



Title: 'How would a child see it?'
Exploring the impact when a parent downloads IIOC

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‘How would a child see it?’

Exploring the impact when a parent downloads IIOC

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Professional Doctorate

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University of Bedfordshire

‘How would a child see it?’

Exploring the impact when a parent downloads IIOC

By Lisa Marie Thornhill

**A thesis submitted to the University of Bedfordshire
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Professional Doctorate in Leadership of
Children and Young People’s Services**

Institute of Applied Social Research

7th May 2019

Declaration

Author's Declaration

I, Lisa Marie Thornhill, I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and have been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

.....
.....

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have cited the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. Either none of this work has been published before submission, or parts of this work have been published, as indicated on page viii.

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Publications to date

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Saint, L. (2014) 'The inform young people programme' in Hackett, S. (ed) (2014) *Children and Young People with Harmful Sexual Behaviours*, Dartington: Research in Practice

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Abstract

This thesis explored the impact on children when their father is arrested for downloading indecent images of children (IIOC). There is existing research which identifies the risk posed by people who download IIOC, however there is no research which explores the risk fathers present to their biological children. There is limited guidance for practitioners responsible for risk management in a family setting. As such, there is a danger that families will receive inconsistent responses from intervening agencies.

This is the first piece of research which specifically explored how children who have a parent who downloads IIOC are affected. An inductive thematic analysis was undertaken. Data collection involved qualitative interviews with nine fathers who had been arrested for downloading IIOC, three mothers who had children with a man arrested for downloading IIOC, one step mother in a relationship with a man who had downloaded IIOC and one 17-year-old girl whose father had been convicted of downloading IIOC. The adults in this study are connected (as a parent or step parent) with a combined total of 27 children, 19 of whom were under the age of 18. The research was underpinned by the following theoretical frameworks: resilience, risk, the social construction of childhood and symbolic interactionism.

The research provides a unique insight into the journey of the child, starting from when their father is arrested, followed by exploration of what they are told (if anything) about their father's offending and how the entire experience impacts on them. The data revealed a wide variety of risks to the child in this context, for example: the risk the child has been exposed to the images, the risk that they will be told about the offence in a way that is emotionally harmful to them, the risk either parent would attempt or commit suicide, the risk that the child has been sexually abused or will be in the future, the risk that the offence will feature in the media and the child will become isolated and bullied, the risk of harm caused by separation from their parent and the risk that the non-offending parent will not be able to cope. The families shared valuable insights about their experience of intervening agencies. The thesis concludes with recommendations for practice,

policy, and the development of materials for children, as well as raising further questions which may be addressed in future research.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The first chapter provides information about my background and experience working with families affected by child sexual abuse. An overview of the structure of the thesis will follow to guide the reader.

About the author

In the spirit of transparency, and to assist the reader in understanding the inspiration for this research, I will include some details about my experience of working in the field of social care. I am aware of how my experiences have shaped my views about how children can best be protected and also supported to thrive in difficult circumstances. My academic and professional background has informed my knowledge and understanding of the variety of experiences a child may endure when a parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children (IIOC).

I qualified as a probation officer in 2004. I began facilitating the Thames Valley Sex Offender Group Work programme in 2005. In 2006, during my employment with the Bedfordshire Probation Service, I was selected to facilitate the pilot Thames Valley Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme. Since that time I have completed many risk assessments with families where a parent has been convicted of downloading indecent images of children.

Throughout this thesis I have been employed full time with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, formerly as a senior children and families practitioner and latterly principal practitioner and clinical lead for young people services. My work involves assessment and intervention with families, training for professionals, conference speaking and taking calls on the Stop it Now! Helpline.

My work with families connected to a registered sex offender has helped me to understand the power of the label 'sex offender' and provided me with insights as to how children experience their parent being assigned that label. I am aware that professionals have significant power with regard to how a child constructs the reality of the situation. This power is, partly, borne out with regard to when they decide what information to give to the child at what stage. The resources aimed

at children who have a parent who have sexually offended are almost non-existent at the time of writing.

Thesis overview

This thesis aimed to explore the impact on children when their father has been convicted or arrested for downloading indecent images of children. The fathers in this study had admitted responsibility for their crime. The original, primary goal of the research was to give children and young people a meaningful opportunity to give their views about how they had been affected, how they experienced professional intervention and what support they had received. For a variety of reasons, explained in the thesis, this was not possible. The experiences of children have, therefore, been explored predominantly through the eyes of their parents.

The research is primarily underpinned by the following theoretical frameworks: the social construction of childhood, symbolic interactionism, resilience and risk. The theory of the social construction of childhood is utilised to provide the social context of how professionals responsible for protecting children respond when a child may be at risk from a parent. Theoretical perspectives offered by Kemshall and Maguire (2001), Beck (1992), Giddens (1997), and Foucault (1973) regarding risk are utilised to examine the context in which professionals, children, parents and carers are interacting. Symbolic interactionism is drawn upon to explore the complex relationship between the social context, attitudes to risk presented by offenders who download IIOC, attitudes to children, and the child's capacity to understand and absorb difficult information. It also helps to understand the subsequent impact upon the child.

Upon completing the literature review it became evident that there are polarised views between experts regarding the risk posed to children by adults who collect indecent images of children. Research regarding what is known about the likelihood of a person who has been convicted of downloading indecent images having previously committed a contact sexual offence is inconclusive. Furthermore, evidence regarding the level of risk of a person convicted of downloading indecent images of children committing a contact sexual offence in

the future is inconclusive. There is a risk, therefore, of research regarding this group of offenders being inconsistently applied in a family setting. There is a danger that families face a kaleidoscope of responses when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC.

One of the most striking findings revealed by the completion of the literature review was the fact that the voice of the child is absent from debates relating to the risk posed by people who download indecent images of children. It is evident that little is known about how children feel they should be protected or how they experience being given details of their parent's offending. Research urgently needs to be completed to ascertain how children experience intervention that aims to protect them when a parent is arrested or convicted of downloading IIOC.

Child centered perspectives argue that the child should always be the central focus of any decisions made by an intervening agency. This thesis aims to galvanise debate about the possibility that when professionals aim to help a child they believe to be in need of protection they may, unintentionally, be harming the child by placing restrictions on their contact with their father which may not be necessary. In addition, this thesis explores the risks associated with the danger of withholding information from the child. The specific aims of the study are as follows:

The aims

The research aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To invite parents to give their views about the impact on their child(ren) when they or their current/ex-partner/father of their children has been arrested and/or convicted of downloading indecent images of children.
- To explore children's experiences of professionals who have contacted them regarding their parent being convicted of indecent images of children
- To give children an opportunity to give their views about the impact upon them when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children

The research questions

As noted above, it was not possible to access the views of the children themselves. The questions addressed within this thesis were therefore:

- What do mothers report about the impact on their child(ren) when the child(ren)'s father was arrested for downloading indecent images of children?
- What do fathers who have been arrested and/or convicted of downloading indecent images of children report about the impact on their child(ren)?
- What is the perceived impact on children when their parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children?
- What support is made available to children when their father is arrested for downloading indecent images of children?
- What are children whose father is convicted of downloading indecent images of children told about his offending?

For ease of analysis and comprehension for the reader, the thesis is broadly divided into three parts. The first part will explain the theoretical framework, followed by an outline of definitions in relation to IIOC, the available literature regarding people who download indecent images of children, the social context in which professionals work to manage risk of sexual abuse, and debate within the field. When the social context has been established I will then move onto explaining the research methods used and exploring the ethical considerations. The findings of the research will be presented in the second part of the thesis. Finally, conclusions and implications for practice will be presented in part three.

Chapter 2 The Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In this chapter I start by outlining the theoretical frameworks that have informed the design of the research and the analysis of the data. In exploring the impact on children, I wanted to capture how the child made sense of the reality of having a parent arrested for downloading indecent images of children (IIOC). The impact on the child is affected by how the parents, professionals and children interact and therefore I have drawn upon symbolic interactionism. To facilitate understanding of how western society perceives children I have used social constructionism. I have also used social constructionism to explore how sex offenders are perceived by society. Having a sex offender in a family environment is a situation which legitimately heightens concern regarding risk. Therefore, I have also drawn upon theories of risk and resilience to explore the context in which professionals will be assessing the behaviour of the fathers and how they, as professionals, interact with the child. I will also present the argument that many children have the capacity to survive difficult experiences and are capable of contributing to decisions about their welfare.

Firstly, I will describe symbolic interactionism. I will explore what I refer to as the flow of communication between child, family and professional when a parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children. This will provide a foundation for the line of enquiry within the research.

I integrate a description of social constructionism with the section focused on symbolic interaction. Symbolic interactionism and social constructionism are linked and I explore this link in relation to the dominant discourse regarding sex offenders. I also explore the social construction of childhood. I will describe the social construction of childhood and explain its relevance to my research. The history of societal attitudes towards children will be explored in the context of children's rights and their need for protection. To enable the reader to understand the likely flow of communication in the context of professional understanding, I will describe the absence of statutory guidance available for professionals when they are working with a family where a parent has downloaded indecent images

of children. Following on from this I will describe and apply risk theory in the context of a father who has been arrested for downloading IIOC.

Symbolic interactionism

Symbolic interactionism analyses how people find meaning in their lives through social interaction and behaviour. The origins of symbolic interactionism are connected to George Herbert Mead and George Blumer. Symbolic interactionism explores the process of how people develop and internalise meaning through communication with others.

I will now consider the influential authors in symbolic interactionism, starting with Blumer. Blumer (1969) argued that people behave towards 'things' on the basis of the meaning they ascribe to those 'things'. A 'thing' could be an object, a person, a group of people or a place. Blumer (1969) highlights the relativity of meaning in relation to objects and draws attention to how the individual processes information about the object. He writes from the premise that the interaction between the individual and society has an impact on how the individual ascribes meaning to something. If symbolic interactionism is applied to a sex offender on an individual level it is important to consider what the term 'sex offender' symbolises. For example, if a person considers that sex offenders are dangerous and evil then they are likely to behave in a negative manner towards those who are convicted of a sexual offence. Blumer (1969) also states that views can be modified when an individual is faced with a situation that causes them to adopt a new meaning or when attempting to make sense of a situation which challenges their established view. Children (who have not been abused) who have a father who is convicted of a sexual offence may face the extraordinary situation of having to re-evaluate the meaning of their father's behaviour and their relationship with him. The re-evaluation described would involve the child drawing on their knowledge and understanding of their father and what that they are told about his offending. Their understanding will also be affected by what they understand about 'sex offenders' and how other people view sex offenders. The child's understanding will also be affected by what they believe other people think of their father. This process is referred to as symbolic interactionism.

In the context of research regarding the impact on children when a parent downloads IIOC, how each person defines the meaning of the other has implications for how they think and feel about parents, children, sex offenders and social workers. In my view the way each individual thinks and feels about parents, social workers, sex offenders and children will impact on the subsequent flow of communication (what information about the offence is shared by whom, when and for what purpose) between these people. I use the term flow of communication to build upon symbolic interactionism. In this context, the flow of communication is relevant to help explore how the interaction affects the child's experience. Later in the chapter I explore the communication flow further.

Mead and Morris's work (1934) is also relevant to work on symbolic interactionism. Mead advocated for the study of subjective experiences. He developed the concept of 'meaning' through its relationship with context. Meanings are shared through the symbols of language. However, the same word can have different meanings. The meaning of being a parent for example is different dependent on time, experience and environment. Responses from one person to the parent vary depending on what the symbol of parent means to them as an individual. For children with a positive experience of their parent, any subsequent behaviour by the parent will be affected by their previous experiences. In the chapter focused on Holly within this thesis, she describes her difficulty in assimilating the label of sex offender with her father, who she perceived as being 'normal'. The data revealed that, according to the parents, the children in the study had positive experiences of their fathers prior to the arrests. Many fathers attributed their children's decision to maintain a relationship after being told about the offence to their having provided good parenting in the past. People respond to situations with the meanings they have attached to people and situations in mind. Lauer and Handel (1977) highlight that meanings can be subject to change: they are also affected by the way in which the individual thinks about them. Lauer and Handel (1977) argue that while people are capable of changing their views about the meaning of a particular group or object, they are unlikely to

change unless their previous understanding is deemed inadequate. This concept has important applications in relation to the family and denial.

This theory has relevant application to a family which contains a father who has become known to have downloaded IIOC, particularly if the family's previous experience of the father has been positive. The meaning of the term 'father' may have been a positive label and the label of 'sex offender' is negative. When the non-offending family members are presented with information which, to them, appears to be inconsistent with their previous experience, they can be reluctant to accept the new information. The reluctance is partly due to the meaning it has for their family. The family may deny that the offence occurred at all and may deny the possibility of future risk to the children. In the literature review I explore how denial can stifle the ability of family members to accept new meanings in their family. Symbolic interactionism affords the opportunity to examine the relationship and exchange of information between people (Goffman, 1971). The data revealed that after the arrest, the extended family may not be given information about the offence that enables them to accept the risk posed by the offender. In one case, the paternal grandparents refused to accept their son may pose a risk of sexual harm, which resulted in them being assessed as unable to protect children. Blumer (1969) argues that meaning develops and is produced through the process of interacting. This theory has an important application in terms of understanding the impacts on a child when their father is arrested for downloading IIOC. The information given to the child will affect the child's interpretation of their previous and future relationship with their father. Furthermore, the way in which their non-offending parent (most commonly their mother) comprehends the meaning of the offences will also affect the evolution of the child's understanding of the meaning of their experience. It is also important to consider how professional interactions will impact on the child.

However, our perceptions of how others perceive us can be inaccurate. In my research I have considered how children may be affected by their perception of how other people see them: as a child of a sex offender; and also how they may perceive their father following their interactions with others. The micro level

interactions are important, but it is also important to explore the wider context in order to fully understand how a child might be affected.

Carter and Fuller (2015) assert that research should consider dominant definitions of social problems to facilitate a holistic analysis. Furthermore, they state that research should explore the themes of the debate about the problem and existing processes and procedures. In chapter 3 I explore the existing research about fathers who download IIOC.

In the formulation of my research I was mindful of the wider social structures that inform individual beliefs about the risk presented by sexual offenders. For example, questions exist about the impact of the way that media reporting of sexual offences including downloading IIOC affect the thinking and actions of social care agencies. In their publication about symbolic interactionism, Lauer and Handel (1977) explore the importance of examining small scale social interaction in the context of larger systems when attempting to analyse human behaviour. They state:

'human symbolising ability is social and even when alone the thinking person exists in a social symbolic world.' (1977:7)

To provide context for the interactions between children, parents and professionals I will explore social constructions in relation to children and also as a dominant discourse in relation to sex offenders. Social constructionism is closely linked to symbolic interactionism. I will introduce social constructionism here before returning to symbolic interactionism.

Social constructionism

I have drawn upon social constructionism due to my belief that the research participants' realities are, to a significant degree, created by the individual interpretations of them (Berger and Luckmann 1966, Gergen 1985). In the context of studying children's services and the criminal justice system, I would argue that an understanding of social constructionism can assist greatly in analysing the context in which people download indecent images of children and can enhance understanding of how families and professionals treat children, parents and

offenders. By understanding how 'children', 'risk', 'sex offenders' and 'parents' are socially constructed, it is possible to undertake an in-depth analysis of how they interact with each other in a context where a father is arrested for downloading IIOC. Furthermore, social constructionism can assist in understanding how professionals and agencies perceive the social construct of risk and how they apply risk management. Social constructionism can also provide a framework to help us understand how children are understood and treated, which I will now explore further.

It is my view that to fully understand the impact on their own child of a parent downloading IIOC, it is necessary to consider the interaction between the criminal justice agencies and children's services and how they understand the nature of childhood. The way agencies perceive the child underpins how they respond and give information to children. In addition, it is important to understand how social care and criminal justice agencies perceive offenders and risk. In this thesis, I have considered both how the child and the offender are socially constructed and how those social constructions manifest in the impact upon the child.

According to Hiebert (2014), social reality is not, in fact, 'real' but a result of a shared understanding of the meaning of social exchanges. He explains that social constructionism questions the existence of facts about our social world. Social constructionists question the existence of a physical reality. Hiebert (2014) acknowledges there is a physical reality but also notes the exchange between the physical reality and the social reality. He provides an example of the exchange between physical and social reality with regard to flying, stating that people are not able to physically fly however they are able to give meaning to the ability to fly. He also notes that humans are able to create tools to enable them to fly. Hiebert makes the distinction between the natural reality, which would exist in the absence of humans. For example, mountains would exist even if people did not. The social reality, however, is dependent on humans to create it. He states that most of what is known is constituted by what we accept of what is taught to us, and therefore our sense of reality, our ability to reason, even our intuition, are affected by the social world in which we live. He raises

questions about what is accepted as 'real' in the social environment and highlights the three phases in the process of creating such realities:

- The first phase is externalisation, whereby he described people's beliefs and values as non-material culture. Hiebert (2014) discusses the development of 'facts' and the development of meaning attached to those facts. He refers to the said process as 'externalisation' whereby people construct what they believe to be true and share that with society.
- The second phase is objectivation, whereby people draw upon the 'facts' as though they are independent of human interaction, giving a sense of an ordered, prearranged reality, one that is unquestionable, that is objective. According to Hiebert (2014) there are three ways that objectivation occurs, though institutionalisation, historicity and legitimation. Institutionalisation is the process through which a behaviour is given meaning which then becomes habitual and routinised. To explain this Hiebert discusses the example of marriage.
- The third phase includes internalisation, whereby culture is absorbed by individuals. Hiebert (2014) describes the internal process of legitimation as a cognitive and moral basis that explains or justifies the meaning. He also refers to the importance of language as the carrier of knowledge in the process of reification, or making something real. The concept of reification was first developed by Karl Marx in 1867 cited in Mark and McLellan (2000). Lukacs (1971) wrote further on reification. Lukacs asserts that capitalism creates obedient and defeated people who surrender to the dominant ideology.

I will now apply this theory to the context of the research.

The part of the theory of social constructionism described above is applicable to criminal justice and children's social care. Social care intervention, for example, is recognised by most as working with the best interests of the child at heart. In all

but one case, fathers who were living with their child at the point of arrest were required to leave the family home. It is an accepted social norm that, if, for example, you are instructed by a social care professional to leave the family home, then you should do so. Most people accept children's services as having moral and legal authority to ensure children are protected. Children's services are also accepted as having knowledge and understanding regarding the needs of children. I would argue that many people, especially those without any experience of working with children's services, would accept the authority and direction of social care agencies. Throughout the thesis I present examples of how the interaction between children's services and the parents translates to impact on the child.

While Hiebert, Marx and Lukacs did not write about sexual deviance, the process of reification has important applications in terms of how sex offenders are perceived by society. An important aspect of how dominant discourse is developed is the media. I will now explore dominant discourse in relation to the media.

Dominant discourse regarding sex offenders

One way in which social constructions and symbols are developed and meaning is assigned to specific behaviours is through discussion in the media. There has been significant debate among professionals and those in the media regarding the risk posed by people who download indecent images of children (Bourke and Hernandez 2009, Seto 2009, Babchishin, Hanson and Hermann 2011). While popular media should not dictate policy and practice to protect children, it is important to note that professionals do not operate in a vacuum and their social construction of risk is affected, to differing degrees, by how media portrays offenders and how the general public respond.

Silverman (2000) explores the impact of the media on public policy in relation to convicted sex offenders. He identifies how the media can influence public policy regarding how sex offenders are managed. He draws on 'Sarah's Law' as an example. Sarah Payne, aged eight, was murdered in 2000 by Roy Whiting, a convicted sex offender. After her death the *News of the World* newspaper

campaigned alongside Sarah's parents for information to be made public regarding convicted sex offenders. At the time I was facilitating the Thames Valley Sex Offender Group Work treatment programme and witnessed the impact of the campaign on group members. The fear they had was visceral and presented challenges for facilitators in keeping the men motivated to continue attending treatment. In the United Kingdom compliance with sex offender registration is high and was reported by Thomas (2003) at 97% in 2001. Research suggests that public knowledge of the identity of sex offenders increases the risk that offenders will fail to comply (Fitch 2007), which demonstrates the danger of dominant symbols in the media. The danger is that policy and practice can become disconnected from what evidence suggests will protect children from harm. In the literature review I explore what is known about the risk posed by fathers who download IIOC. Following on from the media attention and public influence, the sex offender disclosure scheme (often referred to as Sarah's Law) was launched in 2008, it permits the public to apply to the police for information regarding whether or not a person has a conviction against children.

It is, therefore, important to examine the potential impact of high profile cases which involved a person who had downloaded IIOC. High profile cases can have significant impact on dominant symbols relating to sex offenders. An example of a relevant high profile case featured in the media (Joe, 2014) is that of Myles Bradbury, a doctor who specialised in treating children with cancer at Addenbrooke's Hospital. In 2012, Myles Bradbury received a custodial sentence of 22 years after admitting he abused eighteen boys in his care. The child exploitation online protection centre (CEOP) was made aware of over 2,000 UK citizens who had been connected to a website which sold illegal images of children. One of them was Myles Bradbury. He had purchased a video featuring indecent images of children. However, he was not immediately investigated. The police investigation was galvanised when a grandmother of one of his patients contacted the authorities to report that Myles Bradbury had asked her grandson to strip naked and touch his own genitals. The police investigated Myles Bradbury, and seized his computer. They found 16,000 indecent images of children. They also found 170,425 images of children which were not deemed illegal. Clearly in

this case there was a relationship between the collection of indecent images of children and committing contact sexual offences against children. This case illustrates that some offenders who download IIOC are clearly capable of committing contact offences. When applying symbolic interactionism to a context where a father has been arrested for downloading images, it is important to consider how the meaning of their offences is constructed. There is a danger, however, that cases like Myles Bradbury's can become a dominant symbol leading people to believe that all people who look at IIOC pose a significant risk to all children. It also illustrates how the media can stimulate public debate and understanding of how sexual offenders operate. When applying symbolic interactionism it is important to be aware of the context in which professionals are working.

Another important example, which demonstrates the role of the media in the construction of meaning in relation to IIOC offenders, is the case of Mark Bridger. In 2012 Mark Bridger abducted and killed nine-year-old April Jones. His computer was later found to contain a cache of images of children being raped and abused. The case also galvanised mainstream discussion referring to the risk posed by people who download IIOC. One newspaper headline stated: "Murder of April Jones 'proves porn link to sexual assaults'" (Evans, 2013). The Jones family has campaigned for harsher sentences for those who download indecent images of children and for sex offenders to remain on the sex offender register for life. They started an online petition which attracted 166,711 signatures and was debated in the House of Commons on 13th March 2017. The petition stated:

'We the undersigned call on the prime minister to make all sex offenders remain on the register for life no matter the crime, for service providers and search engines to be better policed regarding child abuse images and harder sentences on those caught with indecent images of children.'

It could be argued that media coverage of extreme cases presents the risk that public opinion and the dominant discourse will be influenced, potentially resulting in misdirected resources in the risk assessment and management of offenders who download indecent images of children. High profile media cases are relevant to the application of symbolic interactionism as people develop their

understanding of meaning through their exposure to the media. I will now explore dominant discourses regarding sex offenders and symbolic interactionism in the context of the professional and the family.

Symbolic interaction between the professional and the family

Using research framework underpinned by symbolic interactionism in this context is helpful as it encourages us to explore dominant discourses which will influence how parents, carers, children and practitioners perceive sex offenders. It is also important to think about how convicted offenders may perceive themselves and how I, as the researcher, may perceive them. There are many questions to consider in this context which will inform values, beliefs, practices and the likely feelings of those affected. For example: can offenders change? Are they all the same? Have they been victims of abuse themselves? Did the non-offending parent know about the offences?

Salter (2003) has offered observations regarding public opinion about people who sexually offend. She captures the strength of public rage and willingness to perceive sex offenders as 'monsters' while also highlighting the vulnerability of such views. Salter (2003) argues that when sex offenders are seen as monsters it makes it more difficult for people to believe that a neighbour or relative is capable of such a crime, and therefore easier to conclude that any allegation made against them is false. She also suggests that such views exist even among professionals.

Salter's (2003) observation regarding practitioners' beliefs and values is an important one. It is important to consider how such beliefs can influence how professionals might interact with offenders and families. Furthermore, personal beliefs and values can affect how professionals interpret the available evidence. The way in which the professional interprets the available research regarding offenders may lead them to give information to families in such a way that affects the narrative the family creates for the child. The manner in which a parent's offences are explained to a child has a significant impact upon how the child is affected. The dominant discourse attached to the act of downloading IIOC might result in the professional perceiving the offender as presenting a high risk to

children. I explore risk in the later stages of this chapter. The professional might also perceive themselves of being 'at risk' of repercussions if they fail to prevent that person from offending against a child. Professional fear can be linked to the risk of being named in the media and/or feeling blamed for the harm caused to the child (Munro 2011). The professional's interpretations of the risk will affect how they manage the case and thus how they interact with the child. How the professional interacts with the child will also affect how the child then interprets the meaning of their parent's behaviour.

The social construction of childhood

It has been argued that the concept of childhood is a social construct. For the purpose of this research I have focused on literature related to the UK and Europe. Class, culture, gender and ability are also relevant when considering how childhood is constructed. It is suggested that until the early 1700s children were perceived to be small adults and were treated as such. They were not dressed differently from adults and were expected to be independent and make decisions for themselves. They were also expected to work, often in harsh conditions that exploited their small physique, for example sweeping chimneys (Aries 1962, Shanahan 2007).

Legislation designed to reduce child labour in factories was introduced in 1842, specifically the Mines Act 1842 which prohibited children under the age of ten working underground. In 1847 the Factory Act prohibited children under ten working more than ten hours a day. The introduction of legislation to protect children marks the shift in discourse to children being seen as in need of protection.

As suggested by these changes, the social construction of childhood can be traced to the 19th century and is linked to the industrial revolution, when fathers became primary wage earners. Children were no longer seen as sources of income, but as in need of care. Questions about the social construction of childhood explore how changes in expectations of children's behaviour have come

about. Changes in the 20th century show how children were increasingly understood to be lacking ability to make decisions and thus requiring protection and nurturing from adults (James and Prout 2007). Extending this argument, it is reasonable to suggest that the nature of childhood is dictated by the specific social and cultural conditions at the time. Synott (1983) cited in Zhao (2011:1) states:

'As a social construct, childhood is often a reflection of the constructors rather than a reflection of the children themselves.'

It is important to consider the construction of childhood in this context to understand how children are treated in a safeguarding context. In addition, understanding the nature of the social construction of childhood enables a holistic understanding of how children are encouraged to construct their reality. Seeing children as in need of protection means there is a risk that their capacity for resilience can be overlooked.

Resilience and the rights of the child

In this section I consider resilience: exploring how ideas about the perception of the child as being in need of protection may conflict with the child being capable, resilient and entitled to have their rights upheld. These dominant, potentially conflicting, ideas inform interaction between the professional and the child. I also explore the context in which professionals are working and the legislative and statutory guidance they have to draw upon to inform practice. Before considering risk theory later in this chapter I draw attention to theories which help us to understand a child's resilience. I also refer to the rights of the child to help set the scene for how they might be treated when their father has been arrested for downloading IIOC.

Coleman and Hagell (2007) cited in Pearce (2009:91) illustrate the importance of protective factors which promote resilience in combination with assessment of the risk. Resilience is defined by Rutter (2012:474) as follows:

'Resilience is an interactive phenomenon that is inferred from findings indicating that some individuals have a relatively good outcome despite

having experienced serious stresses or adversities – their outcome being better than that of other individuals who suffered the same experiences’

This quote draws attention to the fact that children of sex offenders are likely to respond differently from each other.

Coleman and Hagell (2007) argue that children are often resilient in response to short-term adversity providing they also have access to protective factors. For example, these may be stability within the family and community and consistency of care and education. Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) completed a literature review in relation to resilience in children. According to Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) the following protective factors were significant: individual characteristics in the child (the child being capable socially), self-regulation (referring to the temperament of the child), self-concept, family conditions, community supports and other factors, for example the child’s developmental and cognitive abilities. Sattler and Font (2017) draw attention to the lack of research in relation to resilience in very young children.

Coleman and Hagell (2007) assert that ongoing exposure to family conflict and constant change are more likely to impact negatively on the child than short-term acute risk may do. My research highlighted the long delays children were exposed to following their father’s arrest, which indicated a risk of vulnerability. The data also revealed that children were part of otherwise stable families, which may have made a positive contribution to their resilience. Coleman and Hagell (2007) also draw attention to the relationship between the frequency and intensity of exposure to risk and the availability of robust protective factors; greater exposure to risk demands greater need for protection.

Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) also highlight the significance of assessing the ecology of the child to establish their potential for resilience in the face of adversity. The ecology of the child refers to both the environment in which the child is growing up and the people who contribute to the child’s development. To fully explore the possible impact on a child when their parent has been arrested for downloading IIOC, it is crucial to consider the capacity of the non-offending

parent. It is possible that the non-offending parent could promote the child's resilience and also protect them from the risk the father may present. Whilst there is limited literature exploring the impact on the non-offending parent, Philpot (2009) and Stublely (2015) revealed that non-offending parents were likely to experience shock and denial in the aftermath of the offence. Shock and denial were dominant themes in the respondents' responses to the arrest in my research. I will explore these themes further in the findings section. The capacity of the non-offending parent, as a significant factor in the child's ecology, can contribute to both risk and the child's resilience. If the non-offending parent is stable and able to support the child it is more likely that the child will be able to maintain their resilience. I explore this further in the chapter focused on the findings in relation to the mothers I interviewed.

Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) note that there is some debate regarding the definition and use of the term resilience, and suggest it should be used when referring to the process or phenomenon of competence despite adversity, with the term 'resiliency' used only when referring to a specific personality trait. In describing processes that alter the effects of adversity, Luthar Cicchetti and Becker (2000) argue that the terms 'protective' and 'vulnerability' could be used to describe overall beneficial or detrimental effects respectively to help illustrate the interactive relationship between risk and resilience. Protective and vulnerability characteristics in the child can be used to help understand how a child can be vulnerable to experiencing greater negative impact or to becoming resilient.

Regarding the issue of subjective perceptions of 'risk' in research into 'resilience', Gordon and Song (1994) cited in Luthar, Cicchetti and Becker (2000) note that the meaning of a particular adverse event, to the individual experiencing it, can differ substantially from the meaning ascribed by the researcher. Some individuals may see themselves as being relatively well off, even though scientists may define their life circumstances as highly stressful. When undertaking the research, it was important for me, as the researcher, to remain as objective as possible when exploring the impact of the offending on the families. While I may consider that the discovery of a father downloading IIOC would be traumatic,

there are a range of emotions a family might experience, including relief, especially if the father was abusive.

It is important to note that children can be resilient in some areas and not others. For example, there can be a discrepancy between emotional and educational resilience. Children are often assumed to be resilient or unaffected if they are achieving at school. Encouragingly, researchers are increasingly using circumscribed terms such as 'educational resilience' (Wang et al. 1994), 'emotional resilience' (Kline and Short. 1991), and 'behavioural resilience' (Carpentieri et al. 1993). These were important factors to consider when designing and conducting the interviews. I wanted to ensure that I created an environment which would facilitate exploration of both resilience (in all its forms) and also experiences of vulnerability and adversity.

Luthar Cicchetti and Becker (2000) explain the significance of the ecology of the child in assessing resilience. They explore the importance of close relations with supportive adults, effective schools, and connections with competent, prosocial adults in the wider community as key contributors to children's resilience. They argue that when assessing the impact of adversity on a child, it is important to explore the impact on the child's ecology. People in the child's ecology may also be able to give information regarding the impact on the child, however they might not always be in the best position to recognise or publicly verbalise impact. Parents, for example, may underestimate the impact on the child. Further, children may seek to hide the impact from their parents or other people they care about. When designing my research, it was important for me to be mindful of the adults surrounding the child and how they interpreted the impact on the child.

The relationship between risk and the child's resilience is important to consider when exploring the impact on children. By being aware of children's risk and vulnerability characteristics during the research I was able to be open to information which highlighted the strength of the children. I was able to identify how this strength could be supported or stifled in the interaction between professionals and families. I was also able to consider when that interaction may contribute to further vulnerability.

When I designed the research I was aware that some professionals working with children could be affected by the discourse that children are not capable of making their own decisions. While practitioners may be motivated to ensure the child's needs are met and that they are protected, it is possible that they may take actions which they believe are in the child's best interests, but which might also largely ignore the child's wishes. When a child has a father who has been arrested for downloading IIOC, decisions need to be taken which are largely subjective. In my research I have utilised the rights of the child to inform my analysis of the data. I have focused on these rights because they relate to the child's right to have a relationship with their parents in combination with their right to be protected from abuse or exploitation. I drew upon the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, I recognise that the application of children's rights is open to individual interpretation.

The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child states every child has:

- The right to life
- The right to his or her own name
- The right to be protected from abuse or exploitation
- The right to an education
- The right to have their privacy protected
- The right to be raised by, or have a relationship with, their parents
- The right to express their opinions and have these listened to and, where appropriate, acted upon
- The right to play and enjoy culture and art in safety.

I have considered the impact on these rights in terms of the harm caused by the knowledge, or lack thereof, regarding their parent's offending. I have considered the child's experience of children's services and criminal justice agencies. When a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children, it is likely that they will be subject to contact with more than one agency.

As explained, how practitioners understand child development is influenced by the social construction of childhood. The dominant discourse regarding child development should inform how children are likely to be perceived and what information is likely to be given to them. Agencies responsible for upholding children's rights have statutory guidance to inform their practice.

In the United Kingdom, services having contact with children should draw upon the statutory guidance, Working Together to Safeguard Children. The guidance states that effective safeguarding arrangements should be underpinned by two key principles:

'safeguarding is everyone's responsibility: for services to be effective each professional and organisation should play their full part; and a child-centred approach: for services to be effective they should be based on a clear understanding of the needs and views of children.' Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015:9)

The document contains no specific guidance for practitioners with regard to how to help children when a parent has been convicted of downloading indecent images of children. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 was published after my research was completed, it does not address the issue of parents being arrested for downloading IIOC. The London Safeguarding Children Board published guidance in 2010 in relation to assessing children and families affected by individuals viewing child sexual abuse images. No data is available to provide an indication of how widely it is being used. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) highlights that children should be treated with respect and with the expectation that they are competent. It also notes that children should be informed about the outcomes of assessments about them. These are important aspects of working with children, which will be explored in the discussion of the findings. Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015) also notes that:

'No system can fully eliminate risk. Understanding risk involves judgement and balance. To manage risks, social workers and other professionals should make decisions with the best interests of the child in mind, informed by the

evidence available and underpinned by knowledge of child development.'

Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015:24)

It is also important to explore how professional understanding of risk may impact on professional capacity to protect the child without causing harm. Furthermore, it is important to consider how the child is given the opportunity to give their opinions and how the relationship with their parents is maintained. In this section I have explored the relationship between resilience and vulnerability in children. I have explored how professional and adult perceptions of children may affect the interactions between them. I have also considered the available statutory guidance and the rights of the child. Another factor that affects professionals is their experience of risk. I will now explore risk theory.

Risk

Foucault (1973) suggested that pre-Enlightenment thinking was dominated by a 'truth' provided by religion. Foucault was an influential thinker in relation to modernity, uncertainty, knowledge and dominant discourse. His publications provide a foundation for understanding how ideas about risk were developed. Foucault argues that dominant discourses are underpinned by power and therefore a shift in dominant discourse represents a shift in power. For example, Foucault argues that the social order was previously dictated by religion, whereas modernity in the Enlightenment period refers to science to produce and establish truth. This shift in focus is described as the 'medical gaze'. Normality and deviancy are negotiated through the conditions presented by science. This allows the social actor to believe they can utilise knowledge to make sense of their world (Danaher et al. 2000:10-30; Foucault 1973:30-40). In the context of safeguarding, professionals rely on research to make sense of information and make informed decisions about risk. The available research will be explored in the literature review. In this chapter, I will outline Beck's (1992) theory in relation to risk in modern society.

