

Hallam Centre for Community Justice

DONCASTER DESISTANCE STUDY

August 2009

Dr Katherine Wilkinson



Sheffield
Hallam University

SHARPENS YOUR THINKING

The Doncaster Desistance Study

Dr Katherine Wilkinson

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Dr Katherine Wilkinson

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Executive Summary

The Hallam Centre for Community Justice conducted two evaluations of the DoVeS Counselling Service at HMP Doncaster, which supports offenders who have had experiences of domestic violence. These reports showed the positive affects of accessing the service on their client's attitudes to their own offending behaviour and demonstrated the challenges of collecting robust data to reflect on service efficiency post release. The Doncaster Violent Crime Theme Group wanted to fund the service, however required evidence that the service affected re-offending rates. Demonstrating effectiveness quantitatively through reconviction/reoffending follow-up studies with a comparable control group with this population would prove complex and expensive. Therefore, this study was developed as an alternative way of examining the affects of DoVeS service engagement post release on desisting from offending.

A desistance approach was adopted, given the previous evaluation findings that individual identity shifts featured highly in DoVeS service user narratives. A qualitative narrative approach was therefore adopted as an appropriate method to explore desisting positions and identify the impact of CJS interventions on respondent's adopting non-offending lifestyles. By adopting this approach, this small research project hopes to move beyond evaluating reducing reoffending programmes from a quantitative, positivist stance, to focus on how interventions may work to foster or support desistance.

This study therefore identifies the transition and sequencing of desistance from criminal activity of a sample of sentence serving offenders who were in custody at HMP Doncaster in 2006. 20 men who were interviewed twice regarding accessing the DoVeS counselling service were invited to take part in this project. The research team successfully contacted and interviewed five (ex) offenders who had been desisting from offending for up to 3 years.

Participant Profile

All of the 5 men interviewed identified their ethnic background as White British. Participants were aged between 31 and 45.

- 3 respondents had been out of prison for between 8 months and 3 years.
- 2 respondents are serving sentences. Of these 1 had been re-convicted since 2006.
- All 5 respondents are experiencing/ have experienced drug or alcohol dependency issues.
- One respondent is currently engaging with an alcohol rehabilitation project.
- 2 respondents with drug dependency issues are both currently taking steps with the support of probation to tackle their drug addiction. The 3rd is completely drug free.

All 5 respondents have received sentences for offences involving violence, ranging from aggravated vandalism to interpersonal violence. All had been arrested for offences including shop lifting, minor driving offences, drunk and disorderly, robbery and GBH. All respondents have had or are currently experiencing drug and/ or

alcohol dependency issues. 4 of the 5 respondents disclosed mental health issues. 4 respondents have spent most of their adult life in and out of prison.

Key Research Findings

Desisting Narratives

- Participants' life histories were defined by the domestic abuse they witnessed or experienced
- All those interviewed reported unhappy, insecure childhoods defined by violence and early family relationships characterised by a lack of trust
- Participants described the time in their lives in between the trauma and desistance as focussing on 'containing' the early trauma

The Desistance Process

- Narratives identified desistance as a process beginning with communicating trauma
- The data in this small sample therefore suggests that the desistance process is not a linear experience
- Feeling strong, confident and 'sorted' enough to access rehabilitation support services was the next step
- Desisters described the final step of desistance as gaining employment
- Many participants admitted that they were anxious about maintaining the desistance they sought in the long term as they felt they lacked practical day-to-day coping skills

Services Supporting Desistance

Participants in the study identified the following services as assisting /supporting their journey to desistance:

1. DoVeS prisons counselling service
2. Drug and alcohol rehabilitation services
3. Community-based services (accommodation, employment and education opportunities)

The Sequencing of Desistance Support

The onset of desistance described by those participating in the study was supported by accessing the DoVeS counselling service, which assisted potential desisters with their previous experiences. Respondents felt this was significant in that once they had dealt with their trauma, they felt more able to engage with other interventions, like drug and alcohol programmes. All respondents described the sequencing of engaging with desistance support services as follows:

- 1) 'Sorting my head out' about the past (Counselling)
- 2) Dealing with dependency issues (Rehabilitation)
- 3) Engaging with more long term planning support (Employment, training etc.)

However, one cannot underestimate the value of utilising both services that affect internal reconfiguration as well as services that can locate appropriate accommodation or drug and alcohol rehabilitation for desisting offenders.

Engaging with the Emotional Aspects of Desistance

The DoVeS counselling service engages with the emotional aspects of desistance and as mentioned above proved to be integral to the act or process of self re-labelling of the men in this study as desisting offenders. Ultimately, this study has shown that engaging with the emotional aspects of desistance, is an important element of encouraging and supporting a process of self re-labelling which is a critical part of the adoption of a desisting identity.

Desisting offenders in this study all felt that accessing the DoVeS prison counselling service had had a positive effect on their attitude to their own ability and coping strategies required to desist from offending behaviour. Clients accessing the service in 2005 described an increased sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment in previous evaluations of the service (Wilkinson and O’Keeffe, 2006; Hamilton et al, 2008). Therefore it is important to acknowledge the positive impact that accessing the DoVeS service is still having on these men’s lives, two years after their engagement with the service.

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Section 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

In 2004, Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Centre (DRSACC), a participating member of Doncaster Domestic Violence Working Party (DDVWP), was successful in securing funding from Lloyds TSB and the Tudor Trust to establish a counselling service for prison inmates who have been affected by domestic violence¹. The service, which has become known as DoVeS² has been providing counselling support to prisoners at HMP Doncaster since 2005. The Hallam Centre for Community Justice conducted two evaluations of this service, between 2005 and 2007.

The counselling outcomes reported in the previous evaluations were that clients accessing the service reported an increased sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment and described being listened to as a powerful experience. The DoVeS evaluation findings tentatively suggested that accessing this service was positive and supportive of clients regarding:

- Coming to terms with their violent past
- Acknowledging that they could choose to behave and live differently
- Beginning to think about different ways to exist and behave that supports a non-offending lifestyle

However, it was found that demonstrating the services effectiveness with regard to supporting desistance from offending behaviour more robustly proved challenging. Demonstrating effectiveness quantitatively through reconviction/reoffending follow-up studies with a lack of a comparable control group was unworkable. Further, there were insufficient numbers of DoVeS clients to make any quantitative work valid and not possible to perform on a cohort of 20.

The Doncaster Violent Crime Theme Group were keen to provide further financial support for DoVeS, however felt they required further evidence that the service supported desistance. Given the circumscriptions above, the Hallam Centre for Community Justice were asked to develop an alternative method of exploring the desisting status of those who had accessed the DoVeS counselling service, using an alternative methodology. Desistance research was considered appropriate here, given the previous findings of the DoVeS evaluations, individual identity and interpretation of and interaction with social structures are key factors in the exploration of desistance (Wilkinson and O’Keeffe, 2006 and Hamilton et al. 2008). A qualitative narrative approach was therefore adopted as an appropriate method to identify the impact of CJS interventions on respondent’s adoption of a non-offending lifestyle. By adopting this type of approach, this small research project hopes to move away from/ beyond evaluating reducing reoffending programmes from a

¹ The definition of domestic violence adopted by the DDVWP and the DoVeS project is “the emotional, physical, sexual or mental abuse of a person by their partner, family members or someone with whom there is or has been a relationship”.

² This title was suggested by prisoners at HMP Doncaster to acknowledge the `Domestic Violence Service` focus, but associated the acronym with DoVeS to symbolise peace and non-aggression.

quantitative, positivist stance, to focusing on how interventions may work to foster or support desistance.

