuals recruited to take part in the research, the finding that cumulative adversities are prevalent across the life course is not unexpected. However, the severity, multiplicity and temporal complexity of adversities is striking. This group is often criminalised and examined pathologically rather than in terms of their lived experiences and trauma, this has important implications for policy. Being marginalised women, they also constitute a group which is often side-lined or omitted from mainstream sociological explanations of the punitive management of the poor.

This chapter highlights high levels of abuse, disconnection and disruption that many participants had experienced in their childhoods. They were, therefore, at a "psychosocial disadvantage" (Noblett and Nelson, 2001, p. 325). Childhood trauma and experiences of physical or sexual trauma has been linked to adult mental distress (Bentall et al., 2014; Friestad et al., 201; Mauritz et al., 2013). And almost all participants had experienced mental health problems into adulthood.

Studies that have examined women's psychosocial health within the CJS found high levels of mental health problems and psychiatric disorders (Turner and Tofler, 1986; Wilkins and Coid, 1991; Dell et al., 1993; Maden et al, 1994; Gorsuch, 1998; Noblett and Nelson, 2001; Bloom and Covington, 2008; Wakai et al., 2014). Class and other indices of inequality are also relevant, as there are strong links between experiences of poverty, marginalisation, violence, racism and poor mental health (Paradies, 2006).

Research on child sexual abuse across a range of disciplines suggests that this kind of experience is linked to a broad range of psychosocial problems for survivors. Shaw (2004, p. 218) highlights a number of factors, including "psychological distress which endures and not infrequently continues on into adulthood, associated with a spectrum of internalizing and externalizing symptoms, trauma-related disorders, and patterns of psychosocial maladaptation". When reflecting on participants' accounts, this can be seen in their experiences. Lola's early experiences underpin the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and disassociation disorders she is later diagnosed with.

According to Putnam (2003), sexual abuse is a complex life experience, not a disorder or diagnosis in of itself. The impact of this experience may manifest as PTSD, depression, anxiety, suicide, substance abuse, eating disorders, or adult re-victimisation (Hornor, 2010). Whether one or a number of disorders developed over the life course depended on the individual, their context and the psychosocial support they have access to.

In coming to terms with what has happened, there can be conflict between wanting to leave the experience behind them, "to bury it, and forget it and the paradoxical compelling need to repeat, relive, and re-experience the affective sexual scenarios in their various forms" (Shaw, 2004, p. 220). Some participants did not want to dwell on their pasts, such as Whitney and Carly whereas others returned to this topic again and again in subsequent interviews (Sylvia and Anita). These complexities were often misunderstood or misrecognised by professionals which contributed to participants' subsequent criminalisation. Some of the women had kept their experiences of abuse secret for many years (see Section 7.2). This may have been compounded by shame; some participants expressed concerns around people finding out what they had been through. For example, Lola had hidden her abuse from her partner and children. It was only when she was convicted of an offence and in engaging with probation and counselling, that she disclosed the intra-familial abuse.

Research has shown that ACEs can "destabilize a person's self-confidence and one's sense of identity" (Wong et al., 2018, p. 2). Participants' development was shaped by their early adverse experiences and family environments. This underpinned the cumulative adversity experienced subsequently throughout the life course. For those whose traumatic experiences surfaced later in life, there was a delay in coming to an appropriate understanding of their abuse or adverse experiences, such as understanding that subsequent problematic behaviours like drug use might be related to ACEs rather than simply being a matter of not making the right choices. Disclosure and the retelling of such experiences is part of this and has been shown to be important for the healing process (Tener and Murphy, 2015).

Not all participants were forthcoming. Some chose to omit details or only made vague inferences to negative events. Research suggests that the majority of child sexual

abuse survivors take 5 to 21 years after the event to disclose and some avoid disclosure permanently (Herbert et al., 2009; Jonzon and Lindblad (2004). As such, the severity and quantity of the adverse experiences that were elicited during interviews for this thesis was striking. Participants' survival and resilience is remarkable in light of their stories, although the ability to survive serious events may be understood as rooted in their development under adverse childhood conditions, as they are practiced at "focusing on surviving and responding to environmental threats...at the expense of other potential capabilities..." (Gringeri and Vogel-Ferguson, 2013, 657; Hagele, 2005).

The consequences of the extent of the ACEs not being taken into account were severe. This can be seen both in the cumulative abuse (by family and partners) experienced on a personal level. On telling (and re-telling) their stories of abuse as adults, to professionals and peers, their lives did not suddenly turn around towards a more positive direction. But it was a key part of the process of making sense of what they had been through and in understanding how that had impacted their life so far and how these events had impacted and shaped who they were.

Engaging in support for these traumas was important in developing more positive and stable beliefs about themselves, or, self-concept clarity, meaning the way they saw themselves was "clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable" (Campbell et al., 1996, p. 141). In fact, the process of self-concept clarity is messy and involves first a "shattered sense of self" which has been associated with negative mental health (Wong et al., 2018, p. 2). In disclosing traumas, participants were able to be more reflexive, to gain further insights and eventually change the narrative to a more appropriate and positive story of survival rather than solely victimhood and criminalization. As can be seen in the data, some participants made sense of their experiences as hardships that they had overcome. In a sense it was presented as character building as it made them the person they are 'now'. There are clear parallels with research by Maruna (2001) on desistance narrative identities and redemption scripts. As shown in this chapter, a number of participants were proud of their current position and how far they had come in light of the trauma in their pasts.

For those who have come out the other side of abuse, and other traumatic experiences, and who are proud of themselves for overcoming complex adversities,

we should acknowledge without romanticising their acts of 'everyday resistance' (Lister, 2015). Participants who had adverse experiences as children were therefore more likely to partake in "risk behaviours" which would impact their "overall health, well-being and social function" (Larkin et al. 2014, p. 2). Moreover, participants were subject to high levels of surveillance by the state, for example those known to social services, the criminal justice system or those in receipt of welfare assistance (in many cases all three).

The level of state intervention for participants who had ACEs ranged widely across participants. Often this was related to whether the abuse was noticed by family members or professionals. Intra-familial abuse is particularly difficult to detect, and a range of factors results in systemic failures to detect and respond to such abuse (Fox, 2016). Institutions across the policy spectrum including schools, social services, the police and the courts are implicated in these contexts where abuse should have been noticed, or if reported, acted upon.

What was common was the lack of justice for survivors of childhood abuse whether it was picked up at the time it happened or much later in life. The response seemingly was to remove them from the situation but not to ensure that treatment was provided to support and try to counteract the impact of ACEs. Research from the field of psychology recommends early prevention of adverse childhood trauma due to the detrimental impact it has on later life or ensuring good secondary treatment in the prison system (Friestad et al., 2014). If prevention is not possible then the next best option would be treating the trauma as early as possible, before survivors of abuse are criminalised. Participants' experiences highlight the importance of supporting individuals and families who have been subject to ACEs. State intervention often failed to do this particularly for those participants who were placed into the care system.

Understanding participants' complex life histories is important for broader social policy and especially practitioners working with them via the welfare and penal arms of the states. This is not to say that individuals from adverse backgrounds all have the same life trajectory or that they cannot amass capitals and change their socio-economic position. It is just that the state expects them to exhibit the correct behaviours and aspirations to 'get on' (be socially mobile) *in spite of* their start in life (see Sections 6.4

and 7.3.1). An examination of participants' life histories has highlighted the punitive treatment of vulnerable children and young people, and prevalence of later problems as adults and parents. There is a complex interplay between their personal experiences and the wider penal-welfare field that they inhabit.

5.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a selection of contextualised insights into the complex and multiple traumas which characterise women's 'lives in adversity'. Participants' lives thus far have been characterised by cumulative adversity and a mix of state intervention and neglect. The women saw themselves as personally responsible for turning their lives around and showed remarkable resilience. Participant experiences that came up frequently were of troubled childhoods and early years which impacted the development of individuals who already faced barriers linked to broader "structural conditions of a deep social, political and economic crisis" (Dowling and Harvie, 2014, p. 872). Together, individual and structural level factors reduced both the opportunities available to participants and what they perceived to be possible. In other words, these factors jointly bounded the choices participants' felt they had available and affected their trajectories as children and adolescents.

It can be inferred from participants' accounts that cumulative adversities have shaped their lives. At each step, from childhood into adolescence and adulthood, they faced additional difficulties related to their ACEs and cumulative adversity. The level of social, economic, educational and symbolic capital that they had was adversely affected by these experiences over the life course. Participants often saw themselves as the agent in control of their destiny which highlights the internalisation of individualised responsibility narrative and the 'doxic' nature of structural barriers to their socio-economic mobility. This agency was somewhat illusory because despite their (self) perceived best efforts they often could not move on, or if they did this took many years and the engagement with supportive organisations. It is also reflective of the paucity of the social safety net for poor and vulnerable women, the support they

received often came after they had already been in conflict with the law and in the prison system.

This chapter has shown the importance of considering both ACEs and cumulative adversity in terms of the development of social and cultural capital, and therefore how individuals deal with stress or crises and their coping mechanisms. It provides a backdrop to the next three chapters which in turn present and explore data related to interventions from the welfare and penal arms of the state as well as the hybridised institutional environment from which participants were recruited to take part in the research. Chapters 6 and 7 explore in turn how the welfare arm and penal arm of the state govern, and are experienced by participants at present, responding to the theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2.

6. Helping or hindering? Welfare conditionality and women who have been in conflict with the law

6.1 Introduction

A key aim of this thesis is to show how women subject to community-based penal interventions make sense of and respond to the 'welfare arm' of the state. The existence of this group of women, subject to both the welfare and penal arms of the state, is not acknowledged in Wacquant's (2009a) 'carceral-assistential net', which is underpinned by a gendered binary that assumes women are managed by the welfare arm and men by the penal arm. This chapter picks up from where Chapter 5 left off by providing insights into participants' ongoing challenges as they try to move forward with their lives. In Wacquant's model of the state, the welfare arm constitutes "spendthrift' ministries in charge of 'social functions' - public education, health, housing, welfare and labour law" (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 289). My use of the term within this research focuses on the formal welfare benefits system as the starting point. But as participants' accounts show, this was mediated by day centres that they were engaged with. Support was required to access the mainstream welfare system for marginalised women (the mixed economy of welfare provision and the hybridity of assistive organisations is explored fully in Chapter 8).

This chapter focuses on the welfare system, specifically the contemporary regime of social assistance in England and Wales, and its impact on marginalised women. It considers the lived experiences of women who have been subject to criminal justice interventions *and* who are in receipt of social assistance. The chapter explores their responses to behavioural conditions imposed, sanctions that ensue when these are not met, and support within the welfare system and focuses on their attempts to move away from the social margins and towards the labour market. In doing so, it foregrounds the context of gendered precarity in which participants live and sheds light on some of the unintended consequences of the welfare arm of the state, highlighting the role of non-state actors within the 'shadow' welfare state.

The term 'penal-welfarism' was initially used to reflect the "post-war 'Golden Age'" shift towards welfarist and rehabilitative policies on both sides of the Atlantic when there

were fewer conditions attached to benefits (Esping-Anderson, 1996; Garland, 2001). However, since the 1980s public policy has taken a more punitive trajectory, which has resulted in not only a more expansive and punitive criminal justice system but also the penalization of welfare as well (Foucault, 1977; Pratt et al., 2013; Wacquant, 2009a; Webster, 2014). More recently, Roberts (2016) proposed 'penal-welfare paternalism' as a more appropriate concept, which reflects the gendered nature of the governance of poverty via the welfare and penal arms of the state.

The focus on the use of sanctions and support to promote behaviour change is a growing area of research, particularly in the UK, which "has been at the forefront internationally in extending and intensifying the reach of benefit sanctions and welfare conditionality¹³ within its social welfare system" (Dwyer, 2019). Evidence suggests rather than a 'hand up', the welfare system in its current guise can bestow more of a 'slap down' (Fletcher and Wright, 2017). There is limited research into the impact of conditionality on hyper marginalised groups with 'complex needs' (Rosengard et al., 2007). Women, in particular, are often marginalised in studies which tend to focus on the experiences of disadvantaged groups, for example, ex-offenders or those who are experiencing homelessness who are disproportionately male (Johnsen et al., 2014; Fletcher and Flint, 2018).

This chapter aims to highlight conflicting dynamics within the current welfare regime by exploring its impact on a specific group of women subject to multiple, overlapping policy aims of the state. The problem for this group is not so much the behaviour change agenda and sanctions that underpin the UK's increasingly conditional social security system; many make attempts to live a 'good life' and move closer to work, and the experience of sanctioning is low. Rather, for women in advanced marginality, it is the dearth of support available to help them overcome structural and personal disadvantages and move on.

Help is accessible in the form of marginal (often charitable) projects and day centres that they are engaged with, rather than from the welfare arm of the state. Welfare policy reform also impacts support staff working at these projects. Data within this chapter highlights how issues with welfare benefits crowded out other support needs.

¹³ Welfare conditionality has also been called 'coercive welfare' (Phoenix, 2008) and 'authoritarian therapeutism' (Wacquant, 2013).

Staff cited the sorting out of service users' benefit claims and income crises following a sanction as particularly time consuming. This theme of welfare system related problems extending into this particular hybridised institutional environment within the penal-welfare nexus is picked up again in chapter 8.

Universal Credit (UC) was introduced in April 2013 and gradually rolled out over the next five years across England and Wales (Wright et al., 2016). The government aims to move all claimants onto UC by 2024, ending legacy schemes (DWP, 2022b). Prior to UC there were six main benefits that claimants were means tested for. These had varying levels of conditionality. At the time of interviewing, UC had not yet been fully rolled out to the location where the research took place (see Chapter 3, section 3.4 and Chapter 4 for further details). Most of the participants were still on legacy benefits, namely Jobseekers' Allowance (JSA) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). Those in receipt of JSA were deemed fit for work, subject to full conditionality and required to undertake extensive work search and attend mandatory Work Focussed Interviews (WFI) and training as specified by Jobcentre staff. Individuals assigned to the Support Group of ESA were not subject to conditionality and attendant sanctions as this is for people with severe, limiting health conditions. Allocation to the ESA work-related activity group (WRAG) brought with it a mandatory requirement to engage in work related activity, such as job search, attending interviews with personal advisors or participation in work experience schemes as instructed. Those on JSA or in the ESA WRAG group faced benefit sanctions ranging from a 100% loss of benefit for four weeks for a low-level transgression (e.g., being late for a WFI), up to loss of full benefit for a three-year¹⁴ period for a third, repeat high level offence, such as refusal to take up a job offer. Under UC rules benefit sanctions will remain in place until compliance in many instances (Dwyer and Bright, 2016).

This chapter examines the impact of changing welfare policy through the lens of women's experiences, as well as the perspectives of some support staff. More specifically, it examines welfare policy interactions between participants and various welfare institutions which includes a range of 'street-level bureaucrats', such as work coaches, Jobcentre Plus advisers and Work Capability Assessment (WCA) assessors,

¹⁴ Maximum sanctioning periods for JSA was three years (DWP, 2021a), under Universal Credit the maximum sanction period is 182 days (approximately 6 months) (DWP, 2021b).

and participants' reflections on the process of claiming, assessing and receiving benefits, how this affects them and their responses to the welfare system (Lipsky, 1980/2010; Fletcher, 2011).

The chapter starts with a brief outline of the gendered impact of welfare reform as well as presenting participants' type of engagement with the welfare system as claimants. Following this there are several sections which present the data thematically, beginning with engagement with the welfare benefits system, and the problems encountered, including its punitive and exclusionary effects. This is followed by consideration of participants' attempts to move towards the labour market and how some are able to carve out spaces of resistance. Some experiences of support within the conditional regime are presented, followed by a short discussion and conclusion.

6.2 Participants' engagement with social assistance

All participants were in receipt of social assistance benefits during the research period apart from one woman who had been convicted of benefit fraud and another who had been sanctioned twice and who relied on family for support. Of the 23 (90%) participants who were in receipt of benefits, 16 were on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) - with its lower level of conditionality, reflective of the high levels of health conditions across the group – with roughly half in the support group and half in the WRAG. Two claimed JSA and three claimed Income Support (IS).

Seventeen participants had used a food bank or accessed food parcels or meals through the day centres in the past 12 months, and three participants had received Hardship Payments.¹⁵ For many, poverty and disadvantage had characterised their earlier years (see Chapter 5) and getting by remained a struggle for some participants; others were held back from progression into low paid and, in some cases, voluntary work due to their previous convictions. Participants had complex needs such as mental health issues, being involved in an abusive or exploitative relationship, known history

¹⁵ When a benefit sanction is imposed, claimants can apply for a hardship payment to cover day-to-day living costs, this takes around two weeks to be instated, some vulnerable groups (those pregnant, lone parents, with a health condition) have immediate access to a hardship payment (DWP, 2017b).

of ACEs or problems with alcohol or drugs. This is likely why most, though not all, were placed onto ESA rather than JSA. This indicated some recognition of individual needs.

6.3 Efforts to move towards work

Most participants had work experience, but this was largely limited to low paid, low skilled jobs such as cleaning, housekeeping, in retail or as a hospital porter; some had spent time cycling in and out of the prison system which meant that they had not been able to sustain a job. For example, prior to going to prison for a number of short sentences Ros (45, ESA WRAG) had been working: "[I've] worked as a porter...I've worked as cleaner". However, following multiple prison stays, periods of homelessness and struggling with substance misuse problems, paid work had subsequently not been realistic for her, though she maintained a hope to get back to work in the future.

Despite participants having experienced multiple complex problems, almost all participants were doing some form of voluntary work, in some cases working daily at the day centres that they were engaged with. Furthermore, many participants, even those still in recovery from alcohol or drug disorders, exhibited motivation to find meaningful and secure work, although the disjuncture between this goal, their educational capital and work experience, and the training opportunities available to them highlighted the dearth of prospects in this regard. The solution to their unemployment is not as straightforward as advocates of behavioural economics would have us believe (Leggett, 2014); participants appeared to be making the 'right' choices and were in many cases doing the things asked of them by various 'street-level bureaucrats'. However, this was not always enough to get them ready for the formal labour market (Fletcher, 2011).

Larissa: are you currently working?

Caitlin: No ... I wish...I've done a lot of cleaning, and I'm after housekeeping at the moment...I really want to be in catering, I do, but that's in the future... I need some training...cake decorator...that is my dream...I really want to do that but there's no funding for that either... I did find a [cake training] course,

and I got there and they said I'd have to pay for it. There was no way I could afford it. (Caitlin, 30, JSA / ESA WRAG)



Figure 6.1: Photo by Caitlin, this depicted her future goals; she hoped to be a cake decorator one day

I've always worked even if has just been voluntary work, I've worked as a trainee mechanic, a cleaner at [hospital], I've worked in a few places, I've even worked in a kebab shop... They [Jobcentre Plus Adviser] know what I'm trying to do... They know I am interested in getting back to work, they know I don't want to be on the dole for the rest of my life. (Whitney, 26, ESA WRAG, recruitment interview)

These accounts counter dominant portrayals of benefit claimants as 'workshy skivers' in need of a punitive benefit sanctioning regime to get them to change their behaviour and make the 'right' choice to enter paid work. Despite being hyper-marginalised they made efforts to move towards the labour market. As will be shown in the rest of this section, criminal histories, personal skill level and experience and the training and jobs available in the local labour market coalesce and constrain participants' transition to work. The data also highlight a number of structural, attitudinal and personal barriers to women accessing meaningful employment in the formal labour market and illustrate that, a desire to work, alone, may not be enough.

Although participants were asked to undertake compulsory job-search or work-related activities, these interventions were not designed to support individuals in achieving their preferred work goals. The Work Programme¹⁶ should theoretically give jobseekers "tailored support specific to their individual needs" (DWP, 2012). However, in practice, claimants are mandated to apply for any job with little meaningful support. For example, Caitlin's Work Coach organised check-out and shelf-stacking interviews at discount high street retailers despite her repeatedly saying that her interests were in catering. Also, the shelf-stacking role showed disregard for her mobility problems (she had been on crutches when recruited to the research) which was part of the reason she was placed on Employment and Support Allowance. Access to training that is suited to job goals appeared to be limited as shown by Caitlin's experience above.

A number of participants voiced a desire to become day centre workers themselves after having benefitted from this support in getting over their own problems. This is a common route for 'experts by experience' who successfully go through recovery (McLaughlin, 2009).

I want to do my drug and alcohol [counselling course] cos I want to be a drug and alcohol worker cos I've experienced the drug side...The job I want to do you've got to have training so I'm happy to volunteer at minute and do my training and then look, but there's always part time work and weekend jobs so I'm happy to do anything. (Whitney, 26, ESA WRAG)

Well I got asked, I see my PSI [psychosocial intervention] worker, and he said you'd make a good drug counsellor. So he's putting me on a course at that centre to do volunteering, so it's sumat to work towards. (Carly, 33, ESA WRAG)

The UK social welfare system does not respond to or support claimant's aspirations by providing tailored support; instead, it prioritises any job over worklessness and, at best, provides only basic employability skills training (Paz-Fuchs, 2020). This approach is supported by the ongoing promotion of workfarist, subpar employment

¹⁶ The Work Programme was introduced in 2011 as part of the Coalition government's welfare reforms, it was the flagship welfare-to-work scheme until 2017 when it was replaced by the Work and Health Programme (DWP, 2012; Mirza-Davies and McGuinness 2016).

(Wacquant, 2011). More specialised training preferences (e.g., to become support workers for vulnerable people) were beyond the financial means of the participants.

There were mixed views on the likelihood of achieving job aspirations. Whitney felt that being in receipt of benefits was helping her during a specific phase of her life, when she was trying to get back on her feet; she believed that she would get work one day and also felt that the Jobcentre knew this. However, others felt that their past might hold them back from reaching a particular goal. Having a criminal record caused anxiety particularly around disclosure, with some participants experiencing this as a barrier to work while others chose to hide this to move into work.

It sez it in that letter, 10 years until I can start working with kids and vulnerable adults. I need to work or I'm just sat at home doing nowt. I'm not gonna survive. (Caitlin, 30, JSA / ESA WRAG)

*I know other women, they work in charity shops but I couldn't cos I've got fraud on my record.
(Gillian, 44, ESA Support)*

My employer has never asked me if I have a criminal record...It affected how I felt about myself at work for a long time I felt really conscious of it and felt anxious and that I was hiding a secret from the people I worked with...I had an advantage - I had a degree and past employment and skills - so I have had an advantage over other women. (Annie, 27, not claiming)

Caitlin lost her voluntary position helping at a food club at the centre because she was told she was not allowed to work in an environment with vulnerable adults due to the nature of her conviction. Gillian wanted retail work experience, but she was unable to obtain a role due to the fraud offence on her criminal record, so she volunteered at the centre instead. For both participants their involvement with the CJS has left a negative legacy. This suggests that despite legislation to prevent discrimination against those who have served their punishment, in practice, they still inhabit a position within society that is below the lowest non-offending member of society, unless they hide their past and have the means to pass for a non-offender. The welfare system does not provide adequate employability support for participants whose histories provide real barriers to employment. However, within the dominant policy discourse behaviour

change is something that is attributed to individual responsibility and choice, tropes often internalised by participants in addition to those highlighted in the previous chapter (see Section 5.5).

For those who had been volunteering for a number of years at a day centre, it had become an integral part of their daily lives. This did not mean that they were not open to moving on into paid work.

Larissa: Why did you choose to photograph the day centre?

Whitney: You said do something what you do every day - day in, day out, and this is what I do, day in, day out...My everyday life basically, a bit boring...But I've got an interview for work, for a job in [supermarket] on Friday...and I found out on Saturday that I got it so I start work this Saturday my first shift and I'm working all week.

Larissa: Fab, is it a set amount of hours per week?

Whitney: 22 hours, working on Deli, getting trained on tills (Whitney, 26, ESA WRAG, follow-up interview).



Figure 6.2: Photo by Whitney, on reception of the day centre, where she enjoyed her role as a volunteer



Figure 6.3: Photo by Annie, of the letters she received regarding her supervision after being released from prison, a reminder of her past which she was hiding.

Annie kept her criminal record a secret from her employer in order to secure a job in a successful and high-profile restaurant. Significantly, Annie was the only participant who has a higher education qualification and a related level of educational capital¹⁷. Unlike the majority of women leaving prison who struggle to find employment - only 9% of women secure jobs - Annie avoided the revolving door of unemployment and reconviction (Hewson and Knight, 2018). Independently of any services, Annie had begun to carve a successful career for herself, which she attributed in part to her level of education. As will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7, society stigmatizes offenders and, in this instance, Annie responded by hiding her criminal record. This was her response to the relative powerlessness bestowed on her as an ex-offender.

¹⁷ Capital is used in the Bourdieusian sense; educational capital is one form of cultural capital (see Bourdieu, 1984).

These accounts highlight the tensions underpinning participants' narratives of positive behaviour change and moving towards volunteering or paid work. Each participant encountered disparities between their aspirations for themselves and the opportunities available to them. For some this left them with few options for moving into work, others were pushed towards jobs unsuitable for them. For those who had moved close to the labour market, such as Whitney, this had not been an easy journey. Whitney has been attending the day centre and accessing support for over seven years; it was the central focus of her photographs, so it is evidently an integral part of the normatively pro-social, non-offending life that she has built. Despite her claim that you have to change on the inside (see chapter 5), and that you have 'to want to do it for yourself', without the support she received it is doubtful that she would have been able to reach a place where a paid job was a realistic option for her. The day centres played a key role in stabilising lives and enabling participants to think about looking for work.

Similarly, Sally attributes her current stability to the centre she attends and volunteers with, as well as other factors, such her partner, who is also in recovery from alcohol and drug use. Importantly, she has had to cut herself off from spending time with former social groups who have continued to engage in 'street culture' activities, such as drinking and begging (Fitzpatrick et al., 2011). She had to do this in order to be able to do her voluntary and part-time paid work successfully.

Despite her efforts, Carly feels she has not yet been given a chance to show that she has left her offending past behind her. There is a temporal element in these journeys; Carly has more recently been in prison and relapsed with drugs than the other participants. The slower and softer support provided by the day centres creates a 'shadow' welfare state that is conducive to long-term positive change for those who engage, in stark contrast with the Jobcentre Plus and welfare provider approach which is explored in the next section; "carrots" worked better with this group than "sticks" (Dwyer, 2016).

Not all participants were in a position to move into voluntary work yet, but job aspirations were still present. Sylvia (who preferred to write her thoughts down) included finding a meaningful job in her hopes for the future.

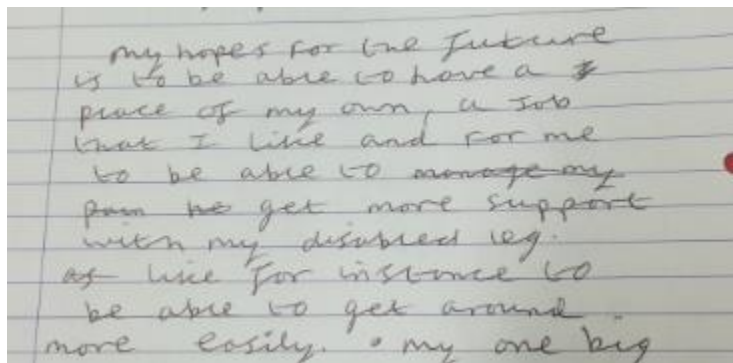


Figure 6.6: Sylvia's thoughts on her hopes for the future.

Sylvia had physical health problems as well as mental health problems and learning difficulties. Sylvia's account highlights the sheer distance between some participants' current circumstances and what the formal labour market required of them. Alice, a participant whose mental health had been poor for many years was in a similar position of not being ready to move into work. Both had battled with alcohol abuse. Even for participants further along in their journeys, there was a reticence to take the leap from voluntary work or part-time work into full-time paid employment due to fears of relapsing or, as Sally described, knowing that there is a possibility of 'mess[ing] up', or mental health problems 'kicking in' (Bella).

6.4 Trapped on the margins: navigating a punitive welfare system

This section presents data on the impact of benefit sanctions under the more conditional regime enacted in the Welfare Reform Act (2012). It explores the different ways in which participants responded highlighting the difference access to social and economic capital makes. Some participants turned to survival crime and were then punished again for breaking the law. Finally, it looks at some of the wider impacts of the welfare conditionality regime which women experienced as punitive and stigmatising.

6.4.1 The impact of sanctions

Four participants had experienced a benefit sanction; others reported being threatened with a benefit sanction. Therefore, those who were sanctioned were a minority among participants; this was likely to be related to the prevalence of ESA claims (which come with a lower level of conditionality). However, a small number were placed on JSA (for example, Christina and Amy) or moved from ESA onto JSA over the course of the research period (Caitlin). This highlights that the welfare system might not systematically take into account those who have multiple and complex needs. As the subsequent data presented illustrates, and in accordance with conditionality research (Welfare Conditionality Project, 2018), when sanctions were applied it was done with little concern for the psychosocial impact or how those sanctioned (or their families/dependents) would subsequently manage financially.

I had his [nods at her baby] extra scan for his kidneys [when I was pregnant], and because [welfare professional] gave Jay [her partner] an appointment on that same day [as the baby's scan], [Jay] said 'I can't go to it'. So, because we went to the baby scan [together] they sanctioned him...And then they gave us £25 a week [hardship payment]...It costed me £15 to get to the scan...by bus, but it's two buses so we have to get a day ticket... (Amy, 18, Joint claim for JSA)

Oh they had organised an interview with the abattoir...do you know I wouldn't work in an abattoir anyway...and I did tell them that I didn't want to go. But they said, oh because I had missed the interview thing...I think it was about 3 months I was sanctioned for. (Donna, 28, JSA/Income Support)

I was...just trying to survive, keep my benefit, not commit suicide...Everything gets cancelled when you get sanctioned. Then you have to do a claim, a hardship claim and then re-benefit. But each time I was getting sanctioned, they would go 'oh yes it is a 2-week sanction, because you haven't done your job search right', I was like 'I am struggling because I am dyslexic'. So I would go to the Jobcentre. And I would go again [after] 2 weeks, 'you haven't done it, you haven't done your 40 jobs' and I would be 'how can I apply for 40 odd jobs I am dyslexic

I have no qualifications?...Sanction again and they just kept doing that for 8 months... (Christina, 30, JSA)

Amy was not sanctioned directly; rather her partner received a sanction for non-attendance at a mandatory Jobcentre interview due to a clash with their baby's scan. This highlights a number of problems within the benefits system and the joint payment model, which come to the fore when a sanction is imposed. Benefit claims administered at the joint couple or unitary household level are underpinned by problematic assumptions about money sharing within relationships and serve to undermine the financial autonomy of partnered women (Bennett and Sung, 2013). Any sanctions applied to a particular claimant through the joint claim mechanism punish the whole household, in this case a pregnant woman. Concerns about the gendered inequality inherent within joint claims have intensified under UC, which requires one person in a couple to complete a claim for both parties (DWP, 2021c). Ultimately, Amy and her partner were granted a Hardship Payment¹⁸ and eventually had the benefit sanction overturned because they were able to prove that the scan had been on the same date as the missed Jobcentre appointment.

Although only four participants in this study had been sanctioned, their experiences provide micro-level insights into the lived effects of sanctions and hardship payments. Research by Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) shows that there is an even higher level of sanctioning of claimants under UC, specifically three times the rate for JSA, which alongside broader changes is pushing more people into destitution in the UK. As the roll out of UC is completed claimants with complex needs will likely be faced with a higher threat and experience of sanctioning.

Participants were engaged with various diversionary and support services when recruited to take part in the research. To gain additional insights into the impacts of welfare reform on marginalised women I conducted interviews with staff working in the centres where participants were recruited. Support workers and key workers' interviews also reflected the impact of welfare conditionality and sanctions.

¹⁸ Hardship Payments are paid at 60% of the claimant's JSA or ESA and implemented as a grant for the period sanctioned, under Universal Credit Hardship Payments are loans set over a time period (McCarthy et al., 2015).

Kerry: Jobseekers is an absolute nightmare...it is a nightmare. Trying to do job search for the amount of hours that they are wanting... (Kerry, Project Worker)

Lots of the women referred...have problems with welfare conditions and sanctions, particularly those living 'chaotic lifestyles'. The most common offences for women referred to us through the courts are welfare fraud and shoplifting. But again it is not always out of poverty or 'need', there may be emotional reasons such as a feeling of control or empowerment that come from committing a crime. (Amanda, Centre Manager)

When their service users had problems with their benefits, project workers ended up spending time sorting this out for them, which was time-consuming.

Larissa: Have you found that any of your caseload have been sanctioned?

Catrin: Yes, the majority of [them], so through the course of it, it is just it is an utter nightmare. And then you ring up benefits and you are holding on the phone for 40 minutes before anyone answers...and then 'oh right I need to put you through to another part', so they put you through to another bit and you are on hold again...It is chaos.

Clearly, problems with claiming and benefit sanctions took up a great deal of the resources of the day centres. Furthermore, this had come to the fore recently and coincided with the implementation of a tougher conditionality and sanctions regime. It was suggested that sanctions were expected by women with more complex problems: 'You know it's almost like, they are not scared of the sanctions because they know it's almost like they know they won't be able to work with them. They sort of give in to the fact that they'll just be on food parcels [and] won't have any money that week' (Liza, Project Worker).

Despite the largely negative impact of the welfare system and increasing conditionality on marginalised women, there were instances where participants recounted some positive interactions with statutory welfare agencies, in particular when they had a Work Coach who they felt empathised with them, and where there was a level of trust:

She's brilliant my Work Coach . . . the lasses and me was planning on going for a day trip out. And . . . I says 'aw I've got a meeting at [Work Programme

provider]'. So I went to [my work coach] 'I've got to have this day out'. And she said, 'do you know what . . . you just go' . . . I've got this banter with her.
(Caitlin)

Superficially, Caitlin's Work Coach appears to act protectively by letting her miss an appointment, possibly flexing the system for a client she has a good relationship with. However, also perceptible is the need to seek permission, and the prioritisation of work coach-guided activities; Caitlin subsequently cancelled a research interview in order to attend a mandatory work-focused interview (WFI). Caitlin accepts that she must perform the behaviours expected of her, signifying an internalisation and normalisation of the disciplinary control exerted by the welfare system.

Whitney and Sally also highlight positive experiences; both have been long-term unemployed and have volunteered at the day centre for many years:

I've never had any problems [with my Work Coach]. (Whitney)

She [the work coach] was lovely. If I didn't make it in, she would ring me up and do the appointment over the phone. I've had crisis loans in the past, I could get them easy. (Sally)

These accounts draw attention to positive experiences within the assistential arm of the state. They did not explicitly indicate any dissatisfaction in their interactions with Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme staff or the requirements placed on them. This suggests being placed in the ESA groups provided a modicum of protection from tougher conditionality and a sanctions regime. Still, participants performed the requisite attitudes and behaviours, which might be interpreted as a means of 'keeping their benefit', rather than as a form of 'gaming the system' which would imply knowledge of the system and conscious manipulation (Batty et al., 2016, p. 171). Nonetheless, their experiences reflect a 'softness' within the practices of frontline welfare professionals. This relies on the discretion of 'street-level bureaucrats' something which has been undermined by policy changes which promote standardisation rather than personalisation (Fuentes and Lindsay, 2016).

Carter and Whitworth (2015) show that 'creaming' and 'parking' – where practitioners focus their efforts on those most likely to secure employment – remain lingering features of welfare-to-work practice. It seems plausible that participants – being far

from the labour market – may have been ‘parked’. Reflecting back on participants who are volunteering but not yet moving towards formal, paid work such as Sally or Bella, they may be being parked, but this may have been done protectively as Caitlin’s experience intimated.

6.4.2 Trying to get by on the margins

Participants experienced a range of sanctions or changes to their circumstances which left them struggling to get by. In the face of hardship women showed resilience and resourcefulness though this often brought them into conflict with the law. Christina’s experience of repeat sanctioning was highly disruptive to her life and contributed to her decline in mental health and housing problems. She had engaged with support from a day centre over the past 18 months prior to taking part in the research, and because of this had managed to claim benefits (she had been allocated to JSA) and taken steps towards securing housing. She was asked to comply with conditions which she could not fulfil due to her trauma-related mental health problems, which were exacerbated by issues with her family; as a result, she received multiple sanctions. Her priority during this time of turmoil was ‘trying to survive’. This demonstrates how difficult life already was for her; it was not a question of poor behaviour but of managing hardship.