Beck (1992) provides an analysis of Western attitudes regarding risk. Examples of risk include risks in the workplace, terrorism, nuclear disasters, war, climate change and financial uncertainty. Beck (1992) also writes about the risk to the individual and the significant uncertainty people face. He argues that as a result of this uncertainty, modern society is preoccupied with the management of risk. Beck states that the important principles of control and security are central to risk. He further explores an irony in institutions being required to control something, even when one does not know if it really exists. In the face of the production of manufactured uncertainties, society relies and insists on security and control. I will now apply the concept of risk to the safeguarding context.

The current safeguarding context is heavily dominated by concepts of risk and risk management. Kemshall (1998) provides a framework for understanding the processes that practitioners can undergo when attempting to manage risk. Kemshall's theory is relevant to my research as it provides the context and meaning that professionals ascribe to risk. Available risk assessment tools will be explored further in the literature review. There is increasing pressure on professionals in criminal justice and social care agencies to assess risk and accurately predict the likelihood of an adverse event. Kemshall (2003) refers to the 'precautionary principle' where workers are so concerned that they will be blamed for underestimating risk that they seek to err on the side of caution. When applying Kemshall's principle, it could be argued that professionals take precautions to protect themselves from the risk that they will be blamed if they underestimate risks facing their clients. This concept is especially relevant when assessing and managing risk presented by fathers who download IIOC, as there is no firm evidence base to draw upon. In respect of the criminal justice system, a danger of overestimating risk is that disproportionate risk management procedures are imposed on the offender and their family. There is a danger that the child will be negatively affected by agencies who intend to protect them. The consequences of overestimating risk are incredibly difficult to quantify, as one can never prove that if measures were not taken (for example, the removal of a child or parent from the family home) a harmful event would not have occurred. The

research examined in Chapter 3 suggests that in some cases the risk presented by a person who has downloaded IIOC could be manageable in a family setting. However, some professionals may feel that the risk of being held publicly accountable for the said scenario is too great. At the other end of the spectrum, Kemshall also explores the danger of professionals becoming de-sensitised to risk due to prolonged exposure. In the literature review I explore a serious case review which concluded an offender was 'low risk' which led to limited restrictions and a child being abused. Prolonged exposure can lead to professionals being vulnerable to underestimating risk. Underestimating risk is often referred to as 'false negatives' (Kemshall 2012, Carson and Bain 2008). There are different types of risk to consider in the context of this research. In the findings chapters, I will apply concepts of risk in more detail.

Kemshall and Wood (2008) also provide a framework for analysing public perception of sex offenders. Kemshall and Wood describe two models, the public health model and the community protection model. The community protection model is a top-down model which involves local authorities protecting the public from harm. The dominant construct of the community protection model includes the public being perceived as irrational and not capable of being trusted with information that may alarm them, for example that they live in the vicinity of a sex offender. According to Kemshall and Wood (2008:217) under the community protection model the dominant construction includes the sex offender being demonised. Due to the described constructs, the proposed intervention includes punitive responses which exclude the community, compulsory cognitive behavioural programmes and surveillance. Under the public health model, however, sex offenders are constructed as being capable of making informed choices. The public are perceived as trustworthy and rational. The public health model promotes a collaborative and voluntary participation approach. In the literature review I will explore public health interventions in greater detail. I will now explore risk in the context of child protection.

A review of child protection procedures completed by Munro (2011) has supported Kemshall's theory by stating that in the current climate, professionals

are vulnerable to overestimating risk. Munro stated that working with families requires professionals to be able to make difficult decisions and manage risk, not avoid it. Munro states:

'Those involved in child protection must be 'risk sensible'. There is no option of being risk averse since there is no absolutely safe option. In reality, risk averse practice usually entails displacing the risk onto someone else. Even if every child who was considered or suspected to be suffering harm was removed from their birth family, that would only incur different risks.'
(Munro 2011:44)

The risks highlighted by Munro (2011) include, among others, potential changes to school, loss of friendship groups and emotional instability. The child's view should always inform decisions regarding actions taken to safeguard the child. However professional perceptions of the capacity of the child can influence interaction with the children. Trinder (1997) cited in Munro (2011:26) states that:

'What is remarkable, and frustrating, is how the adult constructions had become ensnared in ... a simple ... dichotomy, where children are classified as either subjects or objects, competent or incompetent, reliable or unreliable, harmed by decision-making or harmed by exclusion, wanting to participate or not wanting to participate. Practice then becomes founded upon certainties, the perfected (single) procedure, based on the single conception of the child.'

The way in which a child constructs their reality heavily depends on the professionals' and non-offending parent's interpretation of risk. To explore what is known about how a child may experience professionals I applied Munro's review. As part of Munro's (2011) review, 150 children were consulted about their experience of social workers. 35% of those children stated that their social worker or case worker was 'very bad' at communicating information that they needed, with an additional 14% reporting that they were 'fairly bad'. In response to the question 'does your social worker or case worker take notice of your feelings?' 33% said 'never' and an additional 17% stated 'not usually' (Munro 2011:26).

These figures highlight that a significant proportion of children do not feel they are being listened to. The need to consider the interaction between the child, the parents and the professional as part of the impact is evident.

In this chapter I have discussed how sex offenders and children are perceived by society. I have explored how symbolic interactionism, risk, resilience and social constructionism have informed a framework for my research. I have presented how these theories contribute to understanding of the interaction between professionals, parents and children when a parent is arrested for downloading IIOC. An additional factor in the interaction between the professional and the family is understanding of the available research. I will now present the literature review.

Chapter 3 Literature review

Introduction

In this chapter, I will present the process of conducting the literature review. It quickly became apparent that there was no literature or data available with a specific focus on children who had a father who downloaded IIOC. Therefore, I relied upon research which gave some insight into impacts on children in relation to other traumatic experiences. In attempting to understand the potential impact on the child it was important to consider both the professional and family context. I included literature related to the risk men who downloaded IIOC present, literature which focused on the experience of mothers and literature that explored the knowledge and understanding of professionals.

This chapter will be structured as follows: firstly, I set out the aims and research questions addressed by the literature review. Secondly, I outline the methodology used to search for literature and present the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Thirdly I explore definitions and terminology relating to sex offenders, IIOC and the historical context of the phenomenon of sexual offending and the internet. Following from this I will discuss what is known about those who download indecent images of children. The discussion will develop to examine the themes of the debate regarding the risk posed to children by people who download IIOC. To help provide the detail of the context in which professionals are managing risk in a family setting, a description of the available risk assessment tools for people who download IIOC will be given. An analysis of the potential benefits and problems associated with different available risk assessment tools will be presented. The implications of the available research and tools for risk management in a family will be explored. Then I examine what is known about the professionals responsible for intervening. In the final stages of this chapter, I discuss what is known about the impact on children when their father is arrested for downloading IIOC.

Aims and research questions

The aim of this literature review is:

1. To explore what is known about the impact on children who have a father who has downloaded IIOC.

To investigate the available literature in relation to the child's experience it is important to consider the following questions:

1. What is known about the risk posed by men who download IIOC?
2. What is known about the impact on mothers when their partner downloads IIOC?
3. What evidence is available regarding professional responses and intervention?
4. What is known about the impact on children who have a father who downloads IIOC?

Methodology

The intention of the literature review was to develop a baseline understanding of the context of a child who had a father who had downloaded IIOC. On reflection, it is acknowledged that each of these elements of the question could have been the subject of a systematic review in its own right. Trying to develop a systematic approach was very challenging due to the scarcity of the research.

For the purpose of this review, the Bedfordshire University host 'Discover' was utilised to search all databases. Discover is a standard tool used by PhD students. I also searched the NSPCC database and subscribed to the Caspar updates facilitated by NSPCC. I also consulted relevant experts on an informal basis after presenting my research at a variety of conferences in the UK and in the Netherlands. However, I also gathered additional literature which came to my attention during the course of my employment and conference attendances. On 27 May 2017 and 5 July 2018 I used the Bedfordshire University research tool 'Discover'. I also used 'EBSCO host' and 'Discover' using the following key word

search terms: ‘child pornography’, ‘indecent images of children’, ‘contact offending’ ‘risk’ ‘parent’ and ‘family’ (contained within the abstract). I searched for peer reviewed articles. The Discover search generated 48 journal articles, 22 of which were included. When using EBSCO host to search all databases using the same searches, 0 hits were returned. I revised the search terms and searched for ‘child pornography and ‘indecent images’ and ‘contact offending’ within the abstract, which generated one hit. The inclusion and exclusion criteria can be seen below:

Table 1. Literature search: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Criteria	Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria
Language	English	Non-English
Focus of literature/research	Research which considers ‘cross over’ from online offending to contact offences Research on children who have fathers who have committed a sexual offence Research focused on the risk fathers who download IIOC present to their biological children Research exploring how professionals respond to victims of online abuse Research exploring how victims experience intervention following sexual abuse	Research focused on online grooming Research focused on contact sexual offending Research on young people’s offending Research focused on the creation/production of images Research focused on the impact of IIOC on victims (the children in the images)
Type of literature/research	Mixed methods, qualitative, quantitative, meta-analysis Surveys of professionals specific to internet-based offending Grey literature: Organisations focused on internet-based offending	
Demographic	Partners of sex offenders. Men who have downloaded IIOC Fathers who have downloaded IIOC Children of sex offenders	

I also used a Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) list to guide my decision as to whether to include research in the review. However due to the sparsity of research, some surveys were included which may be considered to be of poor methodological quality.

Given the lack of specific research in relation to fathers who download indecent images, all available grey material was included. Publications by the National Crime Agency Child Exploitation and Online Protection Command (NCA CEOP), formerly the Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre, is included due to their relevance and potential influence on frontline practitioners in UK law enforcement. NCA CEOP takes a lead role in responding to indications that a child is at risk of abuse online and facilitates training for professionals regarding online sexual abuse.

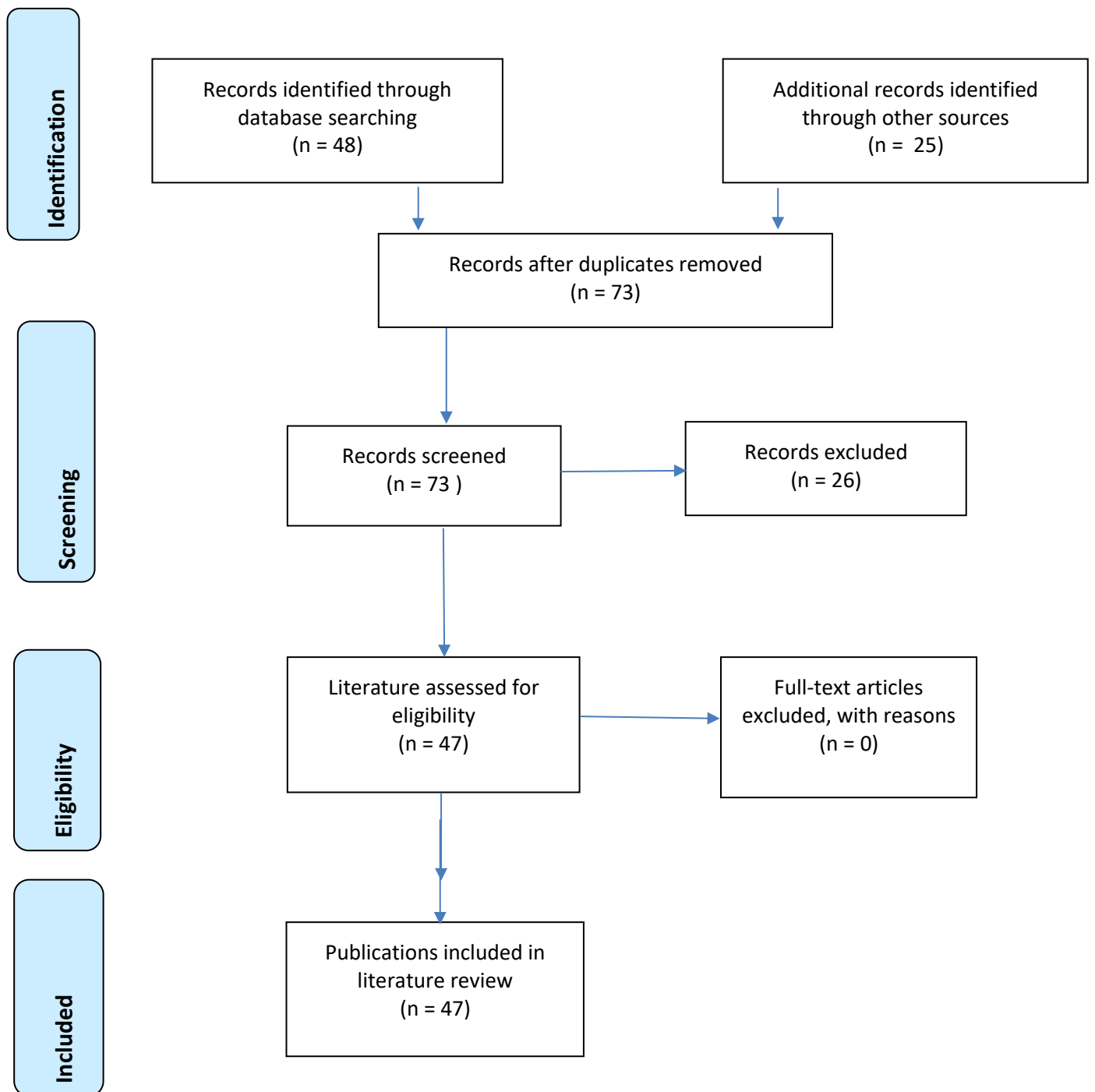
I included some additional literature (not generated by the searches conducted in Discover or EBSCO), specifically: a literature review of the risk posed by internet offenders completed by the Risk Management Authority in 2018, a rapid evidence assessment of the behaviour and characteristics of perpetrators of online facilitated child abuse and exploitation undertaken by DeMarco et al (2018), an article titled 'Social workers' knowledge and confidence when dealing with cases of child sexual abuse' (Kwhali et al 2016), an evaluation of the Stop it Now Helpline completed by Brown et al (2014) and an unpublished evaluation of training facilitated by the Marie Collins Foundation by Agnew, Bond and Phippen (2013). The evaluation completed by Brown et al (2014) is included due to the relevance of understanding what resources are available for offenders and non-offending parents. The survey conducted by Agnew, Bond and Phippen (2013) is included due to the relevance of establishing what training was available for practitioners. My colleague Dr Stubley completed doctoral research in relation to partners of men who downloaded IIOC. I have included reference to her findings in this chapter owing to its relevance. In the course of my work I also found an executive summary and recommendations from research conducted by Dr Liddell and

Professor Taylor in relation to partners of men who downloaded IIOC. I contacted the authors with a view to obtaining more detail about their research, however I did not receive a response.

Information contained on UK-based websites commonly used by frontline practitioners was also examined as part of the literature review, including those of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), Action for Children, the Internet Watch Foundation, InHope, Centre for Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse, WeProtect, The Lucy Faithfull Foundation, The Marie Collins Foundation, The Tavistock Clinic, The Anna Freud Centre, StopSO, the National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers (NOTA), The Safer Living Foundation, Thorn, and the NCA CEOP.

The process of identifying and including relevant literature can be seen in the 2009 Prisma flow diagram on the following page:

Figure 1. Flow chart for selection and exclusion of literature



No literature in relation to the impact on children who have a father who has downloaded IIOC was found. Therefore, to provide some insight into what is known about the impact on children when they have been abused in a family setting, I focused upon the findings of Warrington et al (2016) who explored the experience of children who had been sexually abused within the family. The

findings of this study were useful to apply retrospectively as the results were not available until after my field research was completed.

Following my attendance at a training event focused on working with children who have experienced trauma, I sought advice from consultant psychologist David Trickey regarding relevant literature in relation to my proposed research. He provided me with literature about the experience of children who had experience of a parent committing suicide, which had some parallels with children had a parent who had downloaded IIOC.

The primary focus of this thesis was to establish the impact on children when a parent is arrested for downloading IIOC. No research regarding the specific impact on the children of people who have downloaded IIOC could be identified from this literature review. Furthermore, no research to help practitioners understand the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC could be found. The focus of the literature review was, therefore, to examine what is known about people who download IIOC and identify the emerging themes in relation to risk management. In this chapter I also offer analysis of the available research, informed by my knowledge and experience working in the field of child sexual abuse. I have used the research in combination with my knowledge to explore some initial ideas about the possible impact on children when a parent downloads IIOC. The establishment of these ideas informed the development of the research design and the decision to undertake the research on an exploratory basis.

When analysing and critically appraising the research available, my primary concern was to establish whether the child's voice was present in the research. As the child's voice was absent from all literature relating to men who download IIOC, I considered what the findings would mean for the child. I contemplated how professionals might interpret the research and what implications there might be for practice. In relation to the findings about the effect on partners of men who download IIOC I envisioned what the subsequent impact would be on the child.

Definitions and terminology

Enmeshed in the debate focusing on people who download IIOC is a lack of cohesion regarding appropriate terminology for the images. Language cited in research regarding people who download IIOC has included; 'child sexual abuse material' (CSAM) 'child sexually explicit material' (CSEM), 'pictures of children being abused', 'crime scene' and 'child pornography'. Quayle and Taylor 2003:7 explore the range of imagery related to 'child pornography' and reference very young children being sexually abused and partially clothed children in 'erotic' poses. Quayle and Taylor (2005:1) report reluctance to use the term 'child pornography' but also highlight the international use of the term.

The language used can be revealing of the underpinning attitudes regarding the severity of such imagery. Gallagher (2007) suggest the term 'child pornography' could undermine the impact of the abuse experienced by the child as it encourages people to think that the child might be complicit in the act and deflects the reader from the abuse in the images. Pornography featuring consenting adults is legal and therefore, in my view, the term 'child pornography' implies that the child can consent. Furthermore, the term potentially serves to minimise the severity of such offending and thus may placate any social conscience that the offender may possess. Taking this into consideration, for the purpose of this review the term indecent images of children (IIOC) will be utilised rather than 'child pornography'. The term reflects the legal definition in the United Kingdom under the Protection of Children Act 1978 and therefore leaves the reader with little room for doubt that the subject matter includes children being abused to create indecent images (Gillespie 2005, Gillespie 2010).

The term 'indecent' however, is relatively ambiguous and does not help further understanding of what is being referred to. A further source of potential confusion relates to the different levels of categories of indecent image. I will provide the definitions and categorisation of the images to give context to the discussion. Ten levels were developed by the COPINE project (Combating Paedophile Information Networks In Europe).

The levels are commonly referred to as the Copine scale (Quayle 2008:68) as seen below:

1. INDICATIVE (non-erotic/sexualised pictures)
2. NUDIST (naked/semi-naked in legitimate settings/poses)
3. EROTICA (surreptitious photos showing underwear/nakedness)
4. POSING (semi-deliberate photos suggesting sexual content)
5. EROTIC POSING (as above – deliberate)
6. EXPLICIT EROTIC posing (emphasis on genital areas)
7. EXPLICIT SEXUAL ACTIVITY (not involving an adult)
8. ASSAULT (sexual assault involving an adult)
9. GROSS ASSAULT (penetrative assault involving an adult)
10. SADISTIC/BESTIALITY (sexual images involving pain or animal)

The Sentencing Guidelines Council (2002) condensed the ten levels into five levels, defined as follows:

Level 1. Images depicting erotic posing with no sexual activity

Level 2. Non-penetrative sexual activity between children or solo masturbation by a child

Level 3. Non-penetrative sexual activity between adults and children

Level 4. Penetrative sexual activity involving a child or children, or both children and adults

Level 5. Sadism or penetration of, or by, an animal

From 1st April 2014 the Sentencing Council Guidelines no longer refer to 'levels' but to Categories A, B, & C and are defined as follows:

Category A images involving penetrative sexual activity; images involving sexual activity with an animal or sadism

Category B images involving non-penetrative sexual activity

Category

C

other indecent images not falling within categories A or B

It could be argued that the vague categorisation creates a significant lack of clarity for professionals responsible for managing risk in a family setting. It is also important to note that the categories are intended for sentencing. The categories do not necessarily provide a meaningful representation of the offender's interests or the risk they might present to children. An additional reason for including discussion of the terminology and definitions of IIOC is due to the potential confusion regarding terminology used in relation to the conviction of this type of offenders. It is important to note that taking and making indecent images of children are entirely different offences which can be easily confused. 'Taking' an indecent image of child requires the offender to facilitate the physical taking of the image, 'making', however, relates to the offender downloading the image.

For the purpose of this literature review, the focus is on people convicted of Possession of Indecent images (s.160 of Criminal Justice Act, 1988) or Making an Indecent Image of a Child s.1. Protection of Children Act, 1978). It is important to highlight the difference in offences to provide clarity on the nature of the offences being discussed in relation to fathers.

The historical context

To provide context for the research regarding the relationship between contact sex offending and downloading of IIOC it is important to interrogate the history.

NCA CEOP produced a thematic assessment (CEOP 2012) in which it is noted that in 1996, fewer than 100 million users worldwide had access to the internet compared to 1.5 billion people in 2010 (Edelman 2010 cited in CEOP 2012). The rise in availability of the internet is relevant to the history. The rise in availability of the internet has created a new method of facilitating sexual offences. It has been argued that some people who have downloaded indecent images of a child (or children) would not have done so if they did not have the opportunity or the perceived anonymity provided by the internet (Carr 2004, Itzin 2001, Quayle and Taylor 2002). Since completing the research three systematic reviews have been

conducted in relation to the risk posed by IIOC offenders (DeMarco 2018, The Risk Management Authority 2018, Broome 2018). While all three provide a comprehensive overview, none of them reveal specific insights into the risk posed by fathers to their own children or the impact on children who have a father who has downloaded IIOC.

Operation Ore was a British police operation initiated in 2001 when the Metropolitan Police were provided with the names of 5,700 UK residents alleged to be using credit cards to purchase IIOC from a Texas-based website (Carr 2004). The vast majority of suspects had no previous convictions. In the first year of Operation Ore there were 1,300 arrests, and the Operation resulted in a total of 1,837 convictions. There were approximately 33 suicides among men convicted, which galvanised recognition of the need for a resource for men to seek help. Key et al (2017) published findings from their research into risk factors for suicide for IIOC and child sex exploitation offenders. They report that Operation Notarise saw 24 suicides following 750 arrests and concluded that all suspects of IIOC offences should be treated as being vulnerable to suicide. (Cresswell et al 2017:5)

Women do commit sexual offences online and offline, however, the literature in relation to downloading IIOC is dominated by discussion about male offenders. Intervention programmes are also largely directed at men. Resources for men and the partners and children of men who download IIOC are scarce (particularly pre conviction). Some examples of organisations who provide intervention for people who pose a sexual risk to children include: Marie Collins Foundation, The Portman Clinic, StopSO and the Safer Living Foundation. One resource available for direct work with families in the said situation is the Stop it Now! Helpline. The Helpline was developed in the UK in 2002 by the Lucy Faithful Foundation where, at the time of writing, I am an employee.

The Stop it Now Helpline is part of the Stop it Now campaign. The campaign was created in the US by Fran Henry, a survivor of sexual abuse. Fran Henry's vision was to prevent abuse from remaining hidden by providing a service to help people talk about their concerns. The helpline aims to prevent sexual abuse by raising awareness in people worried about a child. It offers a confidential service for

people concerned about their sexual thoughts about children, including people who have been looking at or arrested for downloading IIOC. The resource is dominated with calls from men who have been arrested for downloading IIOC. It also provides support for their partners. The campaign is underpinned by a public health approach as discussed in chapter 2.

Sheath (2011) states that callers to the Stop it Now! helpline between 1st June 2002 and 16th February 2010 included 1,426 separate individuals concerned about their internet behaviour (99% of whom were male). From 2017 to 2018 this number had risen to 3,507. This information is relevant in terms of understanding the typical profile of internet offenders seeking help.

The scale of the problem

The evidence indicates that significant resources have been allocated to the task of prosecuting internet-facilitated sexual offences. In the UK, NCA CEOP and The Internet Watch Foundation are both dedicated to this task. Internet Watch Foundation is a hotline for reporting illegal material.

On 28th February 2017, Chief Constable and National Lead for child protection and abuse investigations Simon Bailey was quoted in *The Telegraph* as stating that over 400 people who download IIOC were being arrested per month. Jütte (2016) report figures from the Office of National Statistics that between 2010/11 to 2014/15, the number of people in England arrested for offences related to the Obscene Publications Act rose by 134%.

It is widely accepted that those who are arrested represent a minority of the people downloading IIOC. Jütte (2016:19) estimate between 450,000 and 590,000 males aged 18 to 89 have looked at IIOC. Given the enormity of the numbers, one can assume that a significant proportion of those offenders are parents. However, no official or reliable statistics are available to either verify or challenge this assumption. The Stop it Now! Helpline data indicates that from 2012-2017, 38% of 'internet only' offenders who called the helpline were parents.

The volume of offenders creates a significant dilemma in terms of the resources required to address the problem. Arresting 50,000 people is extremely costly. Furthermore, when people are arrested their seized electronic devices need to be analysed by trained officers. David Harrington, author of a report on e-crime published by the Institute for Public Policy Research in 2004 stated that:

'We have around 140,000 police officers in the UK. And yet barely 1,000 of them have been trained to handle digital evidence at the basic level.' BBC News (2004)

Given the lack of availability of trained officers to analyse seized technology, it is likely that people who are arrested for downloading IIOC will experience lengthy delays from the point of arrest to the point of conviction. In chapters 6 and 7 there is discussion regarding the delays experienced by the families in the study.

DeMarco et al (2018) report that there is limited research into statistics or circumstances about sexual offenders' use of technology to abuse children within the family.

Having set out the scale of the problem and potential practical implications I will explore the themes of the academic debate.

Themes of the debate about people who download IIOC

The emerging themes in the literature relate to the profile of people who download IIOC and what their motivations might be. A review of the literature highlighted debate about reoffending rates. There is also tension among researchers regarding the relationship between downloading IIOC and committing a contact sexual offence. Bourke and Hernandez (2009) concluded that it was likely that the men who had downloaded IIOC in their sample had committed a contact sexual offence in the past. On the other hand, Babchishin, Hanson and Hermann (2011), Babchishin, Hanson and VanZulyen (2015), Babchishin et al (2018) explored key differences between people who download IIOC and those who commit contact offences. Comparative studies, for example Webb et al (2007), set out what is known about contact sex offenders and how this

knowledge can be used to better understand those who download IIOC and how findings from the said research should be applied in a family setting. These themes will be explored in more detail throughout the chapter. Firstly, I will explore what the research reveals about the profile of IIOC offenders.

Research indicates that those convicted of downloading IIOC are predominantly white men with fewer previous convictions than contact sex offenders. It has also been suggested that people who download IIOC are younger than contact sex offenders and more than likely to have had contact with mental health services (NCA CEOP 2012, Craissati and Keen 2007).

In a study consisting of 526 contact offenders, 459 internet offenders and 143 mixed contact/internet offenders, Elliott et al (2013) used self-report and psychological measures to explore the profile of IIOC offenders. They found that contact offenders demonstrated lower levels of empathy, higher levels of offence supportive beliefs, externalised locus of control and greater impulsivity than internet-only offenders. In this study, 40% of the internet offenders had children. Elliott et al (2013) also found that the mixed group, despite having current or previous contact sexual offences, still seemed to have lower levels of offence supportive beliefs. The analysis offered by Elliott et al (2013) is thorough but also recognises the limitations of the sample in that it is a community-based sample and, in part, reliant on self-reporting. The findings are of some assistance to practitioners responsible for assessing risk in family settings, however the research was not designed explicitly for this purpose. There is no reference to the experience of the child within the family in these studies.

Sullivan and Beech (2004) suggest that there are three typologies of people who offend online. These include a) those who collect IIOC as a part of a larger pattern of sexual offending, b) those who are developing a sexual interest in children and c) those who collect indecent images out of curiosity. The typologies appear plausible when considered in relation to other available research. In applying this theory, it is important to contend the potential for parents who download IIOC to be in any of the proposed categories.

Cooper (2002) suggested that the catalyst for many people convicted of possessing IIOC is the 'triple A' engine. Cooper (2002) described how the perceived anonymity of the internet, its accessibility and its affordability all contributed to the volume of people committing offences that they may not have otherwise committed. It does appear those without an offending history who have been convicted of downloading IIOC then go on to reoffend at very low rates (Babchishin et al 2018). It is important for researchers and practitioners to develop knowledge and awareness of the range of motivations of the offender who collects IIOC in order to form credible risk assessments.

In further exploring the motivation of people who download IIOC, Quayle and Taylor (2003) suggest that many offenders report that their motivation was rooted in motivation to try to avoid contact offending. It could be argued that it is difficult to be certain whether an offender's interest in children preceded viewing IIOC or developed after initially being curious.

Bourke and Hernandez (2009) stated that the use of IIOC is a behavioural extension of sexual interest in children. Many offenders report no intention of ever abusing a child but are open in admitting that their interest in viewing the images is sexual (Seto, Cantor and Blanchard 2006). However, motivation is complex and unlikely to be attributable to a single source (Kelly 2000 et al, Malamuth et al 2000, Marshall 1989, Marshall and Marshall 2000). It seems likely that practitioners unfamiliar with the research would experience confusion regarding sexual motivation for viewing and may assume that the alleged offender poses a risk of sexually abusing their own child. Practitioners may feel that it is counter-intuitive to conclude that a person with a sexual interest in children who views IIOC would not pose a significant risk of sexually abusing a child in their care.

Seto, Hanson and Babchishin (2011) highlighted the strands to the debate regarding the risk posed by IIOC offenders, including questions as to whether people who download IIOC are simply 'conventional sex offenders' with access to the internet. They cite 'the Butner Study' completed by Bourke and Hernandez (2009) as a common reference for this view. In my professional experience in this

field, the Butner Study remains a frequently cited piece of research in the media, in grey material and academic literature. It is considered likely to impact upon professionals involved in making decisions about risk in a family setting.

The sample for the Butner Study consisted of incarcerated men convicted of downloading indecent images of children. The study compared two groups participating in treatment on a voluntary basis. In one group the offenders were known to have committed contact sex offences against children, the other group was not known to have committed any sexual offences against children, other than having downloaded images. The research concluded that the offenders who had not previously been convicted of a contact sex offence were

‘significantly more likely than not to have sexually abused a child via a hands on act’ (Bourke and Hernandez 2009:183)

The data utilised by Bourke and Hernandez (2009) was collected from offenders who were selected from the Sex Offender Treatment Programme (SOTP). The selection criteria included a requirement that the offender had to have completed treatment for a period of six months. This was in line with Bourke and Hernandez’s view that the participants would be unlikely to disclose their full offending history in the initial stages of treatment. A sample of 155 was collected. The data was collected by means of self-report: that is, the individuals reported their understanding of their own actions. Studies relying upon data that is self-reported are vulnerable to error by both participants and researchers (Wollert 2012). There is a risk that the participants will tell the researcher what they perceive to be the right answer.

The research of Bourke and Hernandez 2009 has been subject to criticism on the basis that the men may have perceived a benefit from admitting the offence. It has been suggested that the prisoners may have thought that they would be moved to a general wing in the prison if they did not admit to previous contact sex offences and feared that on a general wing, their safety would be compromised (Wollert 2012). This criticism has since been refuted by Bourke and Hernandez. Fifty-two per cent of the sample agreed to participate in a polygraph (lie detector).

In the UK polygraphs are not accepted as admissible in the criminal courts. The use of polygraph in this context has been subject to much criticism. In the context of the polygraph, Bourke and Hernandez (2009) reported that 85% of the men known only for internet-facilitated offences admitted committing a contact sexual offence against a child. There are obvious flaws in relation to the 'demand characteristics' in the research sample of this study. These include the fact that the selected participants were incarcerated and they perceived a benefit for them in admitting offences. Furthermore, the participants in the study had not received community sentences but been incarcerated and therefore it was likely that they were more likely to possess a higher level of deviancy and/or previous offending than those sentenced to a community penalty. Weissler (2013) notes that the study was not peer reviewed and the questionnaires used for the study have never been reviewed.

Seto, Hanson and Babchishin (2011) offer analysis of 4,697 offenders. They completed two meta-analyses. The first meta-analysis examined offence histories of men who had downloaded IIOC. One of the primary findings was low rates of known previous contact offending in the samples of offenders convicted of offences involving indecent images of children. One in eight (12.5%) online offenders were known to have committed a prior sex offence. In that group, 55% admitted a previous contact sex offence.

The second meta-analysis completed by Seto, Hanson and Babchishin analysed recidivism in a longitudinal study of 2,630 offenders. They found low rates of reoffending in the samples of offenders convicted of offences involving IIOC. Only 4.6% of offenders engaged in new offences over follow-up periods ranging from 1.5 to 6 years. Two per cent of the total sample were found to engage in new contact offences, 3.4% incurring new charges for offending related to indecent images (Seto, Hanson and Babchishin 2011). This study is based on a significant sample and therefore offers a persuasive argument that those who download IIOC present a low risk of becoming reconvicted of any offence. It is not known what proportion of those offenders were fathers. The study reveals little about why

those offenders who downloaded IIOC did not commit a contact sexual offence, although it is worthy of note that the study did not set out to identify those factors. The study offers good insight into the risk presented by IIOC offenders for practitioners responsible for managing risk in a family setting. However, it is important to note the limitations of applying this research to a family setting as there is no exploration of the offenders' access to children. It is known that sexual offences are difficult to detect and prove to the standard of the burden of proof required in a Criminal Court: 'beyond reasonable doubt'. A study in Norway found that the victims of sexual abuse consistently report difficulty in disclosing sexual abuse, particularly if the perpetrator was a family member. The study also found that victims were more likely to tell as they got older (Tjersland et al 2006). Any research examining rates of conviction is vulnerable to underestimating the rate of offending.

Long et al (2016) argue that those offenders who downloaded IIOC and had access to children were significantly more likely to have committed a contact offence. The studies concluded that the risk of an IIOC offender committing a contact offence was linked to the existence of previous convictions for sexual offences or any offence, access to children, and the number, proportion, and type of IIOC viewed Long et al (2012) Long et al (2016). It could be argued that if practice guidance were to be developed from this research, it should encourage practitioners to thoroughly investigate the content of the images and subsequently explore the possibility of the offender acting that fantasy out in real life. Long et al (2012) refer to the offender with access to a child being more likely to commit an offence. Long et al (2016) replicated the study with a larger sample of 273 offenders (120 contact offenders, 153 non-contact offenders) and concluded that contact offenders were more likely to have a previous criminal conviction of any kind, more likely to engage in grooming behaviours (mainly offline), and more likely to produce IIOC than non-contact offenders. They were also more likely to have access to children and more likely to live with a partner and her children than non-contact offenders. 'Dual offenders' are those who had committed contact sex offences and downloaded IIOC. Some of the dual offenders

in the study had not been convicted of a sexual offence prior to investigation. This means that the participants in the study who had not been convicted of a contact sexual offence had not experienced 'punishment' to persuade them to desist. Thornton (2007) suggested that an important risk indicator included whether or not the offender had persisted after punishment. In my view it is likely that the 'persistence after punishment' indicator is an important consideration with those who download IIOC.

Unfortunately, Long et al (2012) do not offer significant analysis of the relationship between the offender and the victim of the contact offence. The definition of grooming behaviours in the study is vague. It is, therefore, difficult to apply its findings for reliable use in a family setting. Furthermore, there is no analysis of any other protective factors. Protective factors are those which mitigate the risk. An example of a protective factor in a family environment would be the presence of a protective carer (in these circumstances it is usually the mother). It is important to note, however, that Long et al (2012) did not set out to address the nature of protective factors. Further analysis is offered by Craissati, Webb and Keen (2007).