1.1 The Desistance Approach

The relatively scant attention empirical research and theory have given to the process through which individuals go to stop or give up offending can be broadly divided into two groups, which 'fall into the dichotomy of ontogenetic and sociogenetic paradigms' (Maruna, 2001: 27). The idea that offenders gain a stake 'in conformity' by entering the employment market or starting a family unit have resulted in mainly quantitative approaches to researching desistance from crime. Since then however, desistance studies have become increasingly focussed on the impact of internal cognitive processes on desistance (see Mauruna, 2001: Giodano et al. 2002), a position which lends itself more effectively to qualitative research approaches.

The design of this project is based on the increasingly acknowledged position that rather than occurring spontaneously, desistance can be viewed as a process which is impacted upon through the interaction of both environmental influences and processes of individual decision making. In an attempt to move beyond approaches to desistance that are limited by the agency/ structure debate, two theoretically informed narrative-based movements represent working towards a more integrated theory of desistance. Steven Farrall's work draws on Giddens' (1984) Structuration Theory, using insights from his 'life course' perspective and combines an analysis of individual decisions and structural constraints (and Farrall and Bowling, 1999: and Farrall and Calverley, 2006). Shadd Maruna's work focuses on identifying the common psychosocial structures underlying offenders' and ex offenders' self-stories and effectively outlines 'a phenomenology of desistance' (Maruna, 2001: 8).

It is important to note however that the sample used for this study has its limitations.

From the twenty men first contacted, only five were interviewed. Three desisting offenders were interviewed at the Archer Project offices in Sheffield and two were interviewed whilst serving sentences at HMP Ranby and HMP Doncaster.

1.2 The Doncaster Desistance Study

This study seeks to identify the transition and sequencing of desistance from criminal activity of a sample of (ex) offenders who were in custody at HMP Doncaster in 2006. The desisting offenders in the sample were interviewed twice at HMP Doncaster regarding the DoVeS counselling service, an intervention they were participating in at the time. This study was designed to examine if accessing the counselling service (and any other local interventions) while in prison has supported their embracing of a non-offending lifestyle.

Empirical research and theory has, until relatively recently, paid little attention to the process through which individuals go to stop or give up offending. The design of this project is based on the increasingly acknowledged position that rather than occurring spontaneously, desistance can be viewed as a process which is impacted upon by both environmental influences and individual decision making. Social structures, like access to housing, rehabilitation services and employment are still important in deterring offenders from a criminal lifestyle, but this approach acknowledges that an

individual's interpretation of and interaction with social structures is a key factor in the exploration of desistance (Maruna , 2001; Lieblich and Maruna, 2005).

1.3 Research Design

The main aims of this study are to:

- explore with desisting offenders, their 'life story' and within that, their telling of their own involvement in an offending lifestyle.
- identify respondents understandings and interpretations of the factors and experiences related to their own desistance.
- examine, with (ex) offenders, any relationship between their experiences of interventions designed to support non-offending behaviour and their own trajectories of desistance.

1.4 Defining Desistance and Accessing the Sample

Of the 5 respondents in this study, 2 were serving custodial sentences and, one could argue, we may challenge considering them as desisting, as their abstinence may be forced upon them, rather than being actively chosen. However, given the unreliability of other more statistically-based evidence regarding desistance (i.e. re-offending rates) this study defines desistance as a maintenance process:

'desistance might more productively be defined as the long term abstinence from crime among individuals who had previously engaged in persistent patterns of criminal behaviour' (Maruna, 2006: 26).

A total of 20 offenders who had been interviewed twice at HMP Doncaster regarding their engagement with the DoVeS Counselling Service in 2006 represent the total sample for this study. Two appropriate research sites were arranged for any interviews undertaken, one in Sheffield and one in Doncaster:

- In Sheffield, the Archer Project offices
- In Doncaster, the Action for Employment office.

Gaining access to the contact details of this original cohort of men was challenging. Ultimately, the Chair of the Doncaster Violent Crime Theme Group arranged a liaison between research staff and staff at the Offender Management Unit at Doncaster Police Station to access participant contact details. The research team wrote the invitation to participate letters, which were forwarded to the Probation Office. The Probation office inserted the address details and posted the communication on to the sample (see Appendix 1, for first draft of letter).

The potential participants were provided with details about the project in the form of an information sheet (see Appendix 2) which contained further details about the project. This form also contained consent forms. Preparations were made to interview between 7 and 20 men. After 4 separate mail shots 6 men agreed to be interviewed, however 1 did not attend the two arranged interview times.

At a successfully organised interview, the researcher went through the information sheet and consent forms with the respondents to make sure they understood clearly what they were agreeing to. It was possible that these interviews may prove uncomfortable for some participants. All respondents were provided with the contact

details of services offering suitable help and support in the area. This project also underwent successful University Faculty Research Ethics Approval.

1.5 Methodology

This study is informed by a phenomenological perspective, which emphasises an individuals' own perceptions or subjective appraisals of situations, and therefore a qualitative approach was adopted to data collection and analysis. A narrative approach to (ex) offender's life stories necessitated a loosely structured approach to interviewing to ensure the meaning and interpretations of life situations are the respondents own. However, as the aim of this study was to examine what, if any, interventions respondents found useful in their contact with the CJS, the interviews were semi-structured in nature to ensure certain topic areas were covered in detail with each participant.

1.5.1 *Generating and Analysing Data*

The analysis of this data was approached by utilising and adapting content analysis methodology, specifically drawing on Shadd Maruna's framework used in his Liverpool Desistance Study (2006). From Maruna's work, one can produce the following hypotheses (based on McAdams, 2005, Life Story Narrative Framework), that desisting narratives would contain:

- more redemptive than contamination³ storytelling strategies, whereas active offenders would concentrate on the negative consequences that follow a previously positive story sequence.
- a more integrated view of themselves than active offenders (i.e. real me, as opposed to person responsible for crime).
- more generative themes identifying a shift in locus of control from self-absorption to caring for others than active offenders.
- more liberating life narratives where desisters rearrange/ re-work their self narrative and past lives than active offenders.
- more attributions that are neutral⁴ reports and concessionary responsibility, as opposed to active offenders containing more excuses, justifications and refusals to narrate rationales.
- more content indicating individual responsibly and agency than active offenders.

³ In contamination sequences, a good even turns sour, in a redemption event, the opposite happens, something good comes out of something negative.

⁴ Content Categories for Attributions:

1. Reports- neutral admission of a failure event without describing negative aspects or offering justification
2. Concessions- Admission of guilt in which speaker takes responsibility, or partial responsibility for their behaviour and acknowledges wrong. Includes expressions of guilt, shame or remorse.
3. Excuse- Acknowledges failure of offending behaviour, but blames others, extenuating circumstances. Including blaming drugs, alcohol, friends
4. Justification- admits responsibility, but denies behaviour is negative, legitimates their behaviour. Includes denial of injury (no one hurt), denial of victim (they deserved it) and appeals to loyalty (did it for kids).
5. Refusals- evades question, or uses more subtle evasion tactics: 'let's leave it at that'.

- sense of having a plan, an optimistic plan, as opposed to persisting offenders vague view of future.
- strong belief in self determination, unlike active offenders.