So in the end I stopped applying for hardship because it was pointless because by the time I had got hardship, I was being re-sanctioned which cancelled out the hardship (Christina)

Christina told me that she had survived this period of back-to-back sanctions through food aid from the day centre. She also turned to acquisitive crime which began with stealing tins of food for her cat, but “*then I found out I was pretty good at it, that I actually in three days walked out with £3,000 worth of DVDs and Blu Rays*”. Christina whose criminal record consisted mainly of theft-related offences was eventually caught shoplifting. Her experience shows that the Hardship Payments mechanism did not always provide an adequate safety net. In her experience, a Hardship Payment being granted was futile in the face of ongoing benefit sanctions.

Rather than the benefits system getting Christina back on her feet, its withdrawal of support had an unintended consequence of pushing her towards the illegal economy where she would be further punished in the CJS. Instead, it was her on/off engagement with a charitable day centre which provided a source of stable support. Initially, this involved a sleeping bag and food parcels, but the availability of consistent support eventually led to her housing and benefits issues being sorted out. She continued to access support periodically when experiencing food insecurity or if she had a mental health crisis, such as setbacks with re-building relationships with her mother or her own children.

Turning to 'survival crime' (cf. Dwyer and Bright, 2016; Patrick, 2017) was an experience present in other participants' accounts when they were unable to access other means of support through family, informal networks or local charitable organisations (Daly and Kelly, 2015).

I've not shoplifted since... this time last year. And I were on streets so it were for survival basically... I'd nowhere to live and then I sort of shoplifted to survive do you know what I mean?

Larissa: What was your last conviction?

Ros: Purely because circumstances again, I'd nowhere to live and then I sort of shoplifted to survive do you know what I mean but yeah last year.
(Ros, 45, ESA WRAG)

Larissa: Have you ever used a foodbank?

Sylvia: No...I used to get either from the day centre or by 'other' means, other means meaning shoplifting. (Sylvia)

Fletcher (2016) has similarly found that survival crime was strongly linked to benefit sanctioning, particularly with ex-offenders. Some participants, like Ros, disclosed that they had turned to crime to survive when they were not in receipt of benefits, whether due to a sanction or because their lives were too chaotic to receive payments. Participants' experiences of economic hardship aligned with other research; criminalised women have commonly experienced "long-term poverty, debts and loans with high interest" (NOMS, 2012, p. 36). In some cases, individuals experienced food insecurity, even when they were in receipt of benefits and not subject to a sanction.

Talking to my health adviser, I kept saying to her, I've got no food in, I'm eating at me mum's, there's nothing in...And she eventually sent me round to...Salvation Army...I am trying to eat at home [rather than relying on my mum], which is more stressful because ... I am trying to have enough money to like provide my own food so I am...trying to get to next week, I am going to go and get foodbank so I have got enough tinned stuff in so then all I have to do concentrate on is my freezer stuff. (Caitlin, 31, JSA/ESA WRAG)

Larissa: Have you ever had to use a foodbank or anything like that?

Laura: Yes...Use it run up to Christmas.

Larissa: Without that, what would you have done?

Laura: Would have fed my son and I would have gone without...

Sylvia highlighted how poverty and worries about money constituted a major challenge for her:

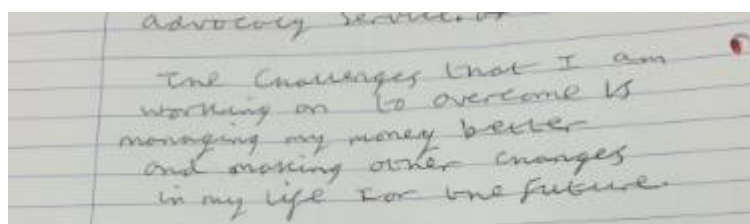


Figure: 6.5: A hand-written reflection from Sylvia.

Nonetheless, as these examples show, whilst participants in receipt of benefits may be living in precarity not all turn to 'survival crime'. This is especially the case when they can rely on family and informal support networks. Access to the ameliorative effects of economic and social capital is important when individuals are sanctioned. Existing on benefits itself was difficult. Special occasions such as birthdays or Christmas could also be difficult for participants. For Laura, a single mum, the struggle to make ends meet was felt much more acutely at Christmas. Laura prioritised rent and household bills – contrary to dominant depictions of 'irresponsible' benefits claimants – after these were accounted for, there sometimes was not enough left to buy other essentials such as food or clothing. She accessed foodbanks in the run up to Christmas, without that extra support she would have been forced to choose between feeding herself and her child. It came naturally to her that pushed to choose

she would have prioritised her child and ‘gone without’ or ‘gone into debt’ to be able to provide food for her son (Laura, 44, Income Support).

Struggling to get by was an experience common to many participants, regardless of being on benefits. In permanent marginalisation, some relied on survival crime, others foodbanks, homeless day centres or family. Furthermore, for those whose histories comprised persistent criminalisation, it had been difficult to disentangle ‘survival crime’ from ‘routine’ offending behaviour. These experiences highlight different forces influencing how individuals coped with financial hardship; those with access to alternative familial or informal networks were less likely to turn to crime to survive.

Project workers reported that it had become harder for their clients to apply (and re-apply) for ongoing benefits, and for women exiting prison this was even more difficult.

So where the women would be able to access the benefits before, now they've got to go through lots of loopholes to get it ... assessments that they've already had six months before ... And the ways in which they apply for it now, before they used to do a lot of starting it off in prison and it's a faster process when you get out, now ... the process [is] slow, the women have got to wait too long for their benefits to come through and you expect them not to commit a crime, but they can't even buy a sanitary towel, they can't even get a bus to go and see a family member... (Lucy, Project Worker)

It is getting a lot harder... ... these are the specific demographic that need it the most I think. It shouldn't be stigmatised as well. I think a lot of people think 'oh you know on the dole and on the benefits and stuff like that', it has got loads of negative connotations...so we want to help people you know realise that it is not ... a shameful thing to need the extra support until you are back on your feet and it is ok to ask for help and stuff. (Catrin, Project Worker)

The preceding accounts highlight the rigidity of the welfare system, which was at odds with the lived realities of the most marginalised benefit claimants. For example, those leaving prison face multiple barriers to getting their benefits and this can impact their recidivism. Catrin described service users as being a group which ‘needed the most support’. Despite this, service users often perceived needing support as something

negative. In addition to the barriers posed by changes in welfare conditionality and sanctions, the heightened stigma attached to accessing support from the benefits system is an important deterrent. Some project workers thought that changes to the benefits system were designed to make it harder for participants to claim, particularly those with health conditions:

There's no crisis loans any more so women can't come out and ring up the crisis line and get a loan the next day, it's all just dependent on when your benefits are sorted. Then you've got to get a sick note for your ESA, that's assuming that women have got the capacity just to go to the doctor's and have got the confidence to go to the doctor's and ask for a sick note. Then a woman can have a long-term sick note, that might run out and then their benefit just stops. Well if it was long-term there must be a better way, can't you contact the doctor and find out if they still need it? It stops and the barriers that are in the welfare system from all the changes that have happened. (Lucy, Project Worker)

Project workers' accounts highlight a number of impacts on service users related to recent changes to the welfare conditionality and sanctions regime. Higher conditions can provide a deterrence to claiming, instead, they choose to withdraw from the welfare system, as they know they will not be able to cope. This resonated with participants who were forced to turn to informal networks and survival crime to get by. Even for those claiming ESA, as Lucy highlights, their claim is dependent on an assessment and a valid 'sick note'. This can be difficult for women who are experiencing multiple problems or in times of crisis.

What was key to participants was the level of support they received at the day centres among other 'marginal social welfare' services – over a long period of time – which enabled them to move away from the CJS and live more normatively acceptable lifestyles (Jamieson, 2012). For participants dealing with living in poverty, getting by on a day-to-day basis took up much of their time and effort, and was a source of stress. Living in this present-oriented way, it is difficult to move on socio-economically or make long-term plans.

6.4.3 Wider impacts of being on benefits under a more conditional regime

What became clear from some accounts was that being punished by the welfare system was not narrowly defined by the application of benefit sanction. For some just being on benefits felt like a punishment, and high levels of conditionality made them feel undeserving due to their perceptions of how the system treated them and the stigma they experienced in interactions with welfare professionals and peers who make them feel like they are undeserving of social assistance (Tyler, 2008; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Jun, 2019).

I've had to fight for that [allocation to the Support Group in ESA]. I went for medicals and things...and they said that I was fit for work. I had to appeal against it and it took 14 months for me to appeal against it and go to court...I had to go for court for that and I had to go to court for disability [Personal Independence Payment] as well... [I was] upset all the time. Cos it was as if like nobody believed me, what was wrong with me. Because they said well you don't look as if you've got an illness...at the time then I was on crutches... And it's like 'well, you can walk with crutches'. And then I had problems with my hands. Because I've got an illness called fibromyalgia as well...And they said 'well you can still use your hands'. They can just say 'no'. You can't have it [ESA], that's worse [than a sanction]...My ex-husband did this [put her in a wheelchair following domestic violence] to me, I think he should pay, not the government. (Vivien, 46, ESA Support Group)

Vivien had to fight for her allocation to a health-related benefit; she was frustrated when she was not believed to have a disability, so there is a sense that she felt entitled to social assistance. The process of claiming that type of benefit and the tests she had to undergo as well as the treatment by the welfare professionals was discriminatory and stigmatising. She showed resistance to the tougher welfare regime by not being deterred by this treatment and appealing the adverse decision. Although this was unusual when compared to the other participants, it made sense for Vivien who linked her need to engage with the welfare system with her physical disabilities which were caused by her abusive ex-husband. Unlike other participants, Vivien had told me in interviews that she had a strong support network through family, friends and the

domestic abuse service that she engaged with. Therefore, she had access to a higher level of social capital which may have been a factor in her overcoming the barriers put in place by work capability assessments of the welfare regime.

Carol felt very strongly that being in receipt of benefit made her feel as though she was doing something wrong, her account highlights the impact of benefit stigma:

They treat you like you are a low life...the benefits office...think that if you are going there then you are there because you are stealing from the government, that is how you are made to feel and I said you know, I have always worked, I have three kids and I have worked three jobs, to pay for them myself, always worked up until I got attacked. (Carol, 54, ESA Support Group)

This resonated with the shift towards welfare receipt in itself being perceived as fraud (Chunn and Gavigan, 2004). Other participants held more ambiguous views, in that their receipt of benefits was justified in relation to others who received a different level of payment than them. For example, Sally said: “a lot of people get a lot more than me! People get £200 odd, I only get £178...” Sally’s account highlights how ‘social sorting’ creates a ‘hierarchy of claimants’ (Grover and Piggott, 2010, p. 266). Both Vivien and Sally highlight the varied “political subjectivity of welfare claimants” (Edmiston and Humpage, 2016). While Vivien defends her status and rights as a deserving claimant, this is not a critique of the existing welfare settlement. Sally tends to draw on othering narratives, distancing herself from those who receive a higher level of payment than her, to highlight that she takes less than others from the state. Both perspectives indicate an internalisation of the logic of welfare reform, subscribing to the individualistic terms upon which they can stake their claims.

These findings also highlight an intensification of shame and stigma associated with claiming welfare benefits (Bell, 2013; Patrick, 2017). More subtle is the acceptance of a stricter regime perceptible in some participants’ accounts. Bella was one of the participants whose disability was visible; she required support to walk. When we discussed how she felt about the benefits system initially, it appeared that she had become accustomed to the process of proving her eligibility for her health-related benefit (ESA WRAG). She spoke in a matter-of-fact way about having to do so on an

ongoing, six-monthly basis. Despite being placed on ESA WRAG, she still struggled to cope and her mental health deteriorated during the research period due to not getting along with others at the centre where she volunteered as part of her work-related activity and other stressors in her life. She told me that she was struggling with self-harming again.

However, not all participants perceived the system as stigmatising or incapacitating them. Or if they had once felt that way in the past they did not anymore.

Larissa: What do you feel about the amount of benefit you receive?

Sally: I think it's enough, well, if you asked me a year ago I'd be saying I need more, but I manage my money now...it depends...because I've got a lot of things coming out of my money at the moment, so I don't know how much I get from one fortnight to the next. I think it is enough; you can live on it...if you're not taking drugs and not drinking you can live on it. (Sally)

It is important to contextualise Sally's words; she was volunteering as a chef in the day centre where she had once been a service user as well as at a local sports club kitchen. In return for her voluntary work, she ate meals at the centre, and if she needed financial, practical or emotional support, she could draw on her peer support network and the professionals at the day centre. Thus, her benefits were augmented by being in the day centre on an almost daily basis; it was a place that gave her purpose, some meals, a social network and ad-hoc support if she needed it. The effects of a more conditional and punitive benefits regime were therefore mitigated by her engagement with non-state marginal support services. The day centres provided a safety net for participants and worked to address the unintended consequences caused by the inflexible benefits system and sanctioning regime.

Sally enjoys her voluntary work, as do many of the other participants. Volunteering therefore appears to be a more enjoyable way to get job ready than, for example, spending a certain number of hours per week applying for jobs. It might be a better route for claimants with multiple and complex needs who are hyper-marginalised and for whom paid work in the formal labour market is not currently realistic.

Day centres provided a social safety net for participants and a way to access mainstream benefits, ameliorating the effects of a state-led bureaucracy that is at best

difficult to navigate and at worst highly punitive due to the ramping up of conditionality and sanctions. This theme is explored further in section 6.6.

In addition to material concerns highlighted in section 6.4.2, participants were often expected to keep a number of plates spinning at once, such as engaging with services to address various complex needs (to reduce their risk of offending) and work-related activity (to maintain their benefits). These included mental or physical health problems, or to work on behavioural issues; some had court ordered activity requirements; others had care plans and social worker assessments. As Lister (2015, p. 148) contends “at a very minimum, coping or lg by is an active process of juggling”. On a number of occasions participants admitted that they did not have enough money to cover food bills or travel costs that week. Despite this they managed to keep their appointments with professionals the majority of the time, although this was challenging at times of crisis. In light of these constraints, participants often focused on the everyday rather than longer term strategic ambitions (Lister, 2015). Marginalisation narrowed participants' temporal horizons to short term goals; this necessitated that they often lived their lives in the present.

Larissa: Do you think in the future you might want to move into full time work?

Sally: I'm happy as it is, just now, because I know I can mess up at any time.

And I've seen people like with jobs, fast cars, money, and then now I see them in here, homeless, on the street That's why I want to get myself, my own head right, before jumping straight in. (Sally, 36, ESA WRAG)

In addition to voluntary work at the centre, Sally was also in a paid part-time role which was not the case for most of the other participants. After many years revolving in and out of prison, Sally had reached a stable place in terms of keeping her benefit, holding down part-time work and volunteering, as well as managing her drinking. Having learned from frequent setbacks in the past, Sally perceived this stability as fragile. She knew a full-time job would intensify pressure and stress. Bella was further from the labour market than Sally as she is yet to enter any form of paid work, she had been volunteering at GO3 when I first met her.

Larissa: Have now changed where you are volunteering?

Bella: Yes

Larissa: Did you want a change?

Bella: My depression kicked in... one day and I thought oh I need a rest...I thought oh, I need a change...you know, different people. Because people bug me and I thought right, what I need is a different environment. I go for a walk, I go to the library ... and I sat down to use their wi-fi and asked is there volunteering jobs and I got an application form and then they said can you start Friday.

Larissa: Wow' That's brilliant. How many hours are you starting with there?

Bella: On a Monday it is 10 till 5, and Wednesdays it opens at 9.30 but I am there 9 till 5, and Friday 9 till 5 and Saturday... 9 till 12... Yes so I am enjoying every moment there. (Bella)

Bella decided she needed a change and found a new volunteer position for herself. While she does not feel ready for paid work, she was able to enact something that she wanted regarding the voluntary work that she does. The new role is more enjoyable than her last in the day centre, which she had grown tired of. She felt ready to leave and move on. As it is a very different working environment, this change also broadens her work experience and the future opportunities that she could have. This still complied with her work-related activity that she must complete as part of her claimant commitment on ESA WRAG. Bella shows agency in changing what she does in terms of her voluntary work and by not feeling pressured to enter paid work yet.

Both Sally's and Bella's ongoing stability (in part-time work with secure housing and not drinking or 'getting into trouble' with the police) is subject to no further demands being made of her with regards to full-time paid work from the welfare system. Assessment of the conditions for an individual to continue in the WRAG is frequent and is subject to change under ongoing welfare reform. Here, Sally and Bella show complex forms of agency in action (Patrick, 2017). Despite being encouraged to move towards full-time employment, they both carve spaces to remain in voluntary roles that they enjoy and find manageable. Should they be migrated onto UC and assessed as fit to work this space to resist the push towards full time paid work and decide for themselves what they do could be taken away.

6.5 Discussion

The experiences presented in this chapter highlight the relationship between structure and agency and how the women attempt to carve out niches for themselves (sometimes positively, sometimes negatively) to negotiate the constraints they are subject to. The more residual and conditional welfare arm of the state can work to (re)produce and in some cases extend poverty and inequality through a lack of support and punitive sanctioning, though there was evidence that discretion remained.

Engagement with the conditionality regime required participants to jump through hoops. It was often difficult to move forward due to ongoing structural (related to poverty) and personal barriers (such as poor mental health) and other challenges. Those who begin with lower levels of social, cultural or economic capital, particularly when they experience cumulative crises, find it almost impossible to accrue enough capital to change their socio-economic position (Chung and Thewissen, 2011).

Participants live in seemingly permanent marginalisation, a direct consequence of successive welfare reforms that make it tougher to live on benefits and reduced funding for local services. Participants' experiences of the current welfare regime are characterised by punishment on one hand and 'parking' on the other, which means they remain 'warehoused' on the margins (Wacquant, 2009a).

Moving towards work in return for receipt of benefits is an expectation of the welfare arm of the state, even for those who claim a health-related benefit, or who have caring responsibilities. Participants' accounts highlight the unrealistic nature of this expectation, at least within the context of ongoing, periodical reassessments. Participants' experiences of sanctions starkly highlight the impact of conditionality on marginalised women subject to the sharp edge of welfare reforms. Their stories of 'just trying to survive', and in desperation of turning to day centres, foodbanks or 'go[ing] without' attest to this. Moreover, being in receipt of benefits did not protect participants from hardship, highlighting the residualised nature of social assistance.

The welfare system is designed to make those in receipt of out-of-work benefits ready for the labour market. However, participants' accounts highlighted the paucity of meaningful employability support from the welfare system or secure job opportunities

in the local labour market. This was often compounded by their histories of involvement with the criminal justice system and complex needs which created additional barriers to employment. Participants' work aspirations therefore often required a rebalancing in light of the opportunities available to them, for those who aspired to re-build their families, their goals often shrank to accommodate more immediate needs and realistic targets.

Many participants were in receipt of ESA WRAG which meant that in return for social assistance from the welfare arm of the state, they were expected to prepare themselves for work. This condition may be appropriate for those participants who had been engaged with support for many years and who had progressed into voluntary positions at the day centres they attended. Without the voluntary roles provided by the centres this may not have been the case. For those without organisations that could offer these positions, or those who had caring responsibilities, it was not always realistic to expect them to look for work'

Participants' aspirations in relation to work or work-related activity, such as volunteering may be presented as a self-chosen goal, but within the contexts of claiming welfare and –rehabilitation - both of which promote the ideology of the 'responsible' active –worker citizen - this may not be the case (Patrick, 2012). Most appeared to derive meaning, satisfaction and support which had been missing from their lives (as shown in Chapter 5). As such, it is important to "chart the mechanisms, practices and influential assumptions through which people's varied lives and plans are constrained, confirmed, supported, conditioned, or even liberated" (Harrison and Davis, 2001, p. 4).

Lister (2015, p. 145) argues that "agency has to be contextualised within the structural constraints and opportunities that frame people's lives". Women at the penal-welfare nexus appeared to get trapped in a dynamic of 'getting by' and 'getting (back) at' for many years (Lister, 2015). Participants who had been engaged with support for a number of years had eventually been able to carve small spaces for micro-level resistance even within the more conditional welfare regime. For example, when Sally felt it would not be in her best interests to be pushed into full-time paid work, she decided to stay in her voluntary roles. Similarly, Whitney took the time she needed to 'get back on her feet' before looking for formal, paid work. However, they were still

being regulated (and punished) by various agencies, such as social services or the criminal justice system.

In making sense of participants' experiences, it is important to consider their socio-economic contexts, and their place within social and institutional relations. As Wright (2012, p. 313) contests "actors are attached, and can contribute, to greater or lesser extents, to long-standing contexts of privilege and disadvantage". Therefore, an individual's intersubjective reality is "an ongoing collective endeavour that involves being influenced and influencing others simultaneously" (Wright, 2012, p. 316).

When reflecting on participants' experiences, it is possible to see that an individual's subjective reality may be at odds with the social reality of the institution that governs them. For example, participants often stated that they wanted to find work that aligned with their personal aspirations and lived experience. Whether this was sincere or whether they felt forced to articulate work aspirations within a punitive welfare system underpinned by behavioural conditionality is difficult to ascertain. Besides, the aspirations voiced often proved often out of sync with the institutional realities of welfare professionals who in some cases pushed participants towards *any* job to get them off benefits or in some cases placed them on benefits with higher conditionality than they could cope with – rather than paying attention to participants' wants and needs. The neoliberal-capitalist aim of the 'active welfare subject' within political discourse and policymaking does not fit with the traumas, setbacks and crises of participants' everyday lives (as shown in Chapter 5) and their aims (Wright, 2016).

Participants' life courses to date were not smooth (see Chapter 5). Relapses or crises may have stymied progress, but most had not returned to their prior state of persistent offending during the research period. Most participants showed they had managed to leave behind negative interactions with the criminal justice system and moved towards work or voluntary activity which aligned with the goals of the welfare state. Although for those moving towards the labour market their new identities were fragile and they sometimes felt that they did not belong due to their pasts.

Despite shifts in how they saw themselves, they still encountered barriers to moving on with their lives. As Wright (2016, p.249) highlights "the active welfare subject, despite effort and self-development, may still meet a brick wall structured by systems

and processes beyond their influence... ..receiving inadequate income from benefits, being treated without dignity or respect or being inappropriately subjected to conditional or punitive policies contributed to emotional distress and a collapse of agency”.

Participants made efforts to move towards the labour market in spite of their cumulative adversities. The speed at which they moved towards work was protracted and the path often not linear. Despite the majority of participants not being in the formal labour market, most participants were caring and in ‘active unemployment’ or volunteering at the day centre they had engaged with (Garthwaite, 2017, p. 289). For those who had found a sense of stability and felt in control in terms of managing their day to day lives, giving back to the day centre from which they had received support was important. Valorised forms of citizenship mainly focus on paid work, but participants derived pride in providing voluntary work for the centres.

One participant stood out from the others in a number of ways. Annie had travelled the farthest in terms of gaining work quickly after her community supervision order came to an end, she secured full-time paid work in a job that she enjoyed. She had also been to university and was the only participant to have achieved qualifications beyond college. She also had a strong informal network of support in the form of a supportive boyfriend and family, and therefore held both more educational (cultural) and social capital than other participants. For the majority of participants, however, it took many years for them to move on from their former criminalised lives, and longer still for them to see themselves not as offenders but as volunteers or workers; identity shift lagged behind behaviour changes.

The data presented in this chapter also highlighted participants' progression in ways other than through paid or voluntary work, such as securing housing and benefits. This showed that some were managing their finances, albeit with continued support when required. Almost all participants were in relationships, and some lived with their partners. They often met their partners through desistance and recovery circles, for example, Sally had met her partner while they were both on a rehab program; Whitney had met her partner through the day centre. Couples claiming social assistance would be impacted by the single payment per household mechanism that UC introduces. Under UC a couple has two separate, personalised Claimant Commitments to be

adhered to, with only one point of payment. This is important because only one person will be in receipt of the household's social assistance payments. For couples where both partners are new to managing their finances and who are still working on alcohol or drug and mental health problems, this places a financial imbalance in who receives the payment in the relationship, and extra pressure on both parties who lose out if just one person in the couple receives a sanction. This is concerning given the prevalence of participants' experiences of controlling and abusive relationships.

The safety net provided by crisis loans has been removed; ongoing erosion of emergency and hardship funds has resulted in increased barriers for claimants whose benefit is stopped or who are in crisis. Project worker accounts back up those of service users turning to the use of charitable food support or survival crime to get by. Furthermore, welfare reforms meant that project workers were spending more time sorting out benefits issues (See Section 6.4), and therefore, less time providing therapeutic interventions designed to prevent recidivism.

The day centres are able to mitigate some of the worst impacts of state welfare policy for example, through helping participants navigate the welfare system or through providing volunteering opportunities where they can meet the conditions of ESA WRAG. The day centres could be seen as acting as part of a 'shadow' welfare state, the ongoing crises of the welfare system spill over and were being addressed in part by VCS organisations such as those in this study. This can be understood as a "crisis of crisis-management" (Offe, 1984, p. 36).

Wacquant's depiction of the welfare system is of a retrenching 'feminine' left arm of the state. As the welfare arm backs away the penal arm grows to enact on 'problem populations' (Wacquant, 2013, p. 242). In practice this is not as simple as Wacquant suggests, the welfare arm is clearly punitive and not just retrenching despite pockets of respite provided by ESA Support and ESA WRAG. And the delineations between the state and voluntary sector have blurred and this theme is returned to in Chapter 8.

6.7 Conclusion

The data presented in this chapter has explored the ways in which the welfare arm of the state produces, governs and reproduces those in advanced marginality through the lived experiences of women who are ex-offenders or who have been in conflict with the law. It examined how UK social institutions, and in particular the welfare system, impacted marginalised women engaged in community-based services which aim to divert them from prison and reduce recidivism, and their efforts to move towards the labour market. This thesis provides a more nuanced perspective of the lived realities of these women and the 'spaces of resistance' that they were able to access through 'shadow' welfare services. This thesis sheds light on the combined impact of multiple and sometimes conflicting approaches to and intervention with a highly vulnerable group. The ongoing retrenchment of social assistance and increased conditionality within the UK social security system has created deteriorating socio-economic conditions for women on the social margins. An inconsistent mix of gender-responsive policies from within the criminal justice system (explored in Chapter 7), contrasts with often highly conditional and constraining welfare policies couched in gender-neutral terms.

Prominent within participant accounts were experiences of punishment, support and bounded agency as they navigated a more punitive welfare system and attempted to exit the CJS for good. The threat of punishment through the welfare system was often evident and four participants had experienced benefits sanctions directly. Moreover, permanent marginalisation was a way of life, as shown by regular food insecurity and problems paying utility bills. Participants were often unable to move into or even towards the labour market due to their past convictions, lack of experience, skills and so on, which induced a sense of powerlessness. Self-improvement approaches cannot address the institutional, legal, policy and societal constraints. In the face of residualised social assistance and community services some had been warehoused in the 'penal-welfare net' for many years (as highlighted in chapter 5 in case study vignettes).

The welfare system uses punitive conditionality and sanctions to induce the 'right' behaviours in claimants, like the penal system (see Chapter 7). For many participants inhabiting this space, tacit acceptance was the most pragmatic way to approach

various street-level agents that governed them and the conditions to which they were subjected; otherwise, they would face a benefit sanction. However, this was not always the case, and, in some instances, discretion and empathy remained. With minimal protections in place, highly marginalised women are incapacitated in the face of various social forces that bear down upon them and influence their daily lives and are in some cases pushed back towards offending.

Yet within this bleak picture, and in spite of pressures bearing down upon this marginalised group, some women had begun to forge new identities and move towards a more stable daily life. There were also stories of support and protection within their interactions with work coaches. Nevertheless, this stability was fragile; participants remained vulnerable to the challenges and crises of everyday life at the social margins and at the mercy of changing expectations placed on them under ongoing welfare reform. Under ongoing UC reforms participants will ultimately navigate a more conditional welfare system which aims to push them into full-time paid work. The strain of supporting more women pushed towards the margins will place an increased burden on these marginal welfare services.

The next chapter turns to marginalised women's experiences of being governed by the penal state. It presents evidence which suggests that a wide range of institutions are experienced as penal beyond what is traditionally understood to be so. It focuses on what participants felt to be the most punitive of interventions, ones which affected their family.

7. Mothers and the 'maloptic' Penal State

7.1 Introduction

A key question of this thesis is how a specific group of marginalised women are governed by the 'penal arm of the state'. By foregrounding the gendered dimensions of the "double (social cum-penal) regulation of the poor", this study highlights how punitive interventions have shaped, and continue to shape, these women's lives (Wacquant, 2015, p. 120). This chapter focuses on participants' interactions with various institutions and representatives of the state, which have been experienced as punitive, and as such, these interventions have been categorised as carceral or disciplinary in nature and thus part of the expansive penal archipelago. My use of the term 'penal arm of the state' draws on Wacquant's conceptualisation of the state as detailed in Chapter 2. In summary, Wacquant defines the state's 'penal arm' as specifically "the police, courts, jail, prison, juvenile facilities, and their extensions" (2014, p. 1690). He goes on to explain 'prisonfare' as "the lattice of policies...that purport to resolve urban ills by activating the judicial arm of the state rather than its social and human services" (Wacquant, 2014, p. 1701).

Most participants' experiences confirm that women do experience penal interventions directly and not, as Wacquant's model suggests, only as partners or daughters of men in prison. In line with the literature on women and crime, participants' accounts showed that the police and courts often criminalised behaviours that were linked to past and current victimisation. Participants are viewed as transgressive rather than vulnerable and were dealt with by the penal arm of the state, and as such, struggled to move on from the 'vulnerability-transgression nexus' (Brown, 2014a). Furthermore, for some participants rehabilitative criminal justice interventions could be experienced as extensions of penal control. This chapter argues that state-ordered child removal is an additional form of punishment with gendered dimensions that should be reflected upon within conceptualisations of the penal state and its management of the poor.

For the purposes of my fieldwork, I operationalised the penal arm originally to encompass the formal agencies of the criminal justice system, namely the police, the Prison Service, Probation (both Community Rehabilitation Companies and National

Probation Service), the courts and legal system. However, during data collection it became clear that due to many participants being ‘failed’ mothers, they experienced other spaces and practices as punitive, coercive, invasive and disciplinary - beyond those institutions and agencies traditionally understood as penal. These experiences were often linked to participants’ gender, and as such, are not reflected in Wacquant’s (2009a) conceptualisation of the punitive management of the poor by the ‘centaur’ state. This thesis extends and refines this work to include the gendered nature of social disciplining.

Firstly, this chapter contends that women are subject to unique and additional forms of disciplinary interventions than men which is most apparent in the governance of pregnant bodies. For participants who were pregnant during the research period it became evident that they were marked for child removal before their child had even been born. Once judged as ‘bad mothers’, they had very little power to challenge these decisions. Early intervention by children’s services is examined drawing on the concept of the ‘Malopticon’¹⁹; a conceptual reworking of the ‘Panopticon’, which highlights how the state’s penal apparatus goes beyond surveillance and impacts individuals’ subjectivity – the penal subject “is seen as bad and is projected and represented as bad” (McNeill, 2019, p. 209). The experiences of mothers and mothers-to-be presented in this chapter highlight how they feel they are ‘seen badly’ by the social-cum-penal state, and how this distortion is linked to their experiences of being disciplined beyond the CJS.

Secondly, removing a child from a family and putting them into care is not experienced as a welfare intervention for families, but as punitive and disciplinary, particularly for the mothers involved in the research. Unlike the CJS, where rehabilitation (i.e., prevention of reoffending) is a formal aim, there is no element of rehabilitation for women who go through the child removal process. A consequence of the penal state overlooking the wellbeing of ‘failed’ mothers has been to produce ‘maternal outcasts’ – women subject to successive, compulsory child removals (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013).

¹⁹ See Chapter 3, section 3.2 for introduction of this concept.

This chapter presents empirical data from participants that had been subject to formal penal interventions, often from a young age within a context of being both ‘vulnerable’ and ‘transgressive’. As will be shown, many of the interventions that participants experienced were either inadequate in supporting them to meaningfully move on or served to recriminalize them. It then moves on to consider how women were affected by the experience of the removal of children and the traumatic social and emotional impacts this had. The effects of this highly invasive intervention are not mitigated by any formal aftercare support procedure. This is followed by considering a different form of family intervention – assessment of parenting ability within residential Mother and Baby Units (MBUs). Participants who went through this process were at least able to remain with their child during the assessment period, yet as will be shown, it is still experienced as a disciplinary response. These findings provide micro-level insights into the gendered dimensions of discipline and punishment, missing from Wacquant’s conceptualisation of the governance of those at the bottom.

7.2 The ‘vulnerability-transgression nexus’: troubled or in trouble?

Within the group of participants (22) there was a range of relationships with the CJS (see Appendix 12 for participant profiles). In total 17 women had been in conflict with the law²⁰, and of these, eight had experienced multiple prison sentences, and nine had experienced non-custodial community-based sentences, penalty notices or fines. The rest had been involved with criminal justice agencies largely as victims or had been seen to be ‘at risk’ rather than transgressive and referred into services. For participants who had been subject to formal penal interventions, the majority of these were for minor offences including possession of a controlled drug, theft (from shops), fraud or breaching of conditions on their records. However, three participants did disclose more serious convictions of arson, being an accessory to murder and child neglect.

Some participants had been in prison and had recently finished probation supervision; others had not been in trouble for years. Others had longer histories of being

²⁰ The term ‘in conflict with the law’ reflects the feminist criminology literature (see Rafter and Heidensohn, 1995, Chesney-Lind, 2006 and Irwin, Pasko and Davidson, 2017) and attends to the power of language, for example ‘women in conflict with the law’ is less stigmatising than ‘women offenders’.

persistently in conflict with the law and had struggled to desist from criminalised activities because of the wider circumstances of their lives which were frequently characterised by a combination of poor mental health, addiction, or being involved in abusive relationships often underpinned by experiences of poverty and social deprivation. As this chapter shows, getting into trouble was very much related to participants' experiences of severe marginalisation and structural disadvantage. Many participants had experienced multiple cumulative adversities in their early years (see Chapter 5) and subsequently had become involved with the CJS for, in some cases, many years.

Brown's (2014a, p. 377) "vulnerability-transgression nexus" is a useful framing device as it reflects the link between 'vulnerability' and 'challenging' or 'difficult' behaviours. Penal subjects can be very much both 'vulnerable' and 'transgressive' at the same time. This poses a challenge to oversimplified understandings of penal subjects within policy and public discourse as either 'bad' or 'in need of help'. For the women who took part in the research, the penal state often viewed them as transgressive when there were clear signs of victimisation or 'vulnerability'. This is most apparent in participants' disclosures of domestic abuse, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation as children and young people.

For many participants, coming into conflict with the law began at an early age - as children or as young adults (see Chapter 5). One participant, Whitney, had experienced social worker interventions after her father died when she was 13 years old. She had also been subject to serious familial abuse, which included being forced into brothel work by her uncle and had also developed a habit of drug use around this time. Her interactions with the social agencies quickly progressed from social services to formal penal interventions:

A lot of working girls go down there - obviously I had to support my habit as well - but I would have never dreamed of doing that [being paid for sex]. But I was scared to say no sometimes or else it's a back hand straight on your mouth...Some women down there... young women and they're getting forced into doing it... and when they walk away if they've not earnt owt or they get moved on, they get a back hander for it... I got attacked down there once by a punter... the police picked me up... I were really shaken up, but then CID were

talking to me, they didn't believe me, they didn't want to know... There's two or three that's got away with [attacking] me cos of that [the police not believing] ... I know police have got to do their job, but in my eyes there's women there getting murdered or raped, black and blue or took away, kidnapped, whatever cos they're too scared to come forward. I've only started coming out of my shell cos of how far I've come over the years, since I've come off the drugs and things like that, and me [sic] uncle's six foot under... (Whitney)

Whitney highlights the coercive control which sex workers are subject to, and the violence they experience at the hands of those controlling and exploiting them. She is concerned that because the police do not see women in this position as victims, they are not perceived as 'vulnerable'. From their perspective protecting sex workers from harm is not part of the 'job' in policing. Research has shown that "some officers view prostitutes as offenders rather than as victims" (Kingston and Thomas, 2014, p. 262-263). There have been efforts to change such attitudes towards sex workers²¹. Still, sex work and the use of substances remains highly stigmatised and is accompanied by a fear of prosecution (Cusick, 2006). For Whitney and the women she knew, the police were not perceived as the route through which they could access justice. Another participant, Carly, also disclosed in an interview that she had been a 'working girl' in the past. She reported being similarly subject to punitive approaches during her involvement in sex work and drug use. Rather than being viewed as victims, women are often be treated as transgressive by the penal state.