Craissati, Webb and Keen (2007) undertook an exploratory study to compare internet sex offenders with a matched group of child molesters in the Greater London Area. 210 participants were assessed over an eight-month period. 90 were internet sex offenders and 120 were contact offenders. Craissati, Webb and Keen (2007) and Henry et al (2010) argue that much of what is known about contact sex offenders can be applied to IIOC offenders. Therefore, if acute indicators of risk in known contact sex offenders are exhibited by an 'IIOC only' offender it would be important to apply the same principles, for example the 'intervene now' principle devised by Hanson et al (2013). Hanson et al (2013) developed a seven-item acute risk factor scale based on findings from studies of high risk offenders (Proulx, McKibben and Lusignan 1996) which is scored from 0 (no problem), through 1 (maybe/some problem), and 2 (definite problem), to 3 (intervene now). Acute risk items include: access to victims, emotional collapse, social support collapse, hostility, substance abuse, sexual preoccupations and rejection of supervision. I will now explore the available risk assessment tools in greater depth.

Risk assessment tools are commonly used in criminal justice and social care settings. In attempting to establish the journey of the child it is important to consider what risk assessment tools are available to professionals working in this area.

Risk assessment and management

Risk assessment tools draw upon static and dynamic factors which are empirically linked to the risk of reoffending. Static factors are those in the offender's history which cannot be changed: for example the age when a person started offending and their previous convictions. Dynamic factors are those which can be altered by intervention, for example offence supportive beliefs. An example of a commonly used static risk assessment tool is Risk Matrix 2000 (RM2000).

Thornton (2007) created the RM2000, an actuarial risk assessment tool designed to assist in assessing the likelihood that a convicted sex offender will be reconvicted of a sexual offence in the future. The tool generates a score which gives an indication of the offender's risk of reconviction in a category of low, medium or high. It should be noted that the research sample utilised to inform the creation of RM2000 did not include those convicted of solely internet offences. The tool has been found to be accurate in the assessment of internet-only offenders when the scoring process is utilised correctly (by omitting to score the downloading of IIOC as a non-contact offence/ offence against a stranger as aggravating factors) (Barnett et al 2010). It should also be noted that RM2000 is not designed for use in a family setting. The tool does not take into account a perpetrator's access to children in a family setting or family dynamics.

A further difficulty presented by the use of static risk assessment tools, as opposed to focusing on dynamic risk, in a family setting is the danger that those assessed as low risk receive minimal risk management. A serious case review undertaken in Bedfordshire revealed that Child J was abused by a man known to have downloaded IIOC but assessed as low risk. The review illustrates how the assessment of low risk can result in ineffective risk management. The review also notes that the child was not consulted (Fox, 2009 Executive Summary Child J).

With regard to specific tools in relation to people who download IIOC, Long et al (2012) utilised their research completed with internet offenders to inform the creation of the Kent Risk Assessment Tool. Long et al (2016) highlight that the tool is designed to assist the police in prioritizing resources with regard to arrest. Therefore, the tool offers limited guidance to social care agencies who are trying to establish the risk a father who has downloaded IIOC presents to his own children. Furthermore, the tool does not provide insight into how children of offenders who download IIOC may best be supported.

Seto and Eke (2015) created the Child Pornography Offender Risk Tool (CPORT). The tool draws upon seven items which have been linked to risk of reoffending in people who download IIOC, including: age at the point of conviction, previous convictions of a sexual nature, any convictions, failure to co-operate with restrictions, more male than female content, ratio of male/female content, any evidence of paedophilic or hebephilic interests. While there are indications that the tool has good predictive accuracy in terms of reconviction, it is not designed to assess risk in a family setting.

Merdian (2013) discusses the differences between those who download IIOC due to interest in contact and those who are fantasy driven. Broome et al (2018) undertook a systematic review which sought to address whether offenders were contact driven or fantasy driven. Within that review, they raised questions in relation to the range of definitions used by researchers to establish whether an offender is contact or fantasy driven. Whether an offender is contact or fantasy driven has important implication in terms of risks in a family unit.

When interrogating risk in a family setting, it is important to consider the meaning of risk in that context. Risk in a family setting can include the risk of the parent reoffending or risk of committing a contact sexual offence against a child or children within the family and/or outside the family.

There are some factors which indicate a heightened risk of a contact offence, these include: non-sexual offending history, previous convictions for sexual offending, and the level of abuse portrayed in images accessed by the offender

(Quayle and Taylor, 2002), the type of images accessed (including the victim profile), if the individual paid for the images, if the offender had exchanged images with another offender, whether the offender has access to children (Burgess et al, 2008; Long et al 2012, 2016) and if the offender exhibited grooming behaviours (McCarthy, 2010). It has also been argued that the offender is more likely to match their collection to their preferred type of victim (Burgess et al, 1986; Quayle and Taylor, 2002; Long et al, 2012, Long et al 2016). Furthermore, there are challenges regarding what risk assessment tools should be used to assess the risk posed by IIOC offenders (Craissati, Webb and Keen 2007, Barnett, Wakeling and Howard 2010).

Risk management and prevention of future crimes should be the focus of social care and criminal justice agencies. One method of risk management relates to restrictions placed on the offender. In his article, Carr (2012) notes that there has been an increase in the use of Police Cautions as a disposal for people who possess IIOC. A Police Caution requires the offender to admit guilt. The offender would not be required to attend Court if they accept a Caution. Carr also makes the valid point that the Crown Prosecution Service Guidance is clear that

‘a Caution is unlikely to be a suitable method of disposal in cases where indecent images of children are found on the subject’s computer’
(accessed on www.cps.gov.uk 25.6.2017)

The significant problem with the use of a Caution is that the offender has no means of accessing rehabilitation services currently facilitated by the National Probation Service as it is their policy not to accept voluntary referrals. Those who receive a Caution for downloading IIOC, therefore, are most likely to be subject to intervention from social care agencies with little or no means of evidencing that they have taken action to address the risk they pose to children. Those offenders who are convicted of downloading IIOC and subject to a Community Order would have previously been required to attend the Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme (ISOTP). ISOTP is a cognitive behavioural therapy programme designed to enable the offender to examine their offence pathway and develop strategies for an offence-free life. Ultimately the goal of such a programme is to

reduce risk of harm and reoffending. However, the programme has recently been withdrawn. Services for non-offending partners of those who download IIOC are very rarely offered by statutory agencies.

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation facilitates the 'Inform' and 'Inform Plus' programmes for non-offending partners and offenders respectively. The Inform Plus programme is designed to enable offenders to make changes to their thinking and behaviour by learning about how the images are created and developing their understanding of how children are affected by them, and to help offenders take steps to ensure they do not offend in the future. Dervley et al (2017) reported that men felt better able to manage their thoughts and feelings after completing the programme.

Brown et al (2014) completed an independent evaluation of the Stop it Now! Helpline. In total, 47 participants took part in an interview or focus group and 112 responded to a questionnaire. Thirty-two adults who had concerns about their thoughts and feelings towards children participated in a focus group. Of this group 29 of the 32 had accessed IIOC. Brown et al (2014:47) reported the following feedback from users:

- Most (28 out of 37 answering) said they felt more in control of their situation because of Stop It Now!, eight neither agreed nor disagreed and one strongly disagreed.
- Most (32 out of 36 answering) said Stop it Now! had helped them to cope with a difficult situation, while three neither agreed nor disagreed, and one disagreed.
- Most (27 out of 36 answering) reported feeling less isolated since they had used a Stop it Now! service, with six people neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and three people disagreeing.

These figures provide insight into those who are motivated to seek and use available help. However, it is important to establish the wider scale of the problem.

The Inform programme is aimed at partners of people who download IIOC. It aims to support partners, help them understand the legal implications, support them in working with children's services and answer any questions they may have.

In light of the evidence reviewed it seems likely that practitioners will experience some anxiety regarding the management of risk when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC. There is a distinct absence of children's perspectives in the risk management tools currently available. It is also important to note that the effective risk management of sex offenders depends heavily on self-report from the offender. Professionals have a responsibility to develop an effective working relationship with offenders which facilitates open discussion regarding motivation for accessing the images and motivation to change (Westwood et al 2011). Professionals who are anxious and confused about risk are unlikely to be able to achieve this.

Professional anxiety about managing risk

The literature in relation to professional knowledge and attitudes regarding management of risk posed by a person who downloads IIOC is very limited. The literature that does exist relates to the risks posed to children online and helping victims who have been subject to having their photograph taken or being filmed and those images being posted online. I considered it beneficial to examine the evidence arising from the literature, albeit some of it is of limited quality.

In 2013, the British Association for Social Workers published the results of an online survey completed by 327 social workers on their website. Almost half (49%) said that 25% of their sexual abuse cases now involve some form of online abuse. 36% felt they did not know the right questions to ask to identify and assess online sexual abuse, a highly concerning indication that risk would not be adequately assessed or managed. 30% said they did not feel confident dealing with child protection sexual abuse cases involving the internet. If the professional does not feel confident then they are unlikely to be able to provide effective guidance and support for a child. This statistic illustrates a danger that a child would not be adequately supported in constructing the reality of their situation. However, I am

not able to offer a critical analysis of the survey as details of the methodology used were not published. I am not aware of how the participants were recruited or any details of their sociodemographic status.

In the aforementioned survey, 50% of social workers stated they do not know how to recognise the signs of the online sexual abuse of children. This survey, while not specifically about the risk posed by people who download IIOC, illustrates the level of knowledge professionals have about managing such cases. Lack of confidence and knowledge could lead to professionals being overly cautious when managing risk, potentially leading to significant levels of intrusion and distress for children of people who have downloaded IIOC.

In 2016, Kwhali et al published findings of their research into social workers' confidence working with child sexual abuse. The study covered six English Local Authorities. It highlighted a need for consistency in relation to training and practice guidance. Kwalhi et al (2016) reported on concerns from social workers that their current knowledge and training was not specific to online abuse. In the UK, the London Safeguarding Children Board published guidelines in 2010, which addressed the assessment of children and families affected by individuals viewing child sexual abuse. The results of the research reviewed for this section may provide some indication that social workers are not aware of the guidance.

The Marie Collins Foundation commissioned Agnew, Bond and Phippen(2013) to explore professionals' need for training in relation to online abuse. A national online survey was undertaken in 2013. It was sent to Local Safeguarding Children Boards, Primary Care Trusts and Local Education Authorities across England. There were 692 responses, which generated the following key findings:

- 70% of the respondents from Health, Education and Children's Services stated that they had not received training in online risk assessment and 96.5% said they would value such training.

- 81.1% of the respondents said they had received no training in assisting children in their recovery from online abuse and 94% stated that they would value such training.

Given the lack of training, it is possible that both risk and protective factors which may enhance the child's resilience may be neglected.

Potential protective factors

Research completed by Williams and Finklehor (1995) suggests that a father who plays a significant care-giving role in the early months of a child's life is more likely to form a strong parental bond, which may reduce the likelihood of abuse as the child matures. There is also some evidence to suggest that the biological bond between father and child may be an inhibitory factor to sexual abuse. It could be argued that removing a parent who downloads IIOC from the family home, particularly when the child is very young, may not be the most effective risk management strategy. The separation may serve to disrupt the bonding process and there is no research which explores this.

Those convicted of downloading IIOC in the past may have been given access to the Internet Sex Offender Treatment Programme, however this has been discontinued. Attendance and engagement on such a programme could be potential protective factor which should feature in the decision-making process for families.

The way the offender responds to external risk management, for example restrictions put in place by the non-offending partner, is important. Furthermore, the presence of a non-offending partner can mitigate the risk. There is also potential for the non-offending partner to engage in educational programmes to develop his/her knowledge regarding IIOC and the associated risks. I will now explore the impact on partners.

Impact on partners

Studies regarding the impact on partners are scarce. Philpot (2009) references one partner of an internet offender in his book. However, the offender Philpot references was unusual in the sense that he had a head injury. Liddell and Taylor (2015) conducted a study of nine women in Australia whose partner had downloaded IIOC. Two of the women were themselves subject to child protection investigations. Liddell and Taylor (2015) reported that the women felt that child protection processes could have been more supportive and helpful. The women reported family tension, disruption and loss of relationships and lack of support. There is no detail regarding the impact on children.

Doctoral research completed by Stublely explored women's decision making about whether to remain with their partner after discovering the offences. Dr Stublely found it partly depended on a person's previous experience and was partly linked to many factors including:

- their prior experience of the quality of the relationship
- their view of the seriousness of the offending
- their dependence on the offender (psychological, social and/or financial)
- their level of investment in the relationship (children, duration of relationship, shared family and social ties)
- the existence of alternative social supports
- the offender's past behaviour
- the offender's account of his offending.

(Stublely 2015)

Stublely also found that women who had a partner who downloaded IIOC reported highly negative experiences of social workers. The women felt that the social workers who intervened with their family lacked training and knowledge. Stublely also reported the partners had concerns about:

- fear of others finding out (family, friends, neighbours, the wider community, employers, colleagues, the media)
- fear of rejection

- employment problems (for themselves and/or the offender)
- involvement of Social Services
- financial problems
- going through the legal process
- waiting to find out about criminal charges and sentencing
- media coverage.

(Stubley 2015)

Further research is needed to explore the psychological processes that a partner of a person who downloads IIOC experiences, to enable professionals to work effectively with them.

Implications for risk management in a family setting

The strongest evidence would suggest that those who download IIOC present a low risk of reconviction generally. For some offenders, particularly those who download IIOC after committing a contact sexual offence, collecting IIOC is a behavioural extension (Bourke et al 2009). Long et al, (2012, 2016) suggest that there is a positive correlation between those who download IIOC, those who also commit contact sexual offences and those who have access to children (Long et al 2012, Long et al 2016). It is possible that the research will be used by risk averse professionals to justify imposing disproportionate risk management strategies, for example requiring a parent to leave the family home. In some cases it would, of course, be appropriate for the parent to be removed from the home, however caution should be exercised in managing the potential harm that could be caused to a child or young person by being separated from a parent that they may have experienced as positive.

There are a number of methods of managing risk when a parent is convicted of a sexual offence. These include the parent being required to leave the family home; the non-offending parent being required to sign a working agreement with the

local authority; children and young people being asked for their views about the risk; children and young people being given information about their parent's offending; and protective behaviour intervention being completed with the family. No research has been found to illustrate what current practice trends are in terms of whether parents who download IIOC are permitted to live in the family home or instructed to leave by the local authority. No research has been found pertaining to what children and young people are told by a parent or professional.

It has been established that a significant number of IIOC offenders are addressed by means of a Caution, thus making social care agencies the primary responsible agency. While not explicitly about managing cases which feature a parent who has downloaded IIOC, the survey conducted by Agnew, Bond and Phippen (2013) with social workers illustrates an unacceptable level of knowledge regarding risk factors. Furthermore this leads to great concern regarding the impact on a child when a parent downloads IIOC.

The impact on a child when a parent downloads IIOC

Kilmer and Leon (2017:184) highlight the gap in literature regarding how policies designed to manage the risk presented by child sex offenders affect their families and children. Kilmer and Leon conducted a qualitative study using web-based surveys (n=58) and open-ended interviews (n=19) to explore the impact of sex offender laws on family members, including children. 93% of the interview respondents were white, 77% were women. The authors acknowledge potential limitations of generalising the findings. They reported that families experience stigma and shame. Furthermore, they state that children of sex offenders are often limited in terms of ordinary childhood experiences due to the restrictions placed on their parent (Kilmer and Leon 2017:182). Additional findings from this research included the father not being able to attend the child's school (to collect children or for performances or parents' evenings), and families experiencing financial strain and struggling to maintain the family home. They also raise the possibility that children of sex offenders might be bullied at school (Kilmer and

Leon 2017:192). Children connected to the study were not allowed to have friends to visit.

The study also explored the issue of disclosure of the fathers' offending to children. The possibility of children accessing information about their fathers' offending via the internet was raised as source of motivation to tell the children (Kilmer and Leon 2017:192).

Levenson and Tewksbury (2009) conducted an online survey with 584 family members of registered sex offenders across the US. 80% of the respondents were female; 92% were white. Therefore, the findings cannot be applied to a diverse population. 29% of the respondents were parents. 6% of the offences committed by the offender connected to the respondent related to the internet. The authors stated that respondents in the study reported adverse consequences for their children including: 13% having suicidal ideation, 80% anger, 52% teasing, 77% depression, 47% harassment, 73% anxiety about being treated differently by teachers and their classmates (Levenson and Tewksbury 2009:64).

Both of the aforementioned studies were conducted in the US. Conditions of registration in the US are different from the UK. In the UK, the identity of sex offenders can only be revealed to members of the public subject to successful application through the Sex Offender Disclosure scheme. However, when an offender is convicted their name can legally be printed in the local press and information can be spread by social media.

In my view, the impact on children when a father has been arrested for downloading IIOC is likely to be different from the impact on those children who have been abused by their father. I acknowledge that there may be some parallels, and therefore I have included some research on the latter scenario to provide context. In addition, it is important to note that it is possible that a child whose father has been arrested for downloading IIOC may also have been abused by their father.

Hovarth et al (2014) found that there was a wealth of research regarding the motivations and patterns of behaviour in offenders but little about the impact on victims. It is important to consider what is known about intrafamilial child sexual abuse (IFCSA). Hovarth et al (2014) completed a rapid evidence assessment on IFCSA and found that prevalence rates were difficult to quantify, due to underreporting. They also found that there is little research exploring online IFCSA. However, it was evident from their assessment that some abuse was live streamed on the internet via webcam and in some instances indecent images of children were produced by family members (Hovarth et al 2014). It is evident there is a risk that a child connected to an offender who has downloaded IIOC will experience sexual abuse. I will now explore the spectrum of risk to the child in this scenario.

Research undertaken by Warrington et al (2016) provides insights into the impact on children who experienced contact sexual abuse. I have included this important piece of research in the literature review as it offers valuable insights into the experience of children. The research was not published until after my field work had been completed and therefore it was considered retrospectively. The research comprised 53 qualitative interviews with children aged 6 to 19 who were receiving support for experiences of child sexual abuse (CSA) in the family environment. The data was supplemented with focus groups (30 participants) and survey data (75 respondents) with more generic cohorts of young people, exploring possible barriers to disclosure and service access.

Warrington et al found that children who were abused were most likely to disclose to their mother or a friend. The potential for the mother to be a protective figure raises important implications for the analysis of the data in this research and for future recommendations. They also found that the child having familial ties to the perpetrator increased the child's distress (Warrington et al 2016).

Warrington et al (2016) identified the following benefits of offering support to non-offending family members:

- addressing parents' and carers' own support needs

- helping parents and carers to better understand and respond to their children's needs
- promoting family stability and safe positive relationships
- reducing the additional burden on children and young people of the responsibility they feel for their families' wellbeing.

Warrington et al 2016:8 comments on when the child is removed from the family home as follows:

'Children who end up being removed from the family home after experiences of CSA carry additional burdens: including significant loss and a sense of dislocation. Even when children recognise and value the sense of physical safety such moves afford, these emotional burdens are profound.'

While the above quote provides some insight regarding impact on a child who has been removed from home, there is no research which explores how a child experiences the removal of a parent who has downloaded IIOC. In addition, there is no research regarding what children are told about their parent in such circumstances. There are some parallels and these will be explored in the findings chapters. It would be beneficial for professionals and non-offending parents to know how a child experiences being told that their parent has been convicted of IIOC and how they make sense of the information provided to them. While there is no research regarding children who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC, there is research which informs knowledge and understanding of how children respond to loss. I was specifically interested in how children respond to an unexpected loss with stigma attached to it.

It is possible that observations of children bereaved as a result of suicide or murder could provide some useful insights regarding how a child may be affected, particularly for those children who have not been abused by the parent who has downloaded IIOC. The child may have previously experienced the parent as a 'good' parent and therefore there is a loss for them. Furthermore, the literature illustrates that parents who download IIOC could be at risk of suicide. There are some parallels in relation to the stigma attached to suicide. Trickey (2005) states that a child who is bereaved by suicide often experiences difficulty in processing

their experience and attaching meaning to it. He references children being given false explanations for their parent's behaviour by family members, even when the child witnessed the event. Trickey (2005) also observes the stigma the child experiences when a parent commits suicide, which also disables the child from processing the event or making sense of it. The child who loses a parent to suicide may also be subject to curious peers, who may have overheard their parents talking about the event. Children can be left poorly resourced to answer questions from their peers, which can further add to the trauma. Trickey (2005) highlights the importance of children being allowed to engage in rituals, for example, funerals, to help them recover. There are no established rituals or template for coping for the child who has a parent who has downloaded IIOC.

When a child has a parent who has downloaded IIOC it is highly likely that they will encounter social care professionals. While I could not find any research to provide insight into a child's experience in these specific circumstances, Warrington et al (2016:9) offer insights into the child's experience of social care:

'a number of children report perceived undue levels of scrutiny on themselves and families, a lack of relationship-based support and, in some cases, feelings of being questioned or blamed by social care professionals.'

During the findings chapter I have explored and compared the reported disclosures made by the children in the study by Warrington et al (2016) and the participants in my study.

In the theoretical framework chapter I have discussed resilience (Luthar Cicchetti and Becker 2000, Zolkoski and Bullock 2012, Sattler and Font 2017) and I explore this in my findings chapters. One of the aspects of resilience I have explored is education. Warrington et al (2016) suggest that school can provide a safe space for children. While some children reported feeling embarrassed, others described feeling supported, especially when they had a named teacher they could turn to.

I have explored the relevance of resilience throughout the study. Warrington et al 2016:150 provided an example which demonstrates the importance of friendship:

'I think it would be easier to talk to friends about it because if you've been friends for years, since, for instance you're in secondary school and you've been friends since nursery, you feel like you can tell your friend more of that stuff than you can tell an adult because the friend wouldn't judge you.' (Female 12 years)

This review demonstrates that there is a considerable amount that is unknown about the impact on a child when a parent downloads IIOC.

Findlater (2010) notes that in cases involving sexual offences the criminal justice system can involve the offender being on bail for up to two years, leaving the family in a period of limbo, causing great emotional and financial instability to the family. The offender may be subject to their employment being terminated. Media interest can lead to the family being isolated in the local community and fearful of repercussions. The offender may be subject to a custodial sentence, which may mean children are not permitted contact, depending on the prison regime and location. Recent prison population problems mean it is less likely that an offender will be placed in the local area. In the absence of training, these issues may not be in the forefront of a professional's mind, which may render them ineffective in supporting the family.

Another important factor to consider in relation to impact is what young people are told, if anything, about their parents' offending. In times of crisis, families require a professional able to guide them to cope with the reality they face. Children are particularly reliant on adults to help them interpret their situation. If a parent needs to be away from the family home, a child needs information to help them construct their reality in the least harmful manner. Proportionate professional responses are more likely to result in the child feeling able to disclose any abuse they may have experienced and enable them to achieve positive outcomes.

In this chapter I have set out the history and terminology in relation to IIOC. I have explored the themes of the debate and outlined the spectrum of risk, including risk of reconviction, risk of sexual abuse and available risk assessment

tools. I have also interrogated the implications for risk management in a family setting, including the risks posed to the child during an intervention intended to protect them. In addition, I have explored the impact on partners of people who download IIOC and also their potential to be a protective factor. It is clear that the voices of children who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC are unheard. In the next chapter I will move on to discuss the methodology of my research, the ethical considerations, the original ambition, the challenges presented, how the research was completed in practice, and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 4 Methodology

Introduction

The aim of this research was to give a voice to children whose father has been arrested or convicted of downloading IIOC. Throughout the research I remained committed to the welfare of the children connected to this study. For ethical reasons, which I will explore in this chapter, I was not able to directly access a sample of children to interview. The research has, therefore, focused on developing insight into the journey of the child from the perspective of parents. Given the absence of research regarding the child's or parent's experience in this context, there were no existing research methodologies to replicate or follow. I wanted to capture the detail of the interactions the child experienced when their father was arrested and therefore I decided to undertake qualitative research. Qualitative methods afforded the opportunity to explore the accounts that the parents gave of the impact of the father downloading IIOC, giving some insight into the child's experience as perceived by the parent.

To explore the impact on children when their father is arrested for downloading IIOC I completed semi-structured interviews with nine fathers, three mothers, one step mother and one 17-year-old girl, referred to in this research as Holly. I undertook an inductive thematic analysis which enabled me to identify themes from the data.

As a full-time employee at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, I have relevant specialist knowledge and understanding of child sexual abuse. My knowledge and experience undoubtedly benefited the research as my previous access to families that have been affected by fathers downloading IIOC had given me some insights into the issues involved. In this chapter I will consider the impact of completing 'insider' research: researching a topic with which I work in my everyday employment and also accessing a research sample from within the organisation where I work. I also explore how my personal characteristics and experiences may have impacted on my ability to engage with the participants.

In this chapter I will present the background to the research process and the development of the research design. The research design was not created through a linear process. It evolved over time. The process of accessing a sample included two phases: in phase one professional gatekeepers informed parents about the study. If the parents were willing to take part, I followed up by inviting them to be interviewed by myself so that they could give their views about the impact on their child(ren) of the parent being arrested for downloading IIOC. In phase two I asked the parents I interviewed (where it was appropriate) for permission to speak to their child. Two of the parents gave me permission to speak with their children, however, due to reasons explained below, only one child was suitable.

The parents who participated in the study had a combined total of 26 children. Therefore, this research gained access to the parents' account of the journeys of a total of 26 children.

This chapter is structured in four sections. In section one I will explore the background context to undertaking the research. Section one will be organised under the following subheadings:

- Epistemology
- Use of self when conducting research
- Insider research
- Reflections on insider research

In section two I will describe the research methods I used and the process of analysis of the data that was generated. The following subheadings are used:

- Method
- The sample
- Data collection methods
- Data analysis

In section three I will discuss the ethical considerations, in two stages:

- (a) Pre-research: Ethical considerations that were anticipated and considered, including management and maintaining confidentiality, and planned support following research

- (b) Ethical considerations emerging through the research, in the main these were:
 - Suicide

 - Confidentiality

In section four I will consider the challenges to completing the research and offer concluding remarks.

Section 1

Epistemology

To establish the most appropriate methodology for the research design I found it helpful to return to the theoretical framework that I had adopted for the study. As discussed in chapter 2, the research was underpinned by the following theories: 'risk', 'resilience', 'social constructionism' and 'symbolic interactionism'. In much of the literature it was established that childhood can be viewed as a social construction. In the United Kingdom, childhood is recognised as a period when the child is physically and emotionally different from adults. Children, aged up to 18, are seen as needing the protection of adults and are often seen as passive recipients of the processes that occur around them (James and Prout 2007). My research was undertaken with awareness that children may be bound by some biological, physiological and neurological changes as are explained by lifespan development theories. I was similarly aware, as explained in Coleman and Hagell (2007), that childhood could also be seen as socially constructed, with the child's development, and indeed the meaning and interpretation of childhood, being influenced by different social, economic and cultural contexts (Jenks 2005). While I took note of lifespan development theory, I equally understood childhood to be socially constructed, recognising that children with different upbringings and with

different social and economic status may experience their parent's downloading of IIOC in different ways. Beck's (1992) risk theory helped me to consider the context in which professionals are working and the potential for precautionary practice. I also applied my knowledge and understanding of Sattler and Font's (2017), Zolkoski and Bullock's (2012) and Luthar, Cichetti and Becker (2000) analysis of children's resilience to the research design. Whittle and Hamilton-Giachritsis (2013) is a related study which explored risk and resilience in relation to children who have been groomed online. I used these theories to ensure that I approached my field research open to the range of possibilities with regard to how a child might be affected. Using qualitative methods enabled me to explore these particular nuances as experienced by different children.

I also drew on symbolic interactionism as a contributing theory informing my work, as discussed in detail in Chapter 2. Symbolic interactionism provides a framework for exploring how the child responds to criminal justice and social care processes. The influence of symbolic interactionism helped me to organise my analysis of the data by facilitating separation of each stage of the child's journey and assessing the way that the child interacted with different professionals at each stage. I looked at the interactions they were exposed to: for example, the different interactions with police officers and social workers. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism helped me to consider how the professionals, the family members and the child would, potentially, interact with each other at each stage. While I did not attempt to predict how the families and professionals would react, I was aware that there were significant points in the journey which may be important to the child's understanding of what was happening. I was specifically interested in the effect of the criminal justice and social care responses, which follow the arrest of a parent, on the child's capacity to understand and manage the impact of their parent's offences.

The combination of these two theories (the social construction of childhood and symbolic interactionism) led me to consider that each journey would be nuanced and would require flexible qualitative research methods that could enquire into the way children were seen (how they were socially constructed) and the symbolic significance of the way that the different agencies interacted with them. In the

literature review I established that there is no specific guidance for social care practitioners or the police to follow when supporting children whose parents are convicted of downloading IIOC. Therefore, I applied the theoretical frameworks to help me generate some ideas about how to understand which points in the participants' journey I should cover in my semi-structured interviews with family members. I was particularly interested in points in the participants' journey which would involve interaction between the family members about the downloading of IIOC and also the interaction between family members and external agencies. For example, who was actually interacting with whom at the point of the arrest? The format for the semi-structured interviews can be found in Appendices 8 and 9.

The literature review revealed that there is no research base to underpin my research regarding the impact on a child when their parent is arrested for downloading IIOC. Given that there was no other research to test a hypothesis against I concluded that I would adopt an inductive approach, sometimes referred to as 'bottom up' research. I wanted to draw the themes from the data rather than seeking to test the data against established theories.

My primary objective was to gain unique insight into the experience of the child. As noted, other than the one interview with a child, this was not achievable through interviewing children themselves. To accurately capture the child's experience through the eyes of their parents it was important that data collection methods could be responsive and flexible to the individual circumstances of the participant. There are so many potentially changing variables for each child whose parent had been arrested for downloading IIOC. For example, their experience may be influenced by their age, whether or not they had siblings, whether they were living with one or both parents, whether they had been told about the offences, whether the offences had been reported in the press, and whether they were present at the point of arrest. Therefore, it was essential to gain an understanding of the child's specific situation, from the perspective of their parents, to generate the opportunity to be able to fully explore their experience. It was also important to be aware that there were many variables which would affect the participants' ability to be open and honest with me during the interview. For example, they may be fearful of the consequences of any disclosures leading

to further action being taken by children's services or they may be embarrassed talking about the subject matter.

The knowledge that I experienced from the absence of published research in relation to the impact on the child in these circumstances was countered, to some degree, by my knowledge and experience of working with families affected by sexual abuse. It was important, however, to be aware of how my experience may affect the manner in which I conducted the interviews and interpreted the data. In the next section I will consider the use of 'self' when conducting research.

Use of self when conducting research

There is no research about how a child might feel in a situation where their parent has been arrested or convicted for downloading IIOC. Given that children have not been consulted thus far, and that there is no guidance specially for practitioners to follow to empower children in this situation, it is important to consider that a child in those circumstances is likely have highly limited access to power. It is important that research is used to develop public messages and campaigns to facilitate wider understanding. Children in this situation may feel that their views are not important or that they have not been heard and therefore they may feel disempowered. So too may the non-offending parent feel that their perspective was not of interest, as there has not been extensive research translated into accessible public materials exploring their views. In light of these factors, it was important that this research did not replicate any previous experience that the children or the non-offending parents may have had of feeling powerless. I was also aware, through my work practice, of the possibility that some non-offending parents and children may have felt that their thoughts and feelings were not important when they were in contact with agencies since the arrest. When designing the research, I wanted to ensure that people participating in the research felt empowered to tell their story. I did not want participants to feel information was being extracted from them without their full engagement and consent. I wanted to create an environment where the families felt that they were working collaboratively with me as a researcher in my efforts to fully represent the needs and interests of affected children in the family. I achieved this to some

degree by giving considerable thought to the inclusion criteria and process of achieving informed consent, which is discussed in the ethics section.

Despite my best efforts and intentions to empower people in the study, I was also aware of the fact that parents might want to talk about their own experiences as well as their observations on the impact on their children. In some cases the parents were inclined to talk at length about the impact on themselves. I was aware that the women in the study may not have had the opportunity to tell their story to someone who they did not feel judged by. While undertaking the interviews I was aware that as a result of not feeling heard, or of feeling judged for the actions of their husbands or partners, the women may have felt disempowered. Therefore, I was mindful to be careful about managing my own irritation in wanting to shift the focus of the interview back to the impact on the child. When faced with these emotions I reminded myself of the power dynamics involved in the research process: I, the researcher, was in a powerful position choosing and asking the questions. However, I did need to exert some control over the interview as I was aware that if I spent too much time discussing the experience of the parents I risked missing an opportunity to explore the impact on the children. I also acknowledged that the people who chose to participate in the research process are likely to feel vulnerable. I felt that my own experiences as a woman, and as an employee undertaking regular work with families affected by the arrest of a father who had downloaded IIOC, meant that I had confidence to connect and empathise with the women I interviewed. I will now explore the benefits and limitations of undertaking research within the researcher's professional environment.

Insider research

As I am an employee of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation and a specialist in child sexual abuse, it is important to consider the advantages and disadvantages of completing insider research. Part of my role at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation includes responding to calls to the Stop it Now Helpline. I also facilitate the Inform and Inform Plus programmes.

The participants in this research were accessed through gatekeepers at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. The gatekeepers were Inform and Inform Plus group facilitators. I did not select the gatekeepers; the director of operations emailed them on my behalf. In the ethics section below I illustrate the steps taken to ensure that the participants did not feel pressured to participate. I did not interview anyone I had undertaken direct work with, either on the phone or in person. I gave gatekeepers information to ensure they were aware of the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

Reinharz (1992) highlights the advantages of completing research within one's own professional environment. These advantages include the researcher's knowledge of the environment, helping the researcher to feel familiar or 'at home' when completing the research. During the interviews I did feel familiar and at ease with the subject matter. However, there are also risks when undertaking insider research.

Insider research can present the risk that roles and boundaries between the researcher and the participants will become blurred. Ross (2017) refers to the emotional impact on the researcher when undertaking research within their own field of employment. Ross also references the potential for the researcher to pursue particular lines of enquiry during interviews due to their professional interest. To reduce the risk of blurring roles between myself as the researcher and the research participant I made time during the introduction phase of the interview to inform participants that I was an employee of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation but that I was interviewing them in my role of researcher and professional doctorate student at Bedfordshire University. There was also potential for roles and boundaries to become blurred between the organisation and myself as the researcher. Brannick and Coghlan (2007) highlights the possibility that those who undertake insider research may experience demand for 'good news' from their employer. Some employers may try to influence the researcher to present findings in a way that presents the organisation in a favourable light, stressing the 'good' findings and hiding the less good ones.

I tried to mitigate against this by being very clear with my employers and encouraging them to be open to receiving all feedback, whether it was positive or identified areas for improvement. While completing 'insider research' it is important to consider the possibility that the research may reveal bad practice within the organisation, which could be potentially damaging for both the clients involved and for the organisation's reputation. For research to be credible there cannot be any guarantees of 'good results' for the agency facilitating access to the sample. Fortunately, there was commitment from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation to respond to the research findings about any gaps in the interventions they offer for families affected by child sexual abuse. That said, my research was not designed to explore the value or effectiveness of the services offered by the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. I made the aims and objectives of the research clear to my employer from the outset.

Despite this, I did experience some interest from senior management within the Lucy Faithfull Foundation in relation to any feedback I had received from participants with regard to their experience of Lucy Faithfull Foundation resources. The interest appeared to be in the spirit of natural curiosity. I did reflect upon what, if any, consequences there might be on my relationships within the organisation if I had discovered evidence of bad practice. I did not discover any bad practice. However, I would have taken appropriate action if I had, in line with the agreed steps for action outlined in my ethics application. Specifically, I would have consulted with my supervisors and, depending on the nature of the discovery, I would have given the information to the senior management team within Lucy Faithfull Foundation.