However, given only 5 interviews were conducted in this current piece of work, all of which were with desisting offenders; a complex statistical analysis would prove meaningless in such a small sample, with no data from active offenders for comparison. Therefore the data were analysed using a thematic content analysis approach, which was designed to identify verbal material for manifest and latent narrative content, whilst remaining loyal to the essence of Maruna's approach. This involved generating and analysing narrative for:

- Hypothetical content regarding future goals and statements about the present.
- Identification and self-evaluation of intervention/ support services that respondents attended.
- Agentic themes (agency and control).
- Attribution content (concessions, excuses and justifications).
- The identification of redemption and contamination sequences.
- The identification of peak experience, lowest point and turning point episodes.

Given these aims, the research team developed a data collection methodology based on the life history approach to interviewing.

1.5.2 A Life History Approach

The life history approach involves collecting as many life stories as possible in order to begin to make sense of how people make sense of their own lives (McAdams, 2005). This type of data collection focuses on collecting individual's narratives about:

- Key events
- Significant relationships
- Identifying recurring themes in the narrative.

When collecting life history data, it is important for participants to concentrate on events and people that they see as fundamentally important to their own life story and how they have become the person they are now (McAdams, 1995⁵).

1.6 Field Work Conducted

In-depth one-to-one life history interviews were conducted with 5 of an original sample of 20 men who were interviewed in 2006 by a researcher from the Hallam Centre for Community Justice in HMP Doncaster.

- 3 desisting offenders were interviewed at the Archer Project offices
- 2 desisting offenders were interviewed in prison, whilst serving sentences at HMP Ranby and HMP Doncaster.

⁵ Please find the Life History Interview Schedule used in this project in Appendix 3.

1.6.1 Participant Profile

The respondent's ethnic profile, age and educational achievements are listed below:

- All of the 5 men interviewed identified their ethnic background as White British.
- Participants were aged between 31 and 45
- All participants left secondary education with no formal qualifications
- All participants have engaged with education opportunities as an adult
- All hold educational qualifications equivalent to level 1 NVQ
- 2 respondents have GCSE's in English and Maths
- 4 of the 5 participants achieved these qualifications whilst in prison.

The respondent's historical involvement in the criminal justice system, sentences served and drug and alcohol dependency issues are outlined below:

- 3 respondent had been out of prison for between 8 months and 3 years
- 2 respondents are serving sentences, 1 gentleman has been re-convicted since 2006 (see definition section below)
- All 5 respondents have had drug or alcohol dependency issues
- One participant is currently engaging with an alcohol rehabilitation project
- 2 respondents with drug dependency issues are currently taking steps with the support of probation to tackle their drug addiction. The 3rd is completely drug free.

All 5 respondents have received sentences for offences involving violence, including: aggravated vandalism to interpersonal violence. All had been arrested for offences ranging from shop lifting, minor driving offences, drunk and disorderly, robbery and GBH. All respondents have had or are having experiences with drug and/ or alcohol dependency issues, with 2 receiving sentences for drug related robbery and/ or violence. 4 of the 5 respondents disclosed mental health issues.

All 5 respondents had spent time in prison, with 4 of the 5 having been serving sentences from three months to four years. 4 respondents have spent most of their adult life in and out of prison. 1 respondent reported having conducted nine separate prison sentences of various lengths in the previous ten years.

Section 2: Early Life Scripts: Domestic Abuse, Loss and Onset of Offending

2.0 Introduction

This section presents findings from the exploration of desisting offenders 'life story' and within that, their telling of their own involvement in an offending lifestyle, with particular reference in this section to the onset of their offending. This project is primarily concerned with desistance from offending behaviour, however as respondents reflected, the context of their offending has had a significant impact on their trajectories into desisting from offending.

2.1 Life Stories Defined by Violence

All those interviewed reported unhappy, insecure childhoods defined by violence and early family relationships characterised by a lack of trust. Each participant, as the victim of or a witness to the abuse described their earliest memories as being marked by helplessness, guilt and anger.

Experiencing or witnessing domestic abuse, both physical and mental, was reported by all 5 participants as a significant part of their formative experiences, which had an important impact on their early socialisation processes:

'My parents were always saying I amount to nothing, so I went to running away at very early ages, meeting the wrong crowds, getting into trouble, anything I could just to get them to notice me' (06: 2).

'I'd broken a window, I was only little and it was by accident playing footy. I was beaten by both mum and dad. Father always had a really bad temper, but usually took it out on mum, not us. My poor mother' (03: 3).

After witnessing an incident of violence against his mother at home, one interviewee described how helpless he felt and how he 'lost the plot', reacted violently himself, because he 'couldn't think how else to get it out'. This outburst resulted in being sent into care, for being 'uncontrollable' (03: 3). He was a cared for child for two years:

'Me dad was sorry at the end and came and took me out. Still felt really rejected by mum though. They never sent any of the other kids, I was the only one- why not the others- why just me? I learnt not to see after that, that's for sure' (03: 3).

This incident led to a breakdown of trust with his parents, as he described how he 'lost respect' for the very people who were 'supposed to be looking after me' (03: 3). These notions of lack of trust in significant others in early childhood was identified across all five interviews:

'I was angry, because of the abuse like, and acted out because of it. So I got into trouble, it's not good for you [witnessing violence at home], it's not nice, plays tricks with your mind' (04:3).

2.2 A Culture of Neglect

All respondents reflected that their exposure to a culture of violence resulting in coming to the attention of local authority and criminal justice agencies early on in their lives:

'I was 9 or 10 years old the first time I brought the police to the house' (03: 03).

'I started drinking when I were at school' (06: 3).

'I have been violent all my life, it was for violence that I first started getting done for violence until like until my life got involved with drugs and then it were all about money to buy drugs' (04:3).

Respondents also attributed the collusion as impacting on their early offending:

'My mum like encouraged me to go out [and steal] because it was not going to cost her. I'm from a big and a poor family. It were wrong but it's like, that's how you have been brought up ' (04: 3).

'As long as I got booze for mum too, she didn't mind me not going to school' (06:3).

'I didn't go to school too often and I didn't have to wag it, I just stayed at home. My mum were always happy to keep me at home. Not too many friends anyway' (02: 3).

Paradoxically, all but 1 respondent reported that they often 'acted up' by offending to get the attention of their parents, even if it meant they received chastisement or physical violence, as negative attention was seen as preferable to being ignored:

'He didn't do anything with me, never came to see me play foot ball, go fishing or anything. I had a social worker who did, but it wasn't him I wanted to be with. I wanted him to notice me- it was my dad. The only time he noticed me was when I'd done wrong and then he'd hit me- not nice, but at least it was something he did to or with me' (03: 03).

'I always spent a lot of time on my own. I spent most of the time in the bedroom ' (02: 3).

'I was fetched up with my Nan and Granddad more than anyone. No one believed me, you know that someone in my own family could hurt me like that, so it just went on, but it was better than nothing from them [parents]' (04:3).

This narrative of loss continued into adolescence and adulthood. Respondents struggled to form and/ or maintain romantic relationships: the effects of relationship breakdowns commonly resulting in respondents losing access to their children:

'I had to battle to see my daughter and I've never seen my grandson' (03: 3).

'I ended up losing my home, losing my daughter, ended up with a bag of clothes, nobody wanted me back' (01: 3).

Experience of mental health problems in adulthood featured in all 5 narratives, with two respondents reporting long term mental health issues. Periods of homelessness characterised 3 out of 5 narratives. Multiple, close family bereavement featured in 3 life stories, as respondents experienced the deaths of parents, siblings and their own children. Many of these bereavements were particularly unexpected; respondents reported losing relatives to drugs, transport accidents and childhood illness.