A number of participants disclosed sexual exploitation, including being forced into sex work. Sex work is patterned by gender with males being the purchasers and the majority of those doing sex work being female (including female identifying individuals). Despite this, many more female sex workers are convicted for 'soliciting' than those buying services or 'kerb crawling' (generally males) in the UK. Gendered injustice is present in the punishment of such offences and reflects the lack of recognition that many of those involved in sex work are themselves being victimised or exploited (Home Affairs Committee, 2016). In the UK, research by the Sex Work Open University (2016) highlights that "most criminal sanctions suffered by sex workers are not reflected in centralised statistics. They instead take the form of

²¹ Through multi-agency schemes such as "Ugly Mugs" or "Dodgy Punters" projects (see Penfold et al., 2004).

cautions, anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs)²², arrests and indeed simple harassment by the police". Due to the enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) these convictions continue to stigmatize women even if they were convicted many years previously (Topping, 2018).

For some participants it was their intimate relationships as adults that exacerbated their problems with mental health and addictions, as Frankie explains:

Well I was in a bit of a dysfunctional relationship and I've self-medicated with alcohol all my life...I've gone through phases of drinking heavily, not drinking at all, binge drinking, but managing. But... I was having a little fling with somebody, he was like quite controlling, heavy drinker, [religion], and they're very controlling in their relationships... And I don't want to diss him because it was my choice but the place was always full of alcohol...
(Frankie)

During this particular heavy drinking phase, Frankie had gotten into trouble for being drunk at work and was accused of abusing someone she was caring for which led her to the CJS, probation and eventually the day centre GO2.

Carly had been in a series of abusive relationships and had only been able to end one such violent relationship when she went to prison after her partner had got her involved in serious crime.

... I met somebody ... before [the last time] I went to jail, I thought he loved me and this, that and the other, anyway he committed a serious crime, and got me involved and because the thought if a man and woman were together police wouldn't stop him but I didn't know what he was doing ... he actually killed a man... But I didn't know nowt, what happened until it all come out in court what he'd done. But I got away from him [through being in prison], so I am glad I went to jail. (Carly)

Prison could also be experienced as a form of sanctuary, preferable to being in a coercive relationship with a violent partner and having to manage trauma and the

²² Please note that since 2014, a new system has been in place and the old "ASBOs" no longer exist. There are a range of powers available to police and local authorities to deal with behaviours regarded as anti-social, such as sex work (Home Office, 2022).

stressors of life on the outside with inadequate means or support. Perversely, the penal system became a means of protecting her from further exploitation from her ex-partner. The prison appeared to be a safer place for her than being on the outside. It brought order and safety for those in advanced marginality who needed respite from a life in crisis.

Superficially, it appears as though the state's protector status is restored and contrasts starkly with the conceptualisation of the 'centaur state' (Wacquant, 2009a). However, on looking closer, it is state agencies' poor handling of individuals who have gone through multiple and cumulative adversities that has led to them perceiving the prison as sanctuary. It can be viewed as a 'crisis response', as the literature on trauma response highlights "emotional attachment to the perpetrator... attachment is instinctual: it is the result of a will for self-preservation" (Åse, 2015, p. 598)

Sylvia had a long history of cycling 'in and out' of prison on short sentences, until she received an imprisonment for public protection (IPP)²³ sentence for fire setting. IPP sentences, indeterminate sentences with no fixed term or tariff, were "designed to detain people in prison who pose a significant risk of causing serious harm to the public through further serious offences until they no longer pose such a risk" (Beard, 2019, p. 4). When I met Sylvia, she was living in supported housing. She had served nine years in prison on her IPP sentence and was subject to lifelong probation supervision. She explained her offence that led to this as follows:

I wanted to try to keep warm...but...well they called it arson with intent...When I got to court the judge, he said, "well your solicitor and barrister were saying, you didn't intend to harm anybody", I said no I was just trying to keep warm...and I was angry about what my step dad did to me in the past...instead of talking about it, it was making me angry and when I was angry I just wanted to take it, punish him but because I couldn't get to him I just used to, it was only like rubbish in the bin, I wasn't hurting anybody or anything, but...it was a criminal offence...I just stood there and

²³ Please note, IPP sentences were introduced in 2005 and abolished in 2012 because they were used "too widely and inconsistently", though not applied retrospectively (Home Office, 2022).

watched the flames...the flames fascinated me...it was like the flames, like arms...reaching out... (Sylvia)

The bin that she had set on fire was directly next to the wall of a hotel building, and as such, she was charged with arson. Within this excerpt the complexity of Sylvia's case is apparent. She provides several explanations for the offence that she was charged with, ranging from initially meeting an immediate survival need of warmth due to being homeless and sleeping rough at the time, to an outlet for the anger she felt towards her abuser. Fire-setting as a crime has a longstanding association with mental health problems (Tyler et al., 2015). Sylvia told me that while in prison she underwent a psychological assessment which linked the childhood abuse she experienced to her mental health problems and the behaviour that led to her last conviction for arson. Research suggests that female fire-setters are more likely to have experienced sexual abuse and to be diagnosed with depression or psychosis than their male counterparts (Dickens et al., 2007). Despite being homeless and dealing with severe trauma from her childhood, Sylvia was judged by representatives of the penal state as transgressive and a risk to public safety.

For the most part, participants who had been involved in the CJS disclosed minor or non-violent convictions which were often related to material deprivation. For some, once labelled as transgressive it was difficult to break out from the 'penal dragnet' (Wacquant, 2009a). Poverty, financial difficulties and limited social welfare support combined with high surveillance resulted in participants being unable to move away from the carceral archipelago despite their efforts to stay out of trouble.

Ros: I'd nowhere to live and then I sort of shoplifted to survive do you know what I mean but yeah last year...I got sentenced, done probation and that's done and dusted now.

Larissa: How long were you doing probation for?

Ros: A year.

Larissa: When were your previous convictions?

Ros: Oh god about, well 12, 13 years ago...

Larissa: Ok, and what was that for?

Ros: Same again, shoplifting...I had to go to prison while they did my pre-sentence report and then obviously got out and had to do a probation order...

Larissa: How many times have you been to prison?

Ros: Twice...For shoplifting...

Sylvia: I was truanting from school... I started drinking when I was 13, I got easily led... I think I have got about 100 convictions and I have been in and out of prison... for over 20 odd years nearly.

Ros' experience highlights the illogical use of the prison for women whose offending is seemingly minor, sporadic and related to their material deprivation. Prior to research participation, Ros had been homeless or living in temporary accommodation for many years. With the support of the homeless day centre she had recently secured accommodation in a flat and was taking part in a drug recovery program. Sylvia had also been homeless for many years, but unlike Ros she had been in trouble much more persistently. Sylvia was the object of successive penal interventions. She had been cycled in and out of the prison but with punishment taking precedence over her long-standing mental health needs which went undiagnosed and untreated for many years (see Chapter 5). Viewed as transgressive by the penal state it was difficult for both women to move any meaningful and sustained distance away from the 'penal dragnet'.

Early traumatic experiences often underpinned participants' pathways into the CJS, though often these issues did not come to the surface until well into adulthood, and in some cases, after persistent criminalisation or crisis points. This is a particularly strong theme in research on women in conflict with the law (Daly, 1992; Siegel and Williams, 2003; Brennan et al., 2012). What makes this context particularly pernicious is that women are criminalised for behaviours that are themselves a result of victimisation. However, 'wrongdoings' were not readily recognised by the penal state as being linked to trauma, exploitation or vulnerability. Exhibiting the kinds of behaviours that led to convictions could in fact be construed as 'normal' reactions to the immense trauma participants had experienced. Yet participants are viewed as transgressive rather than as also being vulnerable and in need of, or deserving of, help.

Instead, women in this 'surplus population' (Rehmann, 2015) are marked for close surveillance and 'early intervention' by criminal justice agencies. This process can be seen as a form of 'net-widening', drawing individuals closer towards the disciplinary

archipelago (Cohen, 1985). When they eventually come into conflict with the disciplinary controls set around them, they are criminalised for their complex needs in the 'vulnerability-transgression nexus' (Brown, 2014a, p. 377). This term highlights a spectrum rather than two opposite ends of a binary, it also indicates the "risk posed *by* an individual as well as *to* them" (Brown, 2015, p. 77). Brown (2015, p. 92) suggests that "vulnerability appeared to be a state that was much more associated with young women than with young men". Certainly, within the findings of this thesis, the gendered implications of risk and vulnerability meant that participants were subject to high levels of state surveillance, intervention and disciplinary control.

Once viewed as transgressive by the penal state, and with a more punitive welfare state, participants faced difficulties in finding a route out of poverty or staying away from activities considered 'criminal'. The Criminal Justice Act (2003) states that 'reform and rehabilitation' are also formal aims of a sentence, alongside punishment. However, in practice there is little emphasis on this aim. Rather than supportive, mechanisms labelled as rehabilitative were experienced as extensions of penal control. Whether leaving prison or a community sentence, participants found themselves with inadequate support and subject to conditions which they struggled to comply. The next section explores different dimensions of rehabilitation interventions and how they are perceived by women subject to them.

7.2.1 Women's rehabilitation: an extension of penal control

Effective reintegration and rehabilitation support is essential to support women to stay out of the CJS. According to official statistics, women have a higher number of reoffences per reoffender compared to males; 4.33 versus 3.99 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Rehabilitation policy has undergone major upheaval since the marketisation of large parts of the probation service in 2014. It has also been noted that within the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2015) and Transforming Rehabilitation reforms, women have remained an afterthought (Birkett, 2017). Critics have highlighted that reforms have been based on privatisation and cost-cutting goals rather than finding the best way to support individuals (Walker et al., 2019). The failed marketisation of Probation

Services ended in June 2021, with services coming back under the NPS (House of Commons Justice Select Committee, 2019; Ministry of Justice, 2022).

Compliance with release conditions and ongoing probation supervision²⁴ is difficult for those returning to contexts outside of mainstream society and back into cycles of abuse, neglect and discrimination (Bumiller, 2013). Participants' accounts, such as Carly's below, highlight a dearth of support during the transition from prison to the community:

...it was just that vicious cycle of coming out of jail and going back to drugs, meeting the same friends...Then you're just gonna go back to that circle. Cos once you leave that prison gate that's it, they don't give you any support....I han't got no support coming out whatsoever, they put me in the house full of men, every door upstairs if there were one pushing it open I were terrified, so obviously that turned me back to drugs again... (Carly)

Carly perceived that a lack of support on leaving prison gave her little choice but to return to the same context that she had been living in prior to going to prison. While she was given transitional accommodation, this appeared to be an inappropriate placement for a woman with a history of abusive relationships and exploitation by men and was a source of stress for her as she feared for her safety. Addressing the circumstances within which Carly's drug use occurred - such as inadequate, mixed sex housing - appears to be an important yet overlooked factor in her reintegration following prison. Although access to accommodation is established as one of the key pathways to reducing reoffending for women (NOMS, 2006; Corston, 2007), "there remains a chronic shortage of suitable housing options for women leaving prison" (Prison Reform Trust, 2018b, p. 1).

Without meaningful rehabilitative support or long-term social or economic opportunities, participants struggled to leave the penal dragnet for many years. This 'revolving door' (Kruttschnitt and Otto, 2019) between custody and community acts as a gateway to further adversity and reoffending. Gillian explains:

²⁴ See Section 3.2 for outline of what probation supervision and conditions can entail.

...it started when I was 21... I just got involved in the wrong crowd, easy money, fraud it was, cheque books and credit cards...but it was always me getting caught, I was doing community service and I was going and doing it again...getting sent to prison, but it wasn't till I came to [current city] that I was a junkie and an alcoholic... When I come here I started drinking badly, I don't know why, probably through boredom, and my kid got took off us cos of the drink...he was six... ...It was the drink made me offend, because you think you're invincible when you're drinking...I went to jail for that, fraud...when you're drinking you don't care what happens, I was killing myself basically...(points to photo)...courts, police, that's the police arresting me, going to court then they send me to [women's centre], I got probation and community service, two orders last year... I was still drinking at the time... (Gillian)



Figure 7.1: Photo by Gillian, depicts a police van

Once she was under the auspices of the penal arm, Gillian found it difficult to break out of a cycle of coming into conflict with the law, going to prison, being released and getting into trouble again. She felt that her issues with alcohol were at the root of her problems, yet despite being in and out of prison for many years, her addiction had only been addressed very recently. As Dominey and Gelsthorpe (2020, p. 14) highlight, penal institutions, such as the probation service, are ill-equipped to address the many challenges of women caught in a “cycle of persistent offending, breach and recall to

prison". Since being referred to the women's centre Gillian had gained some stability through support to get her benefits and housing in order and daily attendance at the centre to volunteer, all of which help her maintain her sobriety.

Alcohol and substance issues were common, 11 women – 50% – disclosed either alcohol or drugs or a combination) as Sally's account highlights:

I did a detox off drink ...I didn't even last that long when I came out, I started drinking again...I've been in and out of prison...most of them were for possession, they'd let me out, give me curfew, most of them are breaches that I got done for...four, five years ago [was the] last time I got locked up, that was [for] violence...I was hanging around with all the wrong people, with all the wrong crowds... (Sally)

On release from prison, or as part of a community sentence, behavioural conditions were placed on participants such as curfews or drug tests. As is clear in Sally's experiences this served to re-criminalise her. Without addressing underlying issues, such as problem alcohol or substance use and the related past traumas these were linked to, participants left prison with little hope of addressing these issues and complying with probation conditions.

The data highlighted a lack of support that reflected women's specific needs; women are marginalised within a system that is used to working with men who make up the majority (around 95%) of those released from prison (Prison Reform Trust, 2013). Participants' accounts highlight how women tend to be "correctional afterthoughts" (Prison Reform Trust, 2017a). Participants found it difficult to navigate the transcarceral²⁵ landscape (whether this was post-prison or after a community sentence). The challenges of day-to-day basic tasks, pressure to build new social and support networks, all whilst addressing any complex needs, meant that breaches of behavioural conditions set by various agencies were commonplace. Compliance with conditions was particularly difficult when there were crisis points, as Donna explains following problems with her partner and having to move flat:

²⁵ Carlton and Baldry (2013, p. 72) define transcarceral policies as those which "extend correctional management and intervention into women's post-release lives".

...that week was hectic in itself trying to get all that done. So any appointments I had that week I cancelled which kind of got me in a bit of a pickle with probation... the social worker spoke to him in the end. Because I said you can't breach me for something like that, even if he was to breach me and I had to go back to court and everything I would have just told them, nothing would have happened because there was a valid reason that I was not in a fit state to see him. (Donna)

With the structural barriers and many personal challenges participants faced, getting away from the CJS was often a slow process. One participant, Annie, stood out as an exception for seemingly not getting caught up in the penal dragnet following her release after three years in prison on drugs charges as a first offence (for more detail see Chapter 6, section 6.3). For Annie being under close supervision in the community was comparatively much better than the experience of being in prison.

After such a long time inside, I was just happy to be out...It [the tag] didn't bother me too much but it was uncomfortable. The comparison from wearing that to being in prison was nothing. I had to wear it over Christmas so I could also cover it up easily with warm clothes... (Annie)



Figure 7.2: Photo by Annie, of the electronic ankle tag she had to wear to monitor her compliance with her curfew after being released from prison

However, most of the participants who had been in conflict with the law remained close to the CJS for many years and struggled to move closer to the labour market (see Chapter 6). Being subject to ongoing disciplinary mechanisms increases and intensifies penalties for unauthorised behaviours such as missing an appointment, being out beyond a curfew, having a relapse, staying away from home for a night. The penal system continues to view its subjects as transgressive rather than vulnerable or at risk and in need of support, hence the high level of reoffending for minor crimes for women. There are processes for referring or signposting women for diversion, or support for those at risk of offending or reoffending, but as participants accounts show this often comes too late. Probation work has become concerned primarily with risk management rather than being required to 'advise, assist and befriend' (Healy, 2012). Rehabilitation reforms have increased supervision without equipping the probation service with the tools required to address the many challenges of women caught up in the revolving door of custody and community (Dominey and Gelsthorpe, 2020). As such, its 'rehabilitative' interventions are narrow and individualised with little acknowledgement of the structural barriers marginalised women face such as housing and poverty. It traps them rather than helping them to move away from the penal arm of the state, because it punishes behaviours that are related to that very vulnerability.

7.3 Motherhood and disciplinary interventions: the 'Malopticon' and producing 'maternal outcasts'

The following sub-sections focus on those participants who had experienced the child removal process, in some cases this process began during pregnancy, for others it was once the child was born or in the early years. It was rarer for children of school age to be removed but this was the case for one participant (Alice). Participants perceived child removal as a punishment, and one that outweighed a prison sentence in terms of its impact on their lives, most had struggled to come to terms with it years down the line.

Of the 23 participants, 19 had children, of those 14 reported being lone parents. Of the 19 mothers, 12 had experienced the state-ordered removal of a child or children

from their care (see Appendix 14 for details on the number of children removed per participant). As highlighted in Chapters 5 and 6, participants lacked access to protective social and economic resources. In child welfare assessments structural influences on parenting ability, such as class position, poverty and social inequality, often take a back seat whereas individual pathology was more often referred in social worker assessments (Gupta, 2017). Participants were variously disadvantaged and trapped within a child-removal-poverty-class-nexus which prevented them from being able to *be* a mother to their child (or children).

As the data in this section highlights, for most participants child removal was the most devastating consequence of their unmet complex and multiple needs which served to compound their cumulative adversity. With limited long-term prospects, losing the ability to self-identify as a 'good mother' (Sykes, 2011) proved to be detrimental for their subjectivity. It is always the mother that is the 'crucial variable' in cases of child welfare interventions, as Swift (1995, p. 89) suggests. Certainly, in my participants' experiences, the majority were facing social worker assessments alone (just two were assessed as part of a couple). Moreover, parenting ability was measured at the individual level and often framed behaviourally; structural barriers are rarely considered in practice with procedures contributing to the othering of poor people (Krumer-Nevo, 2016). This is not to say that issues with the ability to care for a child were not present in participants' respective situations, but that these reflected the women's own (multiple) forms of disadvantage and social barriers.

Although child protection interventions were administered through local authority managed children's services – agencies of the welfare arm of the state rather than the CJS – accounts suggested it was experienced as the toughest form of punishment for perceived deviant behaviours. Being 'seen as bad' by the 'maloptic' state rather than being seen as having done something bad (McNeill, 2019), for women with dependents, was experienced synonymously with being seen as transgressive mothers. Social workers and other involved professionals act as representatives of the maloptic state to judge mothers' worthiness often against "prejudiced middle-class standards" and by how compliant the mother appears to be (Neale and Lopez, 2017, p. 18).

In terms of the number of children removed from each mother; seven participants had experienced one child removal, two had experienced two removals, one had three children removed and three women had experienced five or more children removed from their care. Four participants were going through child removal proceedings during the research period. This meant that they were being assessed by social workers and other professionals, with varying levels of contact with their children during this period depending on their specific case. There was Alice, whose two children aged 9 and 12 were under review for neglect. Two mothers, Carly and Amy, had given birth just a few months prior to research commencing; although both under review as mothers of newborns, they had very different experiences of this process. Amy resided in an MBU with her baby, whereas Carly's baby had been placed in temporary foster care and contact was limited to weekly supervised visits at a contact centre. There was also Donna who was pregnant with her second child at the time she was recruited to take part in the research; like Carly, the social worker reviewing her case had made plans to place her baby into temporary foster care shortly after birth for the assessment period.

For those undergoing care proceedings during the research period, they felt acutely that they were 'not being given a chance' (Carly), or that the system was 'not fair' (Caitlin), with social workers among other professionals 'working against them' (Carly). For those whose children had been recently removed they came to view what had happened to them as judges making examples of them. Many felt that they had been permanently marked by their past involvement in the criminal justice system, and no matter what they did in their present lives, the associated labels they had acquired could not be shaken off. For those whose experience of child removal was many years ago the levels of acceptance varied. Gillian told me that she felt that her son had had a better life than she could have given him since he was placed in long-term foster care, though she thought of him often and would sometimes go to his school just to be able to see him. This contrasted with Sylvia who felt that she could have kept her son had she received better support. For all mothers involved in such proceedings, it seemed that the children they lost remained significant 'haunting' figures in their lives (Morriss, 2018). This theme will be continued in section 7.3.3.

Not all children who had been removed went into the care system or formal adoption. In some cases, one or more children had been placed with kin; access varied widely and was dependent on mothers' relationships with their wider families. For example, Christina was known to her child as an 'aunty', and they did see each other at certain times of the year such as Christmas. Carly was not able to see her child who had been placed with her sister because they were not on speaking terms. Some participants, such as Whitney and Caitlin, had children who had been placed with their fathers, but as they were not facilitating access, they planned to go to court to gain visitation rights.

7.3.1 Pregnant with a baby marked for the care system

Five participants had been subject to child removal processes while pregnant, prior to their children being born. Donna, who was pregnant during the research period, was going through this and provided insights into this experience. She was still dealing with a social worker who had been involved with the removal of her previous child. This social worker was also going to be the social worker of the child Donna was currently pregnant with, and plans were already being made to remove this child shortly after birth.

Donna: As I said to you I'm here most days, that's why I took the pictures in here. And actually to be honest after a few days [I forgot] because I had Teddy's box to do that week after I seen you, when you give me the camera

Larissa: What do you mean by Teddy's box?

Donna: Oh I done him a life story box, and put all stuff in for when he's bigger. So I had to give that, I met the lady that he'll stay with and she were really nice.

Larissa: So you feel ok?

Donna: Yeah, he got cased last Wednesday, the social worker said, and obviously I met the lady the week before...everything over the last few weeks have been a bit prickly anyway, and I have stressed about finishing Teddy's box to the point that I didn't even think about anything else whatsoever. The social worker said at our review meeting that we had a few weeks ago that I need to go see this bloke for support because of alcohol and substance

misuse - but I don't have a substance misuse, but I'm a binger. And as I've said before usually if I let things build up and build up and build up, then I tend to have just one binge and then that's it but then I usually get arrested for drunk and disorderly, so that's not a great idea. She said going to see [a support worker] is better than letting things get too much....It has been quite stressful the last week with [my partner]. But I'm getting there slowly. (Donna, currently pregnant, one child removed)

This exchange highlights the complexity of Donna's situation. She is still dealing with the removal of her first child Teddy; creating a story box for him is clearly very important to her, but also a source of stress, a reminder that she cannot be with him. She is also heavily pregnant with a baby girl who she knows she will not be able to keep. Additionally, she is going through problems with her partner and is not allowed contact with him while pregnant. As these stressors build up, she admits to an episode of binge drinking as a coping mechanism. Despite this she appeared to be trying to be as positive as she could be given the circumstances and was still attending the day centre for her volunteer role, which showed resilience in spite of the ongoing, cumulative adversities that she faced. The use of resilience here draws on conceptualisations of the term that reflects "coping and not being overcome" as opposed to the 'thriving' end of the spectrum (Batty and Cole, 2010, p.8).

Donna talked about her experience of undergoing a pre-birth social worker assessment and the surveillance she is subject to.

Larissa: Is your social worker for your current pregnancy?

Donna: Both. She's Teddy's social worker and she'll be her (rubs her bump) social worker.

Larissa: Has she asked you to do anything?

Donna: Stay out of trouble, she said, for me and the baby, it's hard work though. I'm just one of them people... It's got me down a lot and I've been quite moany, but I guess I just have to make the best of it you know...There's bigger things because the social worker said I wasn't allowed to go back to my flat otherwise they would have applied for an emergency order to place me somewhere... And I had a bollocking the other day because he [her

partner who she isn't allowed to see] came to my scan, I mean it's his daughter, do you know what I mean, it irritated me.

Larissa: Ok so you've got a lot of shit to be dealing with at the moment. But are you coping?

Donna: Yeah I'm alright. I have my down days and sometimes I want to cry all the time.... I'm calling her Lily (rubs her bump).

Donna feels that she is watched closely, particularly at the day centre where she volunteers. She is also being closely monitored by the social worker of her children who placed her in temporary local authority emergency accommodation due to her partner getting into trouble. She lives under close surveillance of representatives of the state and appears to have very little control over important decisions in her life because of her pregnancy. The emotional bond that mothers develop throughout pregnancy is well established (Muller, 1992; Righetti et al., 2005). Raphael-Leff (2005) suggests antenatal attachment can also occur in a preverbal (thinking) manner. Donna's body language of rubbing her pregnant belly and thinking about what to name her baby is a sign of this antenatal bonding. The baby scan, a form of visual bonding, is important both to her and the baby's father.

Carly, similarly, had gone through her pregnancy knowing that her child would be removed shortly after birth, during her pregnancy she had tried to prepare herself for this.

"All way through my pregnancy I thought about giving him up for adoption because of all me other kids, I've let them down an' I didn't wanna put him through what they've been through, so I thought to meself, adoption'd be the best thing. Give him to a family that can't have kids that will look after him. As soon as he were born he changed me life, an' I thought I ain't doing that." (Carly, five children removed)

Once born she realised that she wanted to keep him. We talked about the short time she had spent with her son while on the ward in the hospital, and how the removal to foster care had affected those early moments with him.

Larissa: were you able to breast feed at all?

Carly: No because of all the tablets I was on and I knew he were getting

took so I didn't want to get that bond, that close bond and then him getting took.

Newborn removals appeared to take place within a couple of days after birth and in maternity settings, at a time when the mothers were recovering from childbirth and were highly vulnerable both physically and emotionally. Child welfare policy purportedly focuses on early intervention to prevent developmental harm to children (Brown and Ward, 2013).

Foucauldian 'biopower' intimates the regulation of bodies through appeals to life, risk, and responsibility (Monaghan et al. 2010). The removal of a child shortly after birth has corporeal consequences, and therefore signifies a form of punitive biopower (Foucault, 1978/1990); "power becomes biopower when it is situated and exercised at the level of life" (Barcelo, 2014, p. 477). In maternity settings this power is enforced by midwives (De Backer et al., 2022).

A process both acutely traumatic and enduring for mothers. The practice of pre-birth assessments and the removal of newborns in maternity settings is a gendered form of disciplinary control which impacts those who have often experienced childhoods of great adversity such as being in care themselves, as was the case for participants in this research.

Pre-birth assessments can therefore be characterised as instruments of gendered social control which enable the maloptic state to police the bodies and behaviour of women, particularly those whose parenting practices may be different to those of the middle-class professional involved (Gillies, 2008). A woman's status as pregnant or as a main carer is highly visible; there will be a physical bump or children in tow. Carly told me that she felt too embarrassed to go to her corner shop due to the fact that she was pregnant before and now was not but had no baby with her. She felt as though people 'knew' that her baby had been taken and would talk about her. The informal penalisation of social stigma, shame and social censure were oppressive and serve to consign 'maternal outcasts' to a position of second-class citizenship.

7.3.2 Experiencing child removal: punishment and cumulative trauma

From the perspective of the mothers who took part in the research, interventions from the child welfare system were not perceived as welfarist or family focused in nature. Participants experienced social services interventions as another form of surveillance and punishment.

"That is the worst punishment I've ever 'ad. It just literally...if it wan't for these here [friends in the women's centre] I wouldn't have been able to cope..."
(Caitlin)

"I'm finding it hard, how am I gonna carry on without my boy? My heart's broke...I'm not gonna get through it". (Carly)

This may not be surprising because social work inevitably crosses into the criminal justice arena in the family courts and where it intervenes in households where an offence has been committed. What is troubling is how little participants' accounts conveyed of aftercare or rehabilitative engagement, following such an impactful and traumatic statutory intervention as the compulsory removal of children.

The aims of reform and rehabilitation are written into criminal justice policy, although whether rehabilitative agencies, such as probation can be characterised as such in practice has been debated (Shapland et al., 2012; Hayes, 2018; McNeill, 2018). Rehabilitation and aftercare support for 'failed' parents, in a context of child removal, appears to be absent from child protection policy (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013). While children's welfare was regulated and subject to early intervention, including those not yet born, strategies to improve maternal welfare were not present in participants' experiences. Lupton described this preoccupation with 'precious cargo' in the case of pregnant mothers as "a fetishisation of the foetus, elevated as it is to such heights of value and eclipsing the maternal body in which it grows" (2012, p. 337). For Carly, the relationship with social services had been strained during the assessment period.

Sometimes I think they do...set you up to fail, social services, and they do because it's like, my social worker says to me 'we try and keep baby safe'. No you don't, well, why aren't you workin' with me? You're workin' against me! If you wanted my son to come home you' be workin' with me to do all I can to do me best to get him back, but you just seem to be working against me (Carly)

During fieldwork it became apparent that the agencies that were engaged with participants during child welfare assessments and care proceedings quickly vanished once a decision had been made in court to remove a child from its mother. Carly was one of the participants who lost her case in the family court during the research process. After the ruling, Carly told me that the judge had granted an extension of ongoing supervised contact with her baby – until he was formally adopted – at which point she loses her right to direct, face-to-face contact. However, no formal rehabilitative plan was set out alongside this to support Carly to cope with the compulsory removal. She disclosed that the pain of seeing him when she knew he was not hers anymore was making visits painful. The loss of her role as mother is pervasive, something which cannot be escaped from and as such confers an identity of ‘maternal outcast’ (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013).

The removal of a child from its mother is traumatic; its effects are both immediate and enduring. Broadhurst and Mason (2020, p. 4) highlight the missed opportunity to engage with mothers (and fathers) once they have been through the child removal process, which would be a crucial step in addressing “the negative cycle of repeat removal”. For participants’ whose children were removed against their will, their accounts highlight that they felt they were left on their own to deal with the loss of their child and its psychosocial impact and the associated stigma. In both the immediate aftermath of child removal and in the longer-term, participants were not provided with support to help them with addressing any failings as parents to prevent a future removal if they had another child. As such, this intervention serves to penalise poor and vulnerable mothers and to reproduce them as a surplus population of maternal outcasts.

While there have been some positive developments in preventative interventions, these bottom-up approaches involve local authorities or voluntary organisations and are few and far between (Cox et al., 2017). Preventative initiatives include a mix of services to address women’s needs as well as the ethically questionable encouraging or mandating the use of a long-acting reversible contraception (IARC). In the UK, the Reflect service in Gwent, south-east Wales aims to provide “practical and emotional support to women and their partners who have experienced the compulsory and permanent removal of a child”. As part of this, women are encouraged to be using

long-acting reversible contraception while involved in this program (Roberts et al., 2018). The Pause project which initially began in Hackney was awarded Department for Education funding in 2015 to trial its approach in six English locations. While Pause is a voluntary programme, the use of a larc is a prerequisite of commencing the 18-month programme (McCracken et al., 2017). The success of these initiatives ultimately is measured in their preventing a pregnancy in service users for the duration of their programme. Larc interventions have created some controversy, particularly around mandatory or court-ordered use, and its targeted use on certain groups as being discriminatory (Lowe and Rowlands, 2022).

Participants' experiences of recurrent child removals suggest that once marked a 'maternal outcast', it is a difficult label to shed. Only one participant, Carly, recalled being offered a leaflet for a support group by a contact centre worker when she broke down in front of her. From the perspectives of the mothers who took part in the research, it appears that the state does not meaningfully support maternal rehabilitation as not everyone has access to it. Support is patchy, where it does exist, it seems that professionals do not prioritise getting mothers to access it, or they face resistance from mothers who are wary of professionals having just had their child taken away (Broadhurst et al., 2015; Broadhurst and Mason, 2017). The growing number of mothers subject to successive removals of children from their care highlights that representatives of the state do not easily accept that maternal 'outcasts' can be reformed, despite a sometimes explicit desire to change.

I've got an horrendous past, but...everybody can...well people can change, but it's just giving that chance to show that I've changed...I'm just not being given that chance. (Carly)

As Carly's attests there seemed to be no route to parental rehabilitation and though she had made vast changes in her life the stigma of her past transgressions lingered. Mothers who lose the right to care for their children appear to be abandoned by the state and its welfare-assistential arm does not step in to support them. In fact, for those in receipt of social assistance, the loss of a child also means a loss of financial support through child benefits and housing being put at risk if they have more than one bedroom, this 'civil disqualification' adds another layer of adversity (Broadhurst and

Mason, 2020, p. 2). Child protection institutions constitute a particular and *additional* form of punishment aimed at marginalised mothers.

7.3.3 Haunted futures: child removal, a gateway to further adversity

When a child is removed by the state from its parents, it often constitutes a life sentence of grief and social penalties for those left behind. Sylvia's son had been adopted more than two decades before the research period: *"they fostered him first...when he was...about four or five months old when I was still living in the mother and baby home"*. Although he had been removed from her care 24 years ago, and she had not been granted 'letterbox' contact²⁶ (Selwyn et al., 2014) with him for over 20 years, his memory remained at the forefront of her mind.

The things that make me happy is knowing that I love my son even though he is not with me.

(Written by Sylvia; this is an excerpt of some of her work where she reflected on things that made her happy).

After her son was adopted, Sylvia then lost his father: *"...when he came out of jail he decided to take heroin ... he had been off it for a while and then he...died of a heroin overdose..."*. Sylvia was already struggling with issues related to childhood abuse and extreme disadvantage (see Chapter 5, section 5.2). The removal of her child followed by the death of his father exacerbated her mental health problems and alcohol misuse. With limited access to protective resources, the loss of her child and further exclusionary consequences led to Sylvia subsequently spending many years homeless, precariously housed or in prison. Broadhurst and Mason (2020, p. 17) have recently highlighted "the enormity of the recovery challenge for women with long-standing histories of disadvantage who hold fragile and restricted social statuses".

During her time in prison, Sylvia thought of her son a great deal. In one interview, Sylvia showed me a large folder of letters that she had written to him while 'inside'.

²⁶ 'Letterbox' contact is an agreement meaning letters can be sent to birth children and their adopters until the children reached 18.

She told me she had kept them in the hope that one day she could give them to him. Not having raised her son caused her enduring pain. She talked of this pain being more intense on specific occasions such as Mothers' Day. Her absent son haunted her present and her future. Sylvia told me: *"my one big hope for the future is for me and [my son] to meet up and have a catch up and to get to know each other better, also to meet...his adopted mum and dad...to find out about his life since he was adopted"*. The loss of her son 24 years prior was a moment that she had been unable to meaningfully move on from; the event acted as a gateway to further adversity in her life.



Figure 7.3: Photo by Sylvia of her mantelpiece where she keeps a photo of herself with her son before he was adopted, the frame says 'Together', along with some toys.

Child removal as a gateway to further adversity was also apparent in other accounts, particularly where participants had been subject to recurrent child removal. Carly had five children, none of whom remained in her care. Her youngest child had been the focus, her 'hook for change' (Giordano et al., 2002) to move forward with her life (as outlined in section 7.3.2.

Carly felt that once her son was born, she had a strong motivation to 'change'. She was highly invested and worked hard to comply with various assessments required of her by various agencies of the local authority. Ultimately, Carly was unsuccessful in trying to keep her child. After her court date where it was confirmed that her son would be put up for adoption Carly told me:

"...I lost...I'm devastated but nowt I can do... ...I feel like shit after I've seen him because I know he's not coming home..."

The decision came as a great blow to her; she had little planned beyond the court date and there was no specific support plan in place to help her deal with losing the right to raise her child. She had believed she would win custody after, in her view, trying so hard to turn her life around. She had left her abusive ex-partner, moved to a new city, had secured a local authority flat, managed her bills and expenditures and was continuing in her drug rehabilitation activities and was no longer getting in trouble with the police. She also attended drug counselling and wellbeing courses.

Her son was a key motivation for her, like all mothers she wanted to self-identify as a 'good mother' (Sykes, 2011) who was fighting to be with her son. In the immediate crisis of the child removal ruling, she found herself struggling to cope. I got a sense of the extremely limited protective resources available to her in the aftermath of the decision. I knew that she tried to rely on her key worker at the day centre but was struggling to get the one-to-one support from them that she was looking for. She even asked me if we could stay in contact beyond the research period as she liked having someone to talk to, which was a difficult conversation for me around boundaries. Subsequently, Carly told me that she was finding it harder to stay away from drugs. The loss of the opportunity to *be* a mother and her parenting identity was intensified by severely limited employment prospects which left her with few options for moving forward with her life.