Chavez (2008) identifies one of the benefits of being an insider as being able to develop rapport with participants. In this context, being an insider researcher was hugely beneficial in terms of accessing a hard-to-reach group. I would further argue that, in this context, as an insider I had prior knowledge of the subject area and therefore had skill in accessing sensitive information. In the main, I am confident and competent in talking about the specific issues related to child sexual abuse; and familiar with the terminology and processes associated with my research participants' situations. I hope that this was apparent to them and made

them feel more at ease. As an insider researcher I felt competent in recognising the complexity of the subject and therefore more capable of minimising harm to the participant. As an established senior practitioner within the Lucy Faithfull Foundation I am also in a position of trust and therefore more likely to be perceived as having greater credibility, both to the research participants and to the target audience of readers of the research findings.

Insider researcher's relationship with gatekeepers

As an established employee of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation it was easier for me to access gatekeepers than it might have been if I was employed elsewhere; I had established relationships with the gatekeepers and they respected and trusted me to complete ethically sound research. On a practical note, during the process of completing the research I experienced some dynamics with gatekeepers that I did not anticipate. On occasion I needed to reassert my role as a researcher as opposed to an employee of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation who was supporting the family. While there were benefits of being an insider researcher (for example, being established and accepted by gatekeepers as authentic and legitimate), problems did emerge with gatekeepers who perceived me as a supportive and empathetic practitioner and tended to consult with me as a practitioner rather than as a researcher. As a result, gatekeepers would suggest to me that the participant would benefit from participating in the research as a form of additional support. When this happened I was clear that the participants may find the process cathartic. However, they also needed to balance this against the possibility that they may also find it emotionally demanding.

When completing insider research, it is important to ensure that participants do not feel pressured to consent to participating in the research, thinking that if they do not agree there could be repercussions for their experience as a service user (Brannick and Cohan 2007). Families who contact the Lucy Faithfull Foundation are usually in a state of crisis. They are usually desperate for help and it was important that they did not feel that their access to support required them to participate in my research. To mitigate against this I did not ask anyone I worked

with directly to participate in the research. On occasions this decision was a source of frustration due to the fact that I was working with families who had important experiences which would have been beneficial to include in the research.

I will now explore my reflections on insider research in more detail.

Reflections on insider research

On a personal level, completing the research caused me to reflect upon the differing power dynamics at play when undertaking research. I felt much more empowered as a practitioner than as a researcher. It is likely that this is partly due to the fact that I had over a decade of experience as a practitioner. However, I was also aware that as a researcher I felt that the research participants were giving me something and I was giving them very little in return. This was a contrast to my feelings as a practitioner where I felt I had more power because I could offer a service to the client. I also reflected on how the families would feel when reading the findings. I had some concerns in relation to how the participants might feel and how their relationships with each other might be affected. In a similar vein I was much more accustomed to being a practitioner and therefore it was important that I avoided taking on the role of 'helper' to clients, to ensure that the research was valid and reliable. I also had a heightened awareness of maintaining an objective stance in attempting to persuade people to participate in the research.

Having explored the benefits and challenges of insider research, I will now discuss the methods used in this research.

Section 2

Method

Following acceptance that I was only able to interview one child who was affected by her father downloading IIOC, the aim of this research was to develop understanding of the child's experience through the perspective of parents. The research primarily focused on the family's experience of gaining support and interventions when a parent was arrested for downloading IIOC. There was a

focus on parents' views of their children's experiences of services and their thoughts and feelings about the impact of the offences on their children.

I concluded that any approach which was too rigid would undermine the aims of my research because it would restrict the opportunity for participants to share their views about the impact on children. Given how little is known about the impact on children when a parent is arrested for downloading IIOC, it would have been challenging to develop a set of quantitative measures, for example, through use of a more structured survey or questionnaire asking for quantitative data. In my view a questionnaire asking for quantitative data would not have facilitated an environment in which the participant felt able to share the details of their complex journey. Furthermore, in my view, such a questionnaire would not have afforded the opportunity to ensure that participants were emotionally supported, as was possible following the interviews. I concluded that my experience and connections to gatekeepers meant that it would be possible for me to access to a sample of participants face to face. I also considered that an interview would facilitate an environment where I could elicit nuanced and detailed information from participants.

Having fully considered the range of research options, I concluded that it was appropriate to adopt an inductive methodology. The research needed to have the capacity to be attuned to the data and evolve accordingly. I wanted to be able to capture the narratives of the participants and the impact of their experiences on their children's daily lives. Qualitative methods offer the opportunity to reflect and respond to the data and therefore I chose a qualitative method: semi-structured interviews.

I outline below the methods I used for this research and then summarise the process of analysis that resulted in my findings.

As noted in Chapter two, which explored my theoretical framework, the way sex offenders are perceived in society can have an impact on how they are managed by the agencies who work with them. In my research I wanted to be able to explore the journey of the child in the context of their family. However, I did not want to neglect the wider interactions that were going on at the time, for example between parents, professionals and children. I wanted to explore the child's

reality and the meaning of their experiences through their eyes. While I was only able to interview one child directly, I was able to develop understanding of the child's journey through the eyes of parents. This was achieved through semi-structured interviews with parents/carers and one young person. To enable participants to share their journey with me I decided that semi-structured interviews would provide flexibility and the capacity for me to respond to the unique experience of the child or family member by asking further follow-up questions as part of the interviews. A semi-structured interview gave me the opportunity to apply this flexibility and to be responsive to the needs of the interviewee. The topics that I explored were developed using information gleaned from my own experience as a practitioner in the field and from the literature review. However, the interviews were also very much guided by the individual circumstances disclosed by the participants. The templates for the semi-structured interviews conducted with the parents and child can be found at Appendices 8 and 9. They include references to the support needed by participants: including how to understand and mitigate the potential impact of participating, the support that is available to them and what would be done if there were disclosures of further abuse or danger to a child.

The sample

Practitioners who were working with the parents and families throughout this process as facilitators of the Inform and Inform Plus programmes were approached to act as gatekeepers for the research. During an initial meeting with the gatekeepers I provided detailed information, both verbally and in written format, explaining the details of the research and safeguarding procedures. I was also supported by the then operations director of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, who sent a follow-up email to facilitators of the Inform Plus programme.

These gatekeepers provided suitable participants with information about the research. Initially I informed gatekeepers that in order to be suitable, potential participants needed to be parents who had children over thirteen. I also stipulated that the child needed to have knowledge of their parent's offending. However due

to problems accessing a sample, I agreed to include parents who had children of any age and parents of children who had no knowledge of the offence. An information sheet was provided to gatekeepers (Appendix one), parents (Appendix 2) and children (Appendix 3). The gatekeeper contacted the parent to ask if they wanted to take part in the research, giving them the parents' information sheet. Participants were invited to express an interest directly to myself, as the researcher, via email.

The original research design included the intention to collect a sample of 10 young people from separate families. Participants were intended to be selected using a purposive sampling method. My original aim was to access children who had parents who had participated in the Inform and Inform Plus groups, aiming for 50% boys and 50% girls aged 12-18 years from a range of ethnicities and socioeconomic backgrounds. My original inclusion criteria also included: children who were aware that their parent had been arrested for downloading IIOC, who were in contact with a support service and/or were able to talk about their experiences. I was not able to achieve the desired sample due to children not being aware of the offences, being too close to their trauma, too young, or not being in contact with the offending parent (their father).

My inclusion criteria for parents was originally: parents who had children over thirteen who knew about the offences. After it became evident that it was not going to be possible to access a valid sample of parents who had disclosed the offences to the children I decided, in collaboration with my supervisors, that I would include any parents who had children of any age, including those parents who had not informed the children about the offences. Those parents were given a guidance sheet, taken from The Lucy Faithfull Foundation 'Get Help' website, which includes advice for parents about how to talk with their children. This can be seen at Appendix 11.

I interviewed nine adult fathers who had been arrested for downloading indecent images of children; three mothers of children whose fathers had downloaded IIOC; one step mother of children whose father downloaded IIOC; and one child whose father downloaded IIOC. In total there were 26 children attached to the

nine fathers, three mothers and one step mother within the study. The number of children who were under 18 at the time of the offence was 19. The number of children over eighteen at the time of the offence was seven. One child was born after the offence.

The table shown below illustrates the research sample. I have included details of the participants according to their age and relationship status. I have included the age of their child at the point of the arrest (male children are referred to as MC and female children are referred to as FC). Participant 2 is participant 1's mother. Participants 6 and 7 are in a relationship. Participants 10 and 11 are in relationship.

Table 2. Respondents

Respondent	Age	Children	Relationship status
1 Holly	17	n/a	n/a
2 Mother	49	FC 14 FC 12	Divorced due to offence
3 Offender	53	FC over 18 MC over 18 FC 14 FC 12	Divorced due to offence
4 Offender	52	MC 11	Separated prior to offence
5 Offender	Not known	FC 2.5 MC 1	Separated due to offence
6 Mother	Not known	MC 4 FC 1	In a relationship with 7
7 Offender	Not known	As above	In a relationship with 6
8 Offender	Not known	FC age 2 MC age unknown	Separated due to offence
9 Offender	53	FC over 18 MC over 18 FC 13	Separated due to offence
10 Step mother	29	As below	In a relationship with 11
11 Offender	47	MC over 18 MC 16 FC 15 MC 14	In a relationship with 10
12 Mother	36	FC 5	Divorced due to offence

		MC 2	
13 Offender	54	FC over 18 MC over 18 FC 13	Widower Single
14 Offender	Not known	MC 14 MC 4	Separated due to offence

The sample is small and cannot therefore be seen as representative of all families who experience the arrest of a family member for downloading IIOC. All the participants who completed the monitoring form identified themselves as white British and heterosexual. All the participants were employed. The young person who participated was in full-time education.

Data collection methods

I had intended to interview all participants in person. However due to availability and geographical distance, five participants (Respondents 10, 11, 12, 13 and 14) were interviewed on the telephone. Given my extensive experience of working on the Stop it Now! Helpline I do not consider that the use of telephone hampered data collection. On the contrary, it was entirely possible that some of the participants felt that they could be more open on the telephone for a range of reasons. These reasons might include: feeling more in control (being able to end the call at any time); feeling a sense of anonymity; not trying to read my body language through fear of being judged; and being in their home environment, therefore feeling more comfortable and at ease. On the other hand, not being able to read the participants' body language could have been a potential disadvantage. All participants gave their consent for an audio recording of the interviews to be made.

I was committed to ensuring, where practically possible, that participants who wished to take part were enabled to do so by a commitment to the following: flexibility over time and place where interviews took place; flexibility over the length of the interview; flexibility as to whether the interview took place over the phone or in person.

Data gathered during fieldwork was either i) recorded and then transcribed or ii) noted during the interview and then typed up. I explore data collection in detail later in this chapter.

All names which may potentially have identified a participant were removed. Original tapes and notes were stored in a locked cabinet (in my home) to which access was restricted to myself. Any files holding data about the project and participants were password protected, and if stored on a memory stick, kept in a locked drawer. All participants referenced were given a respondent number to protect their confidentiality.

At the end of each interview, up to 15 minutes was set aside to check that the participant was feeling as comfortable and secure as possible. It was made clear that as a researcher I could not offer any counselling, advice or therapeutic support to participants; however, I remained committed to responding with compassion and provided a list of resources that may be helpful, which can be found in Appendix 10.

Data analysis

With regard to data analysis, I considered the most effective method would be an inductive thematic analysis. I took guidance from Braun and Clarke's (2006) comprehensive framework which states that there are six key phases to undertaking an inductive thematic analysis. The first phase concerns familiarisation with the data, phase 2 initial coding, phase 3 searching for themes, phase 4 reviewing themes, phase 5 defining and naming themes and phase 6 producing the report. I now demonstrate how I applied this guidance.

I applied Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase guidance. In phase one I manually transcribed the interview data and entered it on NVivo 11. This process afforded me the opportunity to become fully immersed and familiar with the data and to start noticing themes and patterns in the interviews. I started creating codes during the transcription. I noticed that there were several key points where it was evident that the impact on the parent/child of the arrest of the family member for

downloading IIOC was most likely to be intensely experienced by the child. I noted that these would be important points to consider at phase two, initial coding. While immersing myself in the data I drew upon the literature reviewed in relation to resilience, however I did not have a predetermined framework but developed the coding framework from the data.

In phase two I used NVivo 11 to code the data. NVivo is computer-assisted software which supports qualitative and mixed methods research. Data can be organised and stored in NVivo using 'nodes'. Using the information I gleaned from the data I developed a coding framework and created corresponding nodes using NVivo to capture the detail of each participant's account of the child's journey. The initial coding framework contained codes which were generated from my manual observations and analysis of the interviews. The codes predominantly related to points in the child's journey which indicated significant impact on them of their parent downloading IIOC. The codes also aimed to capture the difference between the children's lives before, during and after the offences, using before, now and after themes. Following on from this I wanted to capture what assisted the children's recovery, and also data which demonstrated the child's recovery.

In the initial coding phase I generated codes using NVivo which relate to each phase where impact was evident and other key aspects of the child's journey. In phase three I searched for themes. The phases and aspects included:

- Experience of the arrest
- Disclosure
- Experience of professionals
- Contact between the child and the father
- Media
- Symbols
- Impact on the child

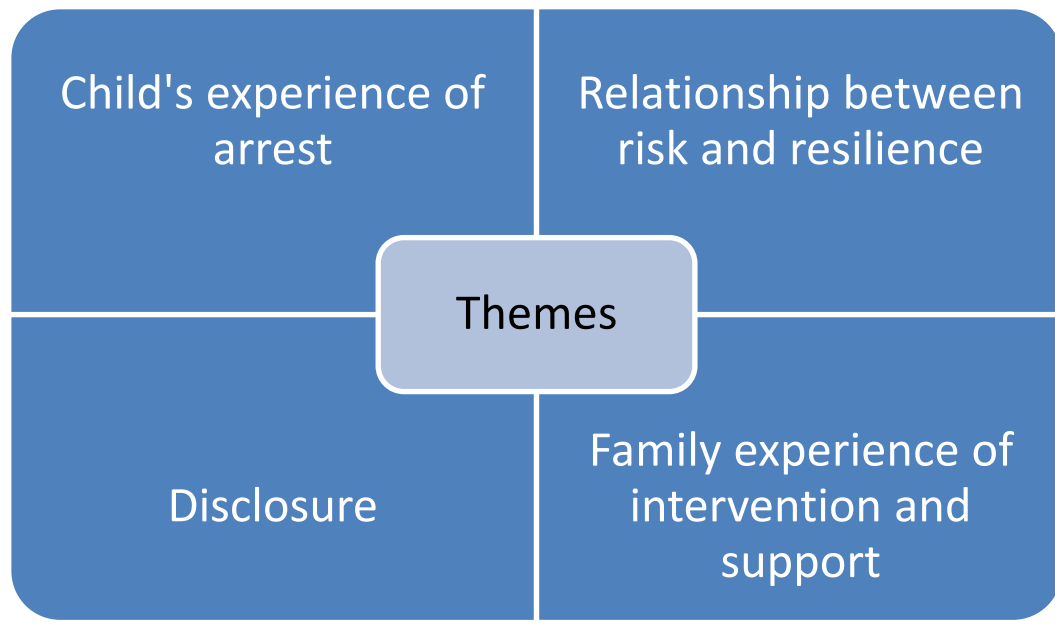
- Support offered

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) the next phase of undertaking an inductive thematic analysis is reviewing themes.

During phase four, I reviewed the coded data and developed a detailed thematic map, which is provided at Appendix 14. The thematic map provides details of the process I went through to review the themes. The participants in the study had a wide range of social, economic and familial circumstances and therefore it was not appropriate to rely solely on the prevalence of any of the descriptive codes alone. One of the challenges of coding the data was in capturing the context quotes without having excessively long passages of text. Braun and Clarke (2006) note that a common criticism of coding is that the context of the quote is lost through the selection of a small part of the discourse. The manner in which I have coded the data perhaps leans more towards having too much detail. However, the data was so rich with detail it was difficult to decide what to cut out. I have provided some examples of coded data at Appendix 13.

Phase five of undertaking an inductive thematic analysis is defining and naming the themes. Having reviewed the coded data I drew upon the existing literature to analyse and organize the data in a meaningful way. I decided that the data could be grouped into the following themes as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Themes



The final phase of undertaking an inductive thematic analysis is producing the report. I dedicated a chapter of my thesis to presenting my analysis of the circumstances of arrest and disclosure. The experience of fathers, mothers and of the one child that I was able to interview were explored in detail, with a chapter allocated to each of them. The remaining themes, relationship between risk and resilience and family experience of intervention and support, were explored within each of the chapters.

Prior to embarking on the research in a context as sensitive as this it was essential to fully explore the ethical considerations.

Section 3

Ethical considerations pre research

This research received ethical approval from the Institute of Applied Social Research Ethics Committee on 16th June 2014.

The participants' needs are central to the ethos of the research. The aims of the research were not prioritised over the participants' ownership of their information. I wanted children who participated to feel that they could share their story at their own pace. In my experience as a practitioner, I often find children

are expected to give information before they feel able to do so and therefore the research was cautious not to place this burden on the child.

It became apparent that it was not going to be possible to obtain a sample of children who met the eligibility criteria. There were a range of reasons why children were not suitable to participate, including that the adults who volunteered had children who were too young to participate and that the child was not living with the offending parent (and the offending parent was estranged from the non-offending parent). As stated previously, in collaboration with my supervisors I took the decision to pursue exploration of the child's experience through the accounts of parents. I was able to interview one child, a 17-year-old girl who is referred to as Holly in this thesis. I also interviewed Holly's mother. Holly's mother gave Holly the information about the study and she agreed to participate. I also gave Holly an information sheet and asked her to sign a consent form in her own right.

To ensure informed consent was achieved from the young person I decided that she would be contacted in three stages, through:

- Gatekeepers
- Parents
- Young person in partnership with the parents

During the process of gaining consent it was stressed to participants (both verbally and in the form) that consent is voluntary and that they could choose to leave the project, for whatever (or no) reason. If they chose to leave the research they could choose that all their contributions to the project be removed and destroyed. For the purposes of this research, consent was viewed as an ongoing process. I made it clear to all participants that they could withdraw their consent at any time.

The research was designed to be exploratory. Participants were reminded that they are in control of their information and are under no obligation to share anything they do not want to. I took care not to overburden participants with

requests for too much information and regularly checked out whether the participant was happy to continue with the session.

Despite these safeguards the nature of some of the information shared by participants was sensitive and had the potential to evoke painful memories and emotional distress. While this potential scenario could not be eliminated completely, I ensured that any signs of distress were responded to by inviting the participant to pause and consider if they want to continue with the interview. On occasion participants became tearful when discussing the past and the future. As an experienced and qualified children and families practitioner I drew upon my skills to assess this and responded accordingly. I also took opportunities to discuss any unresolved issues for me with my supervisors at the university periodically.

Overall it was hoped that participants would find involvement in the project to be a positive experience. Participants appeared to find the experience cathartic and they showed a genuine enthusiasm to be informed about the outcomes of the research. Their advice and opinions were greatly valued. The sessions offered them a chance to express their views in a safe way. It is hoped that the research findings will be used to promote understanding of how the harm caused by a parent downloading IIOC can be reduced to a minimum.

Prior to embarking on the research I considered that there was a possibility that participants would disclose information that they or a child or children were experiencing (or at significant risk of) physical, emotional or sexual abuse or neglect. In this scenario I would have drawn on my child protection training and prior experience of dealing with disclosures of child abuse and neglect. At the beginning of every session I discussed confidentiality issues with the participant and explained that "whatever you tell me will be confidential unless you tell me that you or someone else is in immediate danger of serious harm". There were no unexpected disclosures.

I completed the research under the principle that if any of the participants did disclose information that indicated anyone was experiencing or at risk of harm, it was essential to work with them in a way that was respectful of whatever information they shared by listening carefully to them, reassuring them and talking to them about what action would be taken. I explained that such

information could not be kept 'secret' and that local child protection guidelines would be followed.

It was possible that participants may have disclosed illegal activity not known to the police or practitioners during the interviews. I acknowledged that some information pertaining to their illegal involvement may arise during interviews; however, this did not occur.

Disclosures may have been made by participants about bad or unsafe practice they had experienced from practitioners. I had planned that in this scenario my response would depend on the nature of the disclosure. If information shared highlighted possible risks to the safety of young people I would explain to the participant that I needed to share this information (in accordance with safeguarding procedures).

Participants invited to take part in the research were provided with access to immediate support from the gatekeeper who referred them to the research and, in addition, details of services who could provide relevant after care were given to all participants.

Ethical considerations emerging in practice

During the research interviews several of the participants referred to having had suicidal thoughts or feelings in the past. Shortly after their arrests, respondent 3 took two overdoses and respondent 4 slashed his wrists. Respondents 6 and 8 explicitly reported suicidal thoughts. Respondent 9 alluded to suicidal thoughts. Respondent 12 was very concerned that her ex-partner was at imminent risk of suicide following the offence. It had not been my original aim to explore the risk of suicide during this study. However, I was given pause to consider what the impact would be on the child in the event of their parent committing suicide. During the interviews I gave participants time and space to talk about their thoughts and feelings in relation to suicide. I made sure that I did not rush them to move onto topics that were more relevant to the research project. I took time to ensure that there were no imminent safety issues.

The young person who participated in the study, referred to as Holly, disclosed that her mother experienced suicidal thoughts. I was concerned about the impact of Holly's disclosures in terms of my discussion and inclusion of them in this thesis. I wondered about the impact on her mother should she read the thesis and recognise herself. While this issue could not be fully resolved I concluded that Holly was aware that her disclosures could be included. She was aware that she was the only young person who participated. It is my contention that, like many young people, Holly shared her experiences because she wanted them to be heard and she wanted to galvanise change. At no point did Holly request that any of her disclosures were kept secret.

Section 4

Challenges to completing the research

As discussed, gaining access to the sample was much more difficult and time consuming than I had anticipated, for several reasons discussed throughout this chapter.

My gatekeepers were very busy and, quite rightly, their first priority was not helping me gain access to a research sample. I had to develop resilience and be aware that when gatekeepers did not respond it was no reflection on their commitment to me or my research but simply a consequence of their being busy. Thirdly, I was not aware prior to conducting the research that the gatekeepers had already been approached by other researchers (who were undertaking research with a different focus) while facilitating previous groups and it seemed there was a residue of researcher fatigue.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter I have presented the process undertaken in relation to data collection and analysis. The process of the literature review is described in chapter 3. The research process evolved over the course of the study. There are many ways in which the research could have been improved. Access to a larger sample would have been beneficial. All the participants identified themselves as white and

therefore the sample is not representative of a mixed population. It is not possible to make generalisations from the findings. Furthermore, it would have been helpful to interview the professionals involved with the families. Exploration of the experience of the professionals would have been a useful contribution in terms of exploring the dynamics. However, given that many of the families gave negative accounts of their experience of professionals, it is possible that the participants may have felt stifled if they had thought professionals would be contacted. Like any project, time and resources were limited. The opportunities provided by the sample were maximised.

While I was not able to speak directly with a representative sample of children who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC, the narratives I have gained access to remain valuable. Insights were gained from the perspective of non-offending parents (mothers and one step parent), offending fathers and one female child. The interviews with these participants demonstrated the diverse circumstances of the families and provided an indirect (through the perspective of their parents) insight into the lives of 27 children. There are limitations of this research; it is possible that the children would have given very different accounts to that given by their parents. Further research is needed.

The findings chapters will be organised in a manner that will enable the reader to follow the journey of the respondents. The presentation of findings will begin with an in-depth analysis of the reported experiences of the arrests.

Introduction to findings

The research produced three data sets: mothers, fathers and one child. Presentation of my findings will begin with exploration of the narratives relating to the arrest of the offending parent. In Chapter 5, the experiences of the child are mainly presented through the eyes of parents, as such I integrate the findings from all three sets of data. Chapter 6 provides an analysis of the experience of mothers; the findings are presented to explore the journey of each group. In Chapter 7 I present an analysis of the views of fathers. Chapter 8 will focus on disclosure of the offences to the child. Not all children connected to the study were aware of their parents' offending; this fact gave me the opportunity to explore with the parents their reasons for and against disclosure of the offences. I also discuss the concerns the parents had about disclosing to their children in the future. Chapter 9 will focus on Holly. In the concluding chapter I provide signposts for further research with children and with professionals.

Chapter 5 The arrest

Introduction

The focus of this chapter will be the experience of the arrest for children. The child's experience has been established through analysis of the interviews conducted with the parent who was arrested for downloading IIOC and with non-offending parents. Several important themes emerged from the interviews which facilitate greater understanding of the child's experience when their parent is arrested. The factors I have identified as being of particular importance are: firstly the loss experienced by the child as, in most cases, the offending parent was required to live away from the family home; secondly the circumstances of the arrest: for example the timing of the arrest and whether or not the child was present; thirdly, I have also explored the arrest as a first opportunity to help the non-offending parent understand the risk that may be present, or be seen to present, and how this may later impact on their capacity to engage with children's services and their capacity to protect the child(ren). Throughout this chapter I have included the experience of the parents and their feedback regarding how they felt they and their children were treated.

Analysis of the interviews revealed that the arrest was an important stage to consider in depth. The majority of the families I interviewed had no prior experience of the police or children's services. The experience of arrest was, therefore, a powerful symbolic experience for the family. A common theme of circumstances of the arrest was the child being present. Ten (11 if including an 18-year-old who was also arrested) children connected to the research project were present at the time of the arrest. Nine of the children who were under the age of 18 were not present at the point of arrest. The parents reported diverse experiences of the arresting police officers. It is worthy of note that there was some very positive feedback. The interviews revealed a wide range of circumstances under which the child may experience the arrest and therefore I will offer commentary on and analysis of the information provided to me by the participants under the following subheadings:

- Loss

- Children being present at the point of the arrest
- The dawn raid
- The importance of compassion
- Vigilantism
- The first opportunity to help
-

Loss

The data revealed that all of the children attached to the study experienced some form of loss following the arrest of a parent for downloading IIOC. The experience of loss ranged from the loss of electronic devices to the loss of the parent from the family home and, for many of the children, loss of their perception of their father as they previously knew him. Social constructionists would argue that meaning is given to loss by culture and society. Doka and Martin (2002) argue that patterns of relationships define the meaning of those relationships and the level of emotional intensity to which the individual experiences loss. In modern society, the family is deemed to be an important institution, one in which children should be protected. Furthermore, it is accepted that relationships between parents and children are important. In my view the social construction of the parent as the person who is meant to be protective is relevant in this context. The child experiences psychological impact through the loss of the parent they have hitherto learned to trust and respect.

Despite not being present at the point of arrest, some of the children attached to the study experienced the removal of their electronic devices as part of the investigation process. Respondent 4's son (aged 11) was not present at the arrest. The police did remove his computer to be examined. According to Respondent 4, his son was given the following explanation:

'She [the mother] told my son there were problems with computers in the area and the police had to take them away to examine. My son is not particularly inquisitive... He has no knowledge of the reality and still doesn't today.'

Given the significant attachment many young people have to their smartphones,

computers and tablets, it is important to consider how the removal of these devices would impact on them. Bannon et al (2015) highlight that young people use the internet to develop their social competence, to develop their identity and to feel connected with their peers. It is also important to consider how a child might react in the future if they discover the true reason for the removal of such devices.

After being arrested, the vast majority of the men in the study who were living with their families received bail conditions to live away from the family home.

The concept of loss will be explored further in this chapter and in chapter 6. In the next section I will interrogate the data in relation to children who were present at the point of arrest.

Children present at the point of arrest

Ten children were present at the time their parent was arrested. For some children, the police represent protection: this is likely to be especially true for children who have no prior experience of the police in relation to their family, and no experience of someone they love and care about being arrested. Books aimed at children which detail storylines featuring the police most often portray a police officer in a positive light, for example, acting in the interests of good people and catching 'baddies'. The symbol of a 'parent' is most often understood by children who have not experienced abuse as a person who should protect and care for them. For a child to witness their parent being arrested is a profoundly symbolic experience, one which is likely to affect how they perceive their parent and how they perceive the police.

When exploring the possible impact of witnessing the arrest of a parent, I also considered the following factors: the age of the child; whether the officers were uniformed; the resilience and needs of the child; and their previous experience of their parent. The child's age, resilience, needs and experience are likely to affect their ability to understand and make sense of the experience. However, in my

view, a child of any age will be affected, they will simply be affected in different ways. Analysis of the interviews with the parents and one child all indicated that the child had a positive prior relationship with the father. The relationship between the child and their parents will be explored in more detail in chapters 6-8. The ages of the children present at the point of arrest ranged from approximately eight months to 15 years. A good example of the emotional impact on a child under the age of five is provided by Respondent 8. In the quote below Respondent 8 described his two-and-a-half-year-old daughter's reaction when he was arrested:

'Well my partner left for work early, about quarter past six as always, I was getting my daughter ready to go round to her grandma's for when I went to work, I was combing her hair about quarter to eight in the morning. There was a knock at the door and there were two police officers... she was clinging onto me, she could obviously tell that something wasn't right. Then when I took her to her nan's she was crying at lot, which wasn't very nice for me, she was in tears.'

Despite the fact that the child referenced above was not able to understand the full circumstances, she was aware that something was wrong, despite the fact that the officers were not uniformed.

In contrast to the experience of the dawn raid, another example where children aged one and four were present involved an evening arrest. As can be seen below this was a practical challenge for their mother (Respondent 6):

*'They knocked on the door at tea time and said can we have a word with you and then when they noticed that *Respondent 7 was here, they said it was him they needed to speak to so I stayed in the lounge with the children for ten minutes while they spoke with him, he came back in and told me what they come for... I stayed in the lounge for three hours while they searched the house and had to explain to the children that they couldn't go to bed yet because they couldn't go*

upstairs. Eventually I managed to get them to bed 9:30-10:00 which is about four hours later than their normal bedtime.'

In one, possibly extreme, case the non-offending 18-year-old son of respondent 11 was arrested and held in a police cell. Respondent 11 stated that his son was arrested because he was the only person at home at the time the police raided the house. There are a range of possibilities regarding the reason for respondent 11's son's arrest and detention. It is difficult to offer any insight as to why a young person might be arrested in the situation as the parents describe it.

According to respondent 11, his son was home alone when the police knocked at the door. The account of respondent 10 (partner of respondent 11 and step mother of the young man who was arrested) indicated that her step son is resourced with emotional resilience. A less resilient young person however may have been more profoundly affected.

The interviews raised the importance of timing of the arrest. The timings varied, with the most common being in the morning. It is worth noting that in one case the arrest took place at a time when the child's friends would have been walking past their home to go to school. In such circumstances there is a danger that the child may feel embarrassed and not want to go to school as a result. Furthermore, there is a danger that the child will experience bullying and ridicule. Respondent 5 commented:

*'Our family home is right round the corner from *my son's school and they [the police] came round at the walking out of school time so they were walking past when officers were taking stuff out of the house, clear carry bags with computers in them, while his friends were walking past, they took them to an unmarked car but it was still quite public.'*

I will now discuss the dawn raid in greater depth.

The dawn raid

Being woken from sleep by a knock at the door from the police would be a frightening experience for most people. The data provided a unique insight into the families' experience of the dawn raid. Such an experience may evoke thoughts and feelings of fear, perhaps fearing that a loved one had been hurt. In six cases, the offending parent was arrested in the context of a dawn raid. In those six cases, 11 children were present, their ages ranging from eight months to 15 years. In addition to those children, in one case the 18-year-old son of the perpetrator was present. The cases where a dawn raid was completed were small in number. However, despite being small in number, the respondents who reported a dawn raid lived several hundred miles apart from each other. Given the practice of a dawn raid being evident across different police forces raised the question as to how established this practice might be.

The participants who were subject to dawn raids provided their accounts of the experience. Their accounts were varied. One case raised the issue of how best to respond to single parents. Respondent 13 is a single parent who had (unbeknown to his daughter) previously been convicted for downloading indecent images in 2000. He was re-arrested in 2015 in the context of a dawn raid. It is a point of interest that he reflected upon the first time he was arrested and stated that the police were much more 'heavy handed' in 2000. He said he was handcuffed on that occasion. On the more recent occasion the police were not uniformed. Respondent 13 and his 13-year-old daughter were asleep when the police knocked on the door at 6:30am. He stated:

'They kept knocking and knocking and I slipped on the stairs and dislocated my shoulder so I was unable to be arrested on the day.'

Respondent 13's changing expression and animated tone reflected the heightened emotion of the experience. I did not have the opportunity to interview his daughter, however one might expect that such an experience may have significant impact on her. An important element of the child's context relates to her mother who died suddenly in 2003 after having a stroke while they were on

holiday. This highlights the importance of considering the child's context. Respondent 13 did remark that the police were 'delicate' with his daughter when they searched her laptop, a delicacy which may have offered her some comfort. He was unable to give any examples of how the police were 'delicate'. He also told me that he was taken to hospital in an ambulance, because of his dislocated shoulder, relatively quickly after he answered the door to the police. This example helps to illustrate the importance of the needs of the individual child and the how the impact of their previous experiences may contribute to harm. In this case it was helpful that the girl's paternal grandfather lived in close proximity and was able to come and collect his granddaughter and therefore she was afforded some familiarity.

Respondent 12 told me about her experience of a dawn raid which involved eight uniformed police officers in four marked police cars who attended to arrest her then husband.

When I interviewed Respondent 12, she told me that her husband had previously been arrested in 2008 but was not convicted. Respondent 12 said after the initial arrest in 2008 she had her second child. Being in the late stages of pregnancy would present additional stress for a mother.

Another important detail in relation to the arrest is whether or not the police are in uniform and whether they are in a marked car. The police are easily recognised when in uniform. Many of the parents I interviewed had a deep concern regarding the neighbours seeing police officers outside their family home. Respondent 12's case was the only one in this study where the officers were uniformed. It is possible that her experience is not typical of the experience of families when a parent is arrested. However, it is worthy of exploration to highlight an example of poor practice. Respondent 12 stated:

*'She [the police officer] said we can't tell you any more than that... I just said, by this point I were trying to keep *my son calm, trying to keep meself calm, *my daughter was asleep in bed, most of the police had left. I think there were only about four at that point so I just said "I need*

*to get my daughter out the house". So I had to ask her to give me me phone back so I rung me mother in law who lives just up the road and I said "you're going to have to come and get the kids" and she said "why?" And I said "*my husband has been arrested", she said "why?" I said, "it's the reason they came to your house in 2008" and she just went "oh my god I'm coming"*.

Respondent 12's account indicates that she is well resourced in terms of her ability to regulate her emotions in the presence of the children. Despite feeling panicked she reported realising the importance of remaining calm to enable her to keep the children calm. Like the previous example cited, Respondent 12 is also well resourced in terms of support. Respondent 12 describes her daughter's confusion when she was woken up outside her routine to witness a uniformed police officer at her bedroom door:

*'Meanwhile I'm kind of trying to be jovial with *my daughter saying "come on *, out of bed please, get ready for school, grandma's coming in a minute..." *my daughter replies: 'why is grandma coming? It's not grandma's day today' because we have set routine so she knew it was completely off, so she was like: "I'm not getting out of bed" until it got the point where the police had to come upstairs while I got her out bed. They said they wouldn't be doing their job properly if they didn't follow me upstairs so she waited outside the bedroom and it got to the point where I were getting quite.... frantic probably isn't the right word, kind of, panicked, so I just said to her "you need to get out of bed there is a police officer outside your door" and she just went "what?" and I just said "please * get up, get dressed" and then this police officer appeared, it were a female police officer that come upstairs and she was just like "hello" and I was like "oh she's just being friendly, just get dressed".'*

Despite Respondent 12's ability to regulate her emotions in a difficult situation and to call upon the paternal grandmother, it is evident that her daughter was affected by the experience as she witnessed a police officer at her bedroom door. It is possible that the officer was concerned to check on the child's welfare, but

one would imagine this was an unwanted experience for the child. The experience was potentially very frightening for the child. When I asked Respondent 12 about any explanation she was given she gave the following response:

'Well no [sighs] not really, I mean they basically said afterward that they didn't know how big the house was... well they could have gone on Google Earth and had a look. Also I found out later, cos basically a friend of mine who I have confided in used to work in HR for Homeville Police and he's told me that, for these kind of offences when they know there's children in the house, which I know damn well that they knew that there were children in the house. There's no way that they didn't know that because they can find out everything... [inaudible] They got to the house, they'd got social care and everybody lined up and ready to interview, they'd got child protection, police, ready to interview my daughter, everything, so they knew, my friend told me that they are supposed to wait until the children are not in the house and then go and get them from somewhere else. I mean the thing is if I'd had any advance warning I would have taken 'em down to the police station myself.'