The narratives are characterised by the loss of emotional stability, homes, family relationships, and contact with children, bereavement and control of drugs and alcohol. The narrative then changed from one of anger and violence to a narrative characterised by despair, or 'hitting rock bottom':

'Once you have lost everything, why stop? All you have got to lose then is your life and I didn't care about mine then, so I just let go' (02: 3).

2.3 Containing Early Trauma

Each narrative contained evidence of the struggle to contain the early trauma respondents had experienced:

'I was living with the Mrs then. My memories started coming back as flash backs and I started taking tablets- too many. Ambulances were called, police were called out and I turned violent. I was in the cells more times than I was out, smashing things, always in hospital, suicidal, mad, I was ill. I was really ill' (01:03).

'She were like, we were just totally different with how we were brought up, she was brought up in a nice home and I weren't and I don't know how we ended up together. I ended up just thinking this is dishonest. I have got to talk to somebody about what happened when I was a kid and that was that- she left, or I got her to leave I don't know' (04: 3).

These sections of the narratives were dominated by words and phrases from the semantic field⁶ of running away. Escaping and hiding from the past featured in each story as respondents' coping strategies became more and more extreme:

'I woke up and I am on the hospital wing and he goes oh you have finally woke up have you, you have been asleep for 3 days we thought you were dead, but at least I didn't think about the beatings for 3 days' (02:3).

'I was taking anything to take it off my mind off the violence. LSD didn't work, wizz didn't work, cannabis did work for a bit, but it was still there in my head' (01: 3).

⁶ is the grouping of often, but not entirely descriptive words and phrases, an area of meaning which can be delimited from others in a language. Thus we might use words from the semantic field of cooking (add a pinch of....stir gently....simmer) but often be talking about what 'ingredients' are needed for a happy marriage.

As this section has highlighted, the early narratives of desisting offenders are traumatic, characterised by negative impacts on mental and physical health, episodes of homelessness, occurrences of bereavement and drug and alcohol dependency. The next section of this report presents the findings from respondents' trajectory to desistance.

Section 3: The Desistance Process: Reworking Self-Narratives

3.0 Introduction

This section identifies respondents' understandings and interpretations of the factors and experiences related to their desistance from offending behaviour.

3.1 Communicating Trauma, Accommodating the Past

As highlighted in the previous section, all respondents involved in this study felt they had expended a lot of energy 'running away' from their past trauma. Given this reality, all 5 respondents identified coming to terms with their early experiences as being an important early step on their journey to desistance. Communicating their trauma and working to accommodate their past was described with key words and phrases, such as 'getting it out', 'putting the past where it belongs- in the past'.

Respondents talked about this process as if their early trauma was something that needed to be extracted, looked at, learned from and accepted. This reframed version of their past experiences was described as being re-incorporated as part of who they are today, but positively, as no longer controlling their behaviour and ways of thinking. This process was seen as essential in helping them to shift from the static position they felt they were in before and progression 'to looking forward instead':

'I had to get these thoughts out of me head like, to get [them] out somehow because they hurt' (03: 3).

'you have to get rid of it and come to terms with it as part of you and before you can start being a better person' (06: 3).

Respondents described how liberating they found it to talk about their past experiences of family relationships. As the quotes above illustrate, although they accept that they were very young, as adults, they were ready to come to terms with what happened. Respondents felt they were more open to engaging with their family differently than previously and putting these relationships on a new, more positive footing:

'Me family, they've all come to support me, now after I'd got back in touch with them and got talking to them again, because I wasn't for ages you know' (04:3).

'Me and my brother never got to know much about each other because I was always a drug addict. So me and my brother have only just started getting close' (01: 3).

Respondents had also begun to re-evaluate their approaches to romantic relationships, reflecting on their past experiences, learning from them and actively taking responsibility for their part in it, as the extract below illustrates:

'I had a girlfriend once, gorgeous she were, I got jealous on her and when I got jealous on her what did I do? I do what I always do, the easiest thing,

have a lot to drink and then go straight to heroin, that were my way out. And that's the reason I am not rushing into having another relationship with anybody, because I am going to give it 2-3 years to sort myself out, once I know I have done it and I know that I will never go back to it then I will think about going for a girlfriend but at the moment I'm not ready' (01: 3).

Respondents described being able to think and plan their future, in a way they had not been confident enough to do before, as one stated 'I just used to do stuff, not think it through at all'. For example, one respondent serving a sentence currently described how he has decided to move to a different area so that he does not fall in with the 'old crowd I used to hang round with'. A decision that turned out well for another desisting respondent in the sample:

'I got out of prison and went to live with my mum, I didn't know anybody who were doing heroin and that I stayed away from them circles like on purpose to stay away from them. Moving away from all those people helped' (04:3).

These desistance narratives show respondents taking responsibility for their own choices and their own trajectories out of an offending lifestyle. Respondents talked about gaining an increased sense of agency in their lives. The narratives contained words and terms associated with accepting responsibility for their own behaviour, with phrases like: 'What I did was wrong' (04: 3). Working to understand their motivations enabled them to reflect on their offending behaviour in terms of the effects it has had on other people, their family and friends, particularly spending time in prison. Impacts on employment choices, and the harm they caused to their communities also featured significantly, along with what they had missed out on:

'I've missed my kids growing up' (03: 3).

'I missed my mum's last few months on this earth' (04: 3).

However, respondents attributed these losses to their own behaviour, not their family background, the violence they experienced or as a result of drug or alcohol dependency. As Maruna (2001) found, the word 'I' was used frequently in sections of the interviews where agency and taking control predominated:

'That's what I choose to do in life' (04: 3).

'I can see now that I don't have to get angry, I can do something different' (02: 3).

'I decide' (04: 3).

'I've come on a lot, more confident you know, it's up to me' (04:2).

'I learned I need to listen more, to pay more attention and think before you make decisions' (06: 3).

Similarly, liberating life narratives were illustrated in quotes such as the following:

'I am going to get access to my daughter back, that's ongoing at the minute, finally. I have let that slide for too long. I just knew it was time and knew, I know I can do this, so I've seen a solicitor' (02: 3).

'I've just got to get on with me life' (04:2).

However, there was no sense that these respondents blamed their family background for their challenges, as their stories of the past (attribution) had not changed, yet their future was presented as being in their control:

'would my life have like mapped out like it has if he wouldn't have done that, maybe it wouldn't have made me angry and violent but that's no good to people, you can't live off that can you?' (04: 3).

'I think what I saw in my childhood and adolescence, and maybe...I think it's hard to ever get away totally from what happened. It doesn't change what happened and doesn't make it ok, what happened, but it's better somehow, now I can move on' (06: 3).

3.2 Transformative Experiences: The 'Right Time' to Desist?

When discussing turning points, desisting narratives contained language phrases like, 'pulled me up short'- 'something big changed in me each time', knew 'something had to give', 'I was never the same again after each of those times', 'pulled myself up by the boot straps after that', which indicated this period of reflection. However, desisters reported a variety of events which they saw as turning points in their lives and found it difficult to identify any single transformative experience:

'I was in intensive care for 3 month and that just totally changed my life' (04:3).

'I'd just had enough of doing what I'd been doing for the last 20 years. So drug abuse – I mean it's played a big part in my life' (06: 2).

Time in prison was often an opportunity for desisters to have a period of time in which they could reflect on their life trajectories:

'I have seen the damage being in here can do to your relationships with people- especially your kids- I've missed out on so much' (03: 3).