For participants who had passed through the immediate crisis phase of child removal, an enduring consequence was a fear of this happening again to them if they had another baby. For example, on considering starting a family with her new partner, Caitlin reflected:

How do I find out if they are not going to take the kid off me, you know because of my conviction? I have heard about people that have had their kids taken off them and say they have been in care or whatever, they have had another kid to somebody else, they have took that kid straight off them.

(Caitlin)

Caitlin's potential future motherhood is a cause of anxiety because she is concerned that her previous child removal has marked her for life; she is stigmatised by her past experience of being deemed a 'bad mother'. This inevitably affects her participation in new relationships and highlights the precarious and constrained role for maternal outcasts within society. Having been involved with various arms of the state this an additional source of concern which compounded fears around their future access to a family life.

The process of losing a child from her care haunted Caitlin's present and future. She felt unable to escape from the surveillance of the state, whose penal and welfare arms seemingly governed her life. She was acutely aware of the being powerless in the face of disciplinary interventions and she feared going through this again. As Sylvia's account shows the feeling of being a maternal outcast has not faded over time, the ghosts of her baby son who she was not able to raise, and that of her own mother that she never knew, haunt her.

7.4 The Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) – intense surveillance and carcerality in the community

Two participants reported staying in a Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) as part of the local authority's child protection assessment process. One of these participants, Amy, was living in the unit during the research period which provided current insights into this experience. The MBU in this case was a residential centre for families that required a parenting assessment. The stated function of such centres is that they provide "residential services for parents and their children in order to monitor and assess the parents' ability to respond to their children's needs and to safeguard and promote their children's welfare" (Ofsted, 2016, p. 3). This particular MBU was run by a private

provider whose website states that it provides a safe place for families with round the clock support and facilitates thorough fair and evidence-based assessments. In addition to running this centre, it also provides a wide range of social, welfare and educational services aimed at families, young adults and children. This MBU had received criticism in local press from residents over the conditions of the flats, with damp, mould and cold temperatures highlighted by mothers living there. The positive public image portrayed was strongly contradicted by participant Amy and other mums living there.

Amy, aged 18, was living in a secure, self-contained, one-bedroom flat in one of the unit's housing blocks. She was placed there by her Local Authority social worker, for a 12-week intensive parenting assessment to decide whether or not she could meet the needs of caring for her newborn son. The unit was around 150 miles from where she lived, a long way from her home and social/familial network. Amy was unhappy at being sent so far away; she described herself as having been "shipped [there] from the hospital". Women in prison cite similar concerns because on average women are held 63 miles from home with many over 100 miles from home, which impacts visits and the maintenance of family links (Farmer, 2019). She was told that she would be able to access specific services (counselling and anger management) to address risk factors raised by social workers. However, she found once there that these services were not available on site. On arriving at the flat, she found it was equipped with 24-hour CCTV and audio surveillance in all rooms. She talked about the lack of privacy she experienced, on top of 24-hour audio and visual surveillance: "People just walk in. I'm like there's a door, knock it".



Figure 7.4: Photo by Larissa; Amy had taken a photo of this corner of her flat, but as the blinds had been open the image was too dark and underexposed to make out the CCTV/audio unit that she was trying to photograph so at the photo-elicitation interview I took a photo on my phone which depicted what she was trying to show (see Chapter 4 for discussion of auto-photography issues)

Amy told me that her own history of being a looked after child and her partner's experience of the care system were cited in the decision to send Amy to the unit for a residential assessment; of this she said, "it's like saying anyone who has been in care is not allowed to have kids". Her partner, the child's father, had been allowed to come and stay there with Amy; she said, "I never give 'em a choice...I said if he's not I ain't fucking going". She knew of other mothers in the unit who had not been able to bring their partners; she felt strongly that er partner should be there with her: "he'd be missing out on so many important things, all the firsts, he's grown so much in that time". The MBU appeared to be potentially exclusionary of fathers, who may wish to

take an active, supporting role during pregnancy and as a parent after childbirth, despite marketing itself as a service for 'parents'.

She was referred to a local women's centre to access services the unit could not provide but found that she was also unable to access the services there due to staff absences. In the course of the fieldwork, I did become aware that there had been staff changes at the women's centre, which would explain this lack of appropriate professionals. Overall, it could be inferred that, in practice, surveillance, disciplinary control and the management of risk were more important than the provision of specific support to parents. This is in line with broader shifts towards authoritarianism in public policy, and in particular social work and maternity services as well as austerity policies which have made women's services scarcer (Rogowski, 2015; Zadoroznyj, 2006).

There was a strict regime in place at the MBU which restricted her leaving the unit. Visitors must be approved prior to visits and sign in and out. There was a high green fence circling the unit buildings (which Amy had chosen to photograph, see below) with a code locked entrance gate. To leave the unit residents had to pass the main courtyard, which is overlooked by the staff office. Amy likened it to a prison: "see the green fence outside, all you need is a bit of barbed wire above that". There is an obvious dimension of carcerality within Amy's experience, despite her not being in prison. Her physical mobility is constrained, she is also socially isolated far away from her home and family network. Her past and current life choices are subject to scrutiny by professionals in a state-led assessment of her capability to be a mother. The panoptic gaze of the surveillance cameras is ever present in her living areas. This type of intense disciplinary surveillance which removed any semblance of a private life is deemed acceptable in the assessment of 'at risk' families (most often mothers).



Figure 7.5: Photo by Amy, it shows the gate to Amy's flat door, where she would stand to have a cigarette, the high green fence that surrounds the MBU complex can be seen in the background

There is a large disjuncture between the way this unit and other residential family centres portray themselves and the experience of surveillance and carcerality reported by Amy. As Amy's experience showed, carcerality is dispersed throughout society. Child protection institutions employed a carceral strategy to assess whether Amy would be able to provide 'good enough' care for her child. The coercive and punitive management of marginalised women during pregnancy and when they give birth is unique to women. There is limited support available to help mothers who are going through the looked after child process, with the emphasis on surveillance rather than support, whether this assessment takes place in a residential centre or in the community. In Amy's experience, her own requirement for a social worker was subsumed by her child's 'need' for one.

"After eight months of them working illegally...stopping me having a social worker. [I've got one again]. I've never spoke to him, never met him no,

nothing. And he's just gonna turn up to a meeting on Tuesday without even phoning...Never met [him], never spoke to him. Don't even know who it is... they were saying it'd be better if I only had Cian's [Amy's baby son] cos it's too much professionals involved. But then I found out they were working illegally by stopping me having my social worker, so because of that I said I wanted one. Yeah. So he's going to come on Tuesday. He's coming to my meeting when I haven't even met him." (Amy)

Amy previously had her own social worker, a legacy of her own time in care, but once she became pregnant her unborn child was assigned a social worker, and she was told that she would no longer need to have her own. This shift highlights how the unborn child became the focus for state intervention. Rather than wraparound support for the family as a whole, the focus is on the child, even before they are born.

Amy found herself in trouble many times for infringing the strict and sometimes illogical rules of the unit. For example, when she made friends with another mother there:

Larissa: But you've made some friends here though, haven't you?

Amy: Shh! [nods towards surveillance camera] I'm not allowed to be friends with them. When I come here the social worker was like "you're not allowed to associate with anyone"...Then [staff ask] "are you coming in the playroom?" I was like "no", "oh well it goes as bad in your assessment cause you're not interacting". I'm thinking, what the fuck?!...There's another girl here...I'd usually stand outside and go for a fag with her for a while...obviously [he] is in here with [the baby], Katy's little boy was on [CCTV] camera so staff can see him, he's being supervised, and it's in the night time, it's not like we're spending all day, everyday...we wait til the night when they're settled. Now they've turned around and said only ten minutes to have a fag.

Larissa: Why?

Amy: Because of spending too much time outside and the babies are being left on their own. Well more Katy really because I've got...help. And I was like well give her a fucking break, she's on her own. And she wanted her boyfriend here and they said no...

The emphasis is on surveillance and the pervasive disciplinary gaze of the staff via CCTV is evident. This contrasts starkly with the supportive environment that the unit purports that it provides:

“Families are placed in a safe and comfortable environment that gives them every opportunity to succeed in parenting assessment. Every family is made to feel welcome and shown respect and courtesy from our staff team. They will give them all the encouragement and support they need in reaching their full potential as parents”. (MBU provider service statement)

The mothers living in the MBU have very little power, and they have much to lose if they leave the residential placement with a negative assessment. Amy was released from the MBU after her 12-week assessment to her maternal grandmother's house with custody of her child; this was subject to ongoing monitoring by social workers in the community. Amy's account provides an insight into the intensive way in which marginalised mothers are managed in the community when undergoing a residential parenting assessment by social workers.

Another participant, Sylvia, had spent time in an MBU, although this was when she had her first son over 20 years ago:

Before the adoption went through...the...social work, social services department... It was me that approached them, you know like about like short term fostering, and see how that goes...And she said ‘you go with like short term fostering like from the Friday to the Sunday see how that goes...’...I thought well, you know like I am not being fair to him because like I am still, I am still drinking, because I was drinking - well you are not allowed to drink in the mother and baby home - but I was still going out drinking... and because I was going through this court case thing with my step-dad... it was bringing back painful memories... and then and I was on bail for some offences...Conditional bail that I had to reside at the unit...
(Sylvia)

Sylvia's account reflects some of the long-term shifts in social work and parent assessments. It is likely that had she been in this situation in recent years she would have had her son removed shortly after birth as a newborn rather than being able to

keep him with her in an MBU. Social work, as in other areas of public policy, has become more concerned with risk management, and as such, has shifted towards more and earlier intervention. The concern here is not that children should stay with mothers who cannot meet their needs, but that mothers' needs should also be the focus of support in order to address the increasing numbers of children taken into care and the growing number of women subject to the trauma of successive removals of children from them.

Of course, there may be times when the risks to children are high and, in these circumstances, upholding a child's welfare might warrant removal. However, this is not always the case in families sent to residential units (Munro et al., 2014), and it is also hard to explain the practice of removing newborns from mothers shortly after birth before they have had a chance to be a parent to the child.

The unit where Amy lived during the research process used a highly invasive disciplinary technique aimed at compelling mothers to behave in certain ways for fear of the loss of their children. This segment of the welfare system can therefore have a punitive effect, especially when it is used as in Amy's case to undertake a parenting assessment. As such child removal or the threat of it is a technique of governance utilised mainly against poor and vulnerable mothers and as such goes unchallenged. While there is a plethora of critical analyses of welfare "reforms" as a means of disciplining poor women and children, this is a form of carcerality is overlooked by Wacquant and other social theorists.

7.5 Discussion

For many participants their journeys into the CJS were rooted in childhood abuse or sexual victimisation. Participants' pathways towards coming into conflict with the law were gendered: this is apparent in the high prevalence of ongoing victimisation across the group and the unique ways in which they were criminalised for example for their involvement in sex work and survival crime. The experience of victimisation and gendered pathways into the CJS has been well established by feminist criminologists (Heidensohn, 1985; Richie, 1996; Van Voorhis et al., 2010; Chesney-Lind and Morash,

2013). Within participants' lived experiences there was evidence of state agencies' conflating their position of advanced marginality with transgression. This happened not only in early years as discussed in chapter 5 but cumulatively as they moved into adulthood.

As Brown (2015, p. 86) suggests, individuals can be both 'vulnerable' and 'transgressive' at the same time. The evidence presented in this chapter suggests that participants occupy multiple positions at the same time, for example they may be perceived as vulnerable to domestic abuse or exploitation or at risk, but this might also be construed as a transgressive trait if they are a mother and they do not remove themselves from negative relationships and reduce the risk.

For those with dependents, their involvement with the CJS often negated their right to be a mother. A consequence of women's involvement with the penal state is that their self becomes tainted; they are *seen* as bad in themselves rather than their deeds being bad. Disciplinary and punitive social work and child protection interventions was perceived as an extension of the penal arm of the state. Those who had experienced child removal felt they were left with an indelible label of 'bad' or 'failed mother'.

Although Wacquant (2009a) considered mothers in terms of the retrenchment of social assistance payments, he did not look at women as penal subjects nor at the management of pregnant women by the state. As such, the hybrid function of the child protection system whose stated purpose is to provide welfare for children, but which acts as an extension of the penal arm of the state towards mothers, is overlooked.

It is important to shed light on this group of women who are punished for being mothers in advanced marginality facing multiple and cumulative disadvantage, who are then left unsupported in the immediate crisis of child removal. Parental rehabilitation projects are few and far between which leaves many of these vulnerable mothers with fears around being able to have a family in the future. The construction of maternal outcasts supports the social (re)production of inequality and the maintenance of groups in advanced marginality.

The experiences highlighted reflected the fierce and 'maloptic' (McNeill, 2019) gaze of the centaur state, which punishes 'failed' mothers and abandons them once they no longer pose a 'risk' to their child. Chided and disciplined during pregnancy and after

birth, their treatment highlights the imbalance of power between the state and women within the precariat. State-ordered child removal is an event that mothers found extremely traumatic both at the time, and in most cases, the impact endured for the rest of their lives.

The data presented in this chapter extend and nuance Wacquant's framework of advanced marginality through a focus on the gendered management of a specific population of marginalised women. Participants' experiences highlight how marginalised women are not managed solely by the welfare arm of the state; they are also governed through penal institutions and professionals through their direct involvement with the CJS. Furthermore, there is an important blurring of the boundaries and roles of the welfare and penal arms of the state which becomes starkly apparent in the treatment and removal of at-risk children versus their mothers.

The data highlights the punitive treatment of a socially abject group of mothers, who in some ways are treated less well than prisoners, because there is no rehabilitation attached to the perceived punishment of losing the right to care for a child. Policy reform since 2010 has promoted 'fast-track adoptions' in such cases, which leaves little hope of restoring children to birth mothers (Department for Education, 2011). These 'failed' mothers are abandoned by the state unless they become involved with the CJS again or have another pregnancy.

Pregnancy, childbirth and motherhood are gendered and uniquely corporeal experiences, and arguably ones that leave the most profound mark on participants' identities and subjectivities. Rather than supporting such mothers to be parents, the state ultimately inflicted trauma onto mothers whose children were forcibly removed. Participants' accounts highlighted the destructive cycle of successive pregnancies and child removals, raising important questions around the ethicality and efficacy of these state interventions. At the macro-level, these punitive interventions ultimately (re)produce socially abject and precarious populations on the margins of society.

Over the life course marginalised mothers have been governed in a way that traumatised them. The experiences of the older participants highlighted how difficult it is for some to free themselves from the carceral archipelago. All participants were engaging with services, but for many, these had something of a warehousing function

and were not able to address more than very basic needs (see Chapter 6, section 6.4). In this environment, some women were getting stuck in a negative cycle of pregnancy, state-ordered child removal, and getting into further trouble. Utilising Wacquant's framework to examine the role and aims of the penal state within the governance of marginalised mothers, its purpose seems not corrective but rather a means of disciplining them and making an example of them. They are 'seen as bad' by those in power making parenting assessments. This reflects perceptions of wider society, which is primed for the vilification of poorer, working-class mothers (Gillies, 2006, 2009; Tyler, 2008). In addition to the material impacts discussed, therefore, is also a symbolic function of public policy. As such, there is little support for helping this group of mothers stuck in this negative cycle of child removal despite the moral and economic arguments to do so (Broadhurst and Mason, 2020).

Amy, a first-time mother, was forced to undergo intense surveillance for three months, but was ultimately able to keep her child. This may have reflected that she had not yet been through the prison system; though she was known to social services as a former looked after child and the police for low level, minor offences. For participants with a history of child removal, such as Carly, Sally, Donna and Ros, and who had been cycling around various penal agencies for a long time, the chance to be a mother was taken away repeatedly. Despite their best-efforts participants going through the assessment process were eventually labelled as wanting and excluded from motherhood. This was a traumatic event and one that participants struggled to come to terms with. An older participant, Sylvia, had never gotten over the trauma of giving up her child to adoption, and two decades later she was still haunted by her son in her thoughts.

For participants, it appears that individual agency is not only bounded by structural forces and social barriers but also by how individuals perceive their contextual environment. Foucault's concept of regulation of the self that operates from within individuals is a useful conceptual tool here. The gaze (Foucault, 1975/2005) of onlookers (i.e. street-level bureaucrats) was an expression of disciplinary power that shaped how participants thought and behaved. Participants needed the support they received from day centres, and in return, street-level bureaucrats within those organisations observe them. Participants wanted to have children for various reasons,

but they were also acutely aware that this would attract further surveillance and intervention. Panopticism can also be seen within this experience, particularly for those wanting to have another child; being pregnant is something that is difficult to hide from onlookers, “the total visibility of bodies, of individuals and things, under a system of centralised surveillance” (Foucault 1977, p. 226). These themes are returned to in section 8.3.

Participants experienced 'social abjection', defined by Tyler (2013) as being multiply excluded. This was particularly acute for those who, through child removal, were unable to *be* mothers²⁷. They lost access to an important, if gendered, dimension of working-class identity - that of performing care - as an expression of citizenship and an important means of gaining belonging (Skeggs, 1997). Yet for those subject to child protection intervention, the underlying poverty and social barriers underpinning their position as risky or bad parents is often ignored by practitioners (Swift, 1995). Unable to care for their children, in poverty and 'workless' they are cast as 'waste' (Cain, 2016), a 'surplus population' sacrificed to reinforce the demonisation of the poor and the power of the social-cum-penal state (Rehmann, 2015).

This data provides rich insights into the experiences of very marginalised mothers who have had their children removed. It is important to place this in the context of rising numbers of children in England's care system (figures have risen consecutively over the past nine years). In March 2010, there were 64,400 children in care; by March 2019, this stood at 78,150 (Department for Education, 2010; Department for Education, 2020b). Research on recurrent care proceedings by Broadhurst et al. (2017) found that of the mothers involved in care proceedings between 2007-2013, 15% (7,143) were 'recurrent mothers' (subject to more than one removal) linked to more than one child in care. A lack of post-removal and post-proceedings services for parents is particularly harmful when successive removals are brought into focus. Mothers can feel betrayed by social services and other agencies when a decision goes against them – these kinds of dynamics would need to be considered when developing aftercare support. Furthermore, struggling parents are less likely to ask for help when they fear that intervention might serve as a steppingstone to child removal.

²⁷ See Appendix 12 for participant profiles.

What is often missing in dominant discourse on child removal are issues such as class, poverty and social inequality; instead, individual pathology is more often the focus (Gupta, 2017). This thesis addresses this by centring on the child removal-poverty-class nexus; it also brings into focus the multiple, complex needs of the mothers and the structural barriers which prevent them from getting their children back and / or retaining future children. It also highlights the lived experience of child removal which left participants' ostracised, abandoned and subject to the stigma of being a failed woman and mother, the legacy of which cast a lifelong shadow.

Participants were known to services, and therefore, subject to higher levels of surveillance which was multiplied as they came into contact with a web of state agents across the 'carceral-assistential' net. Those participants involved with the care system as children themselves, were deemed 'risky' as parents. Clearly those leaving care have not been imbued with the skills and social capital to live lives independent of intervention and in such a way that surveillance is no longer deemed necessary. This highlights the social-cum-penal state's attempt to manage earlier failures to support participants as children via the care system through criminal justice system.

7.6 Conclusion

This chapter highlights the way that hyper marginalised women in the UK are managed by the penal arm of the state. The penal arm is expansive. Participants' accounts highlighted that it was not easy to reconcile being labelled an 'offender' and being a mother. Involvement in the CJS system does not conform to gendered norms, particularly those attached to motherhood. Women face unique and additional forms of punishment through child removal which acts as a further layer of adversity.

Considering the serious and complex adversities some participants had faced in childhood and into their adult lives (see Chapter 5), it seems particularly pernicious that the centaur state treats these women as offenders rather than as individuals in need of support. Annison et al. (2019) highlight the need for a holistic and integrated response spanning criminal justice and health agencies to address the various challenges 'women offenders' face. Certainly, the probation service alone does not

have the necessary tools to support these women. However, wrapping around health service interventions will not be enough to outweigh the immense structural barriers they face. Access to suitable accommodation and income security should come before any other mental health, drug and alcohol interventions.

An important ancillary outcome of women's criminalisation and engagement with the CJS, for those who were mothers at least, is the removal of their children. Whether the removal is linked to being sent to prison, for ongoing lifestyles deemed unsuitable to 'good' parenting, or for being unable to cope with mental health issues, it is experienced as a highly punitive and traumatic life sentence. Formal punishments from the CJS are usually time limited, whereas the permanent removal of a child is a punishment without end and for no chance for rehabilitation with that particular child. There appears to be little justice in sentence without end.

Participants who had undergone compulsory child removal experienced this as a further trauma in a long list of cumulative adversities, and for those with repeat removals of children, a gateway to further adversity.

Living under the surveillance and supervision of child protection institutions when pregnant or postnatally in an MBU is experienced as an extension of the punitive penal state. Carcerality can therefore involve many different institutions and agencies; the child protection system can be conceived as carceral since it involves disciplinary mechanisms which serve to lock mother's current and future lives within negative cycles of recurrent removals. For participants who had lost multiple children from their care, child protection was perceived to function via a 'one strike and you're out' policy, with no second chances or rehabilitation for these maternal pariahs.

Under the weight of oppressive economic structures bearing down upon women who were in a marginal social position, alongside their individual experiences of trauma (psychosocial disadvantage); it might seem that participants' pathways into the penal and welfare arms of the state were set in stone. However, this would be a rather simplistic interpretation of participants' lived experiences.

This chapter extends Wacquant's (2009a) work by considering marginalised mothers as penal subjects, as such the hybrid function of the child protection bureaucracy which acts as an extension of the penal arm of the state. Chapter 8 develops the notion

of hybridity further by positing the existence of a hybridised institutional environment in which the women are mired. In doing so, it seeks to extend some of the conceptual tools used in the framing of the research rationale.

8. Hybrid institutional environments and the governance of marginalised women

8.1 Introduction

Wacquant (2009a) offers a useful conceptual starting point for understanding the governance of marginal populations, namely that the binary penal and welfare arms of the state work together disciplining the poor, both materially and symbolically. The 'centaur state' displays its "fearsome and frowning mug towards the lower class", and by means of a 'carceral-assistential net' (knitting of penal and welfare aims) regulates and incapacitates those in the poorest and most marginalised groups – the 'precariat' (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 312). Wacquant (2009a; 2016) traces the transformation of the welfare arm from its 'maternalistic' character during the Keynesian era as it converges with the penal arm.

Wacquant's (2009a) model of the state makes a clear binary distinction between welfare and penal arms yet overlooks another set of institutions – in particular the gatekeeper organisations – that do not neatly fall into these categories. These day centres played a key role in the women's everyday lives. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by further examining the institutional environment that participants were involved with on a day-to-day basis, spaces ignored in male focused conceptual models.

These organisations (listed in Table 8.1) were not strictly penal or welfare in form, function, or the way in which they were experienced. Therefore, they do not fit within the neat, dyadic 'carceral-assistential net' of the state (Wacquant, 2009a). The empirical data presents a more nuanced account of the balance between the organisations' assistive and punitive aims and effects on the marginal populations they govern and support. The organisations participants engaged with were not carceral or assistential but a bit of both, as such it is better to conceive of these organisations - and interventions - as 'hybrid', where the boundaries between penal and welfare agendas are blurred in the governance of poverty and criminality by the 'tutelary state' (Fletcher and Flint, 2018).

Evers (2008, p. 279) defines 'hybrid' within the context of a 'mixed welfare system' as occurring when "elements which do not usually go together or belong to different spheres get intertwined within one organisational being". The ongoing interaction of the public, private and third sectors within public service contracting has meant "an increasing intertwining of components and rationales as they are linked with the state, the market and civil society and its networks" (Evers, 2005, p. 741).

Service delivery arrangements of public services have grown ever more complex (Vennard and Hedderman, 2009). We have seen the "transfer of welfare and penal roles...from the state to community-level actors" (Corcoran and Fox, 2013, p. 136). The intertwining of welfare and penal rationales has been identified in a tougher welfare conditionality and sanctioning regime (Webster, 2014; Fletcher and Flint, 2018), and in the criminal justice system, particularly in gender-specific interventions, such as the 'Diversion Programme'²⁸, and more broadly in the 'voluntary sector turn' in criminal justice working partnerships (Corcoran and Fox, 2012, p. 339; 2013). While community-based interventions have been characterised as "less punitive" and more "women friendly" (Haney, 2010, p. 151), these assumptions warrant empirical exploration through the voices and experiences of women foregrounded who are on the receiving end of interventions beyond the official boundaries of the state.

The empirical data presented in this chapter highlights the contexts in which socially marginalised women are the 'privileged targets' (Wacquant, 2009a) of ambivalent interventions which, as this chapter highlights, were experienced as variously and simultaneously protective, supportive, disciplinary and sometimes neglectful. As such, it provides a nuanced examination of the intensive micro-level interventions that participants were subject to. Despite being couched in terms of support and empowerment, the interventions aimed at poor and socially marginalised women were often underpinned by ideologies of responsibilisation, normalisation and individualisation and principally focused on addressing their attitudes and behaviours through engagement with 'support' (see section 8.3). By foregrounding these experiences, we can interrogate the utility of Wacquant's conceptualisation of the state in the governance of socially marginalised women.

²⁸ Borne out of recommendations in the Corston Report (2007), this involves reducing custodial sentences for women and diverting them towards community-based interventions.

8.2 Moving on from binaries: Introducing (and conceptualising) the hybrid institutions

The 'hybrid' institutions that are the focus of this chapter consist of the four gatekeeper organisations through which participants were recruited (see Table 8.1). There were close linkages with the penal and welfare arms of the state, and in some cases this was more formalised, particularly in referrals from criminal justice agencies to the centres, but also tangentially because the vast majority of service users were in receipt of social assistance benefits. The data presented in this chapter highlights that the gatekeeper organisations were neither exclusively penal nor welfarist in form or function.

Table 8.1: A summary of the four gatekeeping organisations

| Organisations | Aims | Clients | Referral routes | Funded by | Legal status | Pen portrait |
|---------------|--|---|---|---|--------------|---|
| GO1 | A day centre supporting women and girls with multiple and complex needs through holistic services (women only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young and adult women involved in the CJS or at risk of becoming involved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police – diversion from court Magistrates' Court – rehabilitation activity requirement²⁹ Probation Service Various local charities involved in supporting marginalised groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Justice Big Lottery Fund | Charity | Day centre providing a range of social and therapeutic activities for women as part of a community sentence and women referred from other charities or through self-referral. It also runs services for younger women to facilitate their engagement with mainstream education. |
| GO2 | A day centre supporting women and girls with multiple and complex needs through holistic services (women only) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young and adult women involved in the CJS or at risk of becoming involved | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Police – diversion from court Magistrates' Court – rehabilitation activity requirement Probation Service Various local charities involved in supporting marginalised groups | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministry of Justice | Charity | Day centre providing a range of social and therapeutic activities for women as part of a community sentence and women referred from other charities or through self-referral. Provides co-working space for probation within the centre. |

²⁹ Rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) which is one of the elements that can be included in a community order or a suspended sentence order, its purpose is to support an individual's rehabilitation and reduce reoffending (HMPPS, 2020). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rehabilitation-activity-requirement-in-probation/rar-guidance>

| Organisations | Aims | Clients | Referral routes | Funded by | Legal status | Pen portrait |
|---------------|---|---|--|-----------------|--------------|---|
| GO3 | A day centre supporting homeless and socially marginalised people | Homeless people: women constituted around 22% ³⁰ of service user population | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Police • NHS (hospitals) • LA housing service • Various local charities involved in supporting marginalised groups • Self-referral | Fundraising | Charity | Day centre services for homeless adults. Acts as a hub providing two hot meals daily, key workers providing support with housing/benefits/relationship issues, access to healthcare professionals nurse and dentist. Educational and therapeutic courses and activities. Provides volunteer work as progression routes for service users. |
| GO4 | A support group for people experiencing domestic abuse | Adults who have experienced domestic abuse: it was used exclusively by women during the research period | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-referral via the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Helpline • Referrals from GO1 | Local Authority | Charity | A fortnightly support group for women who have or are experiencing domestic abuse. This is led by a worker who guides various therapeutic group activities. |

³⁰ Statistic taken from GO3's volunteer training presentation (attended in 2018).

Two of the organisations (G1 and GO2) were Women's Day Centres set up as part of Diversion Programme to address women's 'vulnerabilities' that led to their criminalisation. They were initially piloted with public funding but at the time of research were required to re-tender for funding; of these, one centre subsequently lost a contract to a competitor.

The third gatekeeper organisation was a homeless day centre, and the fourth a local domestic abuse service run by a charity that had been awarded the contract to provide the local authority commissioned service. All four of the organisations were charities with mixed funding streams and a variety of service delivery contracts in place to work with marginalised groups in and around the edges of the CJS, the 'penal voluntary sector' (Corcoran, 2011; Corcoran et al., 2018). The organisations' purpose, funding and governance were closely linked to (though they remained distinct from) the criminal justice and welfare arms of state, this has been characterised as 'hybridisation' of service providers in the 'mixed economy' of the disciplinary and carceral archipelago³¹ (Corcoran and Fox, 2012).

For participants, engagement with the Women's Day Centres (GO1 and GO2) often began as a mandatory rehabilitation activity requirement of a community-based sentence or an out of court disposal, for example, attending to complete a course on healthy relationships or managing emotions. Many participants recruited from these centres during fieldwork continued to access the day centre services after they had completed the mandatory element. GO3 and GO4 were based mainly on voluntary attendance, though participants might be referred to attend a course or activity on the advice of their probation officer or social worker, so they were not without coercive elements. Whether attendance was voluntary or mandatory did not seem to have an impact on participants' perceptions of the centre, although the researcher was unable to recruit any participants' who had chosen to disengage with the day centre once a mandatory element was complete. GO2 and GO3 had similar approaches in terms of making space for mainstream statutory services in their premises to improve access for service users, and provided volunteer roles at the centre for participants.

³¹ Borrowing the term from Foucault (1977) 'carceral archipelago'; describes the dispersal of disciplinary mechanisms of social control that permeate societal institutions.

In addition to the gatekeeping organisations, participants reported their engagement with an array of ancillary organisations providing variously disciplinary and therapeutic interventions. The organisations disclosed in research interviews encompassed statutory, private and voluntary organisations and community groups. I have attempted to capture participants' experiences of these in Figure 8.2. From participants' accounts of their interactions with these institutions it became apparent they were engaged in a 'web' of institutions experienced as punitive (or authoritarian), assistive or both along a spectrum between the two extremes. The model depicted in Figure 8.2 is accompanied by two caveats: firstly, it is a simplified, visual representation of a continuum of services; secondly, it provides a static picture when in practice services can and do move dynamically back and forth along the continuum, depending on, for example, different funding streams and policy approaches. It is also important to acknowledge that not all participants – or indeed marginalised women more broadly – experience the balance of discipline and support in the same way.

Figure 8.2 highlights the hybrid nature of gatekeeper organisations among a 'web' of other agencies which participants identified as having played a significant role in their lives; they are hybrid because they perpetuate the aims and techniques of the disciplinary state while simultaneously shielding them from the sharper end of punitive welfare and penal reforms. Through this 'web', the tutelary state governs those in poverty, marginality and criminality, disciplining and reforming them at a distance. Some argue that the web facilitates expansive social control and 'net widening' (Cohen, 1985) processes which escalate punitive and disciplinary outcomes for marginalised groups. However, as the data in this chapter shows, it also provides help for those who have been unable to access mainstream support and a lifeline for those in crisis.

Figure 8.1: Changes in welfare paradigms, from Keynesian to Neoliberal

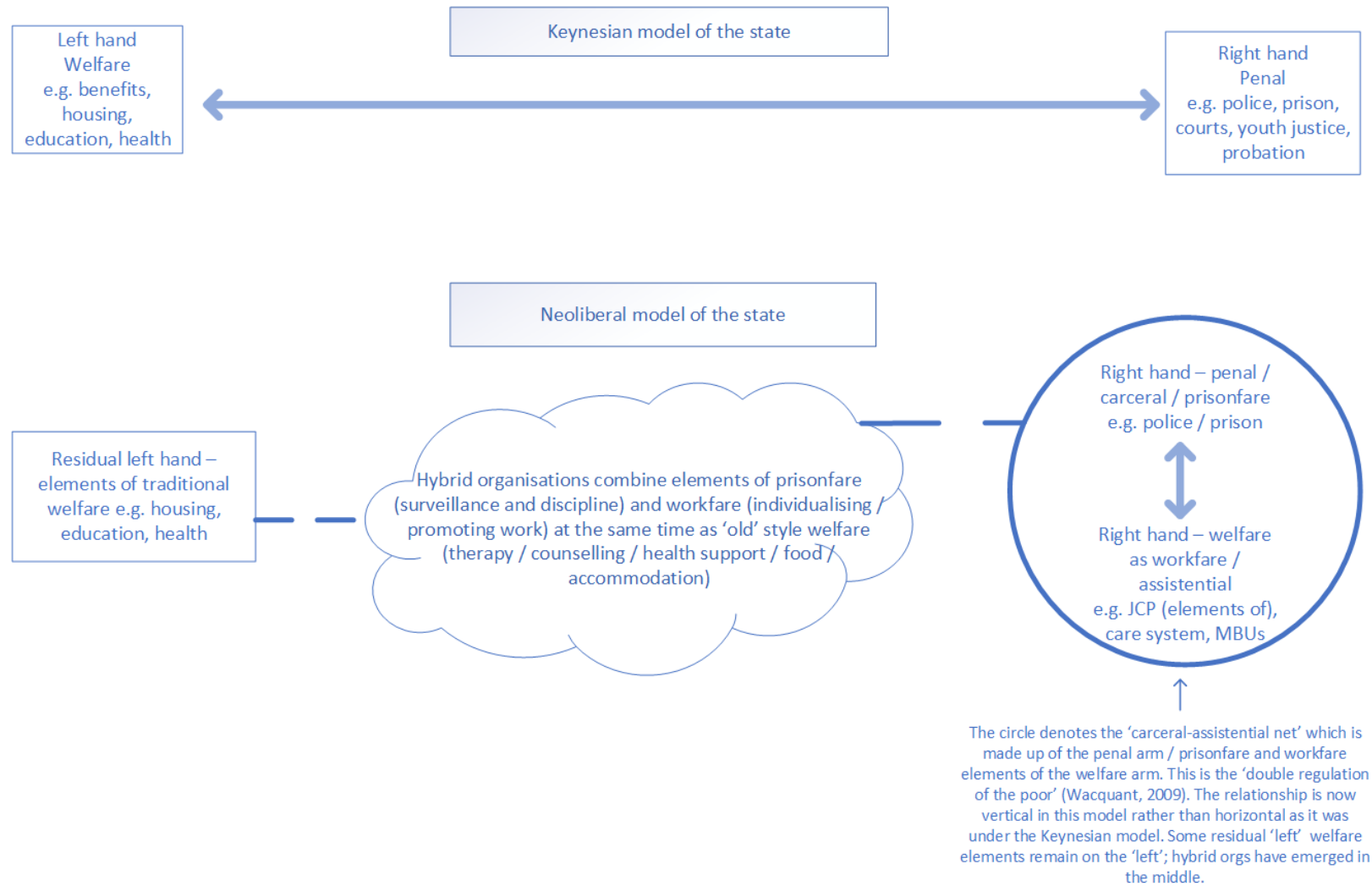
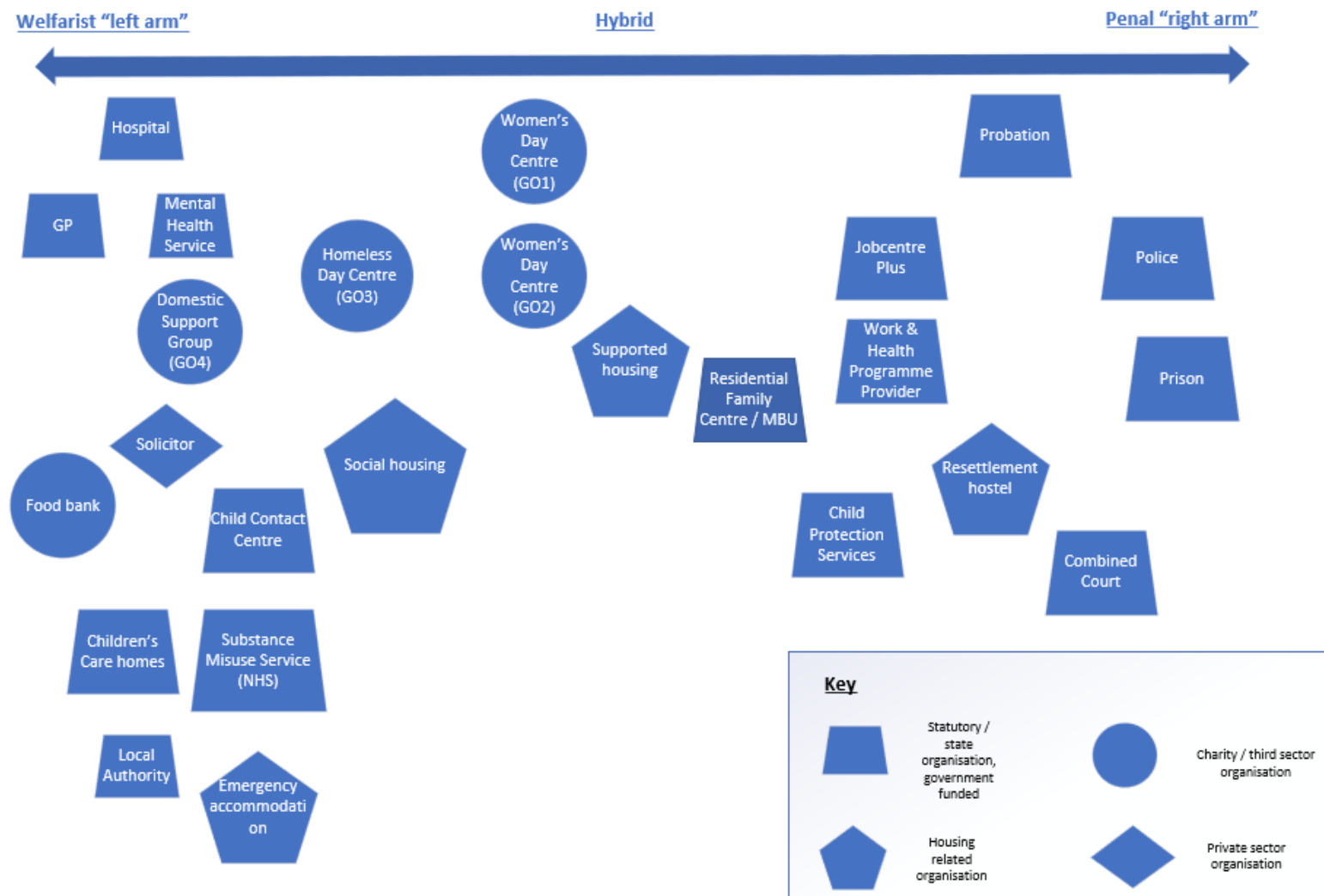


Figure 8.2: Broader web of organisations that participants were engaged with



The development of partnerships between state and non-state actors in dealing with issues of crime and safety follows a similar direction to 'welfare-to-work' initiatives of successive governments. The transfer of ownership and/or delivery of public services to private (including voluntary) sector organisations attempts to harness "the expertise of local groups and service users in identifying their priorities...to address some of the practical limitations of state-institutionalized responses to the complex insecurities or unmet needs of disenfranchised communities, including offenders" (Corcoran, 2012, p. 337).