It is a point of interest that respondent 12's friend informed her that the police are 'not supposed to arrest' when the children are in the house. Respondent 12 raises important points regarding perception of risk and the likelihood of compliance from the non-offending partner.

As stated previously, I did not complete any interviews with the police and therefore my analysis of the experience of arrest is derived from the accounts of parents. The feedback from parents who have experienced an emotionally traumatic event is subject to bias. Negative feedback in relation to the necessity of a dawn raid when a child was present was a consistent theme among the participants who were affected. Without the full facts of the circumstances, it is impossible to know if dawn raids were justified with these families. It is difficult to understand, however, on the basis of the information I have available, why a dawn raid would be necessary. Respondent 12 stated:

*'I appreciate they didn't know me but what they should've done is gone and picked him up at work and then the kids would have been safe and they wouldn't have known, so *my daughter was like oh, I remember her saying to me outside, "how disgust"... she didn't ask about her dad at that point she was like; "oh mum are they going to arrest you?"'*

It is important to consider the fear a child would experience in the said circumstances. Respondent 12's daughter believed she was faced with the possibility of losing both her parents.

While there were some negative reports regarding the circumstances of the arrest, there was also some evidence of good practice. The good practice experienced by the parents in this study was clearly invaluable. Many of the participants indicated that compassion was important. I will now explore the importance of compassion.

The importance of compassion

Despite the reports of negative experiences in relation to dawn raids, and in some cases even when there was a dawn raid, there was a consistent theme of positive feedback in relation to police practice and the way they interacted with the families. There was a stark contrast in the descriptions of interactions between families and the police and that between families and children's services. This will be explored in subsequent chapters. The vast majority of the participants commented that the police were sensitive and compassionate.

The literal definition of compassion includes reference to sympathy. Participants in the study talked about the importance of compassion. When I explored the context and implications of what they meant when they referred to compassion, their responses more clearly linked to empathy, professionalism and respect.

A useful case example concerned the case of Respondent 9. At the time of his arrest, Respondent 9 was in a long-term relationship with his partner, the mother of his 13-year-old child. He told me that he owned his own company. He also told

me that his partner had previously been employed as a police officer. When Respondent 9 was arrested for downloading indecent images of children he said that all the images had been erased. He told me that he had stopped downloading images months before the police arrived. According to Respondent 9, he stopped looking at the images when he saw an image of a child being abused which also revealed the camera crew. He described how he felt that he could no longer delude himself that the images were of children who had 'consented' to the abuse. He said that he initially denied the offences as he was not aware that the police could recover the images. He made important disclosures regarding his experience of how the police interacted with him and how this affected his belief that he could change. When he recounted the way he was treated by the police, Respondent 9's non-verbal indications, lip trembling and clasping hands, illustrated the depth of emotion evoked by the experience of compassion. Respondent 9 commented:

'I hope they treat everybody like that so you know they treated me in a compassionate way.'

Compassion, or lack thereof, was a word that was frequently used by participants. I am particularly interested in the repeat reference to the word 'compassion'; while it is not an antiquated word, it is not a word used in the majority of everyday conversations. There were many positive comments in relation to the way the men were treated by the police, however Respondent 9's comment below provides insight into how the men felt they were treated.

'They talk to you like you're still a human being... they weren't judgemental whereas social services it was "you're an abuser, you're not fit to see your children" whereas like that, well probably not when I'm in that psychological state that made me an offender, I'm not a good person, I'm the wrong side of the law, so I wouldn't disagree with that, but that person is probably 5% or 10% of me, the rest of the time my kids have had a fabulous upbringing.'

The reader will note Respondent 9's powerful reference to being treated like a human being. His experience of the police enabled him to maintain his self-efficacy, which is an essential ingredient in the change process (Maddux 2002).

The men involved in the study had voluntarily accessed a group work programme, most of them were told about the course by the police. It is possible that the officers who gave information about the course held the view that these were men who could be helped and could make changes. Given the police officers' awareness of the course, it is possible that their personal beliefs and values affected the interaction between them and the offender. The initial positive experience with the police officer could potentially alter the pathway of the offender by giving them the message that they need and deserve help and help is available. It is possible that the said views and subsequent interaction between the offender and the police increase the likelihood that an offender will get help and therefore more likely that they will desist from offending in the future.

Respondent 9's comment also illustrates some insight with regard to how the men perceived themselves in terms of risk. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the dominant discourse in relation to sex offenders is that they are dangerous and cannot be changed. As such when an offender is arrested for an offence of a sexual nature there is a risk of vigilantism.

The risk of vigilantism

Respondent 7 felt that the police were reassuring with regards to the risk of being targeted from vigilantism. He stated:

'I was concerned that if anyone was to say anything that I might be targeted but I was assured by a police officer that they would send people to look after me if that was the case.'

The quote provides a powerful reminder of the risks posed to families when a parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children. It is well documented that the label of sexual offender rouses strong emotions in most

people. What is less well documented is the impact on the children and non-offending partners when vigilantes target parents who are arrested for offences of a sexual nature.

The first opportunity to help

The interviews served to highlight the importance of the opportunity at the initial arrest in terms of helping the non-offending parent understand and absorb information.

One of the participants in the study, Respondent 2, was at home with one of her two daughters when the police arrived. Like many female partners, initially she found it exceptionally difficult to accept that her husband was guilty of downloading indecent images of children. Her then husband was not at home when the police arrived to seize the electronic devices. When the police informed her of the charges she was convinced that there must have been a mistake, that there was no way her husband could be capable. Respondent 2 stated:

'I said "this is a case of mistaken identity, you've got the wrong man". [sigh] I had to think really quickly as to what to tell my youngest daughter because she was just completely bewildered and we've talked about it since and she was like, "you, you know I didn't know what to think, I was so frightened". In the end I said he had been arrested for buying too much wine to bring back for the neighbours so I just had to fabricate a story and so that was what happened. So the four police officers obviously wanted to search everything so I had to... so my parents live nearby so thankfully one of the police officers drove my youngest daughter and me so I could drop her with my mum while my dad came back with me to the house so she was protected a little bit then from seeing them go through everything.'

Respondent 2 makes an important point about the experience of the police going through their things and her desire to protect her children from that experience. Respondent 2's desire was to protect her daughters from seeing strangers, albeit police officers in an official capacity, go through their personal belongings.

The quote by Respondent 2 above also illustrates the importance of the arrest when the child is present as the earliest opportunity to disclose to the child. Understandably, Respondent 2 didn't know what to say at the time and in the absence of any advice, she lied to her daughter.

My analysis of the quote below is that the manner in which the police gave Respondent 2 information helped her to move on from her denial. In terms of promoting future training and guidance for the police, Respondent 2's reflection on how she was treated by the police is important.

'I think I knew, really, looking back on it, that it was pretty serious from the manner of the arrest and you know the fact that it was coordinated and the concerns of the investigating officer, who was fantastic, he was very open and candid with me and he said, you know, "I'm telling you these things because I've got child protection concerns".'

The quote illustrates, to some degree, how the way in which the police officers talked to Respondent 2 helped her to accept what was being said. The quote doesn't quite capture the meaning of the words which Respondent 2 was able to portray in her intonation. When she repeated what the police officers had said to her, the warmth and concern were visceral. It was evident that the police officers reached her on an emotional level. My analysis of this interaction is that the officer was able to communicate the information in a manner that didn't leave Respondent 2 feeling that she was wrong for not believing the allegations initially. It was clear that she felt that the officer was not being alarmist but was genuinely concerned about her wellbeing. This data suggests that the initial arrest is an important opportunity to help the non-offending parent hear and absorb the concerns.

The arrest is also an important opportunity to make the non-offending parent aware of what, if any, support is available to them. Furthermore, it is important that they are made aware of resources they can contact for support. Two of the women who participated in the study were made aware of the Stop it Now! Helpline by the arresting officer, however some of the women told me that no

support was available, as illustrated by Respondent 12's case:

'I had said to them is there any help available for me and they all said "no! You're not the victim, we can't provide"... then I got a call mid-morning because basically they just, they walked away when, you know, when you're in a room that deafens you with silence and you just kind of sit there and it's like, I think the last time I was told not to tell anybody, and they were like, "have you talked to anyone" and I was like, "well I was told not to tell anyone last time" and I, he just said "well what about your mum?" and I didn't think about me mum and I rang me mum and it was me grandma's 95th birthday that day.'

The emphasis, tone and sharp manner in which Respondent 12 made the above quote indicated that she felt that the police treated her in manner that suggested their disdain for her. There was also a deep sense of sadness and loneliness in the way she talked about her grandmother's birthday. She went on to tell me that her mother didn't live locally and therefore she found it difficult to use her as a support. Furthermore, she made an interesting observation that she found it difficult to research any support that might be available owing to concerns about the possibility of accidentally accessing indecent material. It was evident that training and guidance was needed for the officers in the case regarding the available support for non-offending partners.

In this chapter I have established that the timing and circumstances of the arrest are important. There is a risk that children will be exposed to the arrest or possibly face arrest themselves. Furthermore, there is a risk that the child will lose their electronic devices without any explanation to help them understand what is happening and why. Children who are exposed to the arrest have different resources: some may be in a single parent family; some may have access to grandparents who may be able to assist. The arrest also presents an opportunity for professionals to help the non-offending parent to understand the possible risks. The data indicates that non-offending parents are likely to experience denial. I have concluded that there is a need for further investigation of how arrests are

most commonly completed. I have also concluded that arresting officers require guidance and training to prepare them for undertaking arrests of this nature. Such training and guidance should include: timing of arrest, the use of marked cars and uniformed officers, engaging non-offending partners, advising on available resources, and talking to children in a child-centred and age-appropriate manner.

Having established these general experiences of the arrest I will present my findings in relation to the experience of mothers, including their experience of children's services, their views about the offence, their experience of the offending parent prior to the arrest, how they believe their child has been affected, their story regarding life after the arrest, and what they feel professionals could have done differently to minimise the harm caused to the children.

Chapter 6 How do mothers see it?

Introduction

In Chapter 5, the concept of mothers as secondary victims of their partner's offending was introduced. In this chapter I will further explore how mothers felt they were affected after they discovered their partners' offending. Denial will be explored in greater depth and observations will be presented regarding what the mothers need from professionals to help them manage the harm caused to their children. In this chapter I provide a preliminary analysis regarding the relationship between the impact on the mother and the impact on the children.

I also give an analysis of all the respondents' reasons for remaining with or deciding to end the relationship with their offending partner.

It was also important to explore how women understood the risk presented by their partner, or, in the cases where the parents were separated, the children's father. In all of the interviews, the child's father had been arrested for downloading IIOC. Regardless of whether women remain in a relationship with the children's father or not, they are more likely than not to remain the primary carers. Mothers are, therefore, likely to be responsible for managing risk presented to the children from their father. To enhance understanding of a family's journey, I asked the women to provide their insights into and observations of the relationship between the father and the child before and after the arrest.

One of the pertinent factors in relation to the impact on the family was the mother's experience of children's services. I will present my findings in relation to what the women told me about their experiences of children's services and implementing contact arrangements. I will also present my findings in relation to what the women told me about the available support for them and their children.

As discussed in the methodology section, it was easier to access a sample of men who had downloaded IIOC than it was to access children or women. All of the men in this research except two (who was a widower) and one who was estranged from his partner before the offence had female partners prior to the offence being discovered. In some cases the men were estranged from their partner after the

offences came to light. In some cases the women were not in contact with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. The men I interviewed (in the cases where I did not have the opportunity to interview the mother) also provided some insight regarding how they felt their current or ex partner was affected and therefore I have included their views. In the table below I have outlined the relationship status and connections between participants.

Table 3. Respondents' relationship status

Respondent	Relationship status	Details of other family members interviewed
1 Holly	n/a	Mother interviewed
2 Mother	Divorced due to offence	Daughter interviewed
3 Father	Divorced due to offence	Mother not interviewed
4 Father	Separated prior to offence	Mother not interviewed
5 Father	Separated due to offence	Mother not interviewed
6 Father	Married to 7	Mother interviewed
7 Mother	Married to 6	Father interviewed
8 Father	Separated due to offence	Mother not interviewed
9 Father	Separated due to offence	Stepmother not interviewed
10 Step mother	In a relationship with 11	Father interviewed
11 Father	In a relation with 10	Step mother interviewed
12 Mother	Divorced due to offence	Father not interviewed
13 Father	Widowed/single	n/a
14 Father	Seperated due to offence	Mother not interviewed

Respondent 10 is a step mother who, at the time of my study, remained in a relationship with Respondent 11. Respondent 7, is a mother who, at the time of the study, remained in a relationship with respondent 6. Two of the four women (Respondents 2 and 12) decided to end their marriages after they discovered the offences. I did not interview the ex partners of Respondent 12 or Respondent 2.

I will structure this chapter using the following subheadings:

- Introduction
- Impact on mothers
- Information sharing
- Emotional impact – Loss
- The decision to remain in or end the relationship
- Experience of professionals
- Delays in the legal process
- Confidentiality
- The relationship between the children and the father
- Observations of the impact on children
- Children being implicated
- Experience of contact arrangements
- Support for mothers
- Support for the family

Impact on mothers

One of the most consistent messages with regard to impact in the accounts of the women I interviewed was shock and disbelief. All of the women I interviewed expressed shock and disbelief when they were told about their partner's offending. Two out of the four women were told about their partner's offending by a police officer.

Respondent 10 informed me that she was told about the offences by her partner over the phone. Respondent 10's case illustrates that even when an offender admits his offending directly, the non-offending partner may still have intense difficulty in

believing the offender would be capable of such behaviour. Respondent 10 expressed feeling unable to believe what had happened, despite her partner admitting to her that he had committed the offences he was accused of. The inability to accept the admission of her partner illustrates the depth of shock that can be experienced by partners of people who download IIOC. Respondent 10 was training to be a teacher at the time. Throughout the interview she was composed and insightful. In the quote below she provides her response upon discovering the nature of the offences:

'I wanted to collapse on the floor, I was in complete shock and I felt like someone had kicked me in my stomach. I didn't understand what was going on, I was training to be a maths teacher and I was on training at the time and I had lessons with me in the morning but I had my phone on me because I still hadn't heard from Respondent 11 and I thought at lunchtime I'll ring and that's when I got through to Respondent 11 and he told me straight away that it was him and told me what he'd done. I don't think I believed him at first, and he was like, "no, you have to believe me, it's true". I can't remember if I hung up on him or I said "I'll ring you back", I just remember being a shaking shivering mess, just basically collapsed.'

The quote clearly demonstrates the physical and emotional sensation evoked by the experience of being informed about the offending. Denial has been discussed in Chapter 5. The quote above demonstrates how important it is for professionals to understand the impact on a partner when they discover that their partner has committed an offence of a sexual nature.

In Respondent 10's case, the importance of emotional containment is highlighted. Emotional containment is the process whereby a professional, or a concerned other, is able to manage and keep reserved any anxiety that might be experienced. 'Holding' this anxiety for the respondent helps the respondent manage the distress. The evidence suggests that many professionals were not experienced or confident in responding to families who were affected by internet-related sexual offences and it is likely that they felt compromised in managing the family members' emotions.

The women in Stubley's (2015) study also reported that mothers felt the professionals from children's services lacked knowledge and experience in managing families in similar situations to theirs. Emotional containment is comparable to the comfort offered by an appropriate and capable parent or responsible adult to a distressed child (Casement 1985). Anyone responsible for giving information to the partner of an offender, or supporting them in the aftermath of disclosure, needs to be able to contain and help to manage the emotions of the recipient of the information. The parents' reports in this study indicate that some professionals experienced difficulty in managing their own anxiety and fear evoked by the offences and this affected subsequent management of the case.

Respondent 12's quote on page 110 also challenges the assumption that offenders convicted of an offence of this nature will lie and manipulate others in relation to their offending. The quote supports the findings of Elliott, Beech and Mandeville-Norden (2013) that offenders who download IIOC often have lower levels of impression management. Lower levels of impression management could mean that offenders are less likely to try to deny their behaviour when they are caught. Respondent 10 highlights that she told her partner she didn't believe him and he had to actively persuade her to believe that it was true. The evidence suggests that it would have been easy for respondent 11 (the father) to persuade his partner (the step mother of his children) that the matter had been a misunderstanding or that he had not downloaded the images. However, he chose to be honest. At the time of the interview they remained in a relationship. A further example of an offender who was honest with his partner about the nature of the offences is Respondent 12's former partner.

Respondent 12's partner had been arrested in the past for downloading indecent images. She referred to shock when her ex-partner told her about his arrest on the first occasion. Respondent 12 commented:

'I just remember stressing and crying and me thinking, not kinda crying hysterically but you know just kinda silent crying, tear stream down your face,

and you're stressing and it's just like the stress and shock, like.... "What?!" He was like "oh the police officer said I didn't have to tell but I thought you had a right to know and here's his phone number and you can ring him. He said if you're freaking out you can ring him." And I thought well I'll ring him anyway. Well anyway he showed me this warrant and this warrant was whatever under the Protection of Children Act they were looking for computers, cameras, all that kind of stuff.'

In addition to shock and denial, the quote above raises an important point in relation to information sharing.

Information sharing

Respondent 12's ex-partner made an interesting point about his partner's right to know. The first time Respondent 12's ex-partner offended she didn't have children. This raises an important practice issue. Given the fact she didn't have children at the time, and there was no evidence that he posed a direct risk to her, she would not satisfy the required criteria to give her a right to access information under the child sex offender disclosure scheme or the domestic violence disclosure scheme. Both schemes enable members of the public to apply for information about a person's criminal history. From a prevention perspective there is a strong argument that a woman who is going to have a child with a person with a conviction has the right to know if the offender presents a risk of harm to children. Respondent 12 later had two children with her then partner.

Respondent 2 (who had children at the point her then husband was arrested) also specifically referenced her right to know information after her ex-partner was sentenced. She said no one contacted her to inform her about the outcome of the court case.

The women in this study also reported practical considerations in these circumstances including financial arrangements, mortgage payments, school holidays and child care. Mothers are highly likely to need support in making

significant adjustments to their lives. Respondent 2 (a mother) told me that she was fortunate enough to be able to increase her hours at the firm where she worked and therefore their lifestyle was not significantly altered.

Emotional impact – Loss

In this subsection I will explore the losses experienced by the women in the study and the subsequent impact on the children. As outlined above, loss of income was one possibility, for some they may lose their career should they choose to stay in a relationship with their partner. When this research was completed, women who worked with children under the age of eight risked disqualification by association if they resided with a registered sex offender. The step mother in this study lost access to her step children. Some women sought to minimise their financial loss by working extra hours. Given the likely impact on emotional health, it is likely that many women might not feel able to, or indeed have the option to, increase their paid working hours. Respondent 2 highlights below the importance of professionals being mindful of the stressors placed on women.

‘What was irritating was I would be at my desk trying to focus on doing my job and always once the girls came back from staying with his family there would always be a follow up call from social services saying “we are just checking up on the arrangements” and I would say, “the girls would stay with his parents” and they would say, “are you happy with that?” and I would say “yes, but you know my daughters would tell me if they were uncomfortable with anything” and they would say “but would they tell you?” So trying to keep everybody happy was just really difficult, it was just like a game in the end. It was like “we are not going to leave you alone unless you give us the answer we want which is you are not allowed to let your girls have unsupervised contact, regardless of what the court says, we are not happy about it”.’

It was evident throughout the interviews that Respondent 2 felt torn and exasperated. It was clear that she did not experience children’s services as

supportive in this difficult time. She did not disclose any support she was offered other than support she sourced herself. She experienced significant loss which was, as noted above, consistently expressed by the women.

Respondent 10 experienced multiple losses. At the time of the interview, section 75 of the Childcare Act 2000 stipulated that any person living with an offender who is disqualified from working with children also becomes disqualified from working with children. It was possible to apply for a waiver from OFSTED to enable the non-offending partner to continue working for her employer. Respondent 10 told me that if she continued her relationship with respondent 11, her training contract would be terminated. She decided to end her training contract. For Respondent 10 there was a huge sense of loss and frustration in relation to the numerous losses she had experienced, including the loss of contact with her step children. Prior to the offence there had been twice weekly contact between her and the children. She also referred to holidays that they would take together.

The bond that Respondent 10 (a step mother) felt with her step children was visceral: she gave significant details about how she had shared experiences with the children. It was evident that she did not feel validated as an important person in the children's lives. She told me that the children's birth mother did permit her to visit the children but it was uncomfortable.

Respondent 10 raised the importance of considering all forms of possible contact with children for herself and for her partner. The evidence also draws attention to differing coping styles in response to loss and also in the interaction with children's services. Her partner, Respondent 11, was much less willing to engage in what he perceived to be an adversarial process. It would appear that Respondent 11 subsequently distanced himself from the children to try and protect himself from the difficult processes he might be subjected to if he remained in touch with them. This raises questions about how well the offender might know of his right to have contact with his children. In assessing the information available, it seems likely he would have parental responsibility in the legal sense unless a care order was made in the family court. Legal proceedings had not been pursued with any of the

respondents. It could be argued that Respondent 11 has the responsibility to seek out such information. However it is also important to consider the needs of the children who were previously living with their father. Respondent 10 offered her view regarding Respondent 11's reaction to the challenges they faced in terms of contact:

'In a way he has now told himself that he doesn't want to see them until they're eighteen because he doesn't want social services to be creating loopholes he has to go through.'

The evidence suggests that Respondent 11 was not aware of his rights to contact with his children. I will explore the responses from the men in more detail in Chapter 7. Respondent 10 implies her partner changed, there was a sense of loss in her description of him. Other women in the study chose to end their relationship.

The decision to remain in or end the relationship

The women's decision about whether to remain in or leave the relationship was varied in this small sample. One consistent reference, however, related to children's services' apparent attitudes to, or assumptions about, the non-offending partners' capacity to care for the children. Some of the women appeared to think that if they remained in a relationship with their partner they would be perceived as unable to protect their children. Respondent 5 asserted that if his partner chose to stay in a relationship with him she would not be perceived as capable of protecting their son.

'She feels trapped really, she doesn't want to have to deal with social services she doesn't want... she feels that if she tries to get back together again, it won't show her capacity to protect [child]. That's the way it's been sold to her, that if she allows me to control seeing [child] then they'll take [child].'

Respondent 9 also gave an account of his partner's negative experience of their child's social worker.

'...like saying to my wife "why are you still with him?"... I think that's something that is wrong to say.'

It would be good social work practice to work with the family to explore views in relation to possible options for the care of the children. A respectful discussion would include an analysis of the pros and cons of continuation of the relationship and possible consequences in terms of risk. It is concerning that the question appears to have been asked in a value-laden manner. The people in the study did not appear to have a sense of their right to have a full and fair assessment to ascertain the risk to the child. The experience of professionals will now be explored in more detail.

Experience of professionals

All the women in the study were subject to professional intervention in the form of children's services after the offences were discovered. I did not interview Respondent 8's ex-partner. However, he, Respondent 8, made an important observation regarding the impact on his partner as quoted below.

'She hated the knocks on the door. She hated people coming to the house, she was absolutely scared stiff of people coming.'

While they are necessary to ensure the child is protected, having unexpected visits from children's services can be stressful for families. Feedback from the women in relation to children's services was almost entirely negative. The themes of the negative feedback included experiencing social workers as judgemental and unhelpful. Respondent 6 raised the issue of training and experience:

'She (the social worker) told us that this was her first ever case, she had literally just qualified and she had been thrown into something and just kind of been thrown into the situation. She had never heard of Lucy Faithfull. She kind of looked at me repulsively as though I was a crazy woman for ever wanting to see him again or letting him see the children.'

The newly qualified social worker is very unlikely to have had any specific training in relation to indecent images of children. It is evident that Respondent 6 felt judged and unsupported. This was her first experience of children's services. The language in relation to the assessment is revealing of the internal processes experienced by Respondent 6. She clearly did not feel the experience was collaborative. It is important to consider the desired outcome, which would be for the mother to feel she can seek advice from the allocated social worker. The data provided by Respondent 6 suggested that she would be unlikely to seek advice or support from the allocated social worker in such cases. An ineffective relationship between the social worker and the mother does not lend to an effective shield around the child.

While there was a general sense that the mothers expected and accepted that involvement of children's services was necessary, Respondent 2 raised the issue of timing, expectations and coping:

'It was within one to two weeks of the arrest that they called me. I said, you know, "I'm trying to manage the situation here, do you have to get involved?" and they said "yeah absolutely..." Of course the girls were saying "we don't want strangers coming to our house and talking to us about dad". It was really, really difficult. They insisted that they had to talk to them. I felt confident in my own mind that nothing had happened, I thought, and I said that to the police officer at the time. I said, you know, "I know my own children and if anything had happened they would be withdrawn".'

The quote above shows the importance and impact of the interaction between the authorities in this situation and how the harm is experienced by the family. Professionals have a role in the promotion of positive coping strategies of the family. In this case, initially at least, it is clear that Respondent 2 felt that she was being imposed upon as opposed to engaged with.

It is also possible that mothers could be in denial about the possibility that their child had been abused. It is evident that Respondent 2 was not aware that many children may not exhibit any obvious signs or indications that they have been abused. The fact that a child is not showing signs of it does not provide conclusive

proof that they have not been abused. Even when there is conclusive proof (for example if there is video evidence) that a child has been a victim of sexual abuse, it is often the case they do not disclose to a parent or anyone. In some cases they actively deny having been abused. Rooy et al (2007) explore the complex nature of disclosure and the reluctance of many victims to disclose. Professionals need to help parents be open to all the possibilities, without being alarmist.

There were consistent criticisms from the participants regarding the quality of the reports completed by children's services. Respondent 4 told me that his ex-partner was employed as a social worker. She was particularly unhappy regarding the quality of the service they received.

'My wife is a social worker and overall she was livid with them, the way the report was done, the way the report was written, she thought it was quite slapdash, quite shoddy, she critiqued it from a social worker perspective. My wife is very conscientious, the wording in the report, she thought at points, it was implied she knew about my offending when she hadn't at all, when I read it I didn't read it the same way at all. My wife was quite irritated.'

Delays in the legal process

Respondent 10 raised the issue of delays. The evidence showed that there were significant delays in the case getting to court and children's services completing the necessary assessments. Delays inevitably prolong the time parents are separated from their partners and the harm caused to child(ren). Respondent 10 spoke of her frustration with regard to the delay and lack of communication as follows:

'I've got a grudge about it since April [interview completed in November] when we had the first meeting from social services, there has been no contact with respondent 11, no email no letter no phone call, nothing... we have not heard anything.'

Complaints about delays was a common experience among the participants.

Confidentiality

Another important issue raised by the women was confidentiality. Deep concern was evident among the sample regarding confidentiality. Concerns related to lack of confidence that the authorities would treat information about the case sensitively.

Respondent 4 also raised significant concern regarding a breach of the Data Protection Act.

'What really blew it was they posted the report to me, they're supposed to be sent recorded, the one where you have to physically sign it. They told me that she received her report and I hadn't, after a few days I called them as I hadn't received mine, they told me the address they sent it to and it wasn't my house number, they sent it to a different house number, it was sent to be signed for but not by the person... I was in a panic, there's all this sensitive information in there and it's gone to someone in the street. I did have a quite a terrible time. I complained to the manager. They were very slow in getting back to me or acknowledging me, they said it hadn't been signed for. Relaying this to my wife, again, this is what really incensed her, she would have lived with the others things she would have left, but they hadn't sent it in the way. My wife received hers through the door. That isn't the way it should be sent out, that shouldn't happen. She was quoting all sorts of data protection. There was no person named on it. No confidential thing on it, she was saying "if it goes back to the post room someone will open it and that breaches data protection". I was advised by my solicitor and the police to take action against them.'

According to Respondent 4, his ex-partner was also concerned that the report implied that she was aware of his offending. Respondent 6 also told me that her social worker implied that she (Respondent 6) was aware of the offences. In both cases the participant denied that she had any prior knowledge. Respondent 6 commented:

'She [the social worker] misunderstood something I said, she said "do you know why they were here?" meaning the police, and I said "well yeah"

because I knew that he was arrested so I knew they came to search the house... It's stupid to say that I knew that they had come to search the house but she had taken it to mean I knew that they had come to search the house for that reason already.'

No evidence was found in this study, or in any other available research, to suggest that men who download IIOC offend with their partners.

The relationship between the children and the father before and after the offence

There was a theme in all the accounts given by the participants in this study of the relationship between the child and the father being positive prior to the offence being discovered. When I asked Respondent 2 about her ex-husband's level of involvement with the children prior to the discovery she commented:

'He was very, very typical kind of family man, you know he would be involved with the girls he was very... a very good... and still is a very good father. He would say, he has a complete, almost like a split personality so he would say that what he did online was absolutely nothing to do with his children... He was really just a great dad, a lot of fun to be with, you know, lively outgoing, they were close to him.'

There were many comments of a similar type to that outlined above. Such comments challenge assumptions about the men who download IIOC. Were they good fathers? Has the family been groomed? Can they be good fathers in the future? Such comments raise important questions of how such cases are managed and indeed what actions should be taken to best serve the child.

The evidence provided by Respondent 2 highlighted the importance of compassion. She is explicit in referencing the lack of compassion experienced from social workers. As described below, she draws explicit focus to questions relating to whether or not her children had been left alone with their father. Asking a mother if the child has spent time alone with their father (who in this

case was also her husband) when they have lived in the same household seems a strange line of questioning. Respondent 2 commented:

*'I just didn't feel like they showed a great deal of compassion really, you know. They asked me if the girls had ever been left alone with him and of course I said "yes" and you know I'd been away with a friend somewhere that year and I said you know, child 2 was left alone with him and obviously they were really concerned about that so they said, you know, social services would be involved and sure enough I got a call from them within the week. I think I was trying to protect the girls at the time, I was you know, child 2, they dealt with it differently, child 2 really wanted to see her dad. Child 1 didn't, she just could not cope with it, she actually went to stay with his parents in *Homeville and she didn't want to be around him, I don't think. She certainly didn't want to meet him whereas child 2 was quite keen to meet him so we met up that week, I think. He talked to her about, you know, about what had happened and at that point I can't remember exactly what we said to her but it was something like: "I made a huge mistake. I got involved in talking to some men that I shouldn't have, but you shouldn't think it's anything to do with you".'*

Respondent 2 raises the importance of the recognising the different responses and needs of siblings. Some of the older children connected to this study seemed not to want to have contact with the offending parent, at least in the initial aftermath of the offences being discovered. The evidence suggested that older children may need more time to process the grief of the loss of the parent they thought they knew. Respondent 1 (Child 1 of Respondent 2) gave an insightful account of her experience of processing her feelings about the offence, which will be explored in more detail in chapter nine.

Observations of the impact on children

The data challenged my expectations in terms of the impact on children, as some parents claimed that they had not observed a significant effect on their children.

In some cases the children were under the age of five. It is possible that the impact was hard to evidence. Respondent 2 described her feelings when the children would have contact with their father:

'They would go away, they would have a fantastic time and they wouldn't feel at all like they were in any danger at all and he would never acknowledge that he was in the position that he was in. And then they would come back and they would witness me in tears, frustrated, I mean it wasn't helpful that they, you know, painted this image of him being whiter than white and of course he is just the victim of, you know, circumstances. But they always had an absolutely brilliant time and you know so it was very difficult for me to cross that bridge because the girls just thought that I was being miserable for the sake of it, and I was miserable. We went from enjoying a really nice joint income to everything being on my shoulders, you know, him not paying any maintenance, and just trying to really get through each week. And then when they went to stay with him it was like money was no object, you know, they would go for meals, they would get clothes.'

Respondent 2 describes above the impact on her relationship with the children. In the interviews a strong sense of frustration and injustice remained. It is evident that not only have the children lost the father as they thought they knew him but there was also potential for children to experience loss in relation to their mother, who changed as a result of the offending. Respondent 2 was a woman who the children may have once known as strong. Since the arrest, they often witnessed this once strong mother upset and in tears. Respondent 1 told me about how her sister responded after the offences were discovered:

'It's funny because she's really, like, happy and, like, easy going and jokey and we've got the same sense of humour. But then she she's also very nervous, she worries a lot, she's quite like my mum in that she worries a lot. Like she [Holly's sister] grinds her jaw, her and my mum both do that. I'm much more easy going than either of them, they're quite... they worry about

a lot of stuff. Like my sister, she would pick up, I feel like she may have had some kind of anxiety or something, she would focus on something, like turn it over in her mind and like fixate on it. Like one time after what had happened with my dad, her and her friend like wrote on someone's Facebook, you know how like little kids find out someone's password and then, like, write some embarrassing message and then, because of what happened with my dad, she thought the police were going to get involved and like arrest her, and she had done something awful like the same severity of my dad. She thought it was on the same level for some reason and she got really panicked and worried. Yeah she's got a lot better now but she still worries a lot.'

Respondent 1 raises an important issue with regard to the potential emotional impact on children. She and her sister experienced significant upheaval in their family life. All the evidence suggested that they continued as normal in many respects, they continued to go to school and continued with hobbies. It is evident that, following a family arrest for offences online, it may be even more important to be clear regarding the law and the use of the internet. The explanation given to Holly's sister referenced a mistake made by her father and perhaps did not give her a full understanding of what he had done. It is possible that her lack of understanding caused her to believe that she, herself, made a 'mistake' and behaved in a way that was similar in severity to her father's offending.

Children being implicated

The 18-year-old son of Respondent 11 (a father who downloaded IIOC) was arrested when the police came to search the family home. His arrest draws attention to the risk that children who are over the age of criminal responsibility who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC could be implicated in the offence. In this case, the 18-year-old was soon exonerated when his father admitted he was responsible for downloading the images. I asked Respondent 10 about the impact on the 18-yearold of his arrest. She commented:

'All I can say is luckily not that much because he went to the police station. He didn't know what was going on. So on the way to the police station Respondent 11 was in the back of the car and he said it was him. So they didn't need to do anything to (child). I even heard in the court that Respondent 11 said straight away, "It's me you're after".'

Respondent 10 told me that the 18-year-old fell asleep in the police cell which could indicate that the stress was so overwhelming his body shut down. It is possible that the experience was too difficult to talk about and therefore he said there was no impact because he didn't want to talk about. As well as being arrested himself, respondent 11's son would have experienced the additional trauma of being told about the alleged offence.

Respondent 10 raised an interesting point with regard to how the knowledge of a parent's offending might affect how the child experiences other trauma. She told me that her step daughter was the victim of grooming. At the least, her experience was made more difficult due to her father's offending. Respondent 10 commented that her step daughter:

'was being groomed, so to speak, by a scout leader... Her mum was telling her that she might have to go to court and she asked to do a video clip for it and that's the only time she's said, "I don't know why dad's done what he's done", when that's happened to her.'