'The more you go [to prison], the older you get and the more time you go the harder it gets' (04: 3).

'Coming to prison in a way it's a positive thing because I believe myself that I would be dead by now if it weren't for coming into prison all these years. I would have either been killed or I would have killed myself through drink or drugs' (06:3).

'Prison was a massive thing for me' (02: 3).

Desisters did not describe their desistance as beginning on one particular occasion or after one specific incident. They saw their own desistance as being rather more serendipitous as things came together at the 'right time':

'it [desistance] just like started at once where everybody were actually listening to what I were saying rather than like oh yes lets sweep it under the carpet' (04).

'I think the first thing I'd say [about own desistance] is I think I were ready' (06).

'There has been a lot of help for me, for some reason it just seems, everything just seems to, I must have just been in the right place' (02).

'I was ready, rehab was there, my mum said she'd support me. It all just came together really at the right time' (04).

'I think the time had come, you get to a time in your life when you have got to sort things out. There was just something, you know when everything came together at the right time, everything rolled into one' (01).

Given this reality, it should be considered that services need to be made continuously available, as it may be more difficult to predict when an 'offending offender' is ready to access services to support their desistance.

'stuff that I'd never ever talked about in my life before and you've carried it around for 20 odd years its massive to get it out and learn from it' (03: 2).

'You do see people my age and older in prisons but its for the younger ones like when I was young that's what I did, whether be it right or be it wrong it doesn't matter but that's what I did so I feel now that there is no place for me in prison so and because I have not got a drug problem anymore I don't need to go out robbing money to get drugs or whatever, I don't drink so I don't go out and get drunk and get into fights, I just try and stay away from it best I can and do it just day by day- try and live your life clean' (04:3).

In this way, desisters communicate their belief that they no longer 'belong' after they have begun reflecting on their own lives and choices. In the quote above, age is mentioned, but the focus of the piece is very much on change in identity, from an offender experiencing drug dependency issues to a drug-free desisting (ex) offender. As he sees it, he has changed, he is 'clean' and can no longer go back to who he was before.

An individual's interpretation of and interaction with social structures is a key factor in the exploration of desistance, reflected in desistance studies' increasing focus on the impact of internal cognitive processes on desistance (see Mauruna, 2001: Giodano et al. 2002). However, structures of support are also necessary, as locating appropriate accommodation or drug and alcohol rehabilitation for desisting offenders is essential to support continued desistance. In this way, individual decision making and structural issues have supported the continued desistance of this small, but significant sample as both are required to support effective desistance from crime,

although the debate rages as to the chicken and egg debate continues with regard to sequencing (LeBel et al, 2008).

The onset of desistance described by those participating in this study was supported by accessing the DoVeS counselling service, which assisted potential desisters with their previous experience. Respondents felt this was significant in that once they had dealt with their trauma, they felt more able to engage with other interventions, like drug and alcohol programmes. All respondents described the sequencing of engaging with desistance support services as follows:

1. 'Sorting my head out' about the past (Counselling)
2. Dealing with dependency issues (Rehabilitation)
3. Engaging with more long term planning support (Employment, training etc.)

However, it is important to note that of the 5 in the sample, only 3 felt they were nearing a phase of their desistance where they felt they could effectively engage with longer term desistance services, such as attaining meaningful employment. It is also important to highlight that, as some of the participants in this study have indicated, desistance is often of a zig-zag nature (Burnett, 2004).

3.3 Maintaining Desistance

Despite the strides the participants in this study have made into their lives as desisting offenders, many admitted that they were anxious about maintaining the desistance they sought long term. Some felt vulnerable as they felt they often felt they lacked the practical day-to-day coping skills. These feelings were exacerbated by previous unsuccessful attempts at desisting:

'Last time I got out from [prison], they gave me 2 days bed and breakfast, I had no support, no probation or anything and I was living rough until the Tuesday. I had that many appointments I start panicking and getting stressed and I believe the only way I can cope is if I drink and that's going back to the old ways, the stealing and the booze. So far, as hard as I try I just keep getting knocked back. I need a job, a stable address and a structure to work' (06: 3).

This excerpt highlights that along with internal cognitive therapy practical support services are also required to sustain desistance. However, the individual did state that 'between sentences is getting longer, so I'm getting there' (06: 03). Other desisters acknowledged that desisting in prison was easier than in the community as:

'staying off stuff is easy in there- no temptation, but it's not giving you the tools to cope when you're out there' (03.03).

Indeed, a further desisting offender reflected that once in prison, one received an often welcome break from both temptations of re-offending, taking drugs and alcohol and the varied responsibilities of a desisting lifestyle:

'I am all right in prison I can cope in prison its different, I can keep away from things its just when I get back out there, everything's done here for you isn't it like you know what I mean there is no worries, no paying bills, you know what I mean you can get a shower everyday. Don't get me wrong I want my freedom I feel I can cope in here but when I get out there paying bills, buying your own stuff and that and when you are skint and no one is helping you, its hard' (06:3).

The biggest challenge to continuing to desist from offending was not identified as lack of money or a job, but that of having to cope with further distressing life events that desisters felt could endangered their desisting lifestyle, as explained in the examples below:

'I went to rehab down Devon, I was down there 27 month and it give me a bit of self worth and self belief back what I never had. Well I lost it all when I lost my mum. I'd met my baby's mum, but she were a drinker and slowly I got back into my old ways. Mum dying just pushed me over the edge again' (06: 3).

'I thought I had to sort my life out before, which I did do you know. I got my family back, they started speaking to me and everything and I did all right when I got out of prison. It were great until the flashbacks came back, I got drinking again and started on drugs again' (04: 3).

Again, emotional coping strategies and individual interpretation of the events come to the fore when discussing effective desistance. Respondents viewed their future as continuing the trajectory they had begun and making further decisions to support this, such as staying away from drugs and alcohol, finding accommodation, strengthening their family relationships and gaining employment:

'I want to get a job, I want to get a decent place to live and live a normal life and see my baby grow up that's what I want' (06: 3).

'Staying off drugs' (04: 3).

'Sustained' employment- full time and somewhere to live' (03: 03).

'See my daughter, hopefully finish a year off booze, work, maybe a few courses on the way a place to live. I would like to do some courses, I want to go back to work, I haven't worked properly in a long time (02: 3).

'Staying off drugs, staying out of trouble, a house, job, girlfriend- I want the same as everyone else really' (01:03).

Here we see desisting offenders who want to engage with supportive structures, such as their own home, getting a job, a girlfriend and maybe having a family, however their internal cognitive issues and support mechanisms had to be strengthened before they could effectively engage with other support services. In other words, the narratives in this study suggest that as a group, these desisters' subjective attitude and view of the quality and timing of structural support services is

key to supporting their desisting behaviour. The desisters describe the therapy as an opportunity to strengthen their emotional coping strategies and as essential as a form of 'pre-therapy' to enable effective engagement with more structural desistance support services and therapies.

Section 4: Services Supporting Desistance

4.0 Introduction

Respondents discussed the relationship between their experiences of interventions designed to support non-offending behaviour and the impacts these had on their trajectories of desistance.