Participants' reflections, and those of day centre workers and volunteers, alongside my participant observations highlighted the complex, heterogeneous raft of support, coercion, protection and disciplinary dynamics that characterised women's experiences within these hybrid institutions. Participants viewed the services they were engaged with, particularly the Women's Day Centres and the Homeless Day Centre (GO1, GO2 and GO3) as important in their day to day lives.

The day centres were simultaneously many things to participants. On the one hand, they represented a place to get support in times of crisis and could also be a safe place where they could meet and make friends. Centres provided meaningful activities, and a means of gaining access to other services such as health workers, dentists and doctors. Participants' needs were met on a number of levels: material, social and psychological. One-on-one relationships with other service users and staff were also significant and affected how women perceived the interventions they received. However, on the other hand, they were also spaces that some participants experienced as coercive and even punitive, where they felt watched, controlled or confined. Though on the periphery of the criminal justice system and linked to the welfare system, they were neither exclusively penal or welfarist in form, function nor how they were experienced by participants.

The gatekeeper organisations often played significant roles in participants' day-to-day lives. Some participants attended a centre daily if they were volunteering at the organisation, others attended regularly for breakfast or lunch, others attended for an activity or therapeutic course. Many participants had strained relationships with their families, so the day centres and ancillary services provided a place to turn to for support in times of crisis or need. For participants who had been consistently in trouble

with the police they had to keep their distance from former social networks in order to maintain their desistance from crime and to continue recovery from drugs or alcohol problems. This was easier in the women-only settings than in the larger and busier day centre GO4, where those still engaged in “street culture activities” would also attend (Johnsen et al., 2014).

The data presented in this chapter provides the context for understanding women's experiences of hybrid institutional environments within the 'carceral-assistential net' as well as those working within them (Wacquant, 2009a). It focuses on the organisations through which marginalised women completed mandated required activities, accessed voluntary services and ‘generative’ (Maruna, 2001) pursuits where participants developed a sense of purpose and belonging through voluntary work at the day centres. Firstly, it explores how women navigate the gatekeeper organisations as sites of control and surveillance. It then goes on to explore views of staff who often individualise problems but also highlights some tensions and nuances within their praxis. Next, it looks at women’s experiences of emotional support, friendship and shelter that organisations that they are engaged with provide. Lastly, it looks at identity change and the way that this is facilitated within these hybrid institutional environments. Ultimately, the organisations highlighted within participant accounts are important sources of support, meaning and identity.

8.3 “Too many noses that's what it is... Nothing's private here”: Surveillance and Disciplinary Elements in Day Centre Practice

Day centres were ambivalent spaces sometimes experienced as spaces of control, where participants’ behaviour was monitored. Participants were acutely aware of this, and it shaped the way they experienced this social space and how they approached their engagement with services. For certain participants, this surveillance appeared pervasive at times, particularly if they were considered more ‘at risk’ for example being pregnant or going through relationship problems. As such, the marginalised women who participated in the research constituted a population ‘marked’ for surveillance. This appeared to be challenging for participants to navigate.

Larissa: *Are you and [your partner] trying to work things out?*

Donna: *Well I dunno... [Donna looks around to check no-one is in earshot and then whispers to me]: I have seen him... he's not allowed to come in here [day centre], he's allowed on reception and that's about it. Too many noses that's what it is. That's the only thing about this place. Nothing's private here...*

Larissa: *Ok so you've got a lot of shit to be dealing with, but are you coping?*

Donna: *Yeah I'm alright. I have my down days and sometimes I want to cry all the time...*

Donna experiences the day centre (GO3) as a space where she endures surveillance, not only from staff but also from her peers. The decision to bar her partner from the centre shows how interventions can actively regulate intimate relationships. The day centre is not the only agency intervening in her life. She is also governed by her probation officer and her children's social worker. As a marginalised woman caught in the "carceral-assistential net" (Wacquant, 2009a), her conduct is monitored as a 'privileged target' of the tutelary state, the interventions she is subject to penetrate deeply into her family life (De Tocqueville, 2003; Foucault, 1977; Wacquant, 2009a). The day centre provides a more benevolent face but remains as extension of the disciplinary state.

The centres and services involved in the research adhered to strict codes of conduct for their service users. These rules and what they meant for participants crystallised when one participant (Jane) was barred for three weeks from women's centre GO2. This matter was brought to the researcher's attention by a key worker who advised that Jane was barred due to disruptive behaviour; "pushing buttons" of other service users and "using abusive language". Jane's key worker was happy for her to continue with research participation, but the interview would need to take place away from GO2. According to the key worker, Jane had tried to enter the women's centre despite the temporary ban.

Jane agreed to meet in a different location for the planned interview, in a quiet area of a local café she suggested. During the interview Jane stated that she didn't care about having been barred from the centre. However, talking about this topic began to make her uncomfortable, her demeanour changed, and she said, "*I don't want to do anymore*

talking", bringing that interview to an abrupt close. As we were leaving, Jane disclosed that she did not have any money to buy lunch, so we walked to a nearby sandwich shop where I bought us both a sandwich, crisps and a drink.

A few days later Jane contacted me asking for money to buy food; this was the first time that she had approached me for money. While it may be that Jane just saw an opportunity to ask me for money following this interaction, it may also have been the case that not being able to attend the centre to eat a hot meal at the breakfast club was having a negative impact on Jane's day-to-day life. As a researcher, giving a participant money was not an option, instead, I sought advice from an experienced member of staff at my research centre, and gave Jane the details of local food banks and signposted her to her local Citizen's Advice Bureau. Although being barred from GO2 for a few weeks may not have seemed overly punitive initially, the impact of this sanction on a hyper marginalised individual who relied on the day centre for a regular meal was quite acute. Day centres had a dual function, meeting welfare needs in the form of food, but they could also be disciplinary, denying access to support and basic necessities when boundaries are transgressed. Barring from the centre could also be a stigmatising and punitive experience for hyper marginalised service users relying on the centre for basic needs

Ongoing attendance was voluntary at the gatekeeper organisations, although some had initially received mandatory referrals as part of a rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) (for example where court ordered; or as part of conditional police caution), depending on the individual's pathway. In these cases, they might be asked to complete a course at the centre as part of their activities or attend for a certain number of weeks. For some, the line between voluntary and mandatory attendance was harder to discern. If, for example, they were advised to engage with a service by a social worker, they might feel compelled to be there in order to have the best chance of getting a positive assessment in their family court report. Some participants hoping to get their children back were highly compliant. This could be seen as a form of coerced voluntarism which shows how the importance of an outcome can drive behaviour change. Nonetheless, it was also common for participants to continue attending voluntarily after their mandatory activity was complete to 'keep busy' (Gillian) and 'stay out of trouble' (Donna). Through these hybrid institutional spaces marginalised groups

were able to access hope that through their engagement they might be viewed more favourably by bureaucratic agents and the state.

8.4 Working with marginalised women: practitioners' perspectives

Within and across organisations, those working with marginalised women consistently focused on the individual and their choices as the site for reform. As such, poverty, criminality and victimhood are construed as individual choices made by (ir)rational actors who, through treatment in the form of self-improvement, have the potential to make better choices in future. A core element within therapeutic interventions aimed at marginalised women is empowerment; this has dovetailed with the broader neoliberal penal apparatus that promotes responsabilisation and self-governance (McDermott, 2014; Elfleet, 2017). Twelve members of staff were interviewed across the four gatekeeping organisations. This section focuses firstly on staff within the domestic abuse support group (GO4) and then on those within the women's day centres GO1 and GO2.

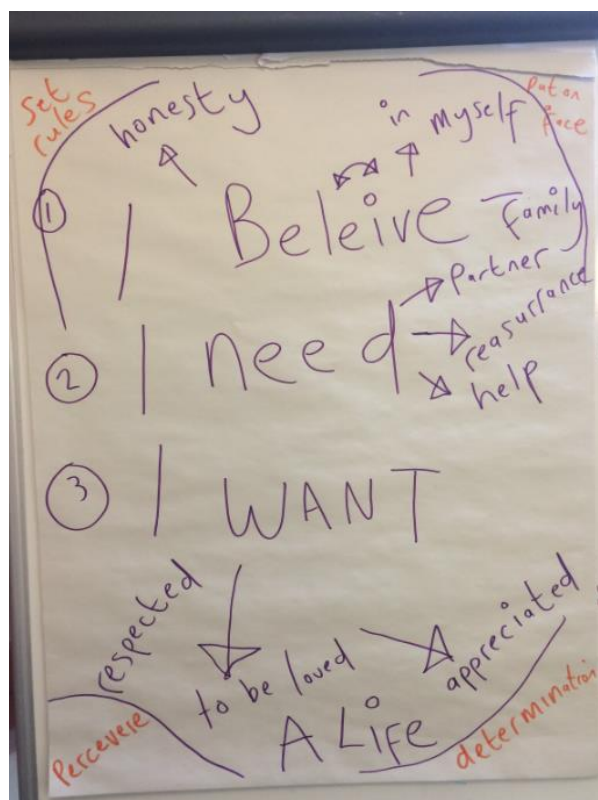
8.4.1 "Bringing men home that you don't know": responsabilising women in the context of domestic abuse services

During the fieldwork, I was a participant observer in the domestic abuse support group (GO4) whose activities aimed to empower the women to 'take control of their lives'. Empowerment as an approach was echoed across gatekeeping organisations and was explicit in the courses aimed at women experiencing domestic abuse, for example 'Power to Change' and the follow-on course 'Make Change Happen'³². Support for survivors of domestic abuse and those still experiencing it consisted of framing the problem as something that the women could and should remove themselves from. As such, the burden of action was on those who had been victimised, who were expected to leave abusive relationships. There are complex reasons why those in abusive relationships do not leave (Bostock et al., 2009). When discussing this with the staff

³² Titles of courses available through at GO1, GO2 and GO4.

of the domestic abuse support group Charlotte (manager, GO4) acknowledged that this was problematic: *"I don't believe there has ever been a voluntary perpetrator course...The onus is put on the victim to keep that person away even though you are terrified. You keep him away and if you can't keep him away that is your fault because you are not strong enough. You are not strong enough and you have not got enough awareness."*

Figure 8.3: Photo of flip chart from a 'What do I value?' activity run by the domestic abuse support group (GO4) taken by researcher



During a group session, I took the photograph of the flip chart during the main activity (Figure 8.3). This was designed to encourage women to consider and articulate what they know about themselves and what they thought would help them to move forward in their lives. The implicit assumption is that women do not know what they want and that not knowing what they want leads to them staying in or getting into abusive relationships. The purported solution is to encourage self-actualisation through therapeutic group activities. Once the women know what they want and what they value, they will be able to identify domestic abuse more easily and remove themselves from the relationship or choose a better partner in the future. In effect therapeutic domestic abuse activities place the onus on women to empower themselves in order to avoid abusive relationships, rather than focusing on the perpetrator of the abuse or

broader structural or cultural factors which may make it hard to identify or leave abusive relationships such as having children with a partner or a lack of economic resources. Charlotte highlights how women's problems are commonly framed by professionals as being a fault within them rather than external factors.

"... why do you keep getting in these relationships? Well probably 'I am isolated, I am scared and I am very lonely on my own with a child. I know it's not wise to keep bringing men home that you don't know and your kids are there'. ...So I can understand why, somebody shows a bit of friendly attention towards you, you are going to say oh, well you have got no childcare, so your options are I will invite people to my home and that is what happens and I will start a new relationship, this sounds like it is going to be really good. But then there is the grooming element in people out there that target people that are vulnerable, but they [the women] are blamed for that as well." (Charlotte, manager, GO4)

Although Charlotte empathises with the loneliness of being a single parent there is still a normative judgement being made about marginalised women who experience domestic abuse in their *'bringing men home'*. The suggestion that service users 'bring men home that they don't know' generates specific stigmatising imagery of the fecund, feckless and hypersexual working-class female (Skeggs, 2004, p. 504). Research suggests that "women's relationships are increasingly targeted as sites of gendered regulation and reform" (Turnbull and Hannah-Moffat, 2009, p. 541). Staying in a 'bad' or abusive relationship is portrayed as a choice which can be used to assess character – particularly in the case of women going through social worker assessments for children. Some participants explained that staying in a bad relationship was among the reasons stated for the recommendation of child removal in social worker assessments.

Despite these broader issues, the women who attended these sessions enjoyed the activities and engaged with them. GO4 is a domestic abuse support group and meets its aim of providing a safe and secure space for women experiencing domestic abuse to connect with and support one another. The remit of the service is not designed to highlight gender-based violence as an endemic problem in our society (Long et al.,

2020) but to work with women so that they know they 'are not alone'³³. As such, activities which focused on bringing out women's self-defined goals did provide positive ways to engage with marginalised women.

8.4.2 "It goes back to their upbringing, their parent's upbringing, their grandparent's upbringing, it is just patterns repeating themselves...": dilemmas of practice in women's centres

Staff working with marginalised women had varying perceptions of the causes of the issues that their service users presented with, as well as the solutions to these. The differences were not only across the different day centre organisations, some of which had differing ethos, but also between staff within a centre depending on the individual staff member's background, training and expertise. What was consistent in the accounts of professionals was a concern with individual-level behaviour change and helping them to move towards and navigate mainstream welfare (workfare) provision. In discussing the underlying causes of service users' problems, GO1 project worker Catrin highlighted the focus on addressing individual deficiencies and encouraging behaviour change in the women coming through their doors.

"Most people come here because they need a place to feel safe, they are vulnerable...the percentage of women who come here who have been in an abusive relationship is just so ridiculously high... and that leads onto so many other things as well like drugs, confidence issues, self-esteem... financial stuff, children being put into care... ..I personally think it goes back to their upbringing, their parents upbringing, their grandparents upbringing, it is just patterns repeating themselves. And it takes extreme circumstances for that pattern to change... ..And we just want to show them that is possible for everybody, you have just got to put the right toolkit in place, gain that confidence and self-esteem in order to be able to leave the situation that you are in as well and that is often, the number one hardest thing is to get out, to

³³ This is part of the phrase after which the support group was named.

break that pattern... people who have been in care especially have these problems..." (Catrin, project worker, GO1)

In this excerpt it becomes apparent that Catrin focuses on addressing service users' individual deficiencies, namely low self-esteem and poor character judgement. She also places a strong emphasis on the cause being intergenerational parental failure; it is their 'upbringing' by parents and their parents before them - the transmission of a culture of abusive relationships as well as economic status - which underlies service users' problems. There are undertones of the 'cycle of deprivation' thesis at the root of this account, an often over-simplified and therefore attractive lens through which to view social problems (Welshman, 2008). Catrin reflects on the increasing emphasis on parenting and problem families, which has overtaken concerns around child poverty or multiple disadvantage in public policy in recent years.

It is widely accepted that many women involved in the criminal justice system require therapeutic services and that these needs should be addressed in the community (Corston, 2007). While efforts to divert women from custody have stalled (Hogarth, 2017), some aspects of the Corston (2007) recommendations are being pushed forward. For example, the Offender Personality Disorder (OPD) Pathway which aims to bring a multi-agency, woman centred and holistic approach and embed it into the rehabilitative elements of a sentence (Player, 2016). Critiques of the OPD Pathway approach link it with the individualisation of social problems. It confers a label onto the individual as having "an inherent defect in the individual, prioritising impaired thinking, poor decision-making and a lack of emotional control as key pathologies, and privileges psychiatric and psychological discourse in its correction" (Player, 2016, p. 577).

Concerns have been voiced around approaches of this nature and other "psychologically intrusive programmes that foster individualised and 'pathologised' understandings of female offenders" (Player, 2016, p. 569). The OPD Pathway – originally developed to address sexual and violent offending in male prisoners – has serious implications for its now wide use with women who have offended, with inadequate duty of care when applied in prison settings (Genders and Player, 2014; Player, 2017).

This formalisation of the OPD Pathway as a way of working with marginalised women has caused issues among the day centre staff as Lucy's account indicates:

"The centre's used to working with women with personality disorder, but now...there's an actual scheme in place for those women [OPD], it kind of labels it now. I think it can be quite tough when it comes to working with other staff members...where you're saying working with this woman in this way is reinforcing their behaviours, which can often bring a clash between staff because it feels like you're undermining them... but sometimes if there's that split, I suppose people [non-OPD trained staff] can be made to feel inadequate." (Lucy, senior key worker, GO2)

This means of approaching the undesirable behaviours of marginalised women can be seen as a form of what Wacquant has termed 'low-grade medicalization':

"It is important to stress that, as the bureaucratic arm of the nation, the state can seek to remedy undesirable conditions and behaviours in three ways. It can "socialize" them by tackling their roots in the collective organization of society. It can "medicalize" them by treating them as individual pathologies. Or it can "penalize" them by ramping up its law-enforcement agencies and directing them at problem populations. Over the past three decades...we have witnessed everywhere a drift from the social to the penal treatment of that question, with low-grade medicalization and "authoritarian therapeutism" acting as a buffer or way-station between the two" (Wacquant, 2013, p. 242).

OPD Pathway trained staff clashed with those using traditional women's empowerment approaches, the former suggesting the latter's ways of working contributed to service users' behavioural problems. The day centres thus constitute a bureaucratic field (Bourdieu, 1991), a social space where actors have shared interests in providing public goods to service users, but it is also an institutional environment where actors' differing agendas and interests clash (Arnholtz & Hammerslev, 2013).

This account highlights the tensions and contradictions within the thoughts and practice of professionals working with marginalised women in the bureaucratic field of services for marginalised women. Although Catrin and other professionals talked

about 'poverty', it was often in the context of something that is culturally transmitted within families rather than acknowledging underlying mechanisms which support the transmission of disadvantage across generations (Blanden and Gibbons, 2006).

Professionals conceptualised marginalised women as being unable to make the right decisions for themselves (or their dependents); a common intervention was to work on these culturally inherited deficits such as failure to recognise bad partners or bad relationships. In framing it in this way, women dealing with complex structural issues such as poverty, poor housing, dealing with abuse, low level of educational attainment and so on have their problems reduced to issues of relationships and attitudes, and are made solely responsible for their problems and are presented as their own solution. Once given the 'right toolkit' through attending workshops, alongside and other opportunities such as informal voluntary work at the gatekeeping organisation or routes to community work, it is up to the women themselves to change their circumstances.

Professionals delivered interventions focused on empowering individuals and removing anti-social behaviours. It is important to recognise that they had little power to address structural or systemic problems that the women faced. The focus on encouraging women to feel more in control of their lives and relationships at least works to increase their agency. What became apparent from interviews with staff was the delicate balance between the organisations' social justice and therapeutic aims and professionals' internalization of welfare derived notions of individualism, responsabilisation, behaviour change and self-reliance which underpinned their practice. This encapsulates some of the tensions and mixed motives of the practitioners working in the hybrid institutions examined in this chapter.

Against the backdrop of a highly conditional and punitive welfare system and reduced budgets for community services such as women's refuges, austerity cuts have a gendered dimension and are arguably felt the most by marginalised women (Towers and Walby, 2012; Elson, 2018). That women can still access services that focus on empowerment and minimising harm to themselves and families that gatekeeping organisations provide can be viewed positively. Indeed, domestic violence and female poverty should be within the purview of the state and the wider bureaucratic field providing these services. However, the focus on individual responsibility and

pathologising women's mental health issues takes the focus away from the state's role in producing marginalised women and keeping them confined in their current circumstances (as discussed in Chapter 5).

The evidence presented in this section points to a more nuanced understanding of hybrid institutions, which do not fall neatly within Wacquant's typology of the state. Wacquant suggests penal and welfare institutions have converged around a common aim of managing social insecurity and symbolically denigrating the poor described as "active entwining of the social and penal treatments of poverty...a complementary institutional duo" (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 294). Yet it appears that the 'carceral-assistential net' (see Figure 8.1) contains hybrid institutions which are not simply meshing together these disciplinary functions but are simultaneously providing 'pre-workfare' welfarist functions of support as well as the more contemporary 'social-cum-penal' (Wacquant, 2010a) functions. The hybrid institutions occupy a different space from the mainstream welfare and penal arms of the state, as such there is space for differential responses and powers of frontline staff to support clients which serve to further blur penal and welfare aims of the state, and to create space for them to approach their clients in different ways.

8.5 Sheltering marginalised women from the centaur state

While the preceding sections showed the surveillance and penal functions of day centres, the next two sections present data which shows the other therapeutic and welfarist side to the day centres as well as supported housing and social housing. From this angle, the organisations can be seen as providing services that once were delivered by local state intermediaries, in the vacuum left by welfare toughening and retrenchment. They provide much needed social and welfare services in the vacuum left by welfare conditionality and retrenchment and the ongoing cuts to public services under policies of fiscal austerity. Supported housing, while providing basic welfare in the form of a place to call home, is also a conduit for surveillance, working closely with and enforcing conditions set by probation and the courts.

8.5.1 Day centres: spaces of kindness, emotional support and surveillance

For some, completion of courses and attendance at the day centres and was a mandatory requirement of formal penal institutions, initially at least. Yet this interaction was often experienced as an assistive 'helping hand' in the lives of participants who took part in the research. The day centre environment often became a source of emotional support and friendship, acting as a buffer for the more explicitly punitive interventions enacted by other agencies of the state that they were enmeshed with.

Participants appeared to need the day centres to fill a gap in their lives, particularly if they were, for example, estranged from family or trying to keep away from certain social groups such as those associated with offending, drug use or 'bad' relationships. Participants often found new peer groups and daily activities through the day centres. What appeared to be important within these spaces were relationships with other service users and with one or two specific workers who were important to them, as Donna's account shows:

This lady [points to photo] is my saviour you know because she helped me a lot... ..well when I was homeless she was my support worker, and after that she still did it, she is one of the ones that gives you tough love sort of thing you know. And she scares me but in a good way, you know, and it's not very often she agrees to a picture for anything. (Donna)



Figure 8.4 Photo by Donna of an important support worker (image blurred for anonymity)

Many women presented the experience of being engaged with services and in the day centre environment as having a positive influence in their lives, even playing a transformative role. For example, Lola describes how her confidence has grown since attending the women's centre (GO2).

Larissa: Do you think coming to the centre has changed you at all in any way or do you still feel as you did 18 months ago?

Lola: No, I am a different person... I don't know how I am a different person I can't say...but I feel it...my husband says to me 'I can't understand why you are still going, you don't have to go there [to the women's centre] anymore'...and I'm like, I know. When I got near the end of my [court ordered] sessions and Fi [key worker] was saying to me 'oh you've nearly finished now', and I broke down because I didn't want to finish and I thought that's it, now I am going to be rejected again they are going to push me out and...I've just got used to it, and Fi was like 'no you can come, you can still come' and I was like are you sure, am I still allowed to come? I was heartbroken at the thought...that I had lost this - something for me. And I think that is the important part, is that I have got something for me...my sister she can't come, my boys can't come, nobody can come in here, from the outside and from my outside. And that's my security thing... ...And so yes it's changed me in that way that I feel more confident, coming in obviously... but it's, it's given me a bit of satisfaction I suppose a bit of, I don't know it just makes me feel better...even if I don't get anything out of it, even if I only come and I don't speak to anybody or anything like that, I am fine. You know what I mean this is, I don't know, it's special...

Lola characterised the women's centre as an inclusive refuge, a source of belonging, support, personal growth and transformation. She valued it to such an extent that she attended beyond the rehabilitation activity requirement (RAR) of her sentence. Centre workers similarly perceived their role as assistive: "to support women through care and management, whether they are having interventions for a personality disorder and through probation as well" (Lucy, senior key worker, GO2).

Lola dropped into the day centre (GO2) once every few weeks to be in a space alongside women who understood what she has been through, where she perceived difference and othering to be minimised. Importantly it was a place where she did not feel stigmatized for having a criminal record or for being a survivor of child sexual abuse. For those whose pasts contain trauma, like many participants did (see Chapter 5), having a support network was particularly important. Giving and receiving peer support is important as Lorde (1984, p. 2) argues: "For women, the need and desire to nurture each other is not pathological but redemptive".

However, it was not always the case that participants were able to find the emotional support they needed at a day centre. For example, a recurrent cause of stress for many participants was related to past or impending child removal (four participants were undergoing child removal proceedings during the research process, see Chapter 7). Following a care assessment drug test, Carly was told her sample had tested positive for THC (the psychoactive constituent of cannabis). Carly appeared very upset when she told me this as she knew it would have a negative impact on her chances of gaining custody of her young baby who had been removed at birth into foster care. In trying to deal with this news, she turned initially to her key worker at the women's day centre GO1:

I were panicking ...I come to [women's centre]...spoke to Fiona [key worker,GO1]...Drug recovery it's a long process like Fiona said, she said 'it's not going to happen overnight' so people have got to understand it's a slow process... but she didn't understand the drug test [result] so she couldn't really say nowt to make me feel better... I said to her right I am going to go [substance misuse service (NHS)], went there and I'm glad I did...The worker that I seen last year, she was sat at her desk eating her dinner, and she seen I was crying and she stopped eating her dinner straight away and took me into the interview room and she went and got somebody else that knew about drug tests and he...and he weren't happy with the drug test to be honest, he said 'I've had problems with these, researchers found out that the tests are not adequate and you can't rely on them'... ...They [social workers] don't see the things I'm doing...all they are getting is reports. (Carly)

Her paperwork stated that her drug test results were 'consistent with her declared abstinence from cocaine'; but indicated that she had been using cannabis with more frequency than she had declared. Carly wanted those professionals around her to empathise with her, and she went to efforts to blame her living environment prior to her current flat which had contributed to this test result as others had smoked nearby. Whether she had used cannabis with the frequency her drug test suggested or not, this experience highlights a disjuncture between the various agencies intervening in her life. While the drug test showed a positive result for cannabis, she had managed to stay away from harder drugs, such as cocaine which was viewed as successful by her NHS drug worker. However, her efforts would ultimately be counted as a 'fail' by local authority social workers.

Carly: I've been put on the Ambassadors³⁴ course, in September at [drug service].

Larissa: Wow that's great; you've made such an impact in a quite short space of time!

Carly: Well one of them [a drug counsellor] said to me, 'when you leave here you'll leave an impression on us'. And that was someone I hadn't never spoke to, I don't know but obviously he knows of me and seen me, and it made me feel right good that they have asked me to do that [course]. My PSI [psychosocial intervention] worker said 'you would make a good...drug counsellor'...Yes and like he's heard me in [support] groups and that... He said to me last week he went 'I know you are rehabilitated', he said 'because you had money in your purse on that Wednesday [when she received news that social services would not recommend her son to stay in her care], you could have easily gone and got some [drugs]'... and I said I could have done...But I come here and spoke to you, I went onto [NHS drug service], and then I went home.

Larissa: Did you chat to your drug worker?

Carly: Yes. He were gutted, he were upset.

Larissa: I bet.

Carly: He said 'I've never done this for anybody', he said 'but tell your solicitor

³⁴ A local Drug and Alcohol Service initiative for ex-service users who are trained to support those still in recovery.

I will stand up in court for you'. And do you know what that made me feel right good, he said 'I've not done it for anyone I don't think I ever would', he said 'but you I know how much you've come on and how much you've changed'.

Larissa: *Yes it's the belief in you.*

Carly: *On Thursday day after, I went back over there and they said 'oh we've had a phone' call I said yes, social services have only asked for a report off them... They said 'can you have it done by today because our report has got to be in by today'. How bad is that, getting it after they've made that life changing decision?!*

Carly's account gives an indication of the web of punitive and assistive institutions she is involved with and how heavily she relies on various day centre staff for emotional and practical support; this was ongoing but was especially acute in times of crisis. For example, when she received further negative news regarding her ongoing social worker assessments, she would return again to the women's centre or the drug service to update them and to talk about it. She was keen to make it clear to me that in the past, on receiving bad news, she would have most likely relapsed or 'gone off the rails' rather than attending these services. In her current way of coping, it appeared there was a conscious commitment to avoid old habits and maintain new ones with affirmative actions to redirect her life (Mulvey et al., 2004). However, it must also be recognised that there may be a performative element to Carly's account (or 'Hawthorne effect') as it is likely that she approached the interview as being conducted by a professional assessing her life (Oswald et al., 2014).

Despite a willingness to try to comply with the rules set out by social workers, Carly had struggled to stay away from drugs completely. Recovery from drugs has been shown to take a long time (Dennis et al., 2005), much longer than the 12-week assessment period by the social worker allowed. With relapses common, project workers saw service users come through their doors again and again as Kerry (project worker, GO3) explains: *"I have a small caseload of 18, and they...have been going round the system for years and being missed due to bad behaviours, so they are barred from majority of places like housing... benefits..."*. Kerry's caseload comprised the 'harder to reach clients', around a third of whom were women. As such, the day centres played a vital role for those shut out of mainstream services.

Through volunteer roles participants were provided with valued and meaningful activity, as well as the opportunity to build social bonds with other service users and staff. When an individual experienced a difficult patch or a crisis in their personal lives, they were still encouraged to keep up their voluntary work or to complete courses at the centre even when they did not feel like it. A conversation with Donna highlighted the hybrid nature of day centres. There was tension in the coerced voluntarism of engagement with the day centre which, though she enjoyed it, could also feel as though she was not allowed a private life beyond the centre. Thus, she experienced it simultaneously as surveillance and support.

Donna: 'Stay out of trouble' she said... it's hard work though. I'm just one of them people... it's got me down a lot and I've been quite moany... but I guess I just have to make the best of it you know...

Larissa: Yeah, just keep getting up each day and coming here and doing what you have to do...

Donna: But they keep giving me extra stuff to do all the time; I do have a life other than here [GO3] you know!

There was a sense that Donna felt trapped by her commitment to the centre because she did not feel she could say no to requests made of her by centre staff. With the upcoming birth of her daughter, who was to be removed from her and fostered, Donna's freedom to resist the demands made of her by the professionals in her life was limited. There may have also been a protective intention in staff giving Donna 'extra stuff to do'. They may have wanted to keep a closer eye on her during this time of turbulence in her relationship and with her being 'stressed out' with the pregnancy.

For some, many years of support were required as Kerry added:

"I never close a case so they are always open and people do move on... so I don't have to see them as often but I still see them maybe once a fortnight. Even if it is just for an hour... to make sure, that they are doing alright...sometimes they will come in with the odd bill... that they have messed up and not paid properly or don't understand and I can be there for them then".

The support Kerry provided was at a basic level with personal day-to-day tasks and finances. This type of support was commonly reported by the staff interviewed across all gatekeeper organisations. That this support service was dominated by this type of problem can be linked to the successive reforms of the welfare system which have seen a shift towards “alienation, sanctioning and disentanglement” from state support for marginalised individuals (Fletcher and Flint, 2018, p. 787). The hybrid institutional environment provided by day centres acts as a residualised safety net receiving individuals pushed out of the mainstream penal-welfare ‘mesh’ (Wacquant, 2016).

Requiring support from day centres was seen as a place of last resort: *“I think you have got to be desperate in order to walk through them doors and it can be intimidating. We work with a lot of hardcore people... it can be intimidating walking in that door if you have never been before, you are a bit like ‘oh God, have I really got to come in here?’”* (Kerry, project worker, GO3). For marginalised women, day centres can simultaneously be spaces of care and spaces of control and even punitive - from (and as extensions of) state agents - but they can also be spaces of safety, sanctuary and through social bonds, sources of strength.

8.5.2 Supported housing as a hybrid institutional space

Parr (2011) and Flint (2002) show how social housing encompasses both the anti-social behaviour and community care agendas of the state and as such is experienced as simultaneously liberating and limiting. Social housing provides touch points between the state via local professionals and individual tenants (Wainwright and Marandet, 2018). The active governance of these individuals is often targeted to those deemed most “in need” of interventions along a continuum of “care” and “control”. The use of acceptable behavioural agreements³⁵, alongside wider welfare reforms, has increased housing tenure insecurity (Watts and Fitzpatrick, 2018). Housing support remains a central element of disciplinary government intervention, playing a key role

³⁵ These are usually voluntary agreements between the person who is behaving antisocially and any other relevant people (for example, the police, the council or social workers), and it aims to bring a stop to the unwanted behaviour (Shelter, 2017).

in the “moralization of conduct” (Jacobs and Manzi, 2020, p. 583). As such, supported housing, which appears welfarist in form has long been a site for surveillance, does constitute a hybrid institutional space with carceral and punitive as well as assistive dimensions.

Participants had experienced various forms of housing accompanied with differing services and levels of intensity of support. These included local authority (LA) temporary housing, women's refuges, 24-hour supported housing for those with mental health, offending and substance misuse problems, and residential family assessment centres or mother and baby units. The housing support they experience cuts across a number of policy areas and aims of the state. As such, these types of institutions are significant in locally enacting national aims (Wainwright and Marandet, 2018).