This quote lends focus to the longevity of the impact on a child of a parent downloading IIOC. The child referenced above not only experienced the trauma of being groomed, her experience of her father's offending added to that trauma. The child's experience of grooming revitalised the impact her father's offence had on her and caused her to question her father's motives. It is likely that children in this situation would be triggered to consider the details of the offence at different stages in their life and as a result of their own experiences. It is possible that their feelings towards their parents and their view of the offences will change over time.

In Respondent 11's case there were no contact arrangements. I will now explore the reported experiences of the mothers with regard to contact arrangements.

Experience of contact arrangements

According to the Children Act 2004 and statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015), contact should be facilitated when it is in the best interests of the child and wherever possible a parental role should be supported and not undermined. The guidance is designed for use with looked-after children. However, there are a number of pertinent points contained within the guidance specifically placing the child at the centre of decision making and effective planning. None of the families I interviewed were subject to any legal orders nor were they in the process of court proceedings.

In most cases there was a formal agreement between the family that contact between the father and the child would be supervised. However, this was not always the case and in some cases it was evident that good practice had not been adhered to. For some families, the case was closed by children's services on the grounds that no contact abuse had taken place or because there was an agreement that there would be no unsupervised contact between the father and the child. In some cases there were no formal contact arrangements. For three of the families there was no contact between the father and the children. There was a combination of reasons for this, including some children refusing contact, no supervisor being approved by children's services, and difficulties with children's services.

Respondent 2 gave a detailed account of her experience of contact arrangements. Initially the children had contact with their father, supervised by the extended paternal family. Respondent 2's turmoil was evident in the interview, where she commented:

'I was completely on the fringes and nobody would talk to me and when I got the probation officer to talk to me she kept saying, "it's entirely up to you" and it was like "you're asking me to make these really difficult decisions against a background of my daughters who really want to see their dad, really want to see their grandparents, and his sister, their cousins, and you're asking me to be the block and also not only that, you're not giving me any information to make a decision because of, I understand, data protection, and I understand, you know, it's confidential but we need to be equipped with information to make these decisions".'

The quote above highlights the pressure Respondent 2 felt that she was under. The comments she reports from the probation officer seem to place an unfair level of responsibility on Respondent 2. Data protection should never be a barrier to sharing information when there are child protection concerns. Respondent 2 quite rightly highlights the importance of needing information to help her make a decision. She highlights the loss her children experienced in relation to not only their father but also the extended family. She was open in stating that she didn't think her ex-partner posed a risk to the children. While the probation officer initially told Respondent 2 that it was her decision, children's services later stipulated the rules for contact. Despite that, she was committed to enforcing the restrictions suggested by the local authority. The local authority did not feel that the extended family could supervise contact between the child and their father. Respondent 2 discussed the fact that her ex partner's family did not believe he was a risk to the children and therefore children's services stipulated that they were not suitable to supervise contact. She expressed her anxiety about being made responsible for explaining to her daughters that they couldn't have contact with their father when they both wanted to. Eventually she sought support from the social worker to assist her.

In order for the environment to be protective, it is important that the children feel able to be open and honest with the protective parent. The quotes above and below demonstrate the damage to the dynamics between the mother and her children as a result of the offence and the subsequent pressures of risk

management that Respondent 2 alludes to, feeling that her role has been changed to that of enforcer of contact with the offender. The children don't share her concerns, possibly because they have never experienced any abuse from their father. Respondent 2's comments below evidence the double burden experienced by mothers not only in terms of the betrayal associated with the offence but also of the loss of how their children view them.

'Are the girls going to stay at half term or whatever with his family? They [the offender's family] would never dare to speak to me because of what I represent to them, I've always taken this seriously and they don't and I would always say, you know, "I expect you to supervise contact" and I knew they weren't supervising contact but I had nothing really to point to because there were no legal restrictions, he could pretty much do anything and I was relying on the fact that, I guess, it would have been very different if my daughters were eight and ten but because they were the ages they were, so by now thirteen and fifteen, or fifteen and sixteen, I kind of had to talk to them about you know, "don't ever go out for the day with just dad. Make sure his sister is there or other people are there". Really difficult conversations to have with them without completely freaking them out.'

Risk management and sexual abuse prevention is a difficult balance as can be seen above. Sexual abuse prevention is likely to be a difficult concept for young people to understand. It is likely that children who have parents who download IIOC will also need to be aware of the risk their father may present to any children in the future. Respondent 2 doesn't want to frighten her children, but she is also acutely aware of the potential risk to them.

Support for mothers

Support for mothers was highly limited. All of the women in the study had contact with children's services, however they did not experience the contact as supportive. The experience of contact offers a tangible example of the relevance

of symbolic interactionism in these circumstances in that the dynamic affects how the family copes and recovers. The flow of communication is particularly important. The relationship between the mother and children's services has a significant impact on the harm experienced by the family. Respondent 5 (a father who downloaded IIOC) told me about the impact on his partner. He said:

'Apart from the social worker, who she hates, she's had no support at all they said maybe you need some counselling. She went to see someone and they said "oh you're doing ok now, aren't you?" They didn't really do anything. My wife has seen my therapist so she could feed back to her and that kind of helped her, I think.'

My data suggests that isolation in these circumstances is detrimental to risk management. If the mother has limited support she is vulnerable to being more reliant on the offender for support. Therefore the offender has greater power. Respondent 6 (a mother), was told that there were no other women in her situation, a comment that is simply not true and highlights a training need in the professional that informed her that this was the case. Respondent 6 stated:

*'They were no support either. I did ask for some support from the council, they just said no, there are no groups, there are no other women in north *Homeville that are in your situation, that are going through it or have been through it ... I spent a lot of time on Stop it Now! to be honest.'*

Support for the family

While it is acknowledged that each family will have its own unique set of circumstances, there are clear themes emerging from my research with regard to the support required. All families were in shock when the offences were first discovered and needed information regarding their rights. All families needed a professional who they could ask questions. There was a repeat reference to the support needed by grandparents and therefore it is also important that the grandparents are given information to help them make sense of what has

happened. A lack of support can make the mother reliant on the offender. Respondent 8 commented:

'Social services they did a lot of breaking and a lot of damage and I'm not sitting here winging and saying they shouldn't have done it because I understand why they did it but what they didn't do is help. They didn't give [my partner] any help, she was on her own, she was pregnant. She had no help and I don't feel very deserving of any sort of help... there was no support from anywhere.'

Respondent 8's quote illustrates the variety of circumstances that a woman might be in. The partner of Respondent 8 was pregnant and therefore vulnerable. He highlights the fact that she needed help. The evidence showed that there was no established process of offering support to the whole family. It was evident that a package of support for the parents and children did not exist.

In this chapter I have explored the narratives provided by three mothers and one step mother, supplemented by observations from a daughter. The emotional impact on mothers has been discussed, including the shock, loss and disbelief they experience. I have also analysed the information provided in relation to issues of confidentiality and information sharing. An example a mother's view regarding their children's relationships with their fathers prior to the arrest has been shared. I have also described the mothers' views regarding impact on children. Issues in relation to contact following the arrest have also been discussed. I have concluded that a package of support for parents and children does not exist. Having presented the views of mothers, the next chapter will focus on the experience of fathers.

Chapter 7 How do fathers see it?

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore nine fathers' views of the impact on their children following their arrest for downloading indecent images of children. Seven of the nine fathers were living with their child or children at the point of arrest. All of the fathers were employed at the point of the arrest. All, except one (a widower and primary carer) of the fathers who were living with their children at the point of the arrest were required to leave the family home when they were arrested. One of the fathers had a previous conviction for downloading indecent images of children, but none of the other men had any previous convictions.

The fathers in the study were invited to tell me about their offending and the consequences for their family. Many of the fathers in this study found it difficult to articulate the impact of their offending on their children. It possible that some fathers were drawn to deny or avoid thinking about the level of impact of their offences on their children in order to avoid the emotional pain associated with having caused harm to their children. However, it is possible that fathers may also experience feelings of personal inadequacy and/or they might be deviant and trying to conceal abusive sexual interest.

In this chapter I will analyse the accounts to develop insight into the child's experience from the perspective of the father. As stated in the methodology chapter, I was mindful to explore the interactions between the family members and also between the family members and the professionals involved. The findings from the interviews with fathers are revealing both in terms of highlighting potential areas for further research and in highlighting the likely experience of children within families of those arrested for downloading IIOC. They provide important sources of information for professionals to be aware of in order to support families. I will structure this chapter using the following subheadings:

- Fathers' accounts of offending
- Fathers' views about risk, harm and protection.

- The risk fathers will attempt suicide
- Fathers' accounts of their relationship with their child before and after the offence
- Contact
- Fathers' observations regarding the impact on their child(ren)
- Media
- Fathers' views about professionals
- Support made available

Fathers' accounts of offending

All of the fathers who participated in the study admitted culpability for their offending. While it was difficult for the men to think about the possible impact on their own children, none of the men sought to minimise the seriousness of their offending. Furthermore, they did not seek to blame anyone for the predicament that they found themselves in. Despite the negative consequences for them and their family, most of the men reported feeling relieved to have been caught and exceptionally grateful for the support they received. In some cases the men reported feeling undeserving and guilty that they received support, especially when their children and partners did not receive any support. It is important to note that the men who engaged in this study had voluntarily engaged in intervention, and in many cases they made significant financial contributions toward the intervention. It is likely that this sample is a particularly motivated group of men who are not necessarily representative of all fathers who have been arrested for downloading indecent images. That said, it is important to emphasise that the men in this study are in father and sometimes father figure roles to 20 children under the age of eighteen, and therefore the stories are important and give significant insight into an area which is under researched.

When I asked Respondent 9 about his offending, he told me that he would tell himself that the children in the images were often smiling and he would use this as a way of making him feel better about the abuse images. He said when he was arrested he was convinced that he had deleted all the images when the police arrived. He was not aware at that point that the images could be recovered from the hard drive even if they had been deleted. He told me that he had stopped viewing IIOC months before his arrest because of a particular image he saw:

'Particular images bought it all home to me, what you see is a child seemingly happy and then it went off camera and the child was not happy and it was... it bought everything home to you about, what if it had been your own children?'

While all the men acknowledged the seriousness of their offending, none of them reported feeling that they represented a risk to children who were related or unrelated to them. Currently there is no available research to offer insight into the number or proportion of offenders convicted of downloading IIOC who sexually abuse their biological, or other, children through contact offences. In the literature review I have explored research regarding 'cross over' rates, which is the term used to describe people who download IIOC and 'cross over' to commit contact sex offences. The quote above illustrates a theme in the narratives given by the men in relation to their ability to demonstrate empathy and appropriate boundaries in relation to their own children.

In the literature review I also explored the potential for an early care-giving role and/or biological link between father and child serving as a potential protective factor against the risk a child will be abused. To explore this potential protective factor, I asked all of the respondents about their relationship with their child(ren) before and after the offence. Respondent 4 gave a detailed and interesting response as shown below:

'Incredibly healthy relationship, he's really active, lots of sports, regional tennis, he plays football, swimming, he's a year ahead at school. I built a bike from scratch, from this old bike I bought, you know, redone all the paint on

it, to give to him when I see him. I absolutely dote on him. I've had no thoughts of harming him or being sexual with him or anything like that at all. I see being a father as being, you know, a process where you know... My last offence was 2005/6, actually having a child and recognising what a child is and what's in their world, you know Minecraft, sport and stuff, and actually having my son has made me realise they are not sexual beings at all.'

Respondent 4 alludes to the distorted thinking he used to enable him to offend, which included perceiving children as having the potential to be sexual, although the quote shows this was disproved by his contact with his own son. The participants provided some interesting insights into the pathway to their offending. A further example of the father's perspective of the offence is provided below. This quote also demonstrates the offender's perspective on his relationship with his children and his willingness to address his offending. Respondent 8 describes his relationship with the professionals involved in the case:

'The police were the easiest people to deal with actually, the social workers, except the most recent one, were just horrible... I said "You can hook me up to a machine, a lie detector or whatever, I have never abused my kids and I never would"... I've got my motivation for coming out of this a better person and it's paid off, it's been hard work but as I said to you before, I've got a clear conscience now. I can look people in the face and say that, I still get upset but at least I feel clean.'

These quotes demonstrate a common theme among the men's responses in that they did not perceive themselves as a risk to children, separating their offence of downloading IIOC from any possibility that they could or would sexually harm a child through a contact offence. In the next section I will offer an analysis of the men's responses in relation to risk, harm and the protection of their children.

Fathers' views about risk, harm and protection

All the fathers in the study were able to recognise that there was a legitimate need for professional intervention when a person was convicted of downloading IIOC, to ensure the safety of children. However there was some confusion about how that professional intervention should work. Respondent 9 commented:

'When you deal with the police they deal with standards, they deal with limits, parameters; when you deal with a whole group of people who I view as people who got rejected from the police, you are dealing with people without any experience, any qualifications, any background training and are capable of saying what they like. Based on the evidence of the 12 people in the room [in a professionals meeting] a number of 'em have got children, it differs with various areas. There's no parameters, where's the parameters? Where's the legislation? How far can they go with what they can say? The police would never dream of going outside of the parameters of what they can and can't say and they are very much a professional organisation, the police, very professional. They were very unprofessional social services.'

It is evident from the quote that Respondent 9 has some prejudiced and inaccurate views regarding children's services. He is somewhat defensive in relation to child-centred practice. He was not aware of 'their' professional qualifications and perceives them as 'rejects' from the police. It was difficult to maintain my role as researcher at this juncture for two main reasons. Firstly, respondent 9's comment with regard to parameters illustrates his need for information regarding his rights as a parent in terms of parental responsibility, the right of the child to be protected, and the child protection processes that follow. Secondly it was difficult not to give him information about the challenges faced by social workers when they are working to protect a child, to help him understand and potentially forge a better working relationship with them. However, it is also possible that Respondent 9 has received a good quality service from children's services and he has not engaged. It is also possible that he has had his rights explained and the procedures explained and he has been resistant to hearing or absorbing the information. The quote does help to illustrate some concerns raised in the

literature review with regard to the danger of a lack of consistency in procedure in relation to fathers who download IIOC. I have also raised concerns in the literature review section in relation to the consistency of the risk assessments used. It is unremarkable that such inconsistency exists when there is currently no available statutory guidance for the professionals responsible for managing such cases. The self-reported experiences of the men in this study varied considerably in how much contact they had with the allocated social worker. Self-reports are vulnerable to bias and therefore there are limitations as to how much they can be relied upon. That said, my data did not evidence any consistency of the men understanding commonly used terminology in relation to risk of reoffending, risk of sexually harming a child or risk management planning. These points also highlight the need for guidance for professionals, as mentioned previously.

Some insights were gleaned from the responses provided by the men. These responses are vulnerable to bias and therefore there are limitations as to how much they can be relied upon. Respondent 7 reported that he felt unable to communicate effectively with the allocated social worker:

'As soon as I knew that new social worker's name when I went in for my meetings with him, because I always had to go to see him in the offices in Homeville, I felt uncomfortable and awkward. He didn't let me talk. I'm a nervous person as it is, I've got worse with it over this last year, but then I was right in the middle of crisis and he didn't really let me... Well I can't really sit here and criticise other people because it was me that was in the wrong but I didn't get on with him, he made me really uncomfortable and the outcome of the assessment was that he thought that I posed a risk to my kids so what happened then was, I don't know what happened, they closed it.'

The quote gives a confused picture of risk assessment processes. It is possible that this is the result of heightened emotion and miscommunication and that Respondent 7 experienced the process as confrontational. It is difficult to decipher why the case was closed if the allocated social worker considered that he was a risk to both his children. To establish a more coherent narrative I asked several

clarification questions which revealed further issues in relation to consistency.

Respondent 8 stated:

'I don't know what happened. I got a phone call from the new social worker to say that (the previous social worker referred to above) didn't work there any more. I don't know whether he lost his job or what or moved somewhere else, and this new social worker met me and she basically sat down with me and went through all that had been written and I had to correct the bits I didn't agree with. At the end of it she chucked away the plan that he had done from our contact with my daughter. She said that from that point on they were going to close it to social services so there would be no plan, no nothing, but they were going to close it with supervised contact.'

The respondent was much more relaxed when talking about this experience of the second social worker.

It also appeared that levels of risk of sexual abuse of the children by the father were not being taken into consideration. It was evident from the parents' responses that they were not clear about how the risk was assessed or what risk category they were placed in. The response from Respondent 11 (a father of four children) below demonstrates the complexity of risk in this scenario.

'Whipping 'em away might save some children from an immediate risk if that abuser relationship is in that family, but if not, it could have maybe just as negative and adverse and stressful in other ways.'

The quote above also raises an important point raised in the literature review in relation to potential for harm to be caused as a result of intervention. Respondent 11 is divorced and two of his children were living with him at the time of the arrest. Both children were required to return to live with their mother, causing significant disruption to their lives. The process as to how it was decided they needed to return home was not clear from the interviews. It was evident from the interviews with the fathers that they didn't understand the process of how decisions were made about them. Respondent 9 commented:

'They cast the net very wide and that, there is no secondary and tertiary net, you know, so it's like, you know, this guy's a monster, see you later.'
Respondent 9

'She (the social worker) was very clearly terrified of me... very clearly terrified like properly reeling back. She shouldn't have been thrown into that situation, I felt, was furious. I think I think having her so out of her depth it affected the bias of the assessment.' Respondent 7

There are a range of possibilities linked to the above quote. It is possible that Respondent 7 is undermining the social worker. It is possible that he presented differently on the day he was interviewed by the social worker. During the interviews Respondent 7 did not present as remotely threatening. However, the dynamic between a social worker and a father who has just been arrested for downloading IIOC and the dynamic between a researcher and a voluntary client are completely different and therefore it is difficult to be certain that he did not present as 'terrifying'.

The risk fathers will attempt suicide

All the participants in this study reported, to varying degrees, a depressive mood state when they were arrested. Most of the women in this study reported that their ex or current partners experienced a depressive mood state in the aftermath of the arrest. Many of the men reported being prescribed anti-depressants.

The risk of suicide was raised in the historical context section of the literature review. While I was aware that suicide was an important issue I had not intended or expected it to form part of the interviews. I was surprised when the men wanted to talk about suicide in fairly candid terms.

'I was desperate. I took two overdoses.' Respondent 3

Eight of the fourteen participants reported concerns about suicide. Shortly after their arrests, Respondent 3 took two overdoses and Respondent 4 slashed his wrists. Respondents 7 and 8 explicitly reported suicidal thoughts. Respondent 9

alluded to suicidal thoughts. Respondent 12 was very concerned that her ex-partner was at imminent risk of suicide following the offence. Respondent 1 reported historic concerns about her mother wanting to walk out in front of a bus after her husband was arrested. In considering how best to intervene in order to reduce the risk of harm to a child to a minimum, it is important to contemplate the risk of suicide when a parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children. The death of any parent has a profound effect on children and the people surrounding the children and therefore it is important to attempt to understand the perspective of the offender to avoid preventable harm to the child. I asked the men who disclosed suicidal thoughts and/or had attempted suicide to share details of what would help reduce the risk. Respondent 3 referred to strategies which helped him to avoid further attempts of suicide, including counselling. However, he also talked about the importance of being mindful and doing meditation. He commented:

'Doing the Inform Plus course, I was very keen to get onto it, was hugely beneficial. The group thing, you're not alone, you're not the only person. There was a big apprehension about going into a room with other offenders, not wanting to be in a room with other offenders, but it quickly became apparent they were just ordinary people who had made bad decisions.'

Another factor which deterred the respondents from suicide was the impact on their children. Respondent 7 was given some assertive advice from the early treatment team which helped him move on from thoughts of self-harm. He commented:

'The only time I was offered help was when I was sent to the intensive early care treatment team because I was obsessed with self-harm. If it was just me I would have just done it. One of the things the early care treatment team said was, "if you do that we will be talking to your kids in ten years' time".'

The relationship between the father and child before and after the offence was investigated with all the respondents. Their responses will be examined in the next section.

Fathers' accounts of their relationship with their child(ren) before and after the offence

In the vast majority of cases, the men reported positive relationships with their sons and daughters prior to the arrest. However, this was not always the case. Respondent 3 acknowledged his deficits as a father prior to the arrest.

'Well I think overall I have not been the father that I should have been, and that is, from my many shortcomings which caused alcoholism, active alcoholism, although others didn't see it in me. I have now accepted it and have addressed it in strong adherence to abstinence but also AA which I go to about ten meetings per week. I'm very committed to that.'

Despite feeling he was not the best father, as can be seen from the quote above, Respondent 3 was able to share some details of positive aspects of his parenting. Like all of the men in the study, he could articulate a convincing level of detail in relation to his knowledge and understanding of his son's and daughters' personalities, emotional wellbeing, development and needs. These accounts will be explored in more detail in the 'impact on children' section.

Both the men and women in this study reported the men to have positive relationships with their children. According to Respondent 9, quoted below, when his ex-wife was approached by children's services (he had remarried before the arrest) she informed them that he was an incredible father.

'I don't think much about my ex-wife but... she was asked about the relationship and she said [I] was an incredible father to the children.'

I've included the quote above as it seems to provide an insight into his children's mother's (his ex partner's) view of the risk. It is possible that he is giving a false account. The quote raises questions about what it means to be a good father and whether a person can be a good parent despite having failed his children by downloading IIOC.

It was expected that the relationship between the father and child would change after the arrest, even if the child was not aware of the circumstances. The reactions from the children were varied. In one case, the older children did not

want contact with their father after the offence. Respondent 3 is a 53-year-old man who has four children, two over the age of 18 and two aged 12 and 14. He was very tearful when he told me about the impact his offending had had on his relationship with the children. To try and repair his relationship with his children he wrote them letters. Letters can also be a method of perpetrating emotional abuse or grooming and therefore I enquired as to the detail contained in the letters. Respondent 3 commented:

'My early letters were expressions of my remorse and contrition for what I had done, these are my two older children, and I didn't, then slowly expanding my love for them, a little about myself and what I'm doing, the 12 step programme. My son is 21 and at university, he has the capacity to understand.... in more recent time, my letters have been expressions of love and if they ever want my help I'm available.'

The letters appear to be appropriate and containing important messages for the children. In a similar vein to other respondents, this case raises the differing responses of siblings. In the case outlined above, the siblings were given information regarding the offences at different stages. Methods of disclosure and timing will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter.

The men reported that their children still loved them regardless of the offences. Those men who did disclose to their children often found them to be supportive. Respondent 4 commented:

'I don't know if he got told an awful lot at the stage. I saw him the evening I went to pick up some stuff. I was very upset and he was upset, he said "it'll be ok, dad" and gave me a hug. We had such a close relationship'

For all the respondents, the most consistent impact on the children was related to the contact arrangements that followed the arrest. All of the respondents were active and present fathers before they were arrested, with most living with their child(ren).

Contact

The most common outcome regarding contact between the father and the child after the arrest was that, initially at least, it was supervised by a family member who had been assessed as suitable by children's services. In several cases, however, there was no direct contact at all. The reasons for this were varied. One reason was related to parents being separated: when the parents separated there were greater challenges to arranging contact between the offender and his children. Respondent 3 said it was a struggle to find a supervisor who could commit the time to supervise contact. He told me that friends and relatives were initially very helpful. However, as months passed their commitment dwindled and contact became less frequent. In another case the offender lived alone and had moved a considerable geographical distance from his child through fear of media reporting of his offence. Respondent 3 reports below on how his contact with his son has become less frequent.

'I was led to believe from arrest that was a stipulation of bail. It wasn't till after Christmas I asked a solicitor and they spoke to the team, they actually told me there are no conditions to stop me seeing my son unsupervised, social services have closed it on that basis. My wife being a social worker has kept that in place, she's very concerned from a professional's point of view that if she, in these circumstances, was seen to be allowing me to have supervised contact with my son. My solicitor has said that my wife's reasons, I understand where she is coming from, as much as it upsets me, it's made the whole me seeing my son far less frequent. I do feel I am missing out a lot and he is as well.'

The quote above also reinforces an earlier point in relation to the men not having a clear understanding of the processes and procedures. It is possible that they were given a clear explanation by professionals but were not able to absorb it at the time. It also highlights potential points of confusion and lines of responsibility for when children's services close the case. The quote also raises an important issue regarding offenders' right to have circumstances reviewed.

For some of the men it was pertinent that their relationships with their partners ended after the arrest, meaning that they may not be living with anyone who could supervise contact. Respondent 8 was particularly distressed when talking about trying to have overnight contact with his daughter following his arrest and the breakdown of his relationship. He received a Caution and it took seven months before his contact was reinstated.

The children in this study clearly experienced the loss of their fathers in some ways, whether it was physical or emotionally as they knew him. It was also clear that some of the fathers felt a significant loss. The quote below demonstrates the impact for Respondent 3.

'It's very painful that, because I asked my wife to keep me informed and I haven't been kept informed. She (the daughter) qualified to sing on television in a competition and she won the competition. I found out through a friend. My wife didn't tell me.'

While prevention of offending was not the focus of the study, the men made some important disclosures that may be helpful for other fathers who may be at risk of offending to hear. The quote above from Respondent 3 also galvanised my thought process in terms of young people who may be in the public eye as they get older. There is a risk for children of offenders that being in the public eye could lead to their father's offending being referenced.

During the study I was mindful not to dismiss the grief and raw emotion of the men. On occasion the men in the study would want to talk about their own emotions. I was quite assertive however in drawing them back to discussing the impact on their children. In the next section I will focus on the responses of the men when I asked them about the specific impact on their children.

Fathers' observations regarding the impact on their child(ren)

There was a consistent theme of a reduction in income. Some of the men lost their jobs as a result of the conviction. Having to move out of the family home meant

that most men had to rent a second property. Having to rent a second property led to a reduction in income for the families, which meant there was a lifestyle change for the children.

For many families, holidays represent a happy and rewarding part of family life. For many of the children connected to this study, the possibility of a holiday with or without their father became much less likely. Respondent 4 commented:

'We had a family holiday planned last year and he hasn't had any holidays, you know, so his whole family, nice childhood things, has been smashed apart since February.'

The quote above illustrates how a father's offending can impact on everyday life. It is likely that the child would experience some negative emotions and, in the absence of any explanation, could feel that they are being punished.

Some of the fathers told me that their children had existing complex needs, including anxiety, which were exacerbated by the consequences of the offending. In the quote below Respondent 3 described the impact on his daughter, who was fearful to be seen in public with him. Prior to the discovery of her father's offending she suffered with anxiety. Respondent 3 commented:

'Having experienced over eight months, pretty much, therapy, it has been a revelation and unbelievable helpful. While I daren't suggest, I think it would be helpful to all of my children, and indeed my wife. I think they could all benefit from it. I think for my elder children, going through, for instance, my daughter and her fears, rationalising, identifying fears, I think would be very helpful for her, historically as well as what's happened since my arrest. My son could be helped in wider areas as well with his feelings.'

In Chapters 2 and 3 I explored the concept of resilience and the child's capacity to thrive in difficult circumstances. In this section I will explore the data in relation to resilience. I have drawn upon information which was identified using my coding framework as discussed in Chapter 4.

There was a theme of pride when the fathers talked about their children. Like many parents, it was common for the fathers to want to talk about the accomplishments of their children but also their reactions when they discovered their offending. I asked Respondent 3 whether he thought his son's resilient response could be attributed to his age.

'He is quite funny, my son, and when I told him he just said, "well, I'm always going to be there for you, dad". You'll find that whether they're 29 or 9 it doesn't matter, it's still your child and although he's a big fitness fanatic. Oh he's got right medical as well, he's a big chap, big hairy chest, he must have got that from his mother [laughs]. He's gone medical, he goes into hospitals and does research about the heart and stuff. You know dealing with people who have had heart attacks and stuff and their coming back for exercise, he's a credit to me as well.'

With the exception of one case, all of the parents denied that their children were angry with them. I pressed Respondent 9 as to why his son wasn't angry toward him. Respondent 9 firmly attributed his children's support and understanding to what he had been to them as a father prior to the offences, not only in terms of the time and support he had given but also to their value base. He also told me about his daughter, as detailed in the quote below.

'Now she is going for a triathlon and stuff, her brother is totally involved in sport you know. He's very highly qualified in what he does so that's the basis that I, and I was like that with my daughter, constantly involved in stuff, and I think they must look back and think "How can I be angry? You've done something wrong, you've understood that you've done something wrong, let's make it better, let's get back to where we were". And that will happen whether social services like it or not. She'll be an adult soon and when she's an adult, she'll have a lot to say.'

The quote above appears to indicate that Respondent 9's daughter is resilient in the sense that she has sport to utilise as a resource for positive coping. It is possible that the children attached to this study felt unable to express any negative emotions that

were directed to their parent. It is possible that the child was aware of the emotionally fragile state of their parent and wanted to protect their parent from any further pain. It is possible that the responses outlined above are indicative of the initial shock experienced by the child. They might try to hide their feelings and only feel able to talk about it when they have had time to absorb it. Alternatively, they may not want to talk due to embarrassment. It is also possible that they have been abused by the parent and feel scared. As Respondent 9 states that when the child is older they may have more questions or different feelings, particularly when they go through puberty and become more sexually aware.

In many cases the parents gave details which demonstrated the resilience of their children. The quote below provides an excellent example of a child who continued to achieve despite significant adversity. Respondent 13 commented:

'Absolutely amazing and unbelievable, the fact that she has stood by me and loves me and with everything going on, her mum dying and all this going on with me and she is still excelling at school just says it all really.'

There were many positives reported by the fathers in relation to how their children coped following the arrest. In the next chapter I explore how one child maintained her friendships and continued to achieve at school. I also identified how children continued to succeed through sport. Furthermore, I have explored how children seemingly forgive and seek to continue their relationship with their parent despite having been badly let down. This demonstrates emotional intelligence and courage. In contrast, a consistent negative was related to children not being listened to.

The fathers regularly reported that they didn't feel that that their child was listened to by children's services. Respondent 9 stated that he felt that if his daughter had made an allegation of abuse against him the professionals would have acted swiftly but because she said she wanted contact with her father on the basis that he had never harmed her, they wouldn't listen. His frustration was evident:

'Her cries in the dark are going unheard and she's not charged as a young adult, I believe, so why aren't you listening to her?'

The majority of the people in this study complained about delays between the initial arrest and decisions being made in regard to child protection, specifically contact. In family court proceedings it is accepted that decisions should be made within the child's timescales. Warrington et al (2016) refer to the emotional impact on children in court processes when they are subject to delays. In this study, delays could be attributed to a number of factors including delays in the offender being processed through the criminal justice process and decision-making processes by children's services. Children were often left in limbo for in excess of six months.

The data highlighted several points of possible delay: waiting for the devices confiscated from the offender to be analysed, a change of social worker, and delay in the case proceeding to court. Respondent 9's daughter was 13 at the time of the arrest. She also had complex needs. When I asked him how his daughter coped with the delay he told me about his daughter being allocated an advocate.

'She did get an advocate, she got an advocate because she became upset when she came into one of the core meetings and, you know, these people sitting there at a table, it's intrusive for anybody irrespective of, you know, whatever profession you're involved in. And to bring a child to be involved in that, so she had an advocate with her. So she's gone to her advocate and the two social workers we were given and given questions and all three questions were, "why are you keeping my dad away from me?" Constantly, that's been said now for the best part of nine months.'

It is possible that Respondent 9 is creating an elaborate story, using the rights of the child to distract from the risk he presents. That said, the reference to an advocate is an important reference point in terms of process. Only one child from the sample group was allocated an advocate and therefore the data demonstrates the need for more consistent practice and a possible method of assisting the child on this difficult journey.

Media

While it is illegal for the media to include details of children when reporting on child sexual abuse cases, fathers can be named. In cases where fathers are named there is a risk that children will be harmed by being bullied by their peers, isolated in the local community, or feeling embarrassed and lonely. It is also possible that the family can become isolated. Respondent 7 and his partner respondent 6 told me that his conviction was reported in the local newspaper and he took the decision to change his name.

*'Yeah so I changed my name. It was, *Homeville is *Homeville so it's a small town mentality, it's only got 100,000 people in, they have a reporter in every court all the time... The press sensationalise stuff, there was that guy who was kicked to death in Bristol and things like that, so I legged it to a hotel in a different county. A former friend of mine put it on Facebook, the article, so it spread round my group of friends, but actually it hasn't had much of an impact.'*

Prior to the offences being reported by the local newspaper, Respondent 7 was confident that he would escape media attention. Despite his changing his name it is still possible that his children could be identified, particularly if a photograph was shared. His partner however was not as confident. Most participants feared media attention even if they didn't receive any. Respondent 6 reported her fear in the lead up to the court case and her continued fear that she doesn't know who has been informed or knows of her partner's conviction.

In four cases, the offender moved out of the area following the discovery of the offences. Respondent 4 was explicit in stating that he did so in order to avoid media attention:

*'I've moved since March this year and I was very apprehensive about doing so, I was taking precautions in case anything hit the local media, so I moved to *Awayville.'*

Moving out of the area is an effective way for the offender to avoid some media attention, particularly local media attention. However social media is not anchored to a geographical area and therefore there is a danger that people in the child's world (or adult's world if they are also on social media) will become aware of the offending. It is also possible that the child will be subject to bullying via social media as a result of their father's offending. None of the parents reported being given advice and guidance on this issue. In chapter 11 I will present my recommendations in relation to advice and guidance for parents.

In the next section I will consider the fathers' experience of professional support, including any positive advice and guidance they were provided with.

Fathers' views about professionals

Lack of communication between the family and professionals was frequently referenced by the participants in this study. One example which illustrates the lack of communication most clearly is Respondent 13, who is a widower and primary carer for his daughter. He told me that he was being sentenced two weeks before Christmas and it was possible that he would receive a custodial sentence. Despite the fact that the interview with me was conducted on 8th December 2015, no one from children's services had communicated contingency plans to his daughter. In this case there was no evidence of a child-centred approach.

An interesting point raised by the fathers in the study related to interagency working. Respondent 9 reported his shock at how a psychologist working with his daughter was treated during a child protection conference. In his account, the psychologist was informing the conference about her observation that he was a good father in relation to supporting his daughter's experience of anxiety, yet the other professionals refused to acknowledge the possibility that he had been a good father, and dismissed the psychologist's comments. Respondent 9 said:

'She [the psychologist] pretty much teaches. She was the highest ranking officer there around the table and they were belittling her.'

Many of the fathers who participated in the study reported feeling excluded from the process following intervention by children's services. It was evident that many of the fathers had not sought any legal advice in relation to their rights. None of the fathers had been subject to a specialist risk assessment to establish the level of risk they posed to their child. The fathers didn't appear to feel that a fair and thorough risk assessment had been undertaken. There was a common theme among the responses from the fathers I interviewed with regard to reporting their experience of children's services as adversarial. Respondent 6 commented:

'Everything I say, the exact opposite is true, yeah that's the relationship at the moment.'

When I interviewed the fathers about their experience of professionals, my intention was to capture the resulting impact on the child. In the quote below, Respondent 6 highlights a concerning observation regarding his view of services being under resourced and uninterested.

*'The only person who has a joined up thinking seems to be *the police officer, he seems to liaise with people... I also get the impression it's people with seriously large case loads. Yeah I'm quite minor to them.'*

In contrast to the above, there were some positive reports in relation to the way the police treated the children attached to the study. In Chapter 6 I raised concern in relation to children having their devices removed and possible consequences of this. Respondent 13 (a single father) reports below regarding his positive experience of the police taking a child-centred approach.

'I think they were pretty good with her. They looked at her laptop here and let her keep it, they didn't take it away. They explained why they were there as delicately as they could but then obviously social services were pretty much involved from that point onwards so it has been... pretty intrusive all the way since.'

The fathers in this study gave mixed views in relation to their experience of professionals. The vast majority of references to children's services were negative,

both in relation to how they felt they themselves were treated and also how their children were. The fathers felt that neither their children nor the mothers of their children were treated fairly. I will now explore the support made available.