4.1 Supporting Desistance

Respondents identified three areas of support services received, which in their own assessment helped to support their journey to desistance:

- DoVeS counselling services
- Drug and alcohol rehabilitation
- Community-based re-integrative services

4.1.1 DoVeS Counselling Service

Respondents felt that accessing the DoVeS project in 2006 helped them on their journey to desistance from crime. Being in a safe environment where they could learn to communicate and express their feeling effectively was considered a significant starting point for this group of desisting offenders. Respondents reported feeling more in control of themselves and their behaviour as they learnt they could change *'It was weird. I kind-of realised with DoVeS I didn't have to do it that way'* (03: 3). Dealing with their previous trauma had the most significant affect on their attitudes to their own offending behaviour.

All clients stated clearly that they were determined not to let the violence and disruption in their early lives prescribe their criminal career:

'The drugs and the robbing to get them- that was me running away from the bad stuff that happened to me when I was a kid you know. I'm not going to run away from it anymore, that's what getting the drugs did for me- kept it down, kept it away. Not any more though' (02: 3)

All but 1 of the participants stated that they had experience of other sorts of counselling, but claimed that the DoVeS approach was unique as:

'It was her if it weren't for her I probably wouldn't have even said this to you what I have told you already, only reason I have told you that is because it was her that got me to have the guts to open up to people because she kept telling me the more you hold it in the more thingy you are going to get' (02: 3).

'There are like different types of counsellors and there is like some like where you will have like a session with them and you will just like keep going on and going on and then they pick all the points out and throw them back at you but not all counsellors are the same so you have got to find one that is compatible with yourself' (04: 3).

One respondent reported that he had a history of bottling things up, as 'I was taught to hit first and ask questions later', whereas he felt DoVeS had 'taught me to talk' (03: 03). It was also reflected that counselling was not for everyone:

'There's some things that I haven't got closure on which I think will just come in time, but the things that were really bothering me, the way I were blaming myself for things and that I could have done more and all that and we just talked through everything and it's so helpful. It were unbelievable. I didn't realise how much I'd gain from it' (04: 3).

Respondents reflected that they felt their relationship with the DoVeS counsellor gave them the opportunity to form a different relational experience:

'She genuinely cared about me, listened and was interested in me' (04: 3).

'It sounds daft, but I always felt happy when I left seeing her and got back to the cell it always made me feel happy for a day or so. I used to look forward to it' (02: 3).

'I do bottle it up inside, but when I talk to somebody different from the family and I explain like I explain to [the counsellor] about how I feel and that' (04:1).

Being in genuinely caring relationships with people looking out for their best interests affected attitudes to therapeutic support:

'I like my drugs counsellor, who has been clean for 18 years and it, just gives you hope doesn't it? If they can bloody do it then there is a chance for me' (04:3).

'A bloke at Turning Point was good, because I have known him from years ago anyway so I knew him anyway and knew where he was coming from and I could open up to him it's all about trust because if you don't trust nobody you are not going to open up you are not going to give them your full attention like' (06: 3).

4.1.2 Breaking the Silence, Breaking the Cycle

Participants described the perception of domestic abuse as a private, 'family affair', one which should not be spoken about, as it was shrouded in shame, shame, that effected these grown men, in some cases, 30 years later. All the desisting offenders reflected that the DoVeS service had helped them to open up and break this taboo:

'I were very, very reluctant to speak about things' (06: 3).

'I didn't tell anybody about it until I was like 32 year old' (04:3).

'I was too scared to talk to anyone about it, because I was ashamed, I was ashamed of what was done to me and I was told what would happen to me if I talked to anybody about it' (01: 3).

Respondents reflected that the DoVeS service had supported them when they opened up about painful experiences which gave them a sense of relief, as these experiences were then absorbed into their personalities, their past and they learned about themselves and their reactions to certain situations:

'The counselling I got gives you... well I know I unlocked a piece of my heart and obviously that's going to make you a better person because you've lightened the load and also you become more knowledgeable about yourself' (03: 2).

By supporting desisting offenders to accommodate their past trauma and recognise their violent responses to it as behaviour that could be relearned. By accepting that part of their life, respondents reflected that it helped release their guilt about a situation they had no control over. They therefore become more confident that the template of violence that framed their early lives did not have to dictate their future:

'It's made me see myself a lot better. It's made me realise that some things that happened to me in the past weren't my fault. But also what happens from now on is' (06: 2).

'She did help me think about things differently' (02: 3).

As this section has shown, the desisting offenders in this study all felt that accessing the DoVeS prison counselling service had had a positive effect on their attitude to the ability and coping strategies required to desist from offending behaviour. This finding is significant, given the previous evaluations of the DoVeS counselling service. Clients' accessing the service in 2005 described an increased sense of agency, self-efficacy and empowerment (Wilkinson and O'Keeffe, 2006). Therefore it is important to acknowledge the positive impact that accessing the DoVeS service is still having on these men's lives, two years after their engagement with the service.

4.1.3 Drugs and Alcohol Rehabilitation Services

All desisting participants have engaged with some form of drug and alcohol rehabilitation services in the area:

'A lot of things have changed since I have been sober. I mean a couple of times I was just going to pack up and give up- it's a big step isn't it' (02: 3).

'It's harder to stop the memories when I'm not taking heroin, but I'm getting there, I'm learning' (01: 3).

'It's been ok, I'm down to 10 milligrams of morphine now' (04: 3).

Desisters were unsure as to the details of how they accessed these services and in some cases, were unsure of the organisations that were providing their care. However, all were sure that they felt more equipped to tackle their dependency issues and more confident about a successful outcome than ever before, as they felt they had dealt with feelings and past trauma that exacerbated their desire to 'run away, into drink and drugs', as mentioned previously.

4.1.4 Community-based Re-integrative Services

As outlined in the previous section, desisters talked about a future with relationships, homes and employment, education and training, however, as the sample of 5 desisters were currently dealing with dependency issues, education and employment were discussed, very much in terms of the future tense.

The kinds of services that participants believed supported desistance were mainly probation-based, in terms of accessing accommodation and benefits. However, as some of the sample had left prison without a licence, they felt they had missed out on some of these services in the community. There was also an issue of immediacy; as some respondents felt that they may do well for a time, but needed more practical support, which they felt could be provided for longer. They reflected that six months after release would be an appropriate time to renew their status, rather than 'feeling ignored when we are doing well' (06:3).

This section has highlighted that desistance for this group, has been a long and difficult process, which often did not run smoothly, as events often set them back. However, accessing the DoVeS counselling service in 2006 was cited by all as contributing most significantly to their current status of desisting.

Section 5: Conclusion: Re-working the Early Trauma Narrative

5.0 Conclusion

In focussing on the life story narratives of desisting offenders, this study has used a methodology that captures the ways in which individuals incorporate both trauma and change over their life course. Identifying desister trajectories and life transitions (events which break into that, both positively and negatively) aid the further understanding of positions of desistance as well as allowing for the effects of interaction with social structures. This study has highlighted that having access to stakes in conformity (a job, a family, a marriage, and accessing education) may need to be offered at specific times during the journey to desistance.

This project was designed to improve the understanding of the processes of desistance in a small sample of men from the Doncaster area. This project has highlighted that accessing the DoVeS counselling service has supported improvements in desister's feelings of control and self awareness and strengthened their coping strategies, which are linked to power resources. However, it also raised further questions regarding notions of unequal power relations, power resources and the accumulation of social capital (Bourdieu, 1997) in desistance narratives, an area not currently well developed in theory or empirical research. Like Maruna, the research team found that identifying turning points served as a way of encouraging participants to talk about self-transformation cues, but not so useful in terms of understanding desistance (Maruna, 2006: 25).