How supportive, controlling or punitive participants found these spaces varied widely across individuals, space, time and particular events. Sylvia, a participant who lived in a supported housing unit, found that it could be inflexible or not understanding of her particular issues (e.g., being homeless for many years prior, and unused to restrictions on her movement). This acted as an extension of the CJS in involving the police when she was not able to comply with the behavioural demands required of her by the Probation Service, which supported housing staff are monitoring and enforcing.

Sylvia: The night staff...they come round and do checks...and Saturday night I stayed out when I shouldn't have... because I am on licence I am not allowed to stay out overnight and the [night staff] reported me missing. The police came round and I got not an aggressive telling off...I don't know when [my Probation Officer] is back but like I am worried now in case like, I am hoping he is not going to revoke my licence because I think it is like the second time I have done it...

Larissa: What is the worst that can happen they wouldn't send you back to prison would they?

Sylvia: Well it depends because it is the second time, I don't know how many [I'm allowed], I think that's what is playing on my mind at the moment... My intention is important, because even Siobhan [supported housing staff] said last night, she said 'I believe it wasn't your intention to like stay out

overnight'... I was at [northern eastern town]...and the train had broke down, so they had to get another replacement and then that one broke down. ...I was talking to Siobhan last night... and she asked me if I was alright and she said 'are you crying', I said I just...realised like that, you know like people care about me... nobody has cared about me before...

Supported housing includes regimes of practice, which aim to move residents away from 'chaotic lifestyles' and towards living self-reliant, independent and pro-social lives. Sylvia is supposed to return to her flat every evening by a certain time and to spend the night there, with staff on site checking residents' compliance with such behavioural demands. As such, Sylvia's 'home' can be conceived of as having carceral elements; those missing from their flats are reported to the police and probation with whom the housing provider works closely.

Having spent much of her adult life homeless, on the streets, or in prison, Sylvia found it difficult to understand the importance of compliance with the rules. Breaking the curfew set by her housing provider had broader implications. It posed a threat of re-criminalisation if her actions were considered a breach of the conditions set by her probation officer, or at worse, a recall to prison because Sylvia is on a lifelong licence. While conditions such as this may be in place to ensure the safety of residents, when applied to individuals who have spent many years living homeless, compliance can be unrealistic. Thus, these sorts of conditions can be somewhat generative of 'bad' behaviour. Despite the supported housing's close links to penal institutions and the notification of the police by her caseworker, Sylvia had come to make sense of this event as a caring intervention. She juxtaposed this intervention with her past experiences, where she felt that no-one had cared where she was when in homeless accommodation, and therefore perceived the actions of staff as a sign of care, not just control.

There has been a shift from passive governance of the homeless (Jamieson, 2012) towards supported housing characterised by active engagement, resident responsibility and conditionality (Baker and Evans, 2016). Indeed, supported housing centres focus on creating a controllable space that facilitates 'good conduct' (Huxley 2007). The behavioural agreements in place emphasise close personal forms of governance and control and aim to imbue self-control and self-regulation within

residents. In this case, the disciplinary power of supported housing aims to foster stability and fixity over movement, and the more general aim of producing an individual that has learned to be more compliant with conditions of behaviour and is, therefore, more acceptable to wider society.

Although Sylvia broke the “rules”, her housing officer appears friendly and sympathetic to her case, though she still followed procedures for escalating the incident to the police. Professionals like Siobhan mediate the objectives of supported housing and those of its partners, for example the police, and the needs of the resident within the context of the relationship they have built over time. There is conflict and complexity in the dynamics playing out in these relationships, contacting the police could have serious impacts for Sylvia. Sylvia’s lengthy periods of homelessness are relevant to this particular breach, and it is important that professionals consider individual biographies rather than being tied up in institutional regimes of practice that criminalise those with complex needs. It is also important that those working in such roles are adequately trained and properly remunerated in order to avoid the ‘care-criminalisation’ that typically occurs in residential care settings (McFarlane et al., 2016).

‘Home’ appeared to be an ambivalent space for participants in terms of its supportive features but also its permeability to state surveillance and disciplinary control from family services. Some participants had progressed from supported housing and had their own social housing flat which had lighter levels of surveillance but retained supportive elements and felt more aligned to a traditional left arm welfare intervention.

Ros: [Local Authority] put us in [LA temporary accommodation] again. And then from [there] we got this [social housing] flat.

Larissa: That's good that you've got this place.

Ros: Yeah and I've got support, I've got [Elise], my housing officer, who's fantastic. And basically they've left us [to it], cos they can see that we're doing alright, yeah...We've done [up the] bathroom. Did you see bathroom when you walked past? Go an have a look... it were a wet room when we walked in...But we've just done bathroom, and...

Larissa: Wow, that looks amazing

Ros: I'm buzzing with it [continues to talk about the bathroom refurbishment]

and plans for decorating the hallway and living room and shows off spare room]... *I've got me dressing room, look, walk in wardrobe...*

Larissa: *How long are you here for? Do you get as long as you want?*

Ros: *Forever. Yep, forever....*

Larissa: *So aside from the housing officer is there anyone else you're getting support from?*

Ros: *No just [NHS drug service] who are fantastic, [GO3] and me housing officer brilliant. I'm dealing with [social workers] now with our Maisie, she [the social worker] seems alright but she's very young, she's 21 so...I don't want her to start being...if she starts sort of laying law down about things that I should know and do...*

Ros' experience of light touch housing support is very positive, as is her perception of ancillary services, such as the homeless day centre. She appreciates the flexibility and voluntary engagement with services when she needs them. Ros interprets being on the whole left alone by housing officers as recognition of her being able to cope and of the progress she had made. She has a weekly routine collecting her methadone prescription three days a week and sees her drug worker and attends the day centre if she needs to sort anything or wants to see a healthcare professional. Supported housing, alongside the holistic services she accesses through the day centre (GO3), has helped to reproduce Ros as an individual who is capable of good, ordered and regular conduct.

8.6 Providing space to renegotiate the self: day centres and identity change

Many participants continued to attend the day centre they were engaged with on a daily or weekly basis, beyond mandatory sessions or crisis points. For those attending daily or a few times a week, the centre had become an integral part of their day-to-day life, which in some cases they depended on. Dependency, an ideologically charged term, has been framed politically as a subjective state associated with something unacceptable, particularly when linked to dependence on welfare (Fraser and Gordon, 1994). A 'good' neoliberal citizen is the self-reliant worker citizen (Cain, 2016), a notion

that stems from the Kantian conception of the 'atomistic', self-reliant and autonomous individual (Kant, 1785/2019). Feminist perspectives have rejected such ideas arguing that individuals are instead socially and historically embedded (Jaggard, 1983; Code, 1991; Mackenzie and Stoljar, 2000).

Within the institutional environment of the day centres, 'dependency' on a particular centre was often viewed positively; ongoing engagement was encouraged. This was most evident in centre GO3, where it was common for participants who had been attending the centre long-term to be offered the chance to take on a volunteer role, ranging from something informal and part-time to more formal and full-time roles. Volunteer work was encouraged as a way to foster stability in service users' lives and to build their CV, moving them towards being 'work ready' for the formal labour market. Individuals' dependency on a centre also meant that key workers could more easily maintain contact with them, and 'keep an eye on them'.

Many participants felt that having volunteer roles in a centre played an important part in participants' goals of 'staying out of trouble', which often meant staying away from problem drug or alcohol using and certain social networks. While they were not yet ready for the formal labour market, working at the centre provided purpose and routine. Research has shown those most successful at maintaining sobriety "appeared to consciously create routines for themselves" (Farrall et al., 2014, p. 173). Moreover, as Gadd and Farrall (2004, p. 124) contest, "desistance is not just about objective transformations in...circumstances, but also a range of subjective phenomena". Day centres provide important spaces for participants, with these hybrid institutional environments playing a key role in behaviour change and identity shift. Therefore, the day centres were integral to individuals' desistance and recovery journeys especially when their impact was compared with formal interventions from penal institutions as the following narratives highlight.

Larissa: What did you think of the probation service and supervision after you left prison?

Annie: On probation I was low risk and was just encouraged to take part on courses. I had limited contact [with probation], but more contact with therapy and support groups here [GO1]. The therapy helped me so much and I am so glad I had the help I did.

Gillian: [points to photo] *"courts, police, that's the police arresting me, going to court, I got probation and community service, two orders last year...I was still drinking at the time... ..I was bad on the beer, really bad ...it's always been the drink all the way through it, this is the longest I've stayed off it...My alcohol worker, I see him every fortnight - since I've come off the beer, it's opened my eyes up more... I come here [GO2] every day just to get out of the house and to stop me thinking about the beer....[points to another photo of a woman, smiling] That's my best mate who also comes here [GO2]... (Gillian)*

Gillian realised that she could no longer continue drinking the way she had been or getting into trouble with the police. This narrative that she had matured past that lifestyle, and wanted a different life for herself, might be seen as an example of "crystallisation of discontent" with her life being in hospital and in conflict with the CJS (Paternoster and Bushway, 2009, p. 1124). Day centre (GO2) provided the environment that Gillian needed in order to attempt to make a change, primarily, to address her alcohol use. If one's sense of self is related to the place where one lives out their life (Farrall et al., 2014), then context is important, and the hybrid institutional environment of the day centres can be said to have encouraged the behaviour change and ongoing identity shift in participants.

These examples highlight the importance of the day centres as places for marginalised women to go for support, both from professionals to address their needs but also to share a space with other women facing similar issues. In Annie's case she valued the therapeutic support from GO1, which enabled her to work through some of the problems she was facing. She eventually began to see herself as someone for whom moving on and getting a job was a possibility; after completing her therapy she eventually moved into paid work (the only participant to move into full-time employment, though she did not disclose her prison sentence, see Chapter 6, section 6.3).

Most of the women interviewed recognised the importance of the centres and services they were engaged with and decided that daily attendance would further support their goal of making changes in their lives and moving away from 'getting into trouble'. Through attending their day centres participants ritualised and reinforced the new selves that they were becoming alongside their peers. Research has shown that those

successful in leaving behind lives in contact with the CJS build new routines around family and work (Farrall et al., 2014).

Many participants were estranged from family and due to multiple issues were far from the labour market. The hybrid institutional environments of the day centres provided social capital through peers, some of whom became very close friends almost like a family, and the opportunity for 'generative activities' which can serve a dual purpose giving a 'sense of fulfilment' and working towards clearing one's conscience for past deeds through giving back (Maruna, 2001, 2012). These elements of the day centres are highly supportive and welfarist.

Participants did not change immediately on engaging with a day centre or service nor did they have smooth and linear journeys. There may have been multiple engagements and ruptures with day centre services, in some cases taking place over many years. This is not something unexpected considering the challenges facing women accessing services. Setbacks in recovery from alcohol or drug use are common (Dennis et al., 2005). As Carly's account suggests, when faced with a challenging situation, it is harder to stay away from past coping mechanisms, at least in such times, so having effective support available is important.

"That's what I used to do, bottle things up, I never used to talk, and that's probably why I was so negative. But now - letting it out - and people do wanna listen... ..I thought back then, 'well no-one wants to hear my problems', that was the problem... ..And they do wanna listen 'ere... ..When I feel I'm gonna relapse I just ring 'em up an' speak to 'em an' they'll talk me out of it, it's really good." (Carly, GO1)

In recent years, we have seen "increasingly precarious and threatening social and economic conditions" (Fletcher and Flint, 2018, p. 773) characterised by toughening penal and welfare regimes in austerity Britain. The availability of support services over the long term for those unable to access mainstream support was an important aspect of the day centres, the oldest of which (GO3) had been established for over 25 years. Having support and positive reinforcement from professionals facilitated individuals' transformations, with external recognition of progress appearing to keep participants

going. Narratives of participants showed that stable, long-term support was important in their creating behaviour and identity change processes.

"I didn't used to be [good at talking to people]... if you speak to [her former key worker], she'd tell you. I used to scowl at her. I used to try and work people out... because of my past and things like that". (Whitney, GO3)

"Someone said to me the other day, why did you change, why is it so different with [youngest son] than your other kids, and I really could not answer that question. I just probably weren't ready to change, but now I've got to an older age in my life that I know I need to change... ..Something clicked inside me that said right, I don't want to live that life anymore... ..When people know I'm doing well and they say, 'listen I'm proud of you', it makes me want to do it all the more..." (Carly, GO1)

Participants tended to disassociate from their old 'self' and saw themselves as being different 'now'. As such, they mainly chose to focus on present and future plans, rather than dwelling on the past; it could be uncomfortable to reconcile the two selves. New selves were positively reinforced by the external recognition of changes having taken place, particularly by staff and peers in the day centres which supported the maintenance of their new identities.

During the research period participants displayed strategies of resilience, such as talking through their problems with friends or peers and engaging with support workers at the day centres. Having a (pro-social) support network is not something participants had always had outside of the day centres, particularly if they had adverse early experiences and abusive or exploitative adult relationships.

Whitney, one of the two participants who moved into part-time paid employment during the research period, talked about her decision to take on this new challenge: *"I've just got to prove myself...I'm not one for sitting at home and not doing anything because it'll do my head in...I'm used to, especially with my past history, coming off drugs and everything, I've always kept myself busy...I like to keep myself busy so I don't do anything stupid..."*. Whitney's strategy was to keep busy, and after a few years doing voluntary work at the day centre GO3, she felt that this was no longer enough. Instead, she felt that she wanted to find work in the mainstream labour market. In this way, she

would be able to continue to further build her new identity through a paid job and ongoing maintenance of her sobriety.

Participants' new and 'precarious identities' (Sharpe, 2015) could be shattered if they came into contact with ex-partners, peers or estranged family, beyond the bubble of the day centre. The hybrid institutional environment of the day centres provides a safety net for the most marginalised for whom mainstream services were not accessible, and also a space which many participants perceived as supporting their shift in identities.

Without the day centre organisations in place to provide the services, space and time that they do, the women in this study would have had few alternatives, as highlighted in section 8.3 when participant (Jane) was barred from a day centre. Participant accounts show that the centres and the services provided continue to be integral to their moving forward with their lives.

8.7 Discussion

The contemporary management of 'awkward citizens' or the 'troublesome poor' by the state is often theorised as a one-directional shift from the social to the penal. It has been suggested that the Keynesian welfare state is obsolete; that the state is less and less concerned with social functions in the "drift from the social to the penal" (Wacquant, 2012, p. 242).

Contemporary conceptualisations of the welfare arm of the state depict it as a second pillar of control and responsibilisation that sits alongside a burgeoning penal arm (Wacquant, 2009a; 2012). This model is problematic as it neither reflects the hybridity of the institutional spaces and the assistive experiences of women who are caught up in the 'carceral-assistential net' nor those working within them in the UK.

Yet what can be observed in day centres serving marginalised populations is not a simple convergence with penal aims and practices. While there are aspects of individualisation, responsibilisation and disciplinary mechanisms, the day centres also provide vital sources of care, support and meaningful activity. They provide important

social welfare functions for marginalised populations, rather than being extinct Keynesian notions of the 'feminine' Left hand of the state. A commitment to welfare services reappears in the day centre, both in how they function and are experienced.

The gatekeeper organisations involved in the research were neither exclusively penal nor welfarist in form or function. They constituted hybrid institutional spaces sheltering marginalised women on the edges of the CJS. Figure 8.2 highlights where the gatekeeper organisations sit within a 'web' of other ancillary organisations, which participants identified as having played a significant role in their lives; organised along a spectrum from punitive to supportive. The day centres constitute hybrid institutions because while they display elements of workfarist and disciplinary welfare in their practice, importantly, they also have a strong 'feminine' protective social function.

Supported housing is an example of another important organisational form that impacts some participants' experiences (Sylvia being the clearest example); it similarly has a hybrid function as an institution meeting welfarist needs of accommodation but also providing a means of surveillance and a route to criminalisation when rules are not abided. The gatekeeper organisations can be described as hybrid because they perpetuated the aims and techniques of the disciplinary state while simultaneously shielding them from the sharper end of punitive welfare and penal reforms, and they provided a stable space for individuals to feel better about themselves.

Wacquant (2009a, p. 291) argues that the contemporary state intervenes to discipline the poor through the dual mechanism of welfare (through a regime of conditionality and sanctions) working alongside the penal system, united by "the same disciplinary philosophy of behaviourism and moralism". Moreover, this "colonisation of the welfare sector by the panoptic and punitive logic characteristic of the post-rehabilitative penal bureaucracy" (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 289) is indicative of the drift from the social to the penal in the 'remasculinization of the state' from "kindly 'nanny state' (feminine) to the strict "daddy state" (masculine) (Wacquant, 2009a, p. 290). This can be seen in the portrayal of 'state managers' as 'virile protectors' of society from awkward and disruptive citizens.

Welfare in its protective, "feminine arm" form is all but extinct in Wacquant's conceptualisations of the state which prioritises "duty over rights, sanction over

support... and...reaffirmation of the capacity of the state to lock the troublemaking poor (welfare recipients and criminals) in a subordinate relation of dependence and obedience” (Wacquant, 2009, pp. 289-290). Instead, disciplinary welfare - also termed ‘coercive welfare’ (Phoenix, 2008) or ‘authoritarian therapeutism’ (Wacquant, 2012) and described as “a huge secret penal system” (Webster, 2014) – has become integrated with the penal system both symbolically and materially in its efforts to manage rising social insecurity through prisonfare and workfare (Wacquant, 2009a). These two policies “work jointly to invisibilise problem populations” - reducing social assistance and access to it on the one hand, and locking people away on the other (Wacquant, 2010a, p. 199).

The gatekeeper organisations examined in this chapter constitute hybrid institutions because while they display elements of workfarist and disciplinary welfare in their practice, importantly, they *also* have a strong ‘maternalistic’ and protective social function. The day centres use a form of welfarist intervention that has been declared all but extinct by Wacquant and other social commentators. As such Wacquant’s model of the state as a workfare-prisonfare binary oversimplifies the governance of the ‘troublesome poor’; it does not reflect some of the work being done in day centres and other assistive organisations within the web of the tutelary state (see Figure 8.1).

The day centres provide a space for marginalised communities to have their health, educational and social needs met that they would otherwise struggle to access. The day centre and its staff also provide an important bridge to accessing mainstream welfare services that some participants would otherwise have been excluded from. The practice of gatekeeper organisation staff is often protective and therapeutic (discussed in Sections 8.5 and 8.6). Keynesian-era means of governing criminality and poverty is not a historical anomaly. It is very much present in the day centres and services that participants were engaged with. Ultimately, these hybrid institutional environments provided the context for participants moving away from auspices of the formal criminal justice system and important personal transformations.

The day centres played an important role in the lives of participants aiming to ‘stay out of trouble’. Those who chose to engage with services beyond mandatory requirements, in some cases for years (see Section 8.5), showed how integral the day centres were to their day-to-day lives. From the accounts presented in Sections 8.5,

alongside the life story perspective of Chapter 5, moving away from formal penal institutions is often a slow and messy journey. The hybrid institutional environment of the day centres was best placed to promote and support these journeys away from formal penal institutions, towards recovery and in navigating the welfare system. Professional practice was often underpinned by discourses of responsabilisation and individualisation but nonetheless provided an essential safety net for those engaged with their services. The gatekeeper organisations and professionals working within them were also navigating their way through the contemporary penal-welfare landscape in order to provide the most effective (but always conditional) support they were able to.

For those with serious drug or alcohol problems, managing these issues in the long term, or having shorter or less frequent periods of relapse, were milestones themselves. The day centres provided an environment in which participants were encouraged and supported to address issues related to problematic drug or alcohol use, with second, third and more chances if required. For participants who had substance or alcohol issues, accessing support was a crucial step, as was disconnecting from relationships, social networks and places that they associated with using drugs or alcohol or were triggering for them. Making social connections with others on desistance journeys and those in recovery helped, as well as taking part in activities which ranged from giving them a reason 'to get out of the house' to satisfying needs to do something meaningful, such as volunteering at the centre to 'give something back' (Maruna, 2012), important 'hooks for change' (Giodarno et al., 2006).

The hybrid institutional environments in which participants were engaged played an important part in their transformations. While these institutions performed variously disciplinary and therapeutic functions outlined in the previous sections, they also provided an important space for women to meet with a common purpose and to facilitate "shared emotional exchanges" (Maruna, 2016, p. 294). The day centres' role in women's personal change processes is important as they provide a place where participants began to be seen – and to see themselves – as something other than an 'offender', 'alcoholic', 'drug-user' or 'bad mother', and they enabled them to build new senses of self and identities.

There was often a disjuncture in the way they were perceived by more formal street-level organisations of the state such as Jobcentre Plus or social services. Within the hybrid institutional environment of the day centre participants were treated as people worthy of support and with potential to be 'given a chance'. The staff, volunteers and their peers did not see them as bad people – unlike the 'maloptic' gaze of formal agencies of the state. Through the day centres individuals used to being marginalised and stigmatised were able to access the practice of 'good citizenship'; particularly when participants took part in 'generative activities' such as those which supported the running of the centres like helping to cook, serving food, working in the laundry service or on the reception desk (Maruna, 2016).

The services provided came at a price to those engaged; it was always a conditional exchange. Participants underwent (in some cases) intense surveillance or felt they were being 'checked up on'; staff often had knowledge of intimate aspects of their lives and personal circumstances; and tutelary strategies of attitude and behaviour change were stipulated in return for practical support for day-to-day living, therapeutic interventions and the social aspects of the centres. Participants, on the whole, perceived this approach as evidence that key workers 'cared' about them. It helped to keep them engaged and for most participants move away from the CJS – perhaps what the CJS should look like. As such the day centres can also be seen to be working at the street-level to help contain the social disorders created by the dismantling of the welfare state, though this may not be an intended outcome.

Participants were encouraged to acknowledge and work on their personal deficiencies and to eventually move towards readying themselves for the labour market. Wacquant (2014, p. 1693) contends that welfare state assistance is "conditional on orienting oneself toward degraded employment". The hybrid institutional environments of the day centres played important roles in crafting participants into responsible and self-regulating individuals. They provided social environments in which they must act and think in a way which aligned with the centre's codes of conducts and aims (and by extension mainstream society). Those considered success stories by participants and staff in the day centre communities were those that were able to secure, firstly, voluntary jobs, often within or linked to the day centre, and later (inevitably), low-skilled, low-paid work outside of the centres in the formal labour market.

Personal goals that were important to participants often related to having contact with and regaining custody of their children or repairing family relationships. While the day centres were not able to support participants with these goals directly, they did so indirectly through encouraging stability. Addressing personal problems and moving them towards gaining paid work supported these wider goals. The gatekeeper organisations play an important role in sheltering marginalised women from the disciplinary workfare interventions of the centaur state, providing a buffer until they are ready to move towards mainstream services. They provide much needed spaces of resistance and relief for those seen as 'troublesome' or 'bad' by the maloptic state, though it is important to remember that the day centres also function to support strategies of the tutelary state. The institutional environments of the day centres provide one of the few routes out for women in advanced marginality who want to leave the penal-welfare net. Despite this it was remarkable that participants had survived all that they had been through, and many had found narratives which enabled them to reconcile their negative experiences with who they were 'now' in terms of identity formation as part of the process of recovery from trauma. All participants were engaged with services and were making steps to move forward with their lives when they were recruited. Those who had moved the furthest towards a healthy, socially and economically productive life had engaged with support and worked on addressing their past traumas. This had transformed how they saw themselves so that they felt they were survivors who had overcome adversities. However, this often came many years after their initial experiences of abuse and after cumulative adversity, and many were still heavily involved with services where they had been former service users.

Despite some participants finding stability through ongoing engagement with the day centres, this did not equate to them being deemed 'fit' for parental responsibility by the state when they became involved in 'care proceedings'. Although Wacquant (2009) considered mothers in terms of the retrenchment of social assistance payments, he did not look at the management of pregnant women or mothers by the child protection system, which he concedes is one of his "greatest regrets" (Wacquant, 2022, p. 101). In the UK, the child protection system has been shown to be increasingly interventionist (Featherstone et al., 2018), and accompanied by the erosion of 'discretionary space' from social worker practice (Munro, 2010; Murphy, 2021). Marginalised women within

this study found themselves under surveillance often from a young age due to their own personal histories of adversity (ACEs), interventions at various stages throughout their lives, and punishment via the CJS and / or the child protection system (without rehabilitation when involved with the latter). Given the experiences of participants who were mothers it is useful to conceptualise the child protection system as part of the broader 'malopticon' which sees its subjects as 'bad'. For participants who found themselves seemingly barred from *being* a mother, interventions from child protection agencies were synonymous with punishment and as such can be conceptualised as an outpost of the penal system (see Figure 8.2).

White et al. (2019, p. 457) critique the increasing significance of 'ACE-awareness' in social work policy and practice which, alongside the ideological dominance of risk management, "obscures the material and social conditions of the lives" of families deemed in need of intervention. Difficult childhoods do not always inevitably lead to cumulative adversity such as those highlighted in this thesis, as such caution is needed when judgements made by child protection professionals focus too heavily on the ACE agenda rather than structural factors such as poverty. The continued 'fecundity' of marginalised women is a problem solved by recurrent removals, a process which reproduces trauma, vulnerability and precarity. This process serves to penalise poor and vulnerable mothers disproportionately (Broadhurst et al., 2015; Broadhurst and Mason, 2013).

When child protection is viewed through a carceral lens we see the social-cum-penal arm of the state at work in the recurrent production and abandonment of maternal outcasts. Enduring austerity affects women and mothers especially; and is likely to continue to exacerbate these experiences for those on the margins. Without action, and against a backdrop of ongoing welfare retrenchment, rising inequality and deepening poverty being experienced by working-class women, the number of mothers trapped in a negative cycle of recurrent child removals will continue to rise.

The state punishes mothers in advanced marginality, women with multiple and cumulative disadvantage. Failed mothers are 'seen badly' not only by the 'maloptic' social-cum penal state but also by wider society, which is primed for the vilification of poorer, working-class mothers (Gillies, 2007; Tyler, 2008). As such there is little

support for this group of mothers stuck in this negative cycle of child removal despite the moral and economic arguments to do so.

This targeted governance of poor and vulnerable families is not unique to the UK. In Norway, for example, "children in socio-economically marginalised families, or whose parents have little or no education, are over-represented among child protection cases" (Aadnanes, 2017). Similarly, research in Canada shows that poor families are over-represented as well as minority ethnic families in those subject to child welfare interventions (Stokes and Schmidt, 2011).

8.8 Conclusion

This chapter started from the premise that the state governs marginalised women in ways that are more complex and nuanced than contemporary theoretical models of the state's management of the 'troublesome poor' account for. It was informed by the work of Loïc Wacquant (2009a; 2014), whose work to conceptualise the state has an important yet narrow focus on its 'drift from the social to the penal', utilising a restrictive 'prisonfare-workfare' binary which does not reflect the hybrid form and function of certain street-level institutions, particularly the day centres (see Section 8.5) which participants were engaged with.

The accounts presented in this chapter have provided rich insights for understanding women's experiences of the 'carceral-assistential net' (Wacquant, 2009a) in the UK context. The day centres worked alongside the criminal justice system and the welfare system, though they were neither exclusively penal or welfarist in form or function. Even for participants referred via the police, judiciary, probation or other CJS agency the experience was never solely punitive. And for others, the day centres were the conduit to accessing mainstream social and welfare services. Ultimately the day centres acted as hybrid institutions that played important sheltering role in participants' lives. While highly valued by participants, any support received from day centres was always highly conditional on their behaviours and attitudes. Engagement could also be experienced as surveillance, an avenue through which these hybrid institutions monitored 'problem populations'.

On the other hand, participants accessed support and therapeutic interventions as well as finding a social space in which they could transform their identities over time within the gatekeeper organisations. The accounts presented in this chapter highlight how service users often chose to engage with the day centres and services beyond any mandatory referral; many of the women who took part in the research attended their centre long after they had completed the specific activities they originally referred for, and in some cases attended for years eventually becoming volunteers.

For those who depended on the centre on a daily basis it provided an important community service, it was not experienced as the ‘people-processing institution’ as agencies involved in delivering workfare and prisonfare have been characterised by Wacquant (2009a, p. 291). While the day centres may have been experienced as a means of surveillance from day centre staff working alongside the state – which could feel acutely intrusive (Donna being the clearest example of this experience) – the centres also acted as lifelines for hyper marginalised individuals who were unable to engage with mainstream services and who struggled with meeting their basic needs, such as maintaining their accommodation and benefits. For participants cut off from the centre (such as Jane during her temporary ban), life became increasingly more difficult.

The day centres provided participants with a broad range of social and welfare services. In addition, they were institutions that provided a social safety net, embodying the idea that individuals would not be given up on, that those deemed ‘troublesome’ or ‘awkward’ were still worthy of second chances or many as needed to make changes in their lives. They constituted hybrid institutions which enacted simultaneously disciplinary and therapeutic strategies. Along the spectrum of assistive and punitive interventions (Figure 8.2), the day centres inhabit the centre ground, providing a lifeline to those in advanced marginality and providing a basic level of care on one side, yet propping up the increasingly authoritarian and coercive state apparatus on the other.

The day centres’ function has been affected by successive welfare reform and austerity policies with staff having to focus on supporting participants to access benefits and housing. As such there is a complexity and nuance in their work which this chapter draws out. This hybridity cannot be explained by oversimplified

conceptualisations of the contemporary state. Ultimately, for many of the women who took part in the research, the gatekeeper organisations provided environments which were the catalyst for positive change and self-improvement.

9. Conclusion

9.1 Introduction

This final chapter of my thesis reflects on research aims and questions, brings together key findings and discusses what implications these have in relation to the theoretical framework, policy and practice. This chapter starts with a reminder of the aims of the research and the three research questions. Next, the key findings that answer the three research questions are outlined. I then present the original empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions to knowledge that this thesis makes. Policy recommendations are then made, and this chapter ends by looking into avenues for future research.

This thesis seeks not to reinforce normative judgements but to explore contexts where women's involvement in criminalised behaviours can be understood through reference to structural constraints, their personal histories, their social networks, and the way they respond to social policies that govern them. It sets out to explore the ways that the state engages with and governs a specific population of marginalised women. It gives prominence to women's voices in a field where the gendered nature of punishment has often been dominated by the male experience, which is treated as the standard, universal experience.

The thesis applied Wacquant's (2009a) key concepts to the targeted governance of marginalised women in the UK. By foregrounding the voices of marginalised women, and the women who work with them, this thesis extends understanding of how the welfare and penal arms of the state govern this specific group of women. It has re-examined Wacquant's (2009a, p. 99) conceptualisations of, *inter alia*, the 'centaur state' and its 'carceral-assistential net' (social and penal arms), employing a feminist lens and focusing on the lived realities of criminalised and 'at risk' women - and the women who work with them.

As outlined initially in section 1.3 the aim of the research is to re-examine Wacquant's (2009a) theoretical model of the contemporary state through employing a feminist lens, focusing on the lived realities of criminalised and 'at risk' women - and those who

work with them - and the gendered character of social disciplining. In doing so, it addresses the following research questions:

1. What forms and frequency of adversity are present in the lives of marginalised women and how does this shape or interact with their coming into conflict with the law?
2. What is the range of institutions/interventions governing marginalised women and how, specifically, do they experience and respond to: i) the conditional welfare system ii) penal institutions and iii) organisations outside of the penal-welfare arms of the state?
3. How might we understand and theorise the range of state and street-level institutions governing marginal women's lives?

This thesis has added to the existing knowledge base and addressed some gaps in understanding through revealing nuances in how marginalised women experience interventions aimed at governing poor and problematic populations in Great Britain. It shows that there are specific ways in which women experience being punished that are different to men, particularly when it comes to the surveillance and management of pregnant bodies, birth and child removal interventions. It also sheds light on the institutional hybridity of day centres, which all acted as marginal welfare services of last resort for those unable to access mainstream socio-welfare provision despite their distinct nominal purposes. For example, GO1 and GO2 were set up to support women's 'particular vulnerabilities' and pathways away from the CJS (Corston, 2007), GO3 is a long-established homelessness charity and GO4 is a charity-run domestic abuse support group.

9.2 Key findings of the study

This study has shown how women, often ignored, or side-lined in contemporary theories on the governance of the poor, experience the tutelary and therapeutic mechanisms of the state differently to men. Rarely has the cumulative nature of the adversities marginalised women face over the life course been documented and explored in this way and the state's role within these processes examined. The use of

creative and participatory research methods, and the presentation of data in case vignettes and lifeline diagrams have provided novel ways to collect and synthesise the complex and detailed qualitative empirical data. This thesis has uniquely demonstrated the collective and cumulative struggles of a specific group of marginalised women who have been abandoned and then criminalised by the state.

This study also makes a contribution to the desistance literature in terms of how women go through this process over the life course. It provides new insights into how women at different stages in their lives make sense of their pasts and their internal narratives around key moments in their lives, which shaped their ability to maintain a stable life and minimise being in conflict with the law and penal agencies.

The rest of this section draws out the main contributions to emerge from the research in relation to the three research questions.

1. What forms and frequency of adversity are present in the lives of marginalised women who find themselves in conflict with the law?

The participants within this study had experienced multiple, complex and cumulative adversities over the life course to date. These events were wide-ranging and included parental death or neglect, childhood abuse, becoming homeless, prison sentences, abusive intimate relationships as adults, and the loss of children from their care. Alongside and often associated with these adversities were poverty, poor mental health which ranged from anxiety and depression to being suicidal, alcohol and other substance disorders, and problems with their physical health.

Experiences of domestic abuse were prevalent among the women who took part in this research and was often a factor in participants coming into conflict with the law and in the loss of custody of children from their care. The latter was frequently a gateway to further adversity and trauma when mothers were subject to subsequent recurrent removal of children from their care by the courts.

Of the many adverse events that participants had experienced, the one that participants appeared to struggle the most to come to terms with was the permanent

loss of children from their care. This was a lifelong punishment. For those denied the ability to care for their children they mourned each loss and were haunted by the memories of their children whose lives they would not be a part of. The contribution here is an understanding of the impacts of child protection interventions which are experienced as penal in nature by the women subject to them.

While cumulative adversity may not be surprising given the group of women recruited to take part in the research, what this thesis highlights is the striking severity, multiplicity and complexity of adversities experienced by individuals. Participant accounts highlight an injustice in that they were often criminalised and examined pathologically rather than in terms of their lived experiences of severe and multiple traumas. It makes an important contribution to an under-researched and under-theorised area.

This research provides robust evidence of the lived and everlasting effects of traumatic experiences in childhood, which played a decisive role in how vulnerable women understand and react to life events in both their past, present and times ahead and how this is often a gateway to further, cumulative adversities. This link between a lived experience and its impact on an individual's agency, perception and therefore their life course can be understood sociologically through the work of Wacquant. These formative experiences are "embodied in the cognitive, affective and conative categories that steer the practical strategies of agents in everyday life, in their social circles, on the labour market, in their dealings with public institutions (police staff, welfare offices, housing and fiscal authorities, etc.), and therefore shape their subjective relationship to the state" (Wacquant, 2014, p. 1699). Personal agency then depends on both an individual's experiences and their perception of the social world around them and the interplay with the structures around them.

The contribution here is that although Wacquant (2009a) considered women and mothers in terms of the retrenchment of the welfare arm of the state, he did not look at women as penal subjects nor at the management of pregnant women or 'failed' mothers by the state. As such, the child protection system which acts as an extension of the penal arm of the state towards mothers, is overlooked and not included as part of his penal-welfare conceptualisation of the state.

What is evident is that women at the penal–welfare nexus have often experienced victimhood and institutional neglect (up to a certain point of problematic behaviour) earlier in life, and this is regularly linked to their subsequent criminalisation. For participants their experience of cumulative adversity was an important factor in their coming into conflict with the law. It is important to shed light on this group of women in advanced marginality and how the state seemingly punishes them for facing multiple and complex disadvantage.

2. What is the range of institutions/interventions governing marginalised women and how, specifically, do they experience and respond to: i) the conditional welfare system ii) penal institutions and iii) organisations outside of the penal-welfare arms of the state?

This thesis suggests that women are governed by the penal arm of the state (police, courts, prison and probation) *alongside* men. Whereas Wacquant (2009a; 2010) suggests that women are under the tutelage of the retrenching welfare arm, this study shows that marginalised women were governed by both welfare and penal institutions of the state. Rather than being subject purely to welfare provision for marginalised women, this thesis suggests that the ‘carceral-assistential net’ was all encompassing. Some participants remained warehoused in the ‘carceral–assistential net’ for many years, cycling in and out of prison or community sentences. As such, the research contributes to debates around how we conceptualise the state, its management and punishment of the poor, and in particular poor women.