Support available

The data demonstrated that the fathers in the study received the most support after they were arrested compared with other family members. The quote below also highlights that there are barriers to fathers receiving help before they became convicted. Respondent 6 commented:

'Most are not willing to talk until post-conviction. There has been zero as far as I'm concerned with the exception of the Lucy Faithfull course.'

There was a general theme of the fathers being exceptionally grateful for the support they received from the Stop it Now! Helpline and subsequent engagement with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation, however the comments included are not necessarily representative given that they volunteered to participate in research after their involvement with the Foundation.

The fathers were informed of the Lucy Faithfull Foundation by the police in all cases. Given that the participants were aware I work for Lucy Faithfull Foundation, it is possible that their responses were affected: they may have been saying nice things to try to win my favour. It is also possible that they chose to participate because they felt they had benefitted from the experience. It was evident from the data that the police are important in terms of raising awareness of the services available for fathers and their families. The data shows that some fathers are willing and motivated to address their behaviour. Respondent 11 stated:

'I was advised to talk to the LFF [the Lucy Faithfull Foundation], the police actually gave me a sheet with LFF's details on, with a number to call the helpline and talk to them the first opportunity I got and they were marvellous. They were a really good group of people... because they are very helpful not only to the offenders but to the offenders' families.'

It could be argued that for fathers to be better parents and to avoid reoffending they need support and intervention. Children also need support and intervention. In the next section I will explore the support offered to children.

There was limited evidence of children being given any specific support in relation to their father's offending. In many cases, according to the parents, a social worker spoke with the children without giving any information to the child about why they were being interviewed. In some cases the fathers didn't know if their child was being given any support due to the loss of contact. Respondent 8 stated:

'What I did was wrong but... if your study is about how to support people then that was a big fall down. There was no help from anyone, social services did all the breaking and you've got the "move out now" and they came in and asked all the questions so they could do their assessments but they didn't put any support in.'

In one case, as detailed below there was some evidence of good child practice. The quote also demonstrates the resilience of Respondent 4's son.

*'Through school, the social worker has been working with him every four or five weeks. She has a little box of telephone numbers he can ring. School have been good, he has a special teacher he can go to if he... he seems to be feeling all right. He's all right because everything in his life has stayed the same. He's a very busy boy you know, he goes to *Homeville three days a week to play tennis, that's an 80-mile round trip. He plays tournaments all around the country at the weekends.'*

This chapter has shown that the fathers involved in this study were able to offer some pertinent insights in relation to the possible impact on children when a parent is arrested for downloading IIOC. The data has evidenced that professionals need to be aware of the range of risks facing families after the arrest of the offender, including the risk of the offender trying to commit suicide. The data evidences a significant deficit in support being offered to children. Furthermore, it

is unclear to as to what is being said to children at what juncture of the process and how that may contribute to impact. I will explore the process of disclosure in more detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 8 Disclosure

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore the responses of the parents in relation to the subject of disclosure of the fathers' offences to children. From the outset of this study I was interested to ascertain who was giving children information about their father's offending; what informed the decision making about what information was being given and how and when it was being given; and what the impact of the disclosure was.

The findings suggest that parents' experiences and views in relation to disclosure were varied. Their descriptions indicated that the circumstances of each family created different opportunities to tell the child. For example, in some cases the child was present at the point of the arrest and therefore some children were immediately made aware that something was wrong. It has been established in Chapter 5 (which focused on the arrest) that even when the child was present at the point of arrest, they were not necessarily informed what their father was being arrested for. The data showed that in most cases the father was subsequently required to live away from the family home, which provided an additional opportunity to tell the child why their father was not at home. In some cases the parents gave an alternative explanation for the child's father living away from the family home. Eight of the children attached to the study were not aware that their parent had been arrested for downloading IIOC. In this chapter I will present the parents' reasons for not disclosing. I will explore the variety of circumstances under which the children might be informed about their parent's offending and what the evidence demonstrated with regard to impact.

I will use the following subsections as a framework for discussing disclosure:

- Parents' views about disclosing the offence to their children
- Examples of disclosure
- The impact of disclosure
- Support needed

Parents' views about disclosing the offence to their children

When I discussed disclosure with parents I discovered polar responses. In some cases when I discussed the possibility of disclosure the immediate reaction was negative and often fearful. In other cases, there was a very clear instantaneous and non-negotiable belief that the child needed to know. Respondent 11 (a father of four) provided a clear and succinct overview of his reasoning for telling his children:

'They just needed to know straight away, I think. I mean my older sons had been dealing with police all day, which was wrong you know, and if I could turn back time I would have been there so they could get off and just go, but... so they needed an explanation.'

Respondent 11's 18-year-old son was the only person at home at the point when the police arrived. As stated in Chapter 5, respondent 11's son was arrested for the alleged offence of downloading IIOC. Respondent 11 decided to admit his guilt in order to ensure that his son was released. He went on to explain:

'The children, they all needed the honest truth, the fact that their dad has let them down badly and I was truly, truly, sorry for what I'd done.'

Honesty was raised by several participants. In the quote above there is reference to the need to be honest about what had happened. Respondent 11 also stated that he was sorry. I will explore the potential importance of honesty and apologising later in the chapter and also in Chapter 10.

It is difficult to be precise as to what would constitute honesty in situations when explaining to a child that their parent had been convicted of a sexual offence. In circumstances like this there are several layers of information. For example, there is the title of the offence, the details, the motive, the length of time the offending had been going on, ongoing risk and the need for therapy and treatment. All these components of honesty would have an impact on how the child would define their experience and view their father. While being given information about the criminal

investigation may reveal what the offender has been looking at online, only the offender truly knows what their motive was. Furthermore, in most cases, the offender holds the information as to whether they are attracted to children in circumstances other than the images they have looked at online. In Respondent 11's view, the concept of honesty seemed to relate to him taking full responsibility not only for his offending but also for his failure as a parent. Unlike many of the other participants, Respondent 11 expressed the view that the offence would have a 'full' impact on his children. It is possible that his acknowledgement of his responsibility for the offence may have enabled his children to feel validated and liberated to express their emotions. In other cases, fathers were drawn to the belief that the children were not affected. It is possible that denial in the parent could stifle the child's capacity to express emotion.

When I explored disclosure with parents who had not told their children it was evident that there was some recognition of the potential consequences of not telling. For example Respondent 12, a mother who had not told her children, made the following comment about her daughter:

'Ultimately, as things stand now, her entire life is built on a lie.'

The quote above highlights the link between the knowledge of the father's offending and the child's sense of identity. The data would suggest that disclosure is linked to how the child constructs their life story. Respondent 12 makes the point that the omission of the information means that the way the child constructs his or her life story contains a lie. Lying caused discomfort in some parents. Being honest was one motivator for parents wanting to tell their children. For others there was concern that the risk that concealment of the offence now could result in the child discovering it at a later date. Respondent 6 commented:

'I think it's too big a secret for them never to find so it's one of those things that will eventually have to come out at some point.'

Respondent 6 makes an important reference with regard to failure to disclose being symbolic of a family secret. The quote draws attention to the secret needing

to come out. It is possible that children would feel betrayed if they found out about 'the secret' years later. The reference to secrets is important due to the connection between secrets and the risk of contact sexual abuse. In order for contact sexual abuse to be perpetrated in the family, secrets have to be kept. Furthermore, if the child is not aware that their parent poses a risk of sexual abuse it is possible that they would be less likely to report a concern, for example if their parent took pictures of them in swimwear, as they would lack the wider understanding that would enable them to accurately identify risks.

Some parents had concerns about how a child might respond to disclosure. For example, Respondent 6, a mother who chose to remain in a relationship with her husband had many concerns about disclosure. She explains the beliefs and values she had in relation to disclosure in the quote below. She contextualises her concern with regard to her general parenting and the morality she seeks to promote in her son (who was aged one when his father was arrested). Respondent 6 stated:

'We always taught him that... Sometimes he comes home and says "I don't like him [a child at school] because he's naughty" so we try and say to him when someone does a naughty thing once it doesn't mean that they will do naughty things all the time and it doesn't mean that they are bad people. They need to be a bit more open minded about how they judge people'

The quote above has an important link to established practice with offenders. In terms of achieving engagement with offenders it is considered good practice to separate the behaviour from the person. Marshall and Hollin (2015) for example, reviewed the history of treatment of sex offenders and commented on the move toward a strengths-based approach, which does not focus solely on the offence but also on the person.

Having explored a case where the parents remained in a relationship, it is important to acknowledge the difficulties for parents who are separated or divorced. In cases where the parents have separated it is inevitable that there are different challenges. Respondent 3 told me about a discussion between him and

his wife (from whom he was separated at the time of interview):

'There was a possibility that the knowledge of my arrest, it would become more widely known, not just by people we knew, and therefore... there was a danger of it being mentioned at school.'

The quote above highlights the possibility that a child will discover the offence other than from their parents, for example through the media or via other children at school. The data illuminates an important risk that parents and professionals need to be aware of from the outset. It is also important to consider how the child might respond if they are not informed by a trusted adult. The reference to the child being made aware at school also highlights the risk that the child's relationships at school might be affected.

Respondent 7, a father of two children, a boy aged two and a girl aged five, raised the issue of the child's academic journey in relation to disclosure to professionals and other adults. In the quote below he raises a valid question about process and the sex offender register:

'Obviously the more people that know that bigger the risk so certainly there is nothing... there is no guidance. If my conviction is spent does that mean the teachers stop having to tell the next teacher and the next teacher and the next teacher?'

The quotes above provide examples of some of the fears that motivated parents to tell their child about the offence. As mentioned in Chapters 5, 6 and 7, there is danger that the offences would appear in the local or national media. The data reveals the risk that a child might discover their father had offended by reading about it in the media or could be told about the offence in the context of being teased at school. In those circumstances there is a significant risk that the child would feel additional betrayal and breach of trust.

Respondent 7's question in relation to offences becoming spent links to the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974, which stipulates that, after a specified time period, the offender is not required to disclose the offence to an employer or

education provider. This quote highlights the potential for misunderstanding the necessity of disclosing information about risk of harm in a manner that would satisfy children's services that both he and his partner are behaving responsibly. For example, while there may not be a legal requirement that Respondents 6 and 7 disclose to the school, children's services may consider it necessary to disclose Respondent 7's offence to ensure the safety of the other children attending the school. It was not only concerns from outside the family that worried the parents with regard to disclosure. There are additional complications when the child is a part of a sibling group.

An additional fear for one parent related to the risk that an older child (who was 14 at the time of the arrest and made aware about the offences from the point of arrest) would tell his younger daughter (who was 12 at the point of arrest) in a way that would be harmful. Respondent 3 stated:

'My wife was concerned that our daughter who's 14 could have used it unkindly to younger daughter. They're abrasive at the moment, and my wife was worried it might come out in an emotional moment between the two of them. Now she is informed in language she understands.'

Respondent 3 told me his 14-year-old daughter was angry with him after she was told about the offence. He suggested that the anger his daughter held could, in his view, be partially attributed to the manner in which she was told by her mother almost immediately after the arrest. According to Respondent 3, the mother was angry at him at the time, and the disclosure was made in a hurried manner with very little thought given to how it was made. In his view, his daughter experienced greater difficulty processing the information because of the emotionally charged manner in which she was told. It was evident that there were varying levels of degrees of discussion between the parents with regard to disclosure, partly dictated by whether or not the parents were in a relationship. Respondent 3's relationship with his partner ended as a result of the offence.

Respondent 8's relationship also ended following disclosure of the offences.

Respondent 8 talked about his concerns about disclosing to his children but also his concerns about the impact of failing to disclose on his partner. He acknowledged the difficulty of how he might go about disclosing but also appeared motivated to tell his children the truth. A quote from Respondent 8 below indicates that he felt guilty that their friends questioned why the relationship between him and his ex-partner (also the mother of their children) ended and he feared that the children would blame their mother for the end of the relationship. It is apparent in the quote that he wanted to take responsibility for causing the relationship to end.

'I don't want her [Respondent 8's daughter] to ever hold it against their mother... We had friends together. It's bad enough as it is when they look at my ex-partner and think "well why she left him when they've got two kids and she were pregnant?". They don't understand and they don't know [about the offence] and I don't want our children to grow up and as an adult to hold it against their mum that they had split parents so I think I owe to them to tell them when they are old enough to understand it, I don't know how old that is. Fortunately, they are very young at the moment so I don't have to think about it.'

The data indicated that a significant concern for parents was the age of the child. The ages of the children connected to this research ranged from one to 18 years at the point of the arrest. Most parents expressed concern or had questions about what would be the best age to tell a child. Additional examples of quotes with regard to age are included below:

'It's definitely something we have talked about but we don't know how we would go about it, they are too young at the moment.'
(Respondent 6)

'We have spoken about the fact that he will know one day. We don't think it's right at the moment, so that he should know that when we

both feel he's.... He's 12, nearly 13, but he's quite immature, he's very young, mentally he's still a young child.' (Respondent 4)

'They have the right to know, my child has the right to know, you know she's not a young child, she's a young adult, and hiding behind things is not the right thing to do, she needed to know.' (Respondent 9)

The data indicates that there is no precise formula for the best age to tell a child about their parent's offending. However, there are some factors which are important to consider. Respondent 4 refers to his son's level of maturity. There are also additional concerns in relation to any learning needs or mental health problems the child may have. Respondent 4 made some important points quoted below with regard to development.

'I think she'll be honest with him and I think he wants to know. He wants to be told the truth, but he's too young to understand it. He doesn't understand the birds and the bees, he's come to the stage where he does a bit but he doesn't understand the more intricate bits of this and as he gets older he might... I'm trying to match with his stage of development, you know, he doesn't get it.'

Respondent 4 makes an important reference to the child's understanding of sex and the necessary details to include in relation to the offence. If a child does not yet understand sex, it is possible that they are not going to understand sexual offence. In my view in these circumstances it would be important to disclose in terms of concepts the child does understand: for example rule breaking and hurting people. These concepts could be used to provide a baseline of disclosure to be built upon later. One example, from Respondent 9, a parent who was clear in his view that his 13-year-old daughter needed to know, is shown below:

'I think these young generations, when my oldest daughter was 13 she was a lot more naïve than my youngest daughter... but society we live in now they are very much older in their thoughts, you know. She's not naïve, she's been spoken to about other things, you know the

mum daughter talk, she's having her periods and stuff like that so we are talking adult stuff, so she needed to know and I have no regrets about that.'

In this section it has been established that many parents were motivated to tell their children about the offences, but had concerns about doing so. One of the major concerns for parents was the age of the child, which led parents to be concerned about disclosure of the offences and how the child might be affected. In the next section I will explore further concerns parents had about disclosing. I will begin with terminology.

One parent raised concerns about terminology as can be seen in the quote below. The term 'paedophile' is a highly emotive one. Seto et al 2012:164 assert that the term paedophile is defined as a person with a fixed sexual interest in prepubescent children. Many people who download IIOC will also be capable of achieving a sexual relationship with an adult and as such will not be paedophiles. The feelings of Respondent 12, a mother, referring to the term are outlined below:

'I think it was unhelpful to call him a paedophile... cos in my mind, a paedophile is a contact offender and I've never felt particularly comfortable with that label anyway.'

The term paedophile is unlikely to be understood or to assist when trying to engage with families in difficult conversations about someone they love. If the offence has been reported in the media it is possible that children would need to be aware of the term in preparation for anything they may read or hear about their father. One parent commented that he would only want to tell his children if he was unable to erase information about this offending from the internet.

Respondent 7 discussed the possibility of utilising the 'right to be forgotten', which refers to a landmark ruling in a European Court of Justice in 2010. The ruling ordered that 'no longer relevant', or irrelevant, data should not be generated by search engines if an internet user requests their name is removed. The ruling indicates that the search engine has to take responsibility as the data controller.

At the time of writing there have not been any tested cases relating to people convicted of a sexual offence.

As discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, parents in this study tended to conclude that younger children were in greater need of protection from disclosure. However, concerns about the age of the child could also be accompanied by denial on the part of the non-offending parent. Respondent 2 was at home with her youngest daughter, then aged 13 when the police arrived. Her husband had been arrested at the train station. She told her daughter that he had been arrested for buying too much wine.

Despite the references to children being too young to understand, it was evident in the quote below that even very young children would react to the changes in the family home. Respondent 6 stated:

'Well there was one chap who came in and took all the details of the people who lived in the house and explained what will be happening and that they would be out later and that was in front of the children and the oldest child at the time was three, nearly four, nearly at pre-school. He did ask what the men were doing, I just said they're just coming to check that we have got everything that we should have. He didn't realise that they were taking things away but we were in a different room when it was happening.'

I pursued further detail with regard to what the children were told when their father was required to leave the family home. She commented:

'I just said that daddy's mind wasn't well and he was going to go and live at grandma's for a little while until he was feeling better.'

The children in question were aged four and one. When I probed further to ascertain how the children reacted, Respondent 6 gave the following response:

'They accepted that and we said that he would be here as much as he could, which he was, and then there were a few occasions when I said

we would see him as much as we could, which was better than not seeing him at all. I've been very, you know, not told them why he wasn't there. It seemed important for them to feel that he was really near and not putting them to bed and then coming back in the morning when he wasn't staying here, which wasn't true. It seemed better to tell them straight away that he was not staying here.'

The decision to provide the children with an explanation immediately seems to be a positive decision which eliminates the children asking and/or guessing where their father is. It may also have led their mother to feel less pressured in the interim period. The medical explanation outlined absolves Respondent 6 of any responsibility. In my professional experience it is not uncommon for families of sex offenders to be drawn to a medical model. Respondent 4 also did not tell his son about the offences, but he was prepared to make some reference to mental health problems:

'My son doesn't know I tried to kill myself, I've managed to keep that from him, the scars have faded. He didn't see me for quite a while, my wife didn't particularly want to see me what with all the revelations, we told my son I had had a breakdown and was being looked after by my sister. We explained that not mentally being well and I was being looked after to my sister, I explained illness isn't always physical, sometimes people's minds are not balanced.'

Given that mental health problems also have a level of stigma attached to them it is a point of interest that the fathers were prepared to acknowledge these above their sexual behaviour problems.

Respondent 7 also changed his name in order to reduce the risk that the offences would be connected to the family. He said:

'We said to our oldest we are thinking of having the same name as nanny and granddad. We said when people get married sometimes

they chose their mummy's and sometimes they chose their daddy's name and we are not sure yet.'

I reflected on Respondent 7's comments with regard to giving a false explanation for changing their children's names. This finding raises questions as to what the impact might be if the children were to discover as adults why their name had been changed.

Other changes had to be explained. For example, the fact that computers went missing from the family home needed some explanation. In Respondent 4's case his ex-partner gave their son a false explanation:

'My wife had told my son because the computer disappeared. She told my son there were problems with computers in the area and the police had to take them away to examine. My son is not particularly inquisitive so that what he was told. He has no knowledge of the reality and still doesn't today.'

This disclosure provides a level of explanation that could later be built upon. For example, the son could be told: daddy has been looking at things that he should not have on the computer; they want to check that there isn't anything there should not be on the computer.

Contact arrangements made post arrest provide an additional opportunity to give an explanation to a child. Inevitably the child will notice that their relationship, living arrangements and/or contact with the offending parent has changed. Contact arrangements changed in every case, whether the parents were living together prior to the discovery of the offence or not. In Respondent 4's case he decided to move to a different county in order to avoid local media attention.

*'I've moved since March this year and, I was very apprehensive about doing so, I was taking precautions in case anything hit the local media, so I moved to *Awayville. The logistics probably explains things to him.'*

Instead of using the relocation as an opportunity to provide his son with an honest explanation of what had happened, Respondent 4 chose to use the relocation as the explanation for his absence. It is unknown what Respondent 4's son thought about the reason for his father moving or how he felt about it. Respondent 4 was not permitted to have overnight contact with his son and therefore contact became infrequent.

It was evident that some parents feared rejection in the event of disclosure as illustrated in the quote below given by Respondent 6:

'I just hope that they don't disown us.'

The quote from Respondent 4 below continues a similar theme with regard to fearing that the child would perceive them in a negative light:

'He would be very shocked. I don't know that he would reject me at all. We do love each other very much, there's that overriding thing that your parent is your parent. I'm sure he would be extremely disappointed and probably a bit disgusted with me.'

These examples demonstrate that for some offenders, self-preservation and removing the risk of rejection is the motivator for avoiding disclosure.

Respondent 11 told his children about the offences. It is possible that his decision was partly informed by the fact that his oldest son had been arrested and therefore immediately had knowledge of the circumstances of his arrest. It is possible that Respondent 11 thought that his son would talk to his siblings and therefore he needed to talk to them first. He expressed the view that the children needed to know. Despite his view that they needed to know, he also had fears with regard to the impact the disclosure would have on them. He commented:

'It worries me in terms of the psychology of it. I could have laid the foundations for a mental breakdown in 20 years' time for 'em, just depending on what happens... So if it's dealt with right and it's reported I could have laid the foundations for them to be a lot more

stable and capable if they can understand, if we can help them understand how we get to where we are now, and I don't know, it's all very complex.'

Disclosure is a complex issue in these circumstances. As mentioned previously, there are several opportunities for disclosure, including the need for supervised contact. Respondent 12 had not told her son or daughter about the reasons why they could not see their father on their own. As can be seen in the quote below, this raised anxiety for her daughter and it is clear that she wants an explanation.

'I've just said "look... you can't see dad on your own, that's what the social workers have said" cos I just said to her "look they've phoned me, they've told me and this is what they said" and she's then come back and said that she's anxious and she's worried. Yeah I think she did use the word anxious or she might have said she's scared and concerned because she doesn't understand why.'

It was clear from the interviews with Respondent 12 that her daughter was not satisfied with the explanation. The risk of not telling the child anything is evident here: the child is anxious and scared. It is also evident from the quote below that her mother is frustrated and doesn't know what to say.

'I said, "Well I don't know why but I know..." I said, "Who do you think knows why?" and she said, "I think you do and the people who told you". I said, "The difficulty is I don't fully understand it myself because they, the social workers, have refused to meet with me to explain the process, their decision. I've only found out because your dad has met with them that there has been supervised contact, no unsupervised contact." So I said, "It's very difficult", no," I said, "you can't be with your dad on your own" and she said, "What even like when I'm 20?!"'

The frustration with regard to supervised contact, with no markers of progression to work towards, resonates with the disclosures made by Respondent 1, which will be explored in more depth in the next chapter. Respondent 12 also commented:

'I went, "No, just until you're 18." I said I couldn't give her any more information because I didn't have any more to give her because no one had spoken to me about it and now I had said to her that I were upset with the people who had done this because they hadn't given me the information that I needed.'

Respondent 12's frustration about the lack of support she was given was evident in her tone. It was clear that she did not know what to say to her daughter.

An additional risk for parents who choose not to tell their children relates to other members of the family deciding to share that information. Family dynamics are important for professionals to explore. Respondent 5 asserted that he suspected a maternal aunt (who he felt never liked him) gave information to his son that led his son to the conclusion that the reason for the family breakdown was due to his father's infidelity. This is demonstrated in the quote below.

'It's had a massive impact on my son because now the family is blown apart, he's incredibly angry with me because he thought we were doing ok and the reason I'm away is because, well, probably because he thinks I've met a women on the internet and I've kissed them and I've been unfaithful to his mother. That's what I think he believes.'

In this section I have presented information about parents' views in relation to young children and their need to be protected. Five of the parents in the study did not disclose to their children. For those families who did disclose I enquired what form disclosure took. In the next section I will explore examples given by parents who did disclose the offences to their children.

Examples of disclosure

When disclosure was made to the children it was made in a variety of circumstances. One of the challenges presented when disclosing the details of the offence to a child is whether or not the child had siblings. The data provided by parents suggests that children of different ages responded differently. In the

majority of cases, children were supportive of the offending parent, particularly when they were told by the parent directly. Respondent 3 commented:

'I spoke to my two elder children, who were at the time were 17 and er 19 and 20 actually, and that was on the day of my arrest. When I got home I told them both individually. My son, who's the elder, didn't respond particularly, that's not unlike him. My eldest daughter was actually quite supportive, not so much in conversation she gave me a long hug, after I told her, not immediately. I told her in her bedroom, she came down 20 mins later and gave me a hug. But after I left the home things changed.'

The quote above shows that the children's reaction may change over time. Absorbing the information is likely to take time and the child may experience a variety of emotions. Parents should be prepared for this by professionals.

There was limited evidence of any advice being provided to the parents specifically in relation to disclosure to the children. Respondent 3 reflected on when his oldest daughter was told about his offending by his wife soon after the offence:

*'I think we got things badly wrong, particularly with my oldest daughter. We should have been together when she was told. When I met my wife did say after I'd finished speaking, she would always be able to ask questions.... If we had been together and able to take *my daughter through that, the outcome would have been more cohesive.'*

Respondent 3's wife sought out advice to enable them to tell their youngest daughter, then aged 12, about the offence. His comments are included below.

'We had a facilitating meeting through LFF [the Lucy Faithfull Foundation] to plan that. That went reasonably well and since I've told my daughter about the reason for my arrest we have been in contact though email and text.'

The strength of the approach outlined above is that it gives space for the dynamics of the individual family to be considered. Respondent 3 was not in a close relationship with his wife. It is possible that having an objective person with specialist expertise was reassuring for them both. Consideration was given to the venue, the structure of the disclosure and the opportunity for questions and how to respond to any questions. Respondent 3 commented:

*'My wife and I were together, we planned, we visited a ruin of a monastery in *Otherville. it was a nice day, we walked around the monastery, we sat on a bench in the park, I told my daughter, using gentle language, she didn't want to ask any questions.'*

I prompted Respondent 3 to tell me more about the specific words he used during the disclosure.

*'Well we were guided by the counsellor that we met in *Otherville and as I remember it, I did the talking. I explained I had been arrested, that the police were investigating me and looking at my computer because I looked at photographs that I shouldn't have that had naked children in them.'*

The narrative provided above appears to be based on the facts of the offence. In this case the family had been given guidance regarding how to go about the disclosure by a practitioner at the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. During their meetings with the practitioner, consideration was given to the best venue to give the child information about her father's offending. It was evident from Respondent 3's description that the venue contributed to the minimisation of harm to the child.

'Fortunately, the area was very nice. We sat on a park bench. There was a playground next door. She's twelve but she will still very much enjoy that sort of thing. We then walked and saw some industrial heritage, walked across a bridge, across a river and bought her an ice cream, had a nice time.'

The parents were separated but they had met prior to the disclosure being made. The parents in this case had agreed what the child would be told prior to the meeting. They had also agreed what would happen afterwards, as detailed below:

'I'd asked that once that had taken place that we did something afterwards, stayed together, have a meal together. My intention was that she wasn't told this information then saw me get into a car and disappear, that we had time together... You know we had a nice time, we were together for 1 hour, 1 hour after telling her, afterwards there was support for her and so far it seems to be ok. So far it's gone reasonably well. Since then I've been charged, and the restrictions are more draconian so I can't even stay in the house with her but I have to.... have acceptance.'

Respondent 3 makes an important reference to acceptance. In Chapter 3 there is reference to the tendency of fathers who download IIOC to be less likely (in comparison to contact offenders) to try and deceive others about their offending (Elliott et al 2009). My data here reflected this. Acceptance of responsibility and guilt was a theme among the fathers' responses. It was evident that most took responsibility for their crimes. A good example of a response that evidences a father telling his child in a way that demonstrates taking responsibility was given by Respondent 9:

'I said "you've got to understand I'll be pleading guilty because I'm guilty of these crimes. I'm sorry for what I did and I'm going to try to make amends." And you know they were shocked initially.'

It is possible that the quote does not accurately represent the disclosure made. Assuming the quote is accurate, it seems likely that a child would understand the concept of guilt and being sorry. The data indicated that children had questions in relation to the father's offending, one example is included below:

Lisa: 'Did they have questions?'

Respondent 9: 'Yes: "Why this, that and the other?"...and I couldn't, I couldn't answer that.'

In my experience it is common for people who have committed sexual offences to find it difficult to explain their actions, particularly if they have only recently been arrested. The data indicates that fathers need to be prepared for difficult questions from their children.

In one case, following disclosure of the offences there was no more contact between the step mother, her partner (and father to the children) and the children. Respondent 10 recalled the disclosure of the offences to her step children, a boys aged 18, 16 and 14, and a girl aged 15.

'He sat them down and told them all, not the full ins and outs but he told them he had been arrested for downloading indecent images and he gave them the option if they wanted to stay for tea or if they wanted to go home then that was fine. They all chose to stay for tea... An hour later so it was about five o'clock we have a phone call from social services saying that you know to take the kids over to the ex-wife as soon as possible... from that to have no more contact with them, and he said, "Well I've just served them their tea, if it's all right if they have their tea," and they, well I think they said, "No, not really, but if you can get them to have their tea and get them back to their mum's as soon as possible then that will be ok." I think he got them back for half five and that was the last time we seen them.'

In this case it is evident that there was no collaboration between the family and children's services. The data highlights a sudden severance in the relationship between the children and their father following the disclosure, leaving them with no opportunity to ask questions or maintain the relationship if they wanted to.

The impact of disclosure

Once information has been given to a child it cannot be erased, the experience will be forever in the child's memory. In this chapter it has been established that the rationale for telling children about their fathers' offences varied. The person

delivering the information to the child and the method used also varied. It is difficult to compare and contrast the children's experiences as these will depend on so many factors, including their relationship with their father.

In Chapters 6 and 7 it has been established that, more often than not, parents reported that a father had a good relationship with his children prior to the discovery of the offence. When I asked Respondent 9 about the reaction from his adult children when he told them about the offences he commented:

'They were understanding and sympathetic, they know me, they know I'm not a threat, I'm not a risk to them or anyone else.'

I did not speak with Respondent 9's children and therefore it not possible to be certain what their reaction was. It is possible that they didn't feel able to be honest with him about their feelings. Respondent 9 also made reference to the direct risk to the child. His description of his children indicated that they are emotionally resilient. It is possible that their pre-existing resilience enabled them to cope with information about their father. It is also important to consider the potential for a child to feel uncomfortable in the presence of their father. When I asked Respondent 2 how she thought the information had affected her daughter she commented:

'She said, "I'm always a bit careful about what I wear, you know I don't wear short pyjamas and shorts and things like that. It's so difficult, you know, to reconcile your dad with someone who might be looking at you that way, it's so really, really difficult".'

For a child to think that their father might be looking at them, or other children, in a sexual manner is a significant impact. The data did not indicate that any thought had been given by any other parent to the fact that their child might worry that their father was looking at them in a sexual manner.

The data also illustrated how differently children might react. It is possible that those differences are related to previous experiences, gender, age and personality.

Respondent 3's account showed differences in how his son and daughter reacted below:

'On the day... my son, who's the elder one, didn't respond particularly, that's not unlike him. My eldest daughter was actually quite supportive, not so much in conversation, she gave me a long hug, after I told her.'

The quote above demonstrates that a parent would need to be prepared for a range of reactions from his children: they may not want to talk further, and alternatively they might be supportive. Respondent 3 also told me that his older daughter was initially supportive but later decided not to have contact with him. He also talked about his 12-year-old daughter, who didn't appear to want to talk about it further. He attributed her response to her coping strategy.

'Insofar as I could tell, she wanted to move on really. I think [she], doesn't dwell on things she finds uncomfortable or unpleasant, she moves on.'

It is possible that Respondent 3's daughter tends to cope with difficult issues by avoiding them. It is also possible that she was frightened and/or didn't know how to respond. The data suggested that it is important to consider what the child's pre-existing coping strategies are prior to disclosure. Some of the descriptions given by the parents indicated that their child(ren) were emotionally resilient. For example, Respondent 9 said of his daughter:

'She is always strong and... she is always involved in activities, which takes her mind off things.'

In this section I have presented findings in relation to the impact of disclosure. It has been established that disclosure of offences to children will affect their view about their parent. It is likely that children will respond in a variety of ways. The child's previous relationship with their father should be considered. It is also evident that there is balance with regard to communicating information about risk

and being sensitive to the child's needs. It has been established that parents should be prepared for the child's questions at the point of disclosure and later.

Support needed

During the interviews I invited parents to share their views regarding what support would have been helpful in relation to disclosure. The parents shared some pertinent ideas. Respondent 5 felt that a publication might be helpful.

'If you had a little three- or four-page thing with cartoon and sometimes, you know, parents might do something that isn't right and people will get worried about them and they want to learn and make sure you're safe and how do you know you're safe and talk around some of the stuff, you know. They had NSPCC thing, the kid exposing himself, the cartoon thing you could tap into that so the child has an awareness over what's appropriate and what's not appropriate, to give them an opportunity to say, you know, my dad makes me run naked around the house or, you know, that wouldn't happen but just to give the information in a child-friendly way to make all the links, to assess the child, you know, maybe give the child some exercises like colouring in to help them express how they feel.'

Respondent 5 also suggested some ideas regarding the best way to explain the offence to a child. His comments below link to social construction of sex offenders being 'bad' and the potential for this view to be passed to the child. The comment in relation to raising awareness that parents might pose a risk to their children is important. It is a concept that many parents might find difficult.

'I think age-appropriate material, primary secondary school age, you know as a commissioner that would be, you know something to leave them with and maybe an exercise for them to do and follow up, put some words down about how they feel, smiley face and sad face on there and what's important to the child, three important people in their life, things that they like doing the most, the things they are most scared of. Leaving

them with some time to think on their own, cos I think children are very malleable. If you tell them “daddy’s bad”, they believe daddy’s bad and become scared of daddy whereas “daddy has got problems, daddy needs to sort himself out” is a difficult statement to make to a child, they wouldn’t be as scared.’

The data above demonstrates the need for child-friendly materials to be used with children. The quote above illustrates that children will be given information about their parent which may be difficult to hear. The child also needs to be given information about the potential risk that their parent may present to them, or to other children. The quote above also evidences the need for professionals to engage with children to promote understanding of the risk in a manner that it is not frightening to them. Respondent 5 also made reference to his view that:

‘It’s not the child’s responsibility to keep themselves safe.’

This piece of data is important in terms of general risk management. The data did not evidence any established practice in relation to telling children about the abuse or the risks. Respondent 6 (a mother) commented:

‘I don’t know if there is support for us, you know, for when we needed to tell them. There must be people. Do they have a course for children the same as the partners one?’

The data above demonstrates that she was not aware of any resource available for children. While the Lucy Faithfull Foundation did provide assistance in relation to disclosure in one case, this was not common practice. There is no bespoke service for children who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC.

In my chapter below that focuses on Holly, I will discuss peer groups as being a potential source of resilience and support for the child from her perspective. Several of the parents in the study had concerns with regard to the possibility that if they disclosed to their child they might tell their friends. Respondent 6 expressed her concern below.

'I think a concern I would have is that they would confide in somebody that is untrustworthy.'

Respondent 7 also reflected on his own experiences of having disclosed to his peers. He comments below:

'Kids are weird and I have disclosed to quite a lot of people and the biggest concern is, are they going to tell somebody else, one of them did and his wife reacted very badly indeed. Even to the extent that she used it in divorce proceedings against him. So... if grown adults are going to behave like that... and there is an element of naivety and impulsiveness, especially in teenage years, yeah it only takes a falling out or you know.'

While it is important to note that children would need assistance and guidance with regard to who they choose to confide in, it is equally important that they are not made to feel that this is their secret to keep or something they should feel ashamed of. Respondent 2 had some reservations with regards to her children telling their friends:

'I think it's a difficult thing. It's one of the most difficult things a child could go through because I just think, they definitely feel different, you know this is something you don't talk about, it's something that doesn't happen to a lot of people. I guess for me I felt as though I had a network of support through Lucy Faithfull whereas they didn't... I know my youngest daughter has told one of her friends and only quite recently and that's only because I know the girl's parents quite well and I confided in them. Yeah it's very lonely for them to have to keep that secret you know, to frame it for their friends in terms of, you know, "Why don't you ever see your dad? Are you seeing your dad at Christmas?" It's very difficult to explain.'