5.1 Characterising Desistance Narratives

As mentioned in the beginning of this project, one can formulate a hypothesis from Maruna's (2006) work; that desisting narratives would contain more or less certain content. As the sample used here was small, it cannot be used to engage with this hypothesis. However, the analysis did identify many of the aspects which Maruna's sample displayed (see page 7).

5.1.1 *Plot Structures of Desister Narratives*

Maruna's (2001: 142) work describes the following three part plot structure for his sample of desister narratives when accounting for their criminal careers (Maruna, 2006: 132).

1. Like a lot of young people in troubled circumstances, I was full of anger, so my offending was justified
2. But I'm also too smart to let this passion be my downfall
3. So, once I saw where I was heading I applied my energy towards more rewarding pursuits

The plot structure of the Doncaster Desistance Study participants can be expressed as follows:

1. The violence I witnessed/was subject to as a child left me full of anger and my behaviour in response to that, although understandable as it was based on a desire to hide from that anger and guilt, is not a way to live.
2. I decided that do not want to live the life I have been living, with the violence I was brought up with and I know that I don't have to.
3. Talking about the past helped me accept what happened to me and helped me to see that I have a choice about whether I want to continue that way of life or not.

5.1.2 The Narrative Therapy Process of 'Self-Relabeling' (Maruna, 2006: 125)

This report has shown the positive effects that accessing the DoVeS counselling service at HMP Doncaster has had on 5 individual's decision to desist. Maruna's study also identified desisting self-narratives as involving 'reworking a delinquent history into a source of wisdom' (Maruna, 2001: 117). In Maruna's own words, the DoVeS counselling service can be described as integral to the act or process of self-relabeling he describes.

5.2 Engaging with the Emotional Aspects of Desistance

The DoVeS counselling service engages with the emotional aspects of desistance and as mentioned above proved to be integral to the act or process of self-relabeling of the respondents in this study as desisting offenders. Offering a person-centred counselling service within a prison environment is, particularly within the current predominance of cognitive behavioural programmes, a somewhat innovative approach to assisting desistance.

The person centred approach however aims to facilitate the strengthening and expansion of the client's identity which results in the client thinking and acting independently. Therefore, a person centred counselling environment is created which is characterised by trust, confidentiality and safety, where clients encounter *themselves*. This counselling approach treats the client as the expert in their own lives and supports them to take responsibility for themselves and their actions. Ultimately, this study has shown that engaging with the emotional aspects of desistance is an important element of encouraging and supporting a process of self-relabeling which is a critical part of the adoption of a desisting identity.

Appendix 1: Participant Contact Letter

(Printed on Sheffield Hallam University letterhead)

Dear Participant

Hello, my name is Kathy Wilkinson and I interviewed you as part of an evaluation project at HMP Doncaster in 2006.

I am writing to ask if you would like to be involved in another research project I am conducting. I am trying to catch up with men I interviewed a couple of years ago to see how things have all been going.

I would like to find out what programmes you have been involved in and if you found them helpful.

Participation in this study is totally VOLUNTARY. Please ignore this letter if you do not want to take part, and do feel free to contact me with any questions you'd like answering before you decide to take part or not!

Please see the 'Information sheet' attached which gives you more details. Could you please read this carefully. If you choose to be involved we will also go through these details again together on the day of the interview.

Please feel free to get in touch with any queries what so ever. There are 3 ways you can do this:

- Telephone me at the office on 0114 225 5417
- E mail me at k.wilkinson@shu.ac.uk
- Fill in and tear off the slip below and return it to me in the stamped address envelope provided, then I will contact you.

I looking forward to hearing from you!

Regards

Kathy

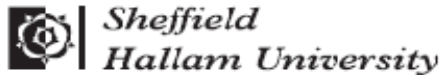
I would like to be contacted about the Doncaster Desistance Study.
I agree to a researcher contacting me on the details below:

Name:

Telephone Number:

Postal Address:

Appendix 2: Information Sheet and Consent Forms



INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS:

Project Title:
Doncaster Desistance Project

Who is doing the project?

The research is being conducted by the Hallam Centre for Community Justice at Sheffield Hallam University. The project is funded by a partnership between the Government Office and Doncaster Violent Crime Sub Group.

What are we trying to find out?

- This study aims to examine which, if any, of the interventions you experienced while being involved in the criminal justice system has most effectively supported you in a non-offending lifestyle.
- We wish to identify your own interpretations of your own experiences in the criminal justice system

What will the research involve?

- We are asking you to take part in the project by agreeing to a one-to-one interview
- The interview will last approximately forty minutes
- **Participation in the study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the research at any time, without giving any reason for doing so.**

Your Contribution is Valued – It is an Opportunity to Make Your Voice Heard!
You will receive a £20 Argos Voucher! and have your travel costs refunded!

Confidentiality:

- The information from this research will be included in reports and presentations. No names, addresses, or information that will identify you, or other people, will be used in the writing-up of these reports.
- The only exception to this would be in the unlikely event that you tell me of any activity that may be harmful to yourself or others. In such an event a relevant staff member will be told.

What will the reports be used for/who will have access to the information?

The reports will help inform resettlement policy in prisons in the Doncaster area on how they can improve the interventions available to people involved with the criminal justice system. It is hoped the report resulting from this research will also be used in a wider way to inform other organisations what people have been through the criminal justice system judge to be the most effective services in the Doncaster area.

Consent Form: Participant Copy

Please answer the following questions by circling your responses:

Have you read the information sheet about this project? YES NO

Have you been able to ask questions about this project? YES NO

Have you received answers to all of your questions? YES NO

Do you understand you are free to withdraw from this research at any time, without giving a reason for doing so? YES NO

Do you agree to have your details being kept in both manual (written) and computerised formats? YES NO

Do you agree to have the interview taped? It will be transcribed anonymously and wiped from the tape. YES NO

Statement of Consent:

- I understand that by signing this form I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have read and understood the information sheet for participants. I also agree that I have had adequate opportunity to ask questions and that the research team member has given satisfactory answers. I am also aware that I am free to ask questions throughout my participation.
- I agree to my details being kept on a computerised or manual database as stated under the Data Protection Act (1998), and upon request, I can access these records at any time.

Signature of Participant: Date:

Name (block letters):

Signature of Investigator: Date:

Consent Form: Investigator Copy

Please answer the following questions by circling your responses:

Have you read the information sheet about this project? YES NO

Have you been able to ask questions about this project? YES NO

Have you received answers to all of your questions? YES NO

Do you understand you are free to withdraw from this
research at any time, without giving a reason for doing
so? YES NO

Do you agree to have your details being kept in both
manual (written) and computerised formats? YES NO

Do you agree to have the interview taped? It will be
transcribed anonymously and wiped from the tape. YES NO

Statement of Consent:

- I understand that by signing this form I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I have read and understood the information sheet for participants. I also agree that I have had adequate opportunity to ask questions and that the research team member has given satisfactory answers. I am also aware that I am free to ask questions throughout my participation.
- I agree to my details being kept on a computerised or manual database as stated under the Data Protection Act (1998), and upon request, I can access these records at any time.

Signature of Participant: Date:

Name (block letters):

Signature of Investigator: Date:

Please keep your copy of the information sheet and consent form together.