The welfare system (JCP, Work and Health Programme providers) plays a residual role in terms of providing little more than a basic level of income support for those in advanced marginality and little meaningful support to move them closer to the labour market. However, there were some exceptions where participants really valued their JCP work coach, highlighting small pockets of care and compassion within a workfarist system. Nonetheless, most participants experienced the benefits system as a flimsy and inflexible layer of support, inadequate in supporting them with their multiple, complex issues. Moreover, some participants had experienced the punitive

repercussion of workfarist sanctions for non-compliance with behavioural demands, pushing them into further hardship and disadvantage, and in some cases back towards the CJS.

Participants were able to find shelter from the ‘carceral-assistential net’ through engagement with services provided by the four gatekeeper organisations and in particular the three day centres GO1, GO2 and GO3 (see Chapter 8). This thesis contributes to our understanding of the mixed economy of marginal services provided by these community-based charities. It advances a conceptualisation of day centres as ‘hybrid’ institutions that displayed elements of a residual ‘feminine’ or left-hand welfare system, but also exhibited elements of surveillance and, in some cases, enforcement of court-mandated conditions. Due to participants’ complex experiences, hybrid organisations working with marginalised women are not always equipped to address their needs. But there was also strong evidence that these organisations played an important role in protecting participants from the sharper end of social policy reform.

This study provides new empirical insights into how the lives of women living in ‘advanced marginality’ in the UK are governed and how they negotiate adversities and interventions from various agents of the state. In doing so, this study textures Wacquant’s (2001b) conceptualisation of how the state manages those in the most ‘precarious factions’ of society in that the governance of women goes beyond the welfare arm as they are also directly disciplined by the penal arm. Through a focus on accounts of women caught within the ‘carceral–assistential net’, the carcerality of ACEs and cumulative adversities is brought to the fore, providing rare, gendered insights into the “cognitive, conative and emotive constructs through which persons navigate social space and animate their lived world” (Wacquant, 2016, p. 70). What my thesis shows is that the state governs marginalised women who have experienced ACEs, cumulative adversity and state neglect by disciplining their subsequent infractions rather than recognising and addressing their victimhood and vulnerability.

The study shows how the child protection system often failed participants who were victims of early abuse or neglect themselves and subsequently labelled them as deviant, subjecting them to criminalisation rather than care and support. It provides insights into the rarely explored gendered dimension of this mechanism and how

marginalised girls and women are treated as a problem population by the state from childhood and into adulthood. Brown's (2014) 'vulnerability-transgression nexus' provided a valuable theoretical framing tool to support the analysis of the governance of marginal girls and women. The focus on this important intersection is supported the experience of participants in this study and how they are managed by formal penal and welfare institutions.

i) The conditional welfare system

This study highlights how – in line with Wacquant's theorisation of urban marginality – it is important to understand the perspectives of those subject to welfare conditionality and sanctions. This is particularly pertinent in a seemingly permanent climate of hostility towards those in receipt of social assistance, where families in deprivation are often met with suspicion. The often-neglected voices and experiences of women on the receiving end of such stigmatising narratives and policy interventions are foregrounded in this study.

Many of the women who took part in this study were in a hyper marginalised position. Poverty was endemic, the use of foodbanks was normalised in this group, as was reliance on day centre 'food parcels', eating some meals at the day centre and turning to family or friends when these options had been exhausted. Hardship, both economically and emotionally, was cumulative from the early years into adulthood and not mitigated by ongoing engagement with the formal welfare system.

Welfare institutions included Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and Work and Health Programme providers alongside housing, education and health (see Figure 8.1). Participants experiences of the benefits system was broadly disciplinary, though there were small pockets of compassion. Participants who were sanctioned felt abandoned by the workfare state. Some were pushed into survival crime or homelessness (and towards the CJS) as a result. Often it was the voluntary sector that stepped in to support participants during these periods of hardship. Despite this there were a couple of participants who gave accounts of having worked with kind and empathetic work coaches, which shows that can still exist within a workfarist system contrary to

Wacquant's (2009a) assertions that we have seen a wholesale shift in character from social to penal in the management of the poor.

Across the group of participants, there was a strong motivation to do voluntary work or paid work. Most of the women I spoke to were not openly resistant to engaging in some form of work or work-focused activity; a key aim of the workfarist state. A few participants were putting in hours close to that of full-time employment. Yet meaningful, secure, work that aligned with their job preferences was not readily available due to a range of factors including criminal histories, personal skill levels and experience, and the training and jobs available in the local labour market.

The solution to the unemployment of this specific group is therefore not as straightforward as advocates of behavioural economics who designed the current welfare system would suggest (Leggett, 2014). Participants appeared to already be making the 'right' choices and were in most cases doing the things asked of them by various 'street-level bureaucrats'. However, this was not always enough to get them ready for the formal labour market, which often took years of intensive support. Despite this, the 'work first' approach persists (Lindsay, 2007), underpinned by the promotion of subpar employment (Wacquant, 2009a).

It was clear from participants that punishment from the welfare system was not just narrowly experienced by the application of a benefit sanction. For some just being on benefits felt like a punishment, both those on JSA with higher levels of conditionality and ESA. Internalised stigmatising narratives around the receipt of benefits meant that it felt 'wrong' to claim even if they had a health-limiting condition or disability. This resonates with the shift to welfare receipt being perceived as fraud (Chunn and Gavigan, 2004), and an intensification of shame and stigma associated with claiming welfare benefits (Bell, 2013; Patrick, 2017).

There was evidence of social hierarchies across participants and distancing from those perceived as not 'deserving' of receipt of benefits. Hostility towards those less deserving and to immigrants highlights the varying "political subjectivity of welfare claimants" (Edmiston and Humpage, 2016). Participants would reproduce politicised, stigmatising discourses, perhaps seeking to assert their deservingness relative to more abject groups, in line with the victim-blaming logics of welfare reform.

Moving towards work in return for the receipt of benefits is an expectation of the welfare arm of the state, even for those who claim a health-related benefit, or who have caring responsibilities. Participants' accounts highlight the unrealistic nature of this expectation, at least within the context of ongoing, periodical reassessments. Participants' experiences of sanctions starkly highlight the impact of conditionality on marginalised women subject to the sharp edge of welfare reforms. Being in receipt of benefits did not protect participants from hardship, highlighting the residualised nature of social assistance. It also highlights how their voluntary work contributions are not recognised.

ii) Penal institutions

This thesis has shown how the penal element of the centaur state views marginalised women as offenders rather than as individuals with complex needs who require support. In doing so it emphasises how – fifteen years on from the Corston Report (2007) – little progress has been made within the female offender policy. As participants accounts showed, the Probation Service alone does not have the tools necessary to support participants in reducing their risk of reoffending and helping them to move away from the CJS. Under ongoing austerity and depleted national and local services, these challenges will continue to grow.

Penal institutions included the police, courts, prisons and probation and it was to be expected that these formal agencies of punishment were often experienced as disciplinary. However, what participants accounts also showed is that there was an array of additional institutions beyond the penal arm which have very punitive effects, even if they are ostensibly focused on family welfare for example supported housing, social work and child protection and MBUs.

This thesis extends Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of the penal arm of the state by focusing on marginalised mothers as subjects of the 'traditional' penal system *and* welfarist elements that had penal effects. They experienced the child protection bureaucracy as an extension of the penal arm of the state. For those participants who

were mothers an important ancillary outcome of being involved with the CJS was the removal of their children. Whether the removal was linked to being sent to prison, lifestyles deemed unsuitable to 'good' parenting, being unable to cope with mental health issues, or having a history of child removal, it was experienced as a highly punitive and traumatic life sentence and a further trauma in a long list of cumulative adversities. For some, it was a gateway to further adversity.

Living under the surveillance and supervision of child protection institutions when pregnant or postnatally in an MBU also had carceral dimensions and was experienced as punishment, an extension of the penal state. There was no chance for rehabilitation (as mothers could not get their child back once removed, and often they did not receive support to prevent this happening to them again in the future).

Participants often required health services including mental health, drugs and alcohol interventions, income insecurity and problems accessing housing. Participants who were in receipt of benefits and in accommodation still required support from organisations beyond the formal penal system to access these services, the day centres for example provided access for those who could not access mainstream services. The traditional welfare and penal arms of the state do not provide the support they need.

iii) Organisations outside of the penal-welfare nexus

All four of the gatekeeper organisations (GO1, GO2, GO3 and GO4) were charities with mixed funding streams and a variety of service delivery contracts in place to work with marginalised groups in and around the edges of the CJS within the penal voluntary sector. The organisations' purpose, funding and governance were closely linked to (though they remained distinct from) the criminal justice and welfare arms of state, this has been characterised as 'hybridisation' of service providers in the 'mixed economy' of criminal justice services (Corcoran and Fox, 2012).

What this thesis shows is that the day centres in particular (GO1, GO2 and GO3) performed a hybrid role in that they are providing services aligned to the aims of penal

policy and also provide a range of supportive welfare services. As such, these hybrid institutions were experienced ambiguously by participants, neither exclusively penal nor welfarist in form or function. They played an important protective function including elements redolent of a classic Keynesian/welfare interventionist state, that is more financially generous and less disciplinary. On the other hand, they remained close to formal penal agencies including the police, courts, probation and could fast track to prison if they reported a breach of behaviour. They were also able to impart their own sanctions such as bars from the centre the impact of which could be devastating for individuals with little access to any other forms of support.

Still, the four organisations GO1, GO2, GO3 and GO4 variously provided an important safety net for participants and worked to address the unintended consequences caused by the inflexible benefits system and sanctioning regime. Within this commitment to providing much needed social and welfare support, Keynesian elements of a welfare state could be detected. Yet there was evidence of neoliberal tropes of individualisation, responsabilisation and disciplinary mechanisms within practice of those working at the day centres. And at times, they could act to enforce penal conditions set by the courts.

The impact of an increasingly conditional and punitive benefits regime was noted particularly by those professionals working in the day centres supporting marginalised women. These voluntary sector projects that are effectively part of the penal system were forced to play a protective role to counter the pernicious impact of the formal welfare state.

Staff commented on the strain of helping those struggling to navigate welfare conditionality attached to their receipt of benefits, particularly when they received a sanction. The effects of a more conditional and punitive benefits regime were mitigated by engagement with the day centres and other support services aimed at those on the social margins.

3. How might we understand and theorise the range of state and street-level organisations governing marginal women's lives?

Participants had experienced a range of interventions from the formal penal state because of their histories of coming into conflict with the law. What is novel is that it was apparent that participants were interacting with a web of institutions and representatives of the state and were experiencing punishment from a variety of sources beyond those traditionally understood as penal. This study extends Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of the penal arm of the state to reflect the experiences and perspectives of marginalised women.

For many participants coming into conflict with the law began at an early age as children or young adults (see Chapter 5). Participants' accounts showed that the police and courts often criminalised behaviours that were linked to past and current victimisation, a connection well-known in feminist criminology (Walklate, 2013), and which has been recognised in policy (Corston, 2007). Participants were viewed as transgressive rather than vulnerable and were dealt with by the penal arm of the state. The 'vulnerability-transgression nexus' was difficult to move on from (Brown, 2014).

In financial difficulty, and with limited social welfare support, combined with high surveillance, participants were unable to move away from the carceral archipelago despite their efforts to stay out of trouble, a form of 'penal dragnet' (Wacquant, 2009b).

Nearly all (19) participants were mothers, and this thesis shows that marginalised motherhood brought with it a specific set of disciplinary spaces and punitive practices. Interventions from child protection were characterised as 'the worst punishment' by participants and thus have been conceptualised in this study as part of the expansive penal archipelago (see Chapter 7, section 7.3 and Chapter 8, section 8.2) despite being delivered through the welfare state by social work teams (albeit enforced through the courts). The experience of being punished as a marginalised mother has important gendered dimensions which deserve scholarly attention when conceptualising the punitive management of the poor. In particular, the practice of successive, compulsory child removal – a social welfare intervention intended to benefit the child – is experienced as a cumulative and life-long punishment.

This addresses a gap by showing that participants were therefore subject to unique, additional and gendered forms of disciplinary interventions relative to men. This was

most apparent in the regulation of pregnant bodies. For participants who were pregnant it became evident that they were already marked for child removal before their child had even been born. Once judged as 'bad mothers', they had very little power to challenge these decisions. Echoing earlier experiences, being vulnerable was likely to be weaponised against mothers.

For mothers, being 'seen as bad' (McNeill, 2019) by 'maloptic' state institutions included being seen as unsuitable for the role of mother. Participants engaged in child removal processes experienced 'social abjection', defined by Tyler (2013) as being multiply excluded. This was particularly acute for those who, following child removal, were unable to *be* mothers. They lost access to an important, if gendered, dimension of working-class identity - that of performing care - as an expression of citizenship and an important means of gaining belonging (Skeggs, 1997). The contribution here is that disciplinary and punitive social work and child protection interventions can be conceptualised as outposts of the penal arm of the state.

Participants' experiences of recurrent child removals suggest that once marked as a 'maternal outcast', it was a difficult label to shed. Child removal can be understood as an additional trauma experienced over the life course to date, and as a gateway to further adversity, particularly where participants had been subject to recurrent child removal. The loss of a child haunted participants' presents and futures. Utilising Wacquant's (2009a) framework to examine the role and aims of the penal state within the governance of marginalised mothers, its purpose seems not corrective but rather a means of disciplining them and making an example of them.

A further contribution of this study is examining how the four gatekeeper organisations (see Chapter 8, Table 8.1) were involved in the regulation of poor women. These institutional spaces were neither strictly penal or welfarist in form, function or how they were experienced by marginalised individuals. As such, they do not fit neatly within dyadic typologies of the state such as Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of a penal-welfare state. There is ambivalence in the organisations' welfarist and disciplinary aims, a delicate balance between supportive and punitive in the regulation of marginalised populations, particularly for GO1 and GO2 that are part of the formal penal system (funding, pathways to desistance and so on) yet provide protective welfare functions. A key finding of this study is that it is more useful to conceive of the

day centres as 'hybrid' in nature. They are institutional spaces where the boundaries between penal and welfare agendas are blurred in the governance of poverty and criminality.

This hybridity can be conceptualised beyond the day centres as they are experienced on a meso-level through the a 'web' of institutions including social and supported housing, probation and so on (see Chapter 8, Figure 8.2) participants were engaged with which could be experienced as variously punitive (or authoritarian) and assistive. The statutory, charitable and private institutions within the 'web' regulate the lives of this marginalised population in a complex, heterogeneous raft of support, coercion, protection and disciplinary dynamics that characterise women's experiences as they interact with these institutions over the course of their lives. It is through this 'web' that the state regulates those in poverty, marginality and criminality, disciplining and reforming them at a distance via the day centres among other institutions and services.

The day centres constitute an outpost of the 'tutelary state'. They are hybrid institutional environments at the boundary of penal and welfare aims of the state (Fletcher and Flint, 2018). They provide important social welfare functions for marginalised populations as vital sources of care, support and meaningful activity. Rather than being extinct, Keynesian notions of the 'feminine' left hand of the state - a commitment to welfare services - reappears in the day centre, both in how they function and are experienced.

The day centres are hybrid institutions because while they display elements of workfarist and disciplinary welfare in their practice, importantly, they *also* have a strong 'feminine' protective social function. The day centres use a form of welfarist intervention that has been declared all but extinguished by Wacquant and other social commentators. As such Wacquant's model of the state as a workfare-prisonfare binary oversimplifies the governance of the 'troublesome poor'; it does not reflect the work being done in hybrid institutions as explored in the case of the four gatekeeper organisations.

The day centre environments play a key role in behaviour change and identity shift. They were integral to individuals' desistance and recovery journeys especially when their impact was compared with formal interventions from penal institutions. Many

participants felt that having volunteer roles in a centre played an important part in goals of 'staying out of trouble', which often meant moving away from problem drug or alcohol using and certain social networks.

The day centres also provide a space for marginalised communities to have their health, educational and social needs met that they would otherwise struggle to access as well as an important bridge to accessing mainstream welfare services that some participants would otherwise have been excluded from. The practice of day centre staff is often protective and therapeutic. As such the Keynesian-era means of governing criminality and poverty is not a historical anomaly. It is very much present in the day centres and services that participants were engaged with. Ultimately, these hybrid institutional environments provided the context for participants moving away from auspices of the formal criminal justice system and towards important personal transformations. They appear to provide one of the few routes out for women in advanced marginality who want to leave the penal-welfare net. The hybrid institutional environments provide an important social function for those in advanced marginality, a place of support and respite from the punitive management the poor.

9.3 Key contributions to knowledge

This thesis makes a range of original contributions to knowledge on a number of levels, with this section setting out the empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of this endeavour.

9.3.1 Empirical contributions

There are two key empirical contributions to knowledge which are:

- i. the importance of foregrounding the role of life histories and cumulative adversity in women's pathways towards coming into conflict with the law and the penal state; and
- ii. that it is necessary to expand understandings of the role and range of institutions considered in (and beyond) the 'carceral-assistential' net.

The gaps in the literature included a lack of detail surrounding the lived experiences and histories of marginalised women subject to intensive social and penal interventions in the community within a context of welfare reform. There were further gaps in understandings of how marginalised women subject to the removal of multiple children by the care system move forward from this and the ongoing impact of this on their lives. This thesis highlights how parts of what is considered to be part of the welfare system are experienced as acutely punitive, and thus it extends our empirical understanding of what the penal system is compromised of (with implications for Wacquant's model).

During the research process, the lived experiences of marginalised women were explored in a context of welfare reform and within the geographical context of two northern English cities. This gave women an opportunity to have their voices heard and to challenge dominant discursive narratives around women, crime and welfare, and also assumptions surrounding the regulation of the poor, in particular, how women are governed at the street-level, which is often missing in the existing academic and research literature.

The research has shown the breadth and depth of the challenges and complexities embedded over the life course for women at the intersection of penal and welfare policy. In particular, the first key empirical contribution is understanding how the cumulative nature of multiple deprivations, victimhood and institutional neglect in childhood is often linked to subsequent victimisation and criminalisation as young women and adults. There is broad agreement in policy that women have 'specific vulnerabilities' which should be taken into account. However, this does not seem to be the case for the participants of this study. Participants felt that they were stuck with a particular label and that efforts to change were not recognised. ACEs and cumulative adversity have seldom been looked at together from a life course perspective, this thesis addresses this gap by showing the combined and in some ways self-reinforcing nature of adversity against a backdrop of state neglect. The cumulative impact of adversities is an important yet overlooked factor in understanding why marginalised women come into conflict with the law or struggle to meet behavioural conditions.

The second key empirical contribution is to add nuance and depth to the understandings of the role and range of institutions that govern marginalised women in and beyond the 'carceral-assistential net'. By focusing on women this thesis has been able to add evidence to understandings of the links between welfare reform, sanctions and hardship and how this can link to offending behaviour, from the perspective of women often side-lined in research of this nature. The research found that participants' relationships with various institutions of the state was more nuanced than the literature suggests. For example, it showed that street-level bureaucrats enacting both penal and welfare policy can in some situations be perceived as protective, making space for participants who struggled with the behavioural conditions expected of them.

The research has also been able to unpick the form and function of day centres. They operate simultaneously as outposts of the tutelary state, providing it with avenues for surveillance from a distance, but also acting as hybrid spaces where therapeutic, health and educational needs are met and where meaningful activities and friendships, including new social networks are made. Experiences of trauma and intervention may have primed participants cognitively, shaping how they make sense of subsequent

and ongoing interventions in their lives. This thesis makes visible the complex, heterogeneous raft of social assistance, institutional neglect and intensive interventions which characterise women's experiences of the 'carceral-assistential net'; and spaces where the prisonfare and workfare overlap as women cycle through periods of prison.

As adults, child removal proceedings were a significant, highly traumatic feature of some participants' experiences. This thesis shows that MBUs and child protection services can be characterised as carceral institutions within the 'carceral-assistential net'. The folk devil of the bad or unfit mother is not new, but it is important to shed light on the targeting of new groups and techniques through which mothers are managed in contemporary society. Poor and vulnerable birth mothers have little power, access to support or means of resistance, therefore how they are regulated and punished and discarded demands scholarly attention.

9.3.2 Theoretical contributions

There are four key theoretical contributions to knowledge which are:

- i. that Wacquant's conceptualisation of the state omits women's experiences of and responses to the penal arm of the state;
- ii. the introduction of the notion of the hybrid organisation in the provision of services for marginalised women as part of conceptualisations of the 'carceral-assistential net';
- iii. challenging the dominance of the idea that we are seeing a one-directional shift from social to penal and new punitiveness theory; and
- iv. theorising the under-researched experience of women who undergo (successive) child removal.

Drawing on the conceptual work of Loïc Wacquant enabled a framework through which to explore the way that marginalised women are governed by the state and to extend the debate on whether its penal and welfare functions are converging towards penality as Wacquant (2009a) suggests. This includes exploring the interplay of tutelary and therapeutic techniques used in regulating a particular group of 'privileged targets' -

marginalised women - as they undergo various interventions to correct their unwanted behaviours and fashion them into independent, self-regulating, workers. Placing women at the centre, so often an afterthought in macro-level conceptualisations, enabled me to extend Wacquant's work so that it reflects the experiences of women in two cities in northern England.

Using Wacquant's penal-welfare framework and taking a feminist-informed approach was useful, particularly when it led to exploring what the form, function and lived experience of such interventions was like at the micro-level for women. This led to key findings which question not only Wacquant's conceptualisations but also the wider literature on the governance of the poor which characterises public policy as moving solely one-directionally and converging punitively as Wacquant (2010a, p. 203) puts it, "the single (welfare) to the double (social-cum-penal regulation) of the poor". State regulation was much more complex than simply a fierce and frowning 'centaur state' (Wacquant, 2009a). There was much more ambivalence on the ground, more of a 'tutelary state' as characterised by Fletcher and Flint (2018) as deploying therapeutic interventions aimed at normalising marginalised groups and the working classes. For example, some professionals advocated for participants and supported them in navigating mainstream services while keeping an eye on them to shield them from the sharper edges of workfare policy reforms. The day centres provided a space for participants to resist regulation, for example, in terms of not being forced into paid work before they were ready. Participants appreciated the engagement of staff but also felt constrained or watched at times.

This thesis has also identified a new set of hybrid organisations that needed to be conceptualised as coexisting between the disciplinary archipelago and the traditional welfare state. This is a significant development of Wacquant's framework, only made possible through using a gendered lens. The research was conducted in a European context, where protective welfare remains stronger (if continually eroded in the UK). Wacquant's (2009a) main focus was the United States but also France to a lesser extent, arguing that his model was applicable to both. While I acknowledge comparative limitations due to differences in political systems, structures and welfare state typologies across the US and UK contexts, within the confines of a PhD thesis

focused on two areas in England there was not the scope to interrogate these differences further.

The research findings supported the introduction of the concept of hybrid institutions in this study. It highlights how voluntary sector organisations funded through the penal arm of the state in the mixed market in criminal justice services, enact disciplinary functions but are simultaneously providing a 'pre-workfare' welfarist role of support. The hybrid institutions occupy a different space from the mainstream welfare and penal arms of the state, and as such, there is space for differential responses and powers of frontline staff to support service users, which serve to further blur penal and welfare aims of the state, and to create space for them to approach their clients in different ways. In fact, those on the front line of GO3 in particular have been shown to deliver support with compassion, discretion and an underlying social justice-informed ethics of care.

Our understanding of mothers in poverty who have experienced recurrent removals of children from their care is also under-theorised. This area of research is relatively new in terms of it being examined empirically within the sociological literature and is largely ignored within the criminology literature, and as such, is under-developed from a penological theory perspective. Therefore, a further theoretical contribution is bringing interventions from child protection and welfare services into the disciplinary archipelago. Wacquant's (2009a) conceptualisation of the penal arm of the state is extended through encompassing the life-changing punishment that marginalised mothers undergo when children are removed from their care.

This thesis draws upon seminal research in this area by Karen Broadhurst and colleagues on 'maternal outcasts' (Broadhurst and Mason, 2013), and adds to this growing body of work by developing a new way to theorise the day-to-day experiences of mothers whose children have been removed or who have experienced successive removals. In developing our theoretical understanding of this process, the concept of the 'malopticon' is also applied. This extends its original use by Fergus McNeill (who coined the term to describe male probationers) to encompass participants in this study who felt they carried the stigma of failed motherhood with them for life and for whom motherhood seemed to be perennially denied.

Ground level insights into the day-to-day governance of poor, marginalised women enrich the growing Marxist feminist literature that has more recently taken everyday life as a matter of concern. This thesis works to extend LeBaron and Roberts (2010) use of carcerality to encompass the socio-economic precarity and cumulative adversity of failed mothers and provides the richness of micro-level insights from women themselves.

9.3.3 Methodological contributions

The key methodological contribution to knowledge is:

- i. the need to use a range of creative, flexible and more participatory methods to engage, empower and understand participants better.

The methodological approaches selected allowed the space to capture participants' experiences both currently and over their life course in a way that enabled a better sense of their nonlinear journeys and various interventions - it grasped their setbacks, personal change, resistance and progress. The use of auto-photography and photo-elicitation alongside repeat interviews captured crises and unexpected events and revealed how the state regulates marginalised women at a distance through various street-level actors. It also captured how participants navigated new issues and move forward (or not) with their lives.

The methodology of this thesis builds on in-depth qualitative engagement, drawing on a tool kit of creative research methods. In addition, the way that the data was synthesised and presented, not only through thematic coding but also lifeline diagrams, brought to the fore the scope, depth and cumulative nature of tutelary and therapeutic interventions used with this marginalised population of women. It becomes possible to gauge what style of intervention worked (and what did not), what kind of support was needed in general and for particular crises and how this changed over time. In utilising vignettes and the life course maps for participants' lives, I was able to clearly highlight the cumulative and complex nature of their experiences. This provides a more accessible way to understand the impact of a raft of state interventions over the life course.

Visual methods and in particular asking participants to conduct a photo project was viewed positively by the managers of the day centres and GO4. It was felt that such an activity was productive and would ‘keep them busy’ (by providing the women with a structured task that they could own), something important for those whose lives were in limbo awaiting important decisions from social workers, probation officers or the courts. As such this proved to be useful in terms of gaining approval to access the centre and recruit participants.

The use of auto-photography was helpful in showing me what was important in the day-to-day lives of the women who took part. It helped them to open up to me about their pasts, the current challenges they faced and their hopes for the future, in a way that was richer than had we only talked about these things. Of course, there is always the performative element in that participants may have taken photos of things that they thought I wanted to see; ‘wasn’t sure what you wanted’ (Amy). As such, it adds to the small body of literature on visual methods with marginalised populations and contributed to our understanding of how these can be used with women who have been in crisis.

9.4 Policy implications: Where do we go from here?

The empirical findings, combined with wider evidence, suggest a number of policy implications emerging from this thesis. There needs to be further investigation into how cumulative adversity and trauma impedes women’s attempts to move forward with their lives. Within criminal justice policy the connection between female offending, victimisation, trauma and criminalisation has been made (Ministry of Justice, 2018). However, this is not the case within the welfare system, as those participants awarded JSA rather than ESA attest. There is, therefore, scope to revise the Work Capability Assessment to ensure it is trauma-informed, for example, by embedding a screening tool for ACEs (Gentry and Paterson, 2021) to ensure these are recognised when assessing claimants’ mental health. It is important, however, to ensure ACEs are not pathologised and that structural factors are also taken into consideration.

Women subject to criminal justice interventions in the community are likely to also have to navigate the welfare system. This means that the way that individuals are assessed in relation to their fitness for work and their support requirements should recognise the relationship between ACEs, related trauma and the broader impacts this has on meeting behavioural conditions set by the state in its welfare policy. Those identified as higher risk via the screening tool could have their claimant commitment amended to reduce or waive conditions. In order to embed this in the welfare system trauma-informed, ACEs awareness training should be mandatory for all Jobcentre Plus staff, and those contracted to provide welfare services.

Compliance with release conditions and ongoing supervision is difficult for those returning to contexts outside mainstream society and back into cycles of abuse, neglect and discrimination (Bumiller, 2013). Without meaningful rehabilitative support or long-term social or economic opportunities, participants often remained enmeshed in the CJS for years. This 'revolving door' (Kruttschnitt and Otto, 2019) between custody and community acts as a gateway to further adversity. Problems faced by participants are exacerbated by the harsher welfare conditionality regime enacted under the Welfare Reform Act (2012).

Child protection interventions were (understandably) child-focused and risk-based. However, the needs of mothers often went unaddressed and were even held against them within parenting assessments, with structural barriers ignored. Furthermore, in spite of mothers' cumulative adversities and trauma there was often only a short time frame for them to 'prove themselves' by enacting behaviour change to meet the required standards to be deemed fit for motherhood. During the assessment periods, mothers in this study were not provided with timely specialist support to address their issues, or aftercare following a negative decision. This contributes to the cycle of recurrent removals of children into care which creates a group of women excluded from motherhood, with the additional trauma and stigma of going through this process, to add to their lists of existing adversities. Parents could be given more time by placing children in foster care, and enacting a longer assessment period, rather than fast-tracking permanent adoption, providing more time for parents to make the changes required of them. Parenting skills programs should be offered alongside assessments.

Individuals' pasts and the ongoing needs relating to these should be addressed or managed rather than marking them as a failed parent.

The study has shown how unrealistic the timescales of child protection assessment periods can be, particularly for those mothers who have multiple and complex needs. Recently, there has been a shift towards court-ordered child removal of newborns and fast-track adoptions, which quickly leave mothers permanently excluded from the chance to know or have contact with their child (Department for Education, 2012). While safeguarding children and ensuring they are protected is important, it seems that mothers are being set up to fail by undergoing assessments with minimal support and in the context of austerity, under a highly conditional and punitive welfare regime. The risk-averse system produces, and processes failed mothers rather than giving them a second chance accompanied by sufficient support. As such it would also be good to see more emphasis on aftercare and supporting mothers who have lost children to the care system. For example, involving mental health professionals and charities in designing and implementing a national aftercare and prevention process.

In terms of the practical delivery of interventions to marginalised women, based on the evidence provided in this thesis, it appears that the best approach is one that is understanding, benevolent, ACE- and trauma-informed and hope-based rather than one which is punitive, rigid or intolerant of setbacks and oriented around fears of less eligibility (DeVerteuil, 2006). Providing long-term support for those whose journeys 'away from chaotic lifestyles' take time, rather than short-term interventions is also important.

In particular, the homeless day centre GO3 provides a good example of how this can be done. The longevity of some of its service users' engagement with their key workers is testament to this, including the progression they have made to becoming people they are proud of being within voluntary roles at the centre. In utilising a model where participants work towards taking on voluntary roles in the centre, GO3 moves away from the pathologising deficit approach and towards empowerment and enablement in the way it engages marginalised individuals. An area that could be further developed is to improve opportunities and pathways for continued progression beyond the day centre. This might include engagement with supportive, voluntary, trauma-informed education, training and employment support. As an established charity for over three

decades, GO3 had more stability than the other hybrid institutions, though all of the day centres (GO1, GO2 and GO3) played key roles in stabilising lives and enabling participants to think about looking for work.

This small qualitative study captured an array of situations and characteristics of participants from a range of ages and backgrounds. The experiences highlighted in this thesis will certainly not be unique to women in the cities I recruited from and link up with national policy problems. Rehabilitation has been a focus of government policy reform since 2010 (Ministry of Justice, 2013a). However, within the Offender Rehabilitation Act (2014) and Transforming Rehabilitation reforms, women have remained an afterthought (Birkett, 2017). Furthermore, critics have highlighted that these reforms have been based on privatisation and cost-cutting goals rather than finding the best way to support individuals (Walker et al., 2019). Changes to the way probation is delivered have been declared unsuccessful and privatisation has recently been reversed (Ministry of Justice, 2022).

Further discussion is required on where responsibility should lie, i.e. public sector or voluntary sector, and what action should be taken for problems influenced by poverty or structural factors. These are not problems for day centres to solve but an awareness of these factors in individuals' life stories is particularly important in times where they resist or challenge the behavioural norms of the centres. There is ongoing debate in the voluntary movement as to whether charities involved in social policy work can remain 'non-aligned advocates' (Corcoran, 2011).

This thesis has broader implications for hyper-marginalised women across the UK and potentially mothers in other European countries who may be following the UK's lead in term of toughening welfare conditionality and criminal justice policy. The rate of children placed into out-of-home care is on the rise in countries with different welfare regime types such as Denmark and Germany (Fallesen, 2014; Fokken, 2016; Ubbesen et al., 2012). Therefore, my findings sound a cautionary note about the harmful effects on women should these states take a similar policy direction.

9.5 Future directions

Notwithstanding empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions of this research, there are things that I might have done differently had I not had the constraints imposed by the Ministry of Justice (see Chapter 4) on sampling recruitment, as well as limited time and resources.

Conceptually and theoretically the single largest lacuna is the absence of marginalised women with ethnic minority experiences. While I recruited one participant who identified as Black British, she withdrew from the research at an early stage. As such, ethnicity as an important object of analysis is missing. While there were women from ethnic minority groups in the day centres, my recruitment approach was to let participants come forward to me organically, and there may have been additional barriers for women from a minority background coming forward. Wacquant's work largely focuses on the important intersection of 'race' and class. An intersectional approach is also pertinent to the exploration of poverty and penalisation in the UK context, however, for my specific set of participants this was not something I was able to explore. It is therefore important to acknowledge that the experience of marginalised white women cannot be generalised to that of women from minoritized communities.

The other group that I feel was missing from the research was those who disengaged from the day centres. As my recruitment was via the day centres it was difficult to capture those who had decided to resist interventions and not attend the centre or engage with research and their reasons for doing so. It can be inferred that there may have been more negative experiences of day centres had I been able to recruit from this group, which potentially would have pushed conceptualisation of day centres more towards the penal arm in terms of how they were experienced.

Given more time, I would have liked to have made this thesis more participatory. For example, the study could have benefitted from engaging marginalised women at an earlier point to support co-production of the research, for example, in the research design stage to get their insights on what the 'problem' was that required research, research aims and objectives and so on. This would have given participants more control and enabled them to develop research skills at the same time. Although the

use of auto-photography and photo-elicitation was something that most participants enjoyed, it had limited impact beyond that. More participatory methods might have had more of an empowering effect and helped them to improve their situations.

Despite these limitations, this thesis paves the way for further research on the experiences of marginalised groups with other institutions that may be formally and conceptually understood as 'non-penal' but with similarly under-researched disciplinary and punitive impacts. This thesis provides important insights into the governance of marginalised women within the 'carceral-assistential net' in the UK. It contributes to our understanding of how they experience punishment and support from a range of statutory institutions across the policy arena from the CJS and social services to the welfare system and beyond, and the vital role that day centres play as they try to move on with their lives.

I hope that these insights do justice to the women who took part in the research process. The women who took part in this research have had some of the most traumatic life experiences imaginable, are consistently failed by the state and are often punished rather than supported. This thesis shines a light on an under-represented and understudied group of marginalised women and emphasises the importance of interventions and practices which, rather than disciplining or punishing them, are supportive and sensitive to their needs in ways which help them find stability and a way to move forward with their lives.

10. References

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Appendix 1: Email to managers of gatekeeping organisations

Dear [insert name],

My name is Larissa Povey and I am currently studying for a PhD at the Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam University.

I am researching the following topic: "Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice and Welfare in the Community" using participatory visual methods.

The purpose of this research is to explore the effects of changing criminal justice and welfare policies on the lives of women who have offended or who are considered to be at risk of offending. My research gives priority to gender, an aspect often overlooked in this field of research. The research has been formally approved by Sheffield Hallam University's Ethics Committee, and I have undergone an enhanced DBS check at this institution.

In order to research the above topic I am seeking the voluntary participation of women who have experience of the criminal justice system e.g. have been to prison in the past or who have experienced a community order and who are in receipt of welfare benefits.

I am hoping to conduct several in-depth interviews with participants, as well as a photography project which will invite participants to create their own images of anything which they want to share with me that represents their life and lived experience. Each participant will receive £15 in high street vouchers, or whatever your guidelines will allow, to thank them for their participation and efforts.

I would be willing to discuss my research and methods with you in more detail, to explain all relevant issues and to answer any questions. I apologise for any inconvenience caused if this research does not meet the remit of your organisation.