***Thank you for participating: Hallam Centre for Community Justice, Sheffield
Hallam University***

Appendix 3: Doncaster Desistance Study 2009: Life History Schedule

SECTION 1:

- Outline research: CJ organisations interested in why people stop offending (focus on start). Lots of 'other' people thinks lots of things- we want to find out what you think/ you are the expert
- Clarify 'taping' permission

Demographics

- DOB
- Ethnicity
- Highest formal qualification

SECTION 2:

Life History (8 critical events)

This way of doing research involves you thinking your life as a story- you are the storyteller- you are the expert. You DO NOT have to tell me EVERYTHING that happened in your life- we'd be here all day! You must select what you think/ feel is important with regard to your life and your offending behaviour.

Can you describe briefly your present life situation?

To include: **where, what, who involved, what you were thinking and feeling, impact and what this experience says about who you are or who you were....**

1. Is there a time in your life you considered your highest point (peak experience)? (pride, respect, happiness, joy)
2. Is there a time in your life you considered your lowest point (nadir experience)? (despair, shame or embarrassment, disrespect, unhappiness)
3. Can you tell me of a serious turning point in your life? (undergo substantial change)
4. Can you describe for me your earliest significant memory? (guess at age)
5. Can you describe an important childhood scene that stands out in your mind as significant?
6. Can you describe an important adolescent scene that stands out in your mind as significant?
7. Can you describe an important adult scene that stands out in your mind as significant?
8. Can you describe your biggest life challenge to date?

9. Influences on the life story: positive and negative
- a) Looking back over what we've talked about, can you please identify the single person, group or organisation that has had the greatest POSITIVE influence on your life story?
 - a) Looking back over what we've talked about, can you please identify the single person, group or organisation that has had the greatest NEGATIVE influence on your life story?
10. Alternative plans for the future? Can you please imagine for me two different futures you could imagine:
- a) Positive future- what you would like to happen, goals and dreams, but realistic
 - b) Negative future - please describe a realistic, but highly undesirable future for yourself

SECTION 3:

Services and interventions supporting desistance?

- What if any 'services/ interventions' have you accessed?
- Which do you feel have supported you to stop offending the most effectively?

Which 'interventions' would you recommend to whom and why:

- 1) Offenders who want to stop offending?
- 2) South Yorkshire Criminal Justice organisations- which services do you think are the most appropriate to continue supporting?

Appendix 4: Participant De-Briefing Form

Participant De-briefing Form

Participant feedback on interview

- Thank you for taking part
- Are there any questions you'd like to ask?
- Is there anything I have left out?

Re-enforcing messages about participation in the study:

- Transcription of interview
- Delete from tape once transcribed
- Confidentiality
- Anonymity
- Report used for....

Provide interviewee with relevant contact details of support available

Hand participant the contact details booklet for Doncaster Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service

Finally:

- 1) Photocopy travel expenses and repay cost to respondent
- 2) Give respondent £20 Argos Voucher and get a signature

Appendix 5: References

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About the Authors

Dr Katherine Wilkinson gained her Doctorate in Philosophy (Sociology) at the University of Nottingham in 2006. Since joining Sheffield Hallam University as a researcher in 2005 Katherine has conducted research across the criminal justice sector.

The author is evaluating the activities of the Prison Radio Association and a social enterprise program which aims to foster the spirit of innovation and enterprise amongst prison service staff. The author is presently involved in an evaluation of the Derbyshire Intensive Alternatives to Custody pilot and a national evaluation of the Integrated Offender Management. Katherine has recently managed the evaluation of South Yorkshire's Independent Domestic Violence Advocacy Services (IDVAS) and an evaluation of a student workbook to support the delivery of the Royal Society Public Health, Health Trainer courses in Offender settings.

Katherine is involved in the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Prison Learning Network, a project is committed to working with key players within the criminal justice system and beyond, to help shape practice, policy and public debate, while encouraging wider community engagement in the prison system (<http://www.thersa.org/projects/public-services/prison-learning-network>). Katherine is a RSA Fellow.

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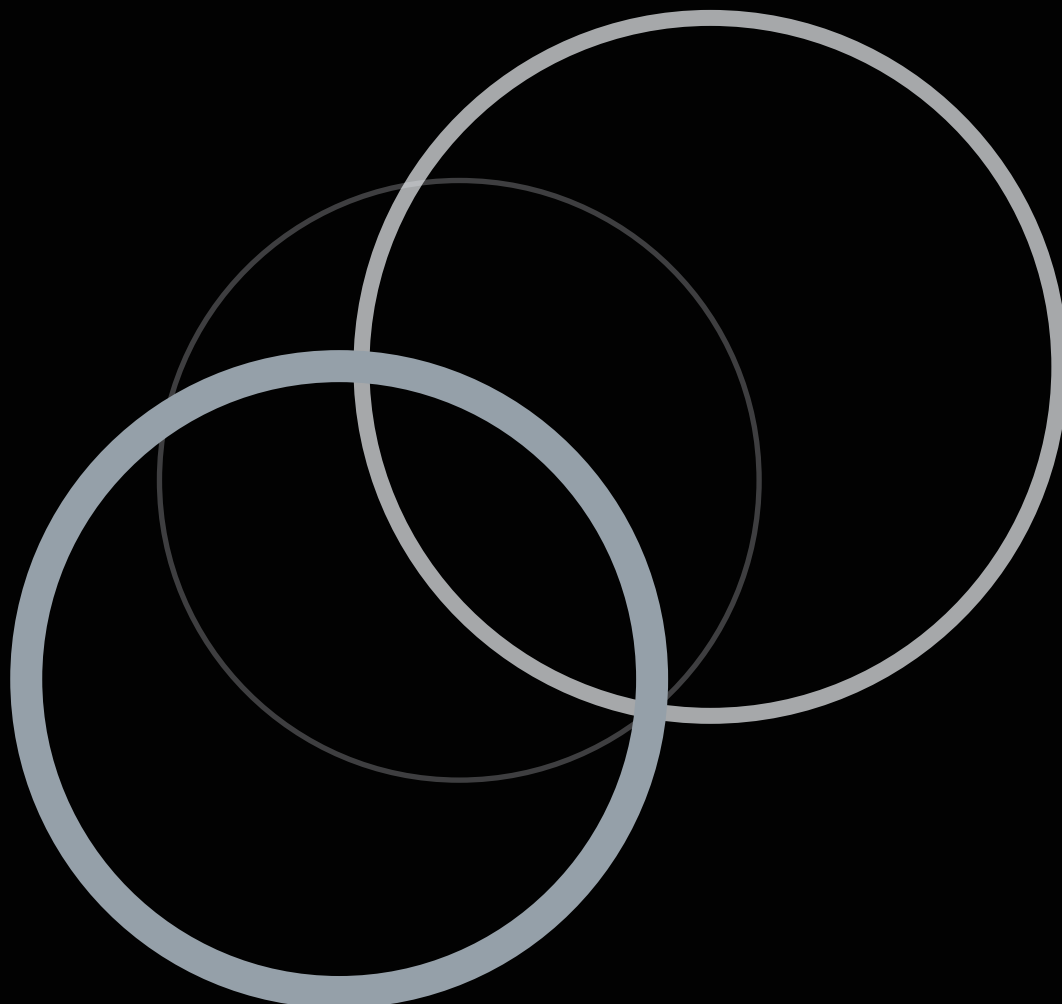
For further information contact:

Telephone: 0114 225 5725

Fax: 0114 225 5800

email: hccj@shu.ac.uk

web: www.shu.ac.uk/hccj



Hallam Centre for Community Justice

220 Southbourne, Collegiate Crescent Campus

Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield

S10 2BP UK

email hccj@shu.ac.uk

web www.shu.ac.uk/hccj

tel +44 (0)114 225 5725



Sheffield Hallam University

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