Thank you for your time.

Kind regards,

Larissa

Appendix 2: Centre manager invite and information sheet

Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice and Welfare in the Community - Centre Manager Information Leaflet

I am inviting your service users and staff to take part in independent research conducted by a PhD student at Sheffield Hallam University. The research will explore the effects of changing criminal justice and welfare policies on the lives of women who have offended or who are considered to be at risk of offending. With service users I plan to use participatory research methods which includes a photography task and two follow-up interviews. I would like to recruit 6-8 service user participants from your centre. To encourage participation service users will receive a small incentive payment in the form of £10 of high street vouchers.

I would also like to conduct two short interviews with your frontline key workers to gain the practitioner perspective on how policy works on the ground, its challenges and opportunities for reform. Key workers will be interviewed twice, once towards the start and also towards the end of the research period, which is from December 2015 to November 2016.

Kind regards,
Larissa Povey

Email: [redacted]
Phone: [redacted]

What will participation involve?

For staff participation will involve taking part in two interviews, each lasting between 30 to 60 minutes. It will also involve acting in a gatekeeper capacity, distributing the research information leaflet to women service users who are eligible to take part. This ensures that I will only recruit women not currently being supervised by NOMS/CRC or whose supervision will be coming to an end within the research period. It is also important that women approached to participate have the capacity to give informed consent and are not too vulnerable to take part in research.

Confidentiality and anonymity:

Any information shared will be treated confidentially and will not be shared with others. Your staff and service users will be offered full anonymity, including a change of name and location, and data will be anonymized and stored on a password protected computer.

What if I have a problem?

If you have a question about the research or a problem with it that you do not feel able to discuss with me you can contact my PhD supervisor, Del Roy Fletcher via email ([redacted]) or telephone ([redacted]).

Appendix 3: Participant recruitment poster and flyer

Sheffield
Hallam
University | Centre for Regional
Economic
and Social Research

Volunteers needed!

**Would you be happy to talk about your
experiences?**

A female university student is looking for women to take part in some research. If you have come into contact with key workers, social workers, the police, the courts, or have accessed benefits or legal aid, we want to know what your experience was like and what you think about it.

Taking part would involve taking some pictures about things that matter to you, followed by a short interview to chat about the photos and your experiences.

**As a thank you for taking part you'll receive £15 of
high street vouchers.**

To find out more get in touch...

...by phone or text:

...by email:

If you'd like to request a call back please send me a text or email me and include your name and contact number.

Appendix 4: Participant information Sheet

What is the aim of the research?

This is an independent research project which aims to understand how women experience the criminal and welfare systems in the community.

Who will conduct the research?

Larissa Povey, a female PhD student.

How long will the research take?

This will vary from person to person, you will have 1-2 weeks to complete the photography task. The photo-interview will take place 1-2 weeks after the camera is returned to me. A follow up interview will take place a month later.

What do I have to do to take part?

1. a photography task using a disposable camera
2. two one-to-one interviews where we discuss the photos and your experiences

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because you attend a women-only support service.

Do I get paid to take part?

In recognition of your time and effort you will receive £15 of high street vouchers in two parts:

1. £5 after photography task
2. £5 after photo-interview
3. £5 after follow-up interview

Will my information be kept confidential?

The data, which includes the interview recordings, transcripts and photographs, will be stored anonymously and securely, the same day that the data is collected. All information from the photography task and the interviews will be kept confidential and your identity will not be disclosed at any stage. The only case where confidentiality would not be upheld would be if you voiced a serious, immediate intent to harm yourself or anyone else, the researcher would need to report this in line with the ethics procedure of Sheffield Hallam University.

What happens if I want to drop out?

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and will be asked to sign a consent form. You are still free to withdraw at any time in the future without giving a reason and without causing any disadvantage to yourself. The researcher will continue to seek your consent throughout the study. You will not have to return the vouchers if you decide to drop out. Please be aware that should you decide to withdraw there is a time limit on the withdrawal of your anonymised data.

How to get in touch:

Email: [REDACTED]
Phone / Text: [REDACTED]

Appendix 5: Consent form for service user participants

Consent Form - Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice and Welfare in the Community

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

| | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. The nature and purpose of the research has been explained to me, I have read the Information Sheet have had the opportunity to ask questions. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that I can refuse to take part or withdraw and there would be no consequences of any kind. I understand that to withdraw I need to contact Larissa Povey [redacted] [redacted] Your anonymised data can be withdrawn up to 14 days after the interview date. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on me, the support I am receiving or the voucher for participating in this research. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that all information I share will be kept strictly confidential, unless I disclose that a vulnerable person may be at risk, in which case the interviewer may share their concerns with an appropriate professional. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. It has been explained to me that I will not be identified in any reports or other documents resulting from the research, and that my personal details will not be revealed. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I understand that my words may be quoted in publications (e.g. articles in journals and academic books, PhD thesis, SHU Research Archive, web pages, presentations) but my name will not be used. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I agree to take part in the photography task and follow up interviews for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I would consider taking part in a photograph exhibition after the study is complete. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. I agree for the interviews to be audio recorded. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant Signature Date

Name of researcher Signature Date

Participant copy

Appendix 6: Consent form for staff participants

Consent Form - Women's Experiences of Criminal Justice and Welfare in the Community

Please answer the following questions by ticking the response that applies

| | YES | NO |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. I have read the Information Sheet for this study and / or had details of the study explained to me and understand that I may ask further questions at any point. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study without giving a reason. If I change my mind I should contact Larissa Povey [redacted] up to 14 days after the interview date. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I understand that I can stop the interview at any point or choose not to answer any particular questions and this will not have any impact on me or the support I am receiving. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that the information collected will remain confidential, unless I say anything that makes the researcher concerned that there is a risk of harm to me or someone else or I discuss undisclosed illegal acts. In these circumstances I understand that the researcher must report this information to the project worker. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I understand that my personal details such as my name will not be shared outside this project. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree that the data in anonymised form can be used for other research purposes (e.g. writing articles in journals). | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I agree to take part in the interview for the above study. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. I agree for the interview to be audio recorded and to quotes being used. I understand my name won't be used. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Name of participant Signature Date

Name of researcher Signature Date

Researcher copy

Appendix 7: Auto-photography information and guidance sheet

Information Sheet - Photography Task

You have been given a disposable camera with a flash, and we have checked that you know how to use it. The camera has 16 exposures so this is the maximum number of photos that you will be able to take.

You have a week to take photos, please keep the camera with you during this time so that you have it to hand when you see something you want to photograph. We have agreed a date and time to meet so that I can collect the camera from you. Please do not remove the silver cover from the camera. You will receive a voucher on completing this task and returning the camera to me.

Guidance for Photos

I am interested in your everyday experiences, and the things that you want to share with me. There is no right or wrong photo. If you are struggling to get started I have included a list of ideas which may be of help.

- Your experience with the police, courts and legal system.
- Your experiences of work and the welfare system.
- Attending the women's centre.
- Places, people or events that are important to you.
- Any challenges that you are working to overcome.
- What worries you?
- What makes you happy?
- What are your hopes for the future?

Health and Safety

Your safety is of utmost importance so please ensure that when you are taking photos that you do not put yourself at any risk. If you want to take photos of people, you should tell them why you are taking photos (as part of the research that you are involved with), and get their permission before doing so. It is important to do check that you have permission even if you are taking photos of family or friends.

Contact Details

If you have any questions or need to re-arrange the date we are meeting you can contact me via phone call or text on [REDACTED] or via email: [REDACTED]

Appendix 8: Participants attributes form for initial interviews

Women, Criminal Justice and Welfare - Attributes Sheet

Name

Gender ☐ Female / ☐ Male / ☐ Transgender / ☐ Prefer not to say

Age

| | | | |
|---------|--------------------------|---------|--------------------------|
| 16 – 24 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 45 – 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25 – 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 55 – 64 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 35 – 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 65+ | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Nationality

Ethnicity (Census categories)

| | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| White | | Black or Black British | |
| British | <input type="checkbox"/> | Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Irish | <input type="checkbox"/> | Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other White | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other Black | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mixed | | Chinese or other ethnic groups | |
| White and Black Caribbean | <input type="checkbox"/> | Chinese | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| White and Black African | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other ethnic group | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| White and Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Other Mixed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Asian or Asian British | |
| | | Indian | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Pakistani | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Bangladeshi | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| | | Other Asian | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Relationship status

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|-------|--------------------------|
| Single | <input type="checkbox"/> | Divorced | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Married | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dissolved civil partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Same sex civil partnership | <input type="checkbox"/> | Living with partner | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Separated | <input type="checkbox"/> | Widowed | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Household Type

| | | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| Couple with dependent(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> | How many dependents? | <input type="text"/> |
| Couple without dependent(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do they live with you? | <input type="text"/> |
| Lone Parent | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Single Person | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| Other | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |

Further information

Education

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
| Entry Level 1-3 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Level 4 (HNC/KS/NVQ) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Level 1 (GCSE D-G/KS/S4L/NVQ) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Level 5 (HND/KS/NVQ) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Level 2 (GCSE A-C/KS/S4L/NVQ) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Level 6 (BA/NVQ/BTEC) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Level 3 (AS-/A-Level/KS/S4L/NVQ) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Level 7 (MA/NVQ/BTEC) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other

Economic status

Economically active

Full-time employment (16+ ~~hours~~) ☐

Part-time employment (<16 ~~hours~~) ☐

Self-employed ☐

How many hours do you work? ☐

Unemployed - seeking ☐

Economically inactive

Unemployed – not seeking ☐

Retired ☐

Long term sick or disabled ☐

Looking after a home ☐

Student ☐

Voluntary work ☐

Other ☐

Have you worked in the past? Yes / No

Tax credits and Benefits

Not in receipt of any benefits ☐

JSA ☐

ESA (Incapacity Benefit) ☐

Income Support ☐

PIP (DLA) ☐

Working Tax Credit ☐

Child Benefit ☐

Housing Benefit ☐

Heating Benefit (WFP/CWP) ☐

Other ☐

Have you been sanctioned by the Jobcentre? Yes / No

If yes, how many times? _____

Have you received a hardship payment? Yes / No

Have you had to use a food bank to get by? Yes / No

Health

No limiting health issues ☐

Limiting long-term illness, health problem or disability that limits work they can do ☐

Permanently sick or disabled ☐

How is your mental health? _____

Do you have any specific learning difficulties? _____

Referral and other services

Who referred you to the women's centre? _____

Do you receive any other support or services? _____

Do you have a social worker or key worker? Yes / No

If yes, what kinds of things do they support you with? _____

Do you have a criminal record? _____

If yes, can you give some details of your conviction(s)? _____

Appendix 9: Interview topic guide for service user participants for photo-elicitation and follow-up interviews

Interview Guide: Women's Centre Service Users

Interview preamble: Ask if they want to create their own pseudonym, agree it if so, reinforce importance of anonymity, and how I will achieve that. Reminder of limit of confidentiality (immediate harm). Talk about interview being about her stories and experiences, rather than a yes or no – no such thing as ‘getting off the subject’. Explain lay-out of interview, (photo interview followed by a more in-depth interview) what we will discuss – reinforce that she is free to leave at any time, with no consequences, and talk about protocol for becoming distressed.

Participant pseudonym: _____

Date of interview: _____

Participant given/read information sheet? [☐]

Participant signed Consent Forms? [☐]

Section one: Opening questions [If not covered in the initial interview...]

- How did you first come to be attending the centre?
[prompts: Who referred you? / How many days of the week are you here? / Which courses or sessions do you regularly attend? / How long have you been coming? / Do you have any one-to-one support?]
- Do you have to come or is it voluntary?
- What do you like about the women's centre?
- Is there anything you dislike about the women's centre?
- Is there anything you would like the centre to provide for you that it doesn't at the moment?
- Has coming to the centre helped you or changed you in any way? Can you describe how.

Section two: Photo-elicitation:

[Thank participant for completing the task, make a general comment on the photos e.g. The photos have come out really well, I'm looking forward to finding out more about them]

- How did you find the task? Was it easy to choose what to take photos of?
- Do you want to put the photos into any kind of order? [If not, say that we can talk through the photos in turn]
- Ask participant to explain what each photo depicts / why they chose to take it / what it means to them.
- Ask about parts of the photos that I want further information on or elements that they haven't mentioned e.g. Why did you decide to take a photo of [insert appropriate subject]?
- Is there anything you didn't get a chance to take a photo of that you would like to have been able to take a photo of?
- What messages were you trying to convey with your photos?

Semi-structured interview

Section three: Personal relationships / family

1. Are your friends or family supportive?
2. What type of support do they provide?
3. Are you working on any relationships with friends/family?
4. Do you live with or nearby friends / family?
5. Are you looking to move or happy where you are?
6. [if they have children] Can you tell me a little bit about your kids?

Section four: Experience of welfare agencies & the benefits system [if indicated as claiming on attributes sheet]

This section is about your work experience and how you have found dealing with welfare agencies such as JCP or Work Programme providers, and your claimant history.

1. [Refer back to attributes sheet to check which benefits claimed] Can you tell me a little bit about what you've been doing for the past year or so?
 - work/unemployed/volunteering/training/benefits/how long?
 - looking after family
 - prison/community sentence
 - worked in the past? role? how long for? why did you lose that job?
2. What kinds of jobs have you had in the past?
3. What are you wanting to do now?
4. Do you have any current plans for work, education, training or volunteering?
5. Do you have a plan to help you reach that goal? Can you think of anything that would get in the way of you achieving this?
6. Did they have any conditions to meet? [ask about their claimant commitment]
7. Did they feel this was reasonable/fair?
8. What would be the consequences of not meeting this?
9. How has this affected them? Have they changed their behaviour because of any conditions?
10. What do you think of your JCP advisor and/or work coach?
11. Describe the relationship / their attitude towards you.
12. Do you worry about missing appointments with them?
13. How useful are they in helping you to find work / get you ready for work?
14. What do you think of the welfare/benefits system? [supportive / controlling]
15. How does the support you get from your work coach compare with the support you get from the women's centre?
16. Do they think the benefits they receive are enough? Can you meet your basic needs [bills, food, toiletries]? If not, how do you cope?
17. Do you rely on family/friends? Food bank? Do you ever go without?
18. Can you afford to treat yourself or your friends/family? How often? What kinds of things do you do as a treat?

Section five: Experience of sanctions [if ticked sanctioned box on attributes sheet]

1. Ask how many times they have been sanctioned.
2. Ask them to talk through the circumstances that led to them being sanctioned [what they were sanctioned for / why they had not fulfilled said requirement / how they found out].
3. What type of sanction.
4. Did they appeal? Hardship payment?
5. What impact did the sanction have? [prompts: stress / could they meet basic needs / did they have to borrow money / was their housing affected]

Section six: Other support services & social services

1. [Refer to attributes sheet] Do you receive any help from outside the centre with anything? [prompts: housing / money/debt / counselling]
2. Ask them to describe the help they receive and the relationship with their support workers.

Section seven: Pathways to offending [if ticked criminal record box on attributes sheet]

This section is really about how you first got into trouble, how old you were, and the circumstances around you at that time.

1. [if not already covered above, or need to expand] So could you start by telling me a little bit about your childhood? [Probe: where lived, who with, how it was]
2. And could you tell me a bit about what age you first got involved in offending, or started getting in trouble with the police? [Probe: How did that happen? With who? What else was going on in your life at that time? Did any of that contribute to your offending, do you think?]
3. Could you think of the main reasons why you started to offend?
4. Looking back on this time, would you say that any of your experiences were particular to being a woman?
5. [if not already covered] Would you say that alcohol or drugs played a part in any way?

| | |
|--|--|
| Offence data (ask at end if not covered in interview) | |
| Number of convictions / type: | Health/Mental health issues: |
| Number of times in prison / lengths: | Alcohol/substance use? |
| | If yes, primary and secondary substances: |

Section eight: Persistence of offending & criminogenic needs [this section only if number of convictions is high]

This section is about how and why your offending increased over time, any periods of non-offending, and potential turning points in your life related to these experiences.

6. When would you say that your offending went from occasional or recreational to a bit more serious or more frequent? And why do you think that happened?

7. What do *you* see as the main issue or problem driving your re-offending in the past? [Probe: relationships, financial situation, substance use, environment; historical or recent experiences of physical/sexual abuse, mental health]
8. Have you had any periods of time where you haven't been offending since you started? [If yes, probe for details, including why it started up again]
9. When you look back over your life to this point, can you identify any turning points where you think "If that certain thing, or certain things, had happened – or had *not* happened - my life would be in a completely different place right now? These can be positive or negative turning points.
10. How did you feel when leaving prison [prompt if required: "life will be different" or did you feel more like "nothing will change"]

Section nine: Reoffending - specific schemes and interventions

This section is about your experiences of being any schemes aimed at reducing reoffending, and other experiences of the criminal justice system.

11. Have you been involved in any schemes to help you reduce your re-offending?
12. What did you think of the scheme? [Probe: Why? What has your experience been of it? Positive? Negative? Why?]
13. Do you see prison as a means of stopping offending? [punishment/rehabilitation]
14. What do you consider to be the most effective form of punishment?
15. What do you consider the most effective form of rehabilitation?
16. In your experience, what has been the most effective intervention to help you to stop offending?
17. Did you need an external intervention, or did the want to change come from within?

Section ten: Relationships with CJS agencies

This section focuses on your relationships with various criminal justice agencies.

18. Can you tell me about the sort of relationship that you have with the police?
19. [if served time] Can you tell me about your experience of prison? [which prison / how long]
20. Describe your relationship with your probation officer.
21. What has been your most positive experience with one of these agencies, or an individual working for them?
22. And the most negative?
23. What (if anything) else did you / do you get out of these relationships? [Support with finding housing, employment, substance misuse etc.]
24. Do you think this will ensure you don't get in trouble again?
25. Looking back on your interactions with police, courts, prison, probation, women's centre do you feel the system has been mainly supportive or has it felt like you were being punished? If both, can you explain why? Or has it changed over time?
26. Has being a woman affected the way you have been treated by the police, courts or probation?

Section eleven: Current plans and the future

Okay, this last section is about your current plans and your hopes and concerns about the future.

1. How do you see yourself? [criminal/victim/unjustly treated]
2. Have you always seen yourself this way?
3. How do you feel about work?
4. How do you feel about family?
5. [if criminal record ask] How hopeful do you feel about a future where you don't go back to prison / get in trouble with the police?

6. What do you see as the most important thing in that scenario?
7. What would it take, do you think, for you to never go back to prison/getting re-arrested?
8. What role do family, children [if any] play in this future?
9. Can you see yourself working [if currently inactive]? If so, what would be your dream job?
10. Do you think the support you have received/receive from the centre and other places will help you to achieve this?

The end

- Thank participant for their time.
- Ask if there is anything they want to ask me.
- Ask them if there is anything they wanted to tell me, but haven't yet been given the opportunity?
- Ask if participant interested in having further contact with me (follow up & see outputs).

Comments:

Appendix 10: Interview topic guide for staff

Interview Guide: Professionals/practitioners – Frontline

Interview preamble: Reinforce importance of their anonymity, and that of their specific institution/local organisation, and how I will achieve that. Talk about interview being about stories and experiences, rather than a yes or no – no such thing as ‘getting off the subject’. Explain lay-out of interview, what we will discuss – reinforce that they are to leave at any time, with no consequences. Explain that we will start with more general questions, before moving specifically on to female offenders and women at risk of offending.

Participant name: _____

Date of interview: _____

Participant given/read information sheet? []

Participant signed Consent Form? []

| Background/Demographic Data | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|
| Age: | Ethnicity: |
| Gender: | Role: |
| Organisation: | Years of service: |

Opening questions:

1. It would be really good if you could start by telling me about your career trajectory, and how you got into working with in a women's centre more generally?
2. And how did you come to be involved working with female offenders and at risk women?

Section One: Working with women who have offended or are at risk of offending

As you know, my research is interested in female offenders and women at risk of offending, and how they experience being socially marginalised and subject to both criminal justice and welfare interventions. For my sample, I am identifying women who have offended or who are at risk, and who have multiple and complex needs. I am interested in your experiences of working with these women.

1. It would be really helpful to me if we could start with you telling me about one or two women you have worked with, or that you know of, who are typical examples of the women who attend the centre, and give me a mini case-study of them [Probe: age, ethnicity, offence type, family circumstances, living arrangements, offending history, relationships, substance use, length of offending career].
 - Identity of the women?

- How are women different from males offenders?
 - What is the role played by men in the development of their criminality?
2. What are the factors that contribute most to these women getting into trouble? [pathways into offending]
 - Do you think this is different to male offenders?
 3. What sort of offences are women who attend the centre typically convicted for?
 4. Is there a difference between the ones who go in and out of prison? [Probe: offences they commit; acquisitive vs non-acquisitive; serious vs non-serious; reasons for this]
 5. In your experience, are women who re-offend persistently over the life course somehow different to women who offend in intense short bursts? Or as a one off? In what ways?
 6. And what about their lives away from offending? [Probe: family, partners, children, employment, accommodation] - Are they able to draw upon supportive social networks?
 7. Where – if at all – do you consider there to be gaps in service provision for women who repeatedly re-offend?
 8. What prompts desistance from crime (maturation / turning point)?
 9. What sort of official interventions – if any – tend to be most effective in helping your service users? [Probe: Prison; Probation; Women's Centre; JCP ; Work Programme]
 - Probe for detail on importance of outside agencies/third sector/charity work
 - If indicating that this process is more related to self / informal support (rather than official interventions), probe for more detail.
 - What role do interventions (prison / community-based) play?
 10. Do you have one or two examples of women who have come to the centre and completely turned their lives around? Can you tell me a little about them [mini case study]?
 11. What do you think was most important in helping them to turn their lives around? [formal or informal / gender-specific support]
 12. Do you have any service users who stick in your mind because you weren't able to work with them? Any particularly difficult cases?
 13. Have you ever had to permanently bar a woman from attending the centre?

Section two: Changes to CJ & welfare policy

1. Have recent changes to probation / implementation of CRCs affected your centre?
2. Has this affected the way you work with your service users?
3. Have changes in welfare had any impact on the women that you work with? Both in terms of their pathways *to* crime *and* in going straight?
4. What role do you think JCP / work coaches play in the lives of the women you work with?
5. How do women view JCP? Is it important or not? Support or punishment? Route to work or just for benefits?
6. Does the CJS and welfare system work together in impacting on the women you work with?

Section three: Women's centre & operations

1. What services and support does the centre provide?
2. How do you see your centre - criminal justice / welfare / others?
3. How do you see the work that you do with the women on a one-to-one basis?

4. Are there any other centres providing a similar service?
5. Where do you get your funding from? Is it enough?

6. Does your funding come with strings attached? [restrictions / limitations]
7. What support is not available to the women that they would benefit from?

The end

- Thank participant for their time.
- Ask if there is anything they want to ask me.
- Ask them if there is anything they wanted to tell me, but haven't yet been given the opportunity?
- Ask if participant interested in having further contact with me, to show what I have done with their data (e.g. any future publications).

Comments:

Appendix 11: Participant profiles

The following profiles offer only a simplified version of participants' lives, I would not assume to neatly summarise a person's life and all its complexities into a single paragraph. Instead, these snapshots are intended to provide a brief introduction to the women who kindly agreed to take part in the research. Further details on their lived experiences are provided in Chapters 5 to 8 where their data is presented in the form of quotes and field notes.

Amy

Aged 18 at the time of interviewing, she lived in a secure Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) (blocks of self-contained flats) within a residential neighbourhood. She was undergoing a looked after child assessment during the research period. She was moved to a flat in the MBU 150 miles away from her hometown from a different country of the UK. She felt she had been let down during her own childhood, she 'was not looked after properly' by her mother and her time in care had not been positive. She felt the MBU was prison-like and did not want to be there. After she was released from the MBU she planned to move into her maternal grandmother's house until her council flat was sorted.

Caitlin

Caitlin was 31 at the time of interviewing, she recalled a mainly positive childhood though she had been bullied and had not done well at school. She felt that things started to go wrong during secondary school when 'a bad thing happened' and her father left which split her family apart. She had worked mainly in cleaning jobs. She had one son; but the relationship with the father had been dysfunctional and at times abusive. They had split up and she had struggled to cope as a single parent, in an area where she had no family or social network. Her mental health deteriorated, she was found guilty of child neglect and abuse and eventually lost custody of her son to his father. She maintained contact with her son once a fortnight via a contact centre.

Carly

Aged 33 at the time of interviewing, Carly had five children although none were in her care. Her main priority during the research period was her ongoing custody battle for her youngest son who was a few months old at the time of Carly's recruitment to this research, and who had been placed into temporary foster care shortly after he was born. Carly had visitation with her son three times a week at a contact centre. Carly had undergone multiple traumatic life experiences and abusive relationships, both as

a child and adult 'I've been brought up like that...around domestic violence'. She had lived in a children's home from the age of 14. She had been in trouble with the police many times and had an extensive history of community sentences and prison stays. She was in the process of recovering from drug addiction during the research period. She was accessing mental health services and domestic abuse support groups. Her last partner had assaulted her when she was seven months pregnant with her youngest son and she had moved to a new city to flee from him. As the research period was coming to an end she received the news that she would not be granted custody of her youngest child.

Gillian

Aged 44 at the time of interviewing Gillian told me about her battle with alcohol abuse. She had been sober for five and a half months when we first met her, and she was really proud of this. She had a long history of offences which she linked to her problem drinking. As well as community sentences she had been to prison numerous times. She had been estranged from her family since stealing to support her alcohol use and felt she 'had a lot to make up for'. Her son, who was in secondary school, had been in long-term foster care since he was little. She had a number of serious long-term health conditions related to her alcohol abuse; due to this she was placed in the ESA Support Group.

Jane

Jane was 48 at the time of interviewing. She was not happy about where she was living during the research period; her council flat was in poor condition and she did not get on well with her neighbours. She had recently been diagnosed with mental health problems including a personality disorder. She had been banned from the day centre where I recruited her, after insulting another service user, so we met in a public building after the initial interview. She claimed ESA WRAG but struggled with money particularly having enough to eat; she used food banks and ate meals at day centres. She had one child who had been removed from her care as a baby. She had been in prison three times mainly for fraud offences.

Carol

Aged 54 at the time of interviewing Carol had experienced many traumatic life events. She called herself a 'government child' as she had been in care from three weeks old. When talking about her parents she described her mother a 'psycho' and her father a 'raging alcoholic'; she said she split apart from her wider family who were 'criminal minded'. She had experienced domestic abuse in most of her adult relationships and

had spent time in a women's refuge with her three daughters, two of whom had experienced abuse by Carol's former partner. At the time of interviewing, she was between corrective surgeries to her skull, since she was assaulted by her ex-partner when she confronted him about the abuse of her daughters. She claimed ESA in the Support Group.

Sylvia

Sylvia was 54 years old at the time of interviewing. She was living in supported accommodation and had been homeless or in temporary accommodation for most of her adult life. Sylvia had spent many years 'in and out of prison...for over 20 odd years', she couldn't remember exactly how many times she had been to court but she said, 'I have got about 100 convictions'. Sylvia had been through multiple traumatic life events; she was abandoned by her mother 'when I think of my mum I always feel sad because...I don't know if she is alive or dead...I have never known if my mum loved me or not'. She was abused by her step-father. She had one grown up son, who had been adopted when he was a baby following time in an MBU. Her son's father had died of a heroin overdose shortly after being released from prison. She described having been diagnosed with various mental health problems including having a dependent personality disorder. She also had various physical health problems linked to many years of rough sleeping and alcohol misuse. She was in receipt of ESA Support although she had not always claimed, and when homeless she had relied on begging, day centres or shoplifting to survive.

Lola

Aged 56 years old at the time of interviewing, Lola was married with two grown up children. She had been convicted for fraudulently claiming Disability Living Allowance. This was her first offence, and she served a community sentence for this. She had suffered with poor mental health throughout her life, in particular dissociative disorders which stemmed from her experiences of child abuse.

Whitney

Whitney was aged 26 at the time of interviewing. She had experienced abuse from a male family member, who pressured her into sex work. She had been in trouble for shoplifting and prostitution and had a past history of drug use. Her focus during the research period was on her new relationship and trying to progress from volunteering into paid work. She has one child who she agreed should live with his father during a period when she had no accommodation and was 'sleeping on sofas'; however, there was an ongoing court battle for custody as the father wanted to restrict all contact with

her son. She has a chronic autoimmune neuromuscular condition and a specific learning difficulty. She claimed ESA WRAG and volunteered at the centre daily after progressing from being a service user two years before.

Sally

Aged 36 years old at the time of interviewing Sally was volunteering at the day centre where she had previously been a service user and, as an ESA WRAG claimant she was also in part-time work. Sally was living with her current partner who has mental health issues which means he has an appointee to help his claim benefits and manage his affairs. Sally has struggled with alcohol abuse. Both she and her partner were trying to manage their drinking by staying away from former social groups who still drink on the street. She had five children who were no longer in her care. She had been in and out of prison, most often her convictions were drug possession related, but some were breaches for example of curfews.

Bella

Bella was 34 years old at the time of interviewing. Bella had a problem with her spine which affected her walking, she had been in an abusive relationship in the past which affected her mental health and resulted in her living in a women's refuge and receiving crisis loans and hardship payments. These problems became particularly acute when her brother died. This event impacted her mental health resulting in her losing her child to adoption. By the time of interviewing, she was in a better place mentally, had a flat and was volunteering daily at the day centre she had used. Her plan was to try to gain contact with her daughter and eventually get her back. She did not have a formal criminal record and was in ESA WRAG with DLA.

Anita

Aged 32 at the time of interviewing Anita had undergone a number of traumatic events. She had been a victim of sexual abuse by a male family member. She felt that she had not been able to find justice for this; she said that though the police were involved 'he got off with it'. She had also experienced domestic abuse in subsequent intimate relationships. She lived with a number of mental health issues including a specific learning difficulty, anxiety and depression. She had been unemployed for 'about 10 to 12 years', and was on ESA WRAG with PIP, she was volunteering in a charity shop and hoping to progress into care work.

Evie

Evie was aged 24 at the time of interviewing. She identified her ethnicity as 'white mixed' as one of her parents was from a Mediterranean country in southern Europe. She lives with a specific learning difficulty and anxiety and had been a victim of domestic abuse in a past relationship. She had one child who lived with her parents, who she sees weekly. She understood that her learning difficulty had been linked to her child being removed from her care, 'I couldn't be responsible for her, I couldn't protect her because I can't empathise very well'. Evie claimed ESA Support.

Jessica

Aged 55 at the time of interviewing, Jessica had two adopted children. She had experienced domestic abuse from her ex-partner and was experiencing abuse from her eldest son in the research period. She had various physical health issues and could not walk unaided and was on ESA Support. She struggled to manage her household budget; her eldest son had stolen money from her and was taking food from the kitchen, she said that 'it is the amount of food he is stealing' that meant she had taken to locking the food cupboard.

Vivien

Vivien was 46-year-old at the time of interviewing, and she had experienced severe physical domestic abuse the injuries she sustained had left her physically disabled. She had two children, one grown up and one in primary school. On ESA Support Group, she wasn't looking for work but had gotten involved in civil society engagement panels organised by the local authority.

Laura

Aged 44 years old at the time of interviewing, she had one son. Laura was in a new flat at the time of recruitment having recently fled from a domestic abuse relationship. She received Income Support and Carer's Allowance for looking after her mother. She struggled to get by and attended support services where meals were provided; she had used food banks particularly in the winter and run up to Christmas.

Bethany

Bethany was aged 67 at the time of interviewing. She had been on Income Support previously but was on a pension. Her children are grown up and she lives alone. She

struggled to get by at certain times of the year. She had been taken to court after falling into arrears with her council flat, this had really upset her, and she said the council had 'threatened [to] do all sorts'. As well as attending the support groups at the day centre she spends a lot of time supporting a friend with mental health issues.

Alice

Alice was 41 years old at the time of interviewing. She had two children in primary school who had recently been removed from her care. She was facing a charge of neglect at family court. Alice had quite serious long-term mental health issues and a history of alcohol misuse. She had a psychiatric nurse who visited her at home. In the past she had been subject to electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) a number of times which has impacted her memory.

Frankie

Aged 48 at the time of interviewing Frankie described herself as a 'functional alcoholic'. She had previously worked as a healthcare professional but had her contract terminated when she was accused of sexual assault and being under the influence of alcohol at work. Though the charge for sexual assault was eventually dropped; she was attending the day centre courses as part of a conditional caution. She was educated to degree level and until this conviction had always been employed, she told me she came from a "privileged background".

Ros

Ros was 45 years old at the time of interviewing. She was living in a new flat with her partner when I met her. She was very happy to have her own flat after many years being homeless - on the streets or in temporary accommodation. She has had drug and alcohol issues, and still drinks but feels she has it under control, and she has a methadone script to help her abstain from heroin. She had a long history of community orders and prison sentences for mainly theft related incidents. She has six children altogether, none of whom remained in her care. She claimed ESA WRAG and was interested in getting into voluntary work at the day centre.

Christina

Christina was 30 years old the time of interviewing. She had left home at 16 because she did not get on well with her mother. She had been living on friends' sofas but eventually ended up rough sleeping. She initially accessed food parcels at the centre and support with getting housing; but she is now a volunteer as well. By the time I

interviewed her she had a flat of her own. She has a heart murmur and mental health issues and learning difficulties. She claims JSA rather than ESA because of 'not having a thousand pieces of paper that I can pass to them to show how long I have had [health issues]'. She is repaying debt related to housing arrears. She has a criminal record mainly for shoplifting when she was homeless.

Annie

Aged 27 years old at the time of interviewing, Annie had been to University but had been in prison following being charged with drug related offences in a mainland European country. She had undergone a number of prison transfers and had finished serving her time in a UK prison. She had been subject to supervision in the community for a year following release from prison which came to an end as she was recruited to take part in the research. As part of her community supervision, she had a curfew and undergone electronic monitoring. Annie had been attending workshops at a women's day centre when I first met her and said, 'the therapy helped me so much and I am so glad I had the help I did'. She was not claiming benefits as she had been sanctioned twice; she had a supportive boyfriend and family. During the research period she moved to a new city and found work though she chose not to disclose her criminal record to her employer.

Donna

Insert Donna's biog!

Camille

Camille dropped out of the research process.

Appendix 12: N-Vivo Coding Nodes

| Look for: | | Search In | Nodes | Fin |
|---|--|-----------|-------|-----|
| Nodes | | | | |
| Name | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Alcohol and substance misuse, desistance and recovery | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Being valued, positive encounters | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Benefit sanctions | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Building life skills | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Care system, revolving door | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Childhood experiences of abuse and trauma | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Coping strategies | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Courts, judges, legal process | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Diversion interventions | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Domestic violence victimisation | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Emotions | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Anger | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Betrayal | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Forgiveness | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Happiness | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Injustice, unfairness | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Respect | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Shame | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Stigma | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Trust | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Fatherhood | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Gendered experiences | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Good life management skills | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Governance, street-level bureaucrats | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Health problems related to street living, street culture | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Homelessness, rough sleeping, housing problems, insecure housing | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> House proud | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Informal support network | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Intervention and Abandonment | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Keeping on top of household chores | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Lack of material resources | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Loss of rights | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Low educational attainment | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Marginal welfare services - drug, alcohol, mental health, behaviour | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Maturation and desistance from crime, old lifestyle | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Mental health problems | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Methodological findings - access, qualitative interviews and ethnography | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Methodological findings - visual methods | | | | |
| <input checked="" type="radio"/> Motherhood, child removal | | | | |

Appendix 13: Information on participants' children and the experiences of child removal

| Participant | Number of children | Number of children removed by care system |
|-------------|--------------------|---|
| Amy | 1 | 0 |
| Caitlin | 1 | 1 |
| Carly | 5 | 5 |
| Gillian | 1 | 1 |
| Jane | 1 | 1 |
| Carol | 3 | 0 |
| Sylvia | 1 | 1 |
| Lola | 2 | 0 |
| Whitney | 1 | 1 |
| Sally | 5 | 5 |
| Bella | 1 | 1 |
| Evie | 1 | 1 |
| Jessica | 2 | 0 |
| Vivien | 2 | 0 |
| Laura | 1 | 0 |
| Bethany | 2 | 0 |
| Alice | 2 | 2 |
| Ros | 6 | 6 |
| Christina | 1 | 1 |