Children will inevitably ask their friends about their family circumstances. Children talk to each other about home, holidays, birthdays, Christmas and other holiday

plans, as indicated by Respondent 2. It is important that professionals and families prepare children for such questions. In my view it is also important to acknowledge and validate the loneliness referred to by Respondent 2. The experience of children in families like those in the study is not a common one for families. The child is likely to need help constructing a narrative for themselves or others. There are no guidelines to help children navigate the difficult emotions they might experience and how to overcome them. Respondent 2 felt that being able to talk to her friends was a significant source of support for her daughter. Respondent 2 ensured that the parents of the children were also aware, which enables support to be in place for them too. Children who were regular visitors to the family home are likely to experience a range of emotions and perhaps fear that the friend's father was looking at them in sexual way.

This chapter has revealed that disclosing the arrest and offending behaviour of a parent to a child poses a wide range of challenges. The data showed a variety of responses by the parents in relation to their feelings and experience of disclosing details of the offences to their child(ren). Some parents had not told their child(ren) anything because they felt that they were too young to understand. All parents stated that they thought their child would need to know something about the offending behaviour. Many fears and concerns were identified in the interviews with parents. The fears included: fear of being rejected by their child, fear of not knowing what to say, not knowing when the right age would be, the child's level of maturity and sexual knowledge, not wanting to frighten their child and not knowing what terminology to use. As established in the literature review, there is no established coping ritual or template for families to draw upon in these circumstances. The support for families in relation to the disclosing to children is limited. Respondent 3 was the only respondent who had told his child about the offence in a manner that had been supported by a professional and in collaboration with his estranged wife. While their experience indicated some evidence of promising emerging practice, this was the only time intervention with children was mentioned.

This chapter has generated some insights regarding what information a child may or may not be given. In the next chapter I will explore the experience of the only child respondent in this study.

Chapter 9 Holly's story

Introduction

In this chapter I will explore and analyse the responses of the young person I interviewed in relation to this study, who I refer to as Holly. In the methodology chapter I have set out the reasons why there is only one young person in this study. Holly's mother, referred to as Respondent 2, also participated in this study. Holly was able to give a unique insight into the journey of the child when a parent is arrested. Holly was not present when the police arrived to search the family home but her younger sister was. During the interview she told me about her experience of her father before and after the offence. Holly had no previous experience of children's services and was able to give her views regarding the service she received and what would have been helpful to her.

Holly presented as a remarkably grounded and articulate young person. In the interview it was evident that the impact on her mother was the most distressing and challenging outcome of her father's offending for Holly. The data suggests that there was little focus on the support needed by the mother. Holly's reference to the impact on her mother is an important consideration for future guidance for professionals regarding how they can best support affected families.

In this chapter I will present my findings from the interview with Holly using the following subheadings:

- Holly's relationship with her father
- A new reality: making sense of the offences
- Holly's experience of the impact on her mother
- The impact on sibling relationships
- Emotional and educational resilience
- Holly's experience of the professionals
- Holly's advice for professionals
- Summary

Holly's relationship with her father

As discussed in the literature review, there is evidence to suggest that a proportion of people who download IIOC will have already abused a child (Bourke and Hernandez 2009). It is important, therefore, that professionals are aware of the possibility that a child whose parent has downloaded IIOC may have been abused by their parent. The abuse could have taken the form of contact abuse, the child being exposed to the images, or the parent taking indecent images of their child or other children known to the child. While interviewing Holly I was aware that it was possible that Holly had been abused, groomed or manipulated by her father. While I was completing the interview I was prepared for the fact that Holly may disclose abuse from her father. I was also prepared for Holly to give a positive account of her father. As discussed in the methodology chapter, one of the benefits of completing insider research is that I am trained in and have extensive experience of working with families where there is known or suspected child sexual abuse. In my professional experience of working with children I have often found that children will give a generous account of their experiences of their parent even when abuse is proven to have occurred.

Holly presented as giving a balanced view of her father. She was able to look back on her experience and give examples of him being an 'ordinary' father. She was able to articulate her feelings after observing her friends' relationships with their fathers and commented that there was little difference between her relationship with her father and theirs. When I asked Holly about her relationship with her father before the offence came to light it was evident from her instantaneous and fluent responses that she had given this consideration. She gave a nod in acknowledgement and expectation of the question before proceeding to give the following response:

'He was jokey and quite like... yeah it's really weird because he seems like a completely normal person, like my relationship with him, like the relationships I see with my friends and their dads, is like now it was the same.'

The use of the word 'normal' is important. As discussed in previous chapters, denial is common in families who are affected by sexual abuse (Salter 1995). While Holly did not deny her father had offended in the way he had, it was evident that she found it difficult to assimilate the meaning of the offence with her experience of her 'normal' father and experienced this as 'weird'. At this point in the interview Holly's expression of confusion and disbelief provided an indication that she wanted some validation for her feeling that her relationship with her father was 'normal'. As a researcher it would have been inappropriate for me to offer her reassurance. It was difficult not to provide Holly with the validation of her feelings that she so clearly wanted and seemingly had not been provided with. In light of the fact that I only met Holly once, it is likely she had thoughts and feelings about her father's offending that she felt unable to discuss with me. I wanted to ensure that Holly only shared information that she felt comfortable to share and therefore I did not place any pressure on her to give more information than she was happy to give.

Given that her father had been looking at sexual images of children it is possible that Holly had questioned her father's behaviour and his thoughts toward her as a result of the offence. In Chapter 8 I have included a comment by Holly's mother where she indicates that Holly is more aware of the clothes she wears when she is around her father. It is possible that she feared he has perceived her in a sexual way. However, these issues require further research. Holly did tell me about an occasion when her mother joked about her father's sexual offending as detailed in the quote below:

'She'll say weird stuff, like inappropriate jokes like, in front of my sister, like she'll make a joke about his offence or something... Like my sister had like a concert thing at the school and my mum was worried my dad would turn up and like she was making jokes, like, about he came one year, he came to a concert or something and he was videoing it when he wasn't meant to be, it was a place where you weren't mean to video, and mum was making jokes like, "Oh we don't want him to come, he might video up the girls' skirts and stuff". and I was like, ok, that was a bit unnecessary and not funny, it

was just awkward. I mean, like, it was my sister's Christmas concert that she is doing at school and I was just, like "Why did you say that? You didn't need to say that".'

Perhaps Holly's mother's remark was a result of coping with anxiety but it was clearly uncomfortable for the children and unnecessary for them to hear. In Chapter 11 recommendations will be presented. It is possible that the family would have benefitted from individual and group counselling and/or therapy to help them cope with the personal impact and also how they communicate their worries and concerns to each other. Furthermore, guidance for parents should include advice for coping with negative emotions about their current or ex-partner and information regarding how the child might experience negative comments. Holly's sister was experiencing the loss of her father at her Christmas concert and then also experienced her mother making inappropriate remarks.

Holly's account provides evidence of the importance of professionals being aware that some children of offenders who have been convicted of downloading IIOC will find it difficult to assimilate the information that their father has looked at sexualised images of children, placing this in context with their experience of their father. It is likely that the child will need time to process any information that they are given to enable them to make sense of it. Giving too much information too quickly, or trying to pressurise young people to accept information about their parent, is likely to further entrench denial, as discussed in previous chapters. It is also important that professionals are aware that some children in these circumstances will have had positive experiences of their father. I asked Holly to tell me about some shared experiences with her father.

'He used to take me out on his motorbike. We used to go on dog walks and stuff.'

Holly reflected fondly with regard to her memories of her father. It was evident that Holly experienced her father as taking a firm parental role. She experienced him as pressuring her to succeed at school. Holly's account of her father resonates with some of the accounts given by fathers when they were asked about their

relationships with their children. She gave the impression that her father had strengths and was often good company however she was also able to reflect on his flaws.

As illustrated in the quote below, Holly was able to recognise her father's flaws. She reflected on past behaviour which could indicate abusive behaviour. During the interview Holly presented as giving an unbiased view of her father.

'He was quite like, with school work, he was very strict on and if I was like, did badly in anything I got a massive telling off for it basically... He was quite charming, he had friends... Everyone he met he got quite friendly with them quickly, he won people over very easily I think, but he was also quite controlling, you would only see it at certain times but he was quite controlling, he liked things to be a certain way... I think she [mum] felt a bit overshadowed by him maybe because she felt like she had to support him, like they were my parents and I think she felt quite controlled by him and I think I felt that as well, because my mum would be like backing him up but he would be the main person who would be telling me what to do.'

Holly's comments above illustrate that she is willing to reflect on negative aspects of her father's behaviour, which could suggest that she would be more likely to disclose if she had experienced abuse. However, research is needed with regard to what might indicate a child would disclose in these circumstances.

All the children connected to the study experienced loss in various forms. In this section I will explore the loss experienced by Holly as a result of her father's offending. In Holly's case it was evident that the losses were multiple: she lost her mother as she had previously known her, she lost her immediate family as she had previously known it and also regular contact with her extended family. Holly's experience of celebrations changed, for example Christmas and birthdays, she also lost direct contact with her father. These losses will be explored further throughout the chapter, starting with the loss of contact.

At the time of my interview with Holly, she was not having any direct contact with her father. The interviews with Holly and her mother revealed that contact was supervised by the paternal family in the first instance. It became apparent that the paternal family did not take the risk to children presented by Holly's father to be serious and therefore children's services did not consider them to be appropriate contact supervisors. As a consequence, Holly experienced the literal loss of contact with her father and also her paternal extended family. I asked Holly about the current contact arrangements and she gave the following response:

'I text him maybe, like, it varies, sometimes he's quite on it with texting and he'll text me like two or three times a week and then I won't hear from him for two or three weeks or something and he calls, he actually called me yesterday but he more calls me around like Christmas time to see like what I'm doing and what ideas to give him for Christmas and stuff like that. He calls me more around this time of year but normally it's only like twice a month or something that I call him, but I don't, I don't... Last time I saw him, like, not ages ago, maybe in summer, yeah I think in summer. It was either late summer or early September.'

Holly's reference to Christmas is important. Celebrations and rituals including Christmas are highly likely to change for young people who have a parent who has been convicted for downloading IIOC. Such celebrations are important markers in a child's development and in the formulation of the sense of identity. Holly was clearly distressed at not only losing contact with her father at these times but also with her extended family, as demonstrated in the quote below:

'This is where it gets complicated, basically my aunty texted me the other week saying, like oh "are you coming up for Christmas? We want to see you." And I really want to see them because I really like them, because they live up there and he lives with them and if I don't see them we don't see that side of the family, and I want to see my grandparents and my aunty and my cousins.'

I did not have access to information regarding Holly's extended family and the views they expressed to professionals and therefore cannot comment on the necessity of the severance of contact. However, the impact of the loss remains. It is also possible that more could have been done to help the extended family understand the risk. I asked Holly to give me her understanding of the reasons why she was not permitted to have contact with her father at the paternal family home. It was evident that she had been given an explanation as follows:

'My understanding is that... it's something like the police or child's services aren't happy with the supervision my aunty gives or something.'

The quote demonstrates that Holly had been given some information that is likely to be accurate. When I listened back to the recorded interview I noticed the emphasis on the word 'supervision' and a slight inflection in tone which could have indicated that Holly was unsure what supervision meant in practice.

Holly added:

'They need someone to be like a supervisor and my aunty is apparently (this is all coming from my mum) is in denial, thinks that there shouldn't be any supervision at all, so they don't think she's suitable because she's not taking it seriously so they won't let us go up.'

The data above illustrates the complexity of the flow of information when a parent downloads IIOC.

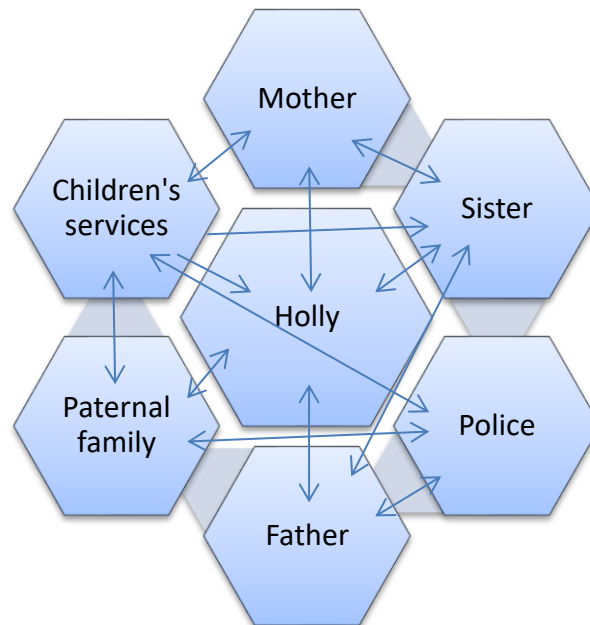
It is evident that the term 'denial' has been introduced by a professional. However, it does not appear that this concept has been absorbed in a manner which enables Holly to understand its application or relevance in terms of risk management. Holly said the word denial in a similar tone as to one which might be made in combination with making quotation marks with her fingers. Her use of the word 'apparently' verbally underscored Holly's suspicion that it was an inaccurate assessment. It is possible that Holly's aunty accepted that her brother

had offended, but might not feel that he presented a risk to Holly and her sister. The quote above also draws attention to the dynamics between Holly and her mother. Despite Holly's statement that she believed her mother's account, her tone indicated that she did not wholly believe her mother. Holly's father denies the problem to Holly entirely and blames Holly's mother. During the interview with Holly's mother it was apparent that Holly's mother felt that she was blamed. Holly said:

'Well they're [children's services] not happy for me to go up so she's [Holly's mother] not happy for me to go up. But my dad's like "no there's no problem". He says to me the other week "everyone up here is up, there isn't a problem, it's just our mum saying you can't go up". So I'm hearing different things from different sides. I believe my mum more because I think my dad has a tendency to brush things over. Be like "it's fine, don't worry about it". But it is confusing because I would like to go up.'

The quote also reveals the opportunity to control the narrative surrounding risk and supervision requirements received by the child. The quote demonstrates how the narrative can become distorted and manipulated. By telling her that there isn't a problem, Holly's father places her in the difficult position of not knowing who to believe. The data reveals that in circumstances like these, children like Holly and her sister can become confused because they don't know who to believe. It demonstrates how the interaction between the people surrounding the child contributes to the level of harm experienced by the child. The quote demonstrates the importance of the necessity of very clear communication. This data links back to symbolic interactionism; the emotional harm caused to Holly in this scenario relates to how each other person interprets the information and how they then interact with Holly. The diagram below provides a visual representation of how each person interacts with Holly. The diagram also provides a stark representation of the absence of communication between the professionals, Holly's maternal family and her father.

Figure 3 Communication flow



This diagram illustrates Holly as being in the middle of the interaction. A child-centred approach would ensure Holly is protected from difficult dynamics. In addition to the loss of contact with her father and her extended family, Holly also lost the father she thought that she knew when the offences came to light. In the next section I will explore how Holly was told about the offences and how she made sense of the information.

A new reality: making sense of the offences

In the previous chapter I have explored in detail the accounts of the adults relating to what, if anything, the child is told about the offences. Holly told me that she thought the information was given to her in a gradual way. Holly felt that this was the best method for her. She comments further below.

'I can't remember how I got told because it was quite gradual. I got told he was in contact with people that were making indecent films and stuff and he, apparently... I was told he wasn't involved in the actual making of anything, he never did anything in person, it was all online

but he had indecent images of... and, yeah, and was in contact with people like that.'

Holly appeared relatively confident talking about the offences and what she had been told. In the quote above she wanted to make the distinction between offending online and offending in person. It is possible that Holly would have found information to suggest that her father had committed a contact sexual offence harder to absorb.

In some cases the parents told an older child before the young siblings. The evidence indicated that this would alter the dynamics between the siblings and between the child who was aware of the offence and their parent, as can be seen in the quote below.

*'My sister didn't find out for a while. She thought he imported illegal wine or something [laughs]. But I remember thinking, I feel, I feel like it was me and my mum looking after my sister. Then I felt like a lot of the time, I felt like I was looking after my mum. I felt like my dad was the least of my worries. Because he was like off up *Awayville, I wasn't really thinking about what was going on with him, I was thinking about what was going on like in my house. So I was more worried about my sister and my mum than what he was doing.'*

It is possible that Holly's inability to recall the initial disclosure indicates that she has blocked out the experience or she didn't want to talk about it at that stage of the interview. It is evident that the disclosure affected Holly's relationship with both her mother and her sister and therefore demonstrates the significance of disclosure as an important life event. Holly seemed to want to separate her father from those who make the indecent images. Therefore, the quote links with discussion in the literature review regarding stigma attached to contact sex offenders. I asked Holly to tell me how she has made sense of what her father did, she gave the following response:

'I don't really make sense of what my dad did and I don't think that I can. I don't think anyone in my position could properly make sense of it because it's just like you can't like think about it too much because otherwise you'll just stress yourself out. I don't feel in danger or threatened or upset because I just put it to the back of my mind.'

Holly makes an important point with regard to not being able to make sense of what has happened. It could be said that she is unique in this regard, as in my professional experience of working with families affected by abuse, most people will try to create a narrative to help them make sense of the behaviour. Salter (1995) also references the different forms of denial that direct victims attempt to provide alternative explanations for the abuse they endured. In my experience, people who have a loved one or family member who commits a sexual offence go through a similar process to that of grief. The ways in which families can attempt to make sense of the behaviour vary; in some cases people attempt to attribute the person's behaviour to poor mental health, alcohol or drug abuse, stress, relationship breakdown, addiction or a mistake that would never be repeated. Holly appears to have contextualised the information in relation to the danger to herself and she concluded that she does not feel as though she in danger. Holly demonstrates emotional resilience by separating the event to a portion of her life, she has not allowed it to become a dominant part of her identity. She also told me about how she compartmentalised her perception of her father after they spoke about what happened, as detailed below:

'I think it was partly to do with him being charming, he still just had that, so when I see him, it's very really normal. I said this to my mum before, I like separate... I kind of like separate the two ideas of him, like I know that he is a registered sex offender and there's all like these bad things that have happened because of him and like, I know that but there is part of me that is like, we get on, like our personalities get on quite well. I... tend to just put that to one side. Like when I do see him it's only for a few hours at a time so I don't get a chance to like worry about or think too much about it because we're

normally somewhere like London where there are distractions and it's like it's fine when I see him.'

Holly refers to her father as a registered sex offender. It is interesting that she is comfortable using this term. It is possible that she is stating the fact. She makes an interesting point in relation to activity-based contact. It is evident that Holly finds activity-based contact with her father easier to cope with. The data also illustrates that Holly is aware of her father's status as a sex offender however this does not erase her identity as his child or her relationship with him.

When I asked Holly to tell me about when her dad talked to her about what he had done, she gave the following response:

'I remember, well, he he's very like, he likes to brush stuff over, he likes to pretend like nothing has really happened.'

This quote provided the catalyst for consideration of the range of possible responses and resulting dynamics when a child discovers their parent has downloaded IIOC. There are challenges for all concerned in knowing the best way to approach this situation. In Holly's case, initially she didn't want to see her father.

'My sister saw him before me because when he did it I was like, ok, I don't want to see him any more, so I went. He came down to see my sister and I didn't want to see him so I went to stay with my grandparents, which are his parents, and, yeah, so I didn't see him then and I saw him a lot later than my sister.'

Adolescent and first born children in circumstances similar to Holly are likely to require a different type of support from much younger children. They are more likely to want to contribute to decisions about contact. Holly told me that her father wrote to her when she refused contact.

'He used to write letters to me saying, like, "I'm really sorry".'

The evidence suggested that both Holly and her father avoided talking about what happened. The account Holly gives below of being forced to talk to her father indicates that her choices were removed from her. While children who talked to their parent did seem to respond well to the disclosure, it is important that they are given a choice and not forced. It was clear from the quote below that Holly felt very uncomfortable.

'I remember going to my grandparents and my grandpa, like, shut us in a room together to like talk about it and I was like "oh my god this is so weird". I wasn't really ready to have that conversation yet but I think my grandpa was like my dad, so, like brush things over like, "you just need to like talk to each other for like five minutes and then it's fine". He literally just sat us down and then left us to talk and I just kind of let him speak and I was like, "yeah, ok" and like I said, he didn't really address it.'

As can be seen below, Holly did have the opportunity to ask questions. She makes an interesting point regarding not wanting to taint her view of her father.

'He asked me if I had any questions but I didn't ask anything. Like I said about having two different images of him – I didn't want them to like clash. Speaking to him about what he actually did is kind of like stressful because they kind of like come together when I do that so I tend not to do that.'

During the interviews with Holly and her mother, there were mixed messages in relation to the risk posed to Holly from her father. I asked Holly what risk she believed her father to present. She replied:

'I never feel threatened like I'm in danger but obviously I don't know the whole depth of what happened.'

Holly's reference to danger is important in terms of how concepts of risk are understood by children and parents when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC. The word danger denotes an imminent and tangible event. However, sexual

abuse is a process whereby the victim does not always feel threatened or in danger. Finkelhor (1984) created the preconditions model. He stipulates that in order for sexual abuse to happen, four preconditions have to be in place. The offender has to be motivated. The second step is overcoming internal inhibitors: many offenders know that sexual abuse of children is wrong and therefore they have to overcome any internal inhibitions using cognitive distortions, for example telling themselves the child enjoys the abuse. The third step is the removal of any external impediments, for example any protective carers (usually a parent). Perpetrators of abuse remove protective carers by gaining trust or instilling fear. The fourth step is overcoming any resistance from the child. Perpetrators of sexual abuse groom and manipulate children, which can result in the child not feeling as if they are in danger. The perpetrator might reassure the child that they love them and the abuse is an expression of love. They might bribe or persuade them to engage in the abuse, to keep secrets. They make children feel special and corrupt their view of sex and relationships. In terms of enabling those at risk of sexual abuse to spot signs that their parent is trying to groom or manipulate them, it is important that professionals are able to promote awareness of the process of grooming. Holly's reference to not knowing the full depth of what happened represents openness to being given information that could enhance her understanding of risk. Holly's willingness to consider the potential for further risk is an important indication of resilience.

In this section Holly's account demonstrates the experience of loss a child might experience. A child who has a parent who downloads IIOC encounters the loss of the parent they thought they knew. It might be difficult for them to reconcile information they receive about the offence with their experience of their father. The data also raises an important point about children and the concept of risk and danger. Children may not feel that they are in danger from their parents. It is likely that children in these circumstances would benefit from information which would help them to understand the process of abuse. Having explored the impact on Holly's relationship with her father, I will now explore Holly's experience of the impact on her mother.

Holly's experience of the impact on her mother

When I started this research I had not considered in detail how the impact on mothers would subsequently affect the children. Prior to meeting Holly, my priority would have been to focus on the impact of the father's behaviour, as he was the one responsible for causing the damage to the family. It is important to note that mothers are not responsible for their current or ex partners' behaviour. However, from a child-focused perspective it is important for professionals to focus on how professionals themselves can support mothers.

From the outset of the interview with Holly, the significance of the impact on her mother quickly became evident.

'I felt like I was looking after my mum. I felt like my dad was the least of my worries.'

This quote captures the essence of Holly's description of her experience. Her father had moved out of the county where Holly lived. According to Holly's mother, he moved to prevent any local media attention. The quote serves to illustrate that it is children's immediate reality that is most likely to affect them. As noted in the literature review, there are number of factors which play a role in the child's ability to process information about their father's offending, including their age, maturity, life experiences, resilience and personality. It is also known that the part of the brain responsible for thinking about consequences for the future, the prefrontal cortex, is not yet fully developed in children and teenagers and therefore they are vulnerable to making impulsive decisions (Johnson et al 2009). The evidence would suggest that children are likely to need help and assistance to cope with their difficult circumstances.

When interviewing Holly, there was greater trauma evident in her description of the impact on her mother in comparison to when she talked about her father. Holly's eyes were wide and the tone of her speech indicated that what she observed was shocking to her. The quote below illustrates how Holly was exposed to her mother's difficulty in coping with the trauma evoked by the discovery of her partner's offending.

'Well she was very... well, she's since told me all these horrible things she used to think and she told me that she tried to commit suicide one time by walking in front of a bus and she had a bit of a breakdown in a shopping centre. I, I didn't see that but I knew that something was seriously up because she was massively up and down and she... I remember one time she was just crying uncontrollably and my sister was upstairs and I was the only one up with my mum and she was just like hysterical and I had to call my grandparents because I didn't know what to do.'

Like several of the families in this study the grandparents were an important resource. Holly did not cry but her distress in recounting this event was evident. At this juncture I was aware to maintain my role as researcher and not move into the role of helper. It was important to the integrity of the research that I did not lead Holly to any particular response, however by doing so it appeared I gave Holly the message that I did not understand the gravity of what she was describing, as she seemed to want to persuade me as to the seriousness of what happened. Holly went on to give more details and repeated the need to call her grandparents. Holly's description reiterates the need to explore the support network available to the non-offending parent. Like many of the other participants, Holly's family drew on the support of the extended family. Holly wanted to provide additional clarity regarding how desperate the situation was at home:

'She was like... it... wasn't just like a little cry and I could leave her to it. I was like really scared, like, saying things like she didn't want to be here, so I felt like I had to call my grandparents to come over which they did and she calmed down. But there's been times like that when she just been so hysterical that I feel like I have to look after my sister because I don't feel like my mum was fit to look after my sister.'

In light of her ability to continue with her education and to support her mother and sister, it is evident that Holly is clearly a resilient child; she described being able to control her own emotions when her mother seemingly couldn't. Holly was 14 at the point of her father's arrest, with the support of local grandparents. Many

children in her situation would not be so well resourced and therefore her disclosures provide an important indication of what professionals should be doing to support children in situations like Holly's. The impact on the relationship between Holly and her mother was clear throughout the interview. The following quote illustrates the impact on the dynamics between Holly and her mother:

'I find it hard as well because a lot of the time I was like looking after her, sometimes I would like cook dinner and stuff. Not like big things but I would like cook dinner or stay up with her if she was really upset. So I feel like it's difficult for her to gain the authority back.'

In this section I have offered my analysis of Holly's experience of her mother. The data has shown that the child is likely to live with their mother after the offence is discovered. It has also shown that the mother may experience difficulty coping and may need support, but that she may not present as needing help or assistance. It is important for parents and professionals to consider whether the mother was experiencing difficulty coping. Grandparents, extended family, close friends or neighbours are possible source of help in these circumstances. It is evident that the offence is likely to affect the relationship between mother and child. The data also showed that the discovery of the offences is likely to impact on the relationship between siblings, and this will be the focus of the next section.

The impact on sibling relationships

It was evident that Holly was emotionally close to her sister before and after the offence. The offence changed the nature of their relationship. Holly reported feeling responsible for her sister because she had lost faith in her mother's ability to care for them. Holly did not appear to resent her sister, she described her in the following way:

'She's really like happy and like easy going and jokey and we've got the same sense of humour. But then she she's also very nervous, she worries a lot, she's quite like my mum in that she

worries a lot. Like she grinds her jaw. Her and my mum both do that.'

The impact on sibling dynamics has been raised in Chapters 6 and 7. Holly likened her sister to her mother, perhaps reinforcing her view that they both needed to be cared for:

'I'm much more easy going than either of them. They're quite... they worry about a lot of stuff. Like my sister, she would pick up, I feel like she may have had some kind of anxiety or something, she would focus on something, like turn it over in her mind and like fixate on it.'

The quote also illustrates the importance of Holly's internal resilience and her view that she is capable of coping. Her comments illustrate the importance of professionals ensuring that they enable young people to focus on their strength. Holly also made some important points in relation to the danger of not giving young people enough information to help them contextualise what their parent had done. In the quote below, she gives an example of her sister fearing that she would be investigated by the police.

'One time after what had happened with my dad, her and her friend, like, wrote on someone's Facebook, you know how like little kids find out someone's password and then, like, write some embarrassing message and then, because of what happened with my dad, she thought the police were going to get involved and like arrest her and she had done something awful, like the same severity of my dad. She thought it was on the same level for some reason and she got really panicked and worried. Yeah she's got a lot better now but she still worries a lot.'

This quote provides a good example of how the interplay between how the offence, the response to the offence and the information given to the child can contribute to the impact. Holly's sister had understood the offence in a manner

which led her to feel anxious and confused about social media and the law. Holly's sister had subsequently become fearful in her own use of social media. As stated in the literature review, the vast majority of children in the United Kingdom have an online presence. For those children who have a parent who has been convicted of an online offence it is likely that the impact will extend to the child's experience of using the internet.

While Holly did not express any fears in relation to her use of the internet, she did report feeling anxious about leaving the family home due to worrying about her sister. She said:

'She always says she doesn't want me to go to uni because she says mum can be quite difficult to cope with.'

Emotional and educational resilience

As explored in the literature review, there are different types of resilience; one of those is educational resilience. Educational resilience refers to a young person's capacity to achieve academically despite being faced with trauma and adversity. It has been suggested that contributing factors to a child being able to succeed academically in the face of trauma relate to their basic needs being met, for example having been nourished and clothed to a good enough standard, having good peer relationships, having trusted adults outside the family home and also having the equipment they need for school (Hart, Blincow and Thomas 2007).

While Holly's mother experienced difficulty coping, she did ensure her children's basic needs were met and therefore Holly was provided with the tools she needed to attend school. Holly also had good relationships with her peers. The evidence suggested that Holly derived a strong sense of identity from being successful at school. She told me that her father put her under pressure to achieve academically. She had been assessed as a gifted child. Holly did not report any disruption to her education following her discovery of her father's offending. Education seemed to provide a source of stability and consistency for her. Each

child needs to be assessed on an individual basis, however it is possible that continuing to attend school in the aftermath of offences is positive for children. Holly was studying for her 'A' levels at the time of the interview. She was committed and balanced in her approach to ensuring her success, as can be seen in her response below when I asked her if she was studying her 'A' levels at the same school she did her GCSEs.

'I didn't want a lot of disruption going to another school... Yeah, just going from GCSE to 'A' level was difficult enough without having to move school in my head.'

Holly reported wanting to go to university, however she didn't want to be far from home. She was worried about leaving her sister. As mentioned previously, she reported that her sister didn't want to be left with their mother owing to the impact the offence had had on her.

Schoon (2006:16) argues that the term 'resilient' should not be used as an adjective for individuals. She argues that using the term to describe individuals carries the risk of blaming victims as it puts the onus of responsibility on them to cope with their experience in a particular way. Schoon (2006) suggests that resilience is better understood in relation to the dynamics between the person and their environment. Holly's home environment was stressful but she was able to confide in friends and seek external support. There are many factors which contribute to a young person's emotional resilience, including emotional intelligence. As stated previously, Holly presented as having high levels of resilience in many respects, for example she gave an insightful account of the impact on the family and her views about relationships and she continues to succeed at school. During the interviews it was evident that Holly was an emotionally intelligent young person. When exploring the impact of the discovery of her father's offending she commented below on experiencing isolation.

'Well it shocked me. Obviously I never thought he would and it was always like really weird because when you hear about other stories that's not similar to mine but when people actually have been sexually

abused themselves, it's weird but I'm in the same kind of category. Obviously not as severe but I have been affected by it but it doesn't feel like I have been.'

Holly makes an important observation in terms of not having a category to subscribe to. There is no dominant discourse with regard to young people who have parents who have downloaded IIOC. Potentially this could be an isolating experience for a child in Holly's position. There are no online resources for such children. Holly, however, is very grounded in her analysis of how she has been affected. There is a theme in her commentary about the impact on her. She acknowledges impact however she does not appear consumed by it. In the comment below Holly presents a positive view of herself and her ability to cope.

'I don't mean to sound big headed but I feel like I've coped quite well with it. I said to my mum "it's weird I feel happier now with him not here than I did when he was there".'

Holly states that she is happier now. There are many possibilities regarding why Holly is happier without her father living with them. It is possible that her parents didn't have a happy marriage. Holly acknowledged earlier in the interview that her father was controlling. It is also possible that her father was abusive in other ways. Upon reflection I would have liked to explore Holly's response in more detail.

During discussion regarding the impact of the offences on her, Holly expressed concern about the future. We discussed relationships. Holly made the following comments:

'I can't remember who said it that you always look for a boy that's like your dad and then it's like, well, I hope not!'

It is possible that future relationships would be a concern for other young people in the same position as Holly. For other young people it may not be a concern that they consciously acknowledge. In some cases it is possible that there would be a risk that they would have abusive relationships. In addition to specialist therapy, policy changes and further guidance for professionals and families should include

assessment with regard to the impact on relationships to explore and address this risk.

Holly's mother felt that Holly took an interest in psychology because she wanted to understand her father's behaviour. Holly did not make reference to her father when talking about her college or 'A' level course but she did talk about analysis of her own psychological profile, as can be seen in the quote below.

'I think it's like, we did this like thing in psychology like this love quiz thing... I think I got insecure avoidant... I would find it hard to fully trust someone, I hope that's not the case. I haven't like had a proper boyfriend like I could compare it to really but I don't know if that is maybe to do with what my dad did and I find it hard to get close to someone like that. I guess I'll find out. I don't know.'

Holly refers to her attachment style. Attachment theorists would suggest that Holly's attachment style was already formed before the discovery of her father's offending. Attachment style may be an important factor regarding how a child copes with the discovery of a parent's offending, however further research is needed in this regard. Holly is open to the possibility that what her father did has had an impact on her ability to form and maintain relationships. In my view Holly and other young people in her position would benefit from support and guidance with regard to relationships. A source of strength for Holly related to her relationships with her friends.

The importance of friendship

Many, but not all, children confide in their friends, share experiences and connect with each other in a way they are not able to do with adults. Holly told me that she disclosed what had happened to her friends. She said:

'They all reacted very shocked, they, I feel like they would have been more shocked if they knew my dad better but they didn't and I feel like if they knew

my dad well enough they would have been more shocked. But they [were] really nice about it.'

Holly's commented there was no 'category' for what she had experienced, which links to the fact that there is no established template for coping in a situation like hers. Holly wanted to tell her friends about her father's offending as she felt that they too would find it shocking. Holly's experience of her friends' shock helped her to feel validated in her own reaction to her father's offending. The availability of peer support is an important potential source of strength for young people and therefore it should form part of assessment with young people in a similar position to Holly. While peer support may be a potential source of strength it is also important to note that there are risks to telling people about offences of a sexual nature. It is possible the young person receiving the information may experience difficulty coping with the information and therefore need support of their own. It is also important that the child of the offender is prepared for the fact that other young people might not know what to say in response to hearing the information. In addition, the young person receiving the information might tell other children, which could result in bullying and isolation. The parents of the potential peer supporter may object to the information being given to the child. Furthermore, the offending and non-offending parents may object to their child sharing information. Parents in the study said that they were against the idea of telling friends about the offences. Holly also said that her mother objected:

'My mum was like, "don't tell your friends". She was very against the idea of me telling my friends... but I really wanted to. She thought that they would, like, judge. She said she thinks they would judge me or something but I genuinely didn't feel like that at all. When I told them they asked questions about it but I don't mind answering them, it's not like... I feel like I'm quite open about it so if someone asks me a question, I don't, it's not difficult for me, there's no part of what I know that I wouldn't feel comfortable telling them.'

The quote demonstrates Holly's confidence in her friendships. In terms of helping her recognise her own strength and capacity to make good decisions it is positive

that she was able to make these decisions. Reflecting on her disclosures and demeanour, I consider that Holly was clear in her mind that she had not done anything wrong. In the quote below Holly also makes an important point about relatedness.

Lisa: 'What do you put that down to, the fact that you feel quite confident about talking about it?'

Holly: 'I don't know really. I feel like, I don't know, I feel like I can relate to a lot of people about it, like I feel like it allows me to put things into perspective.'

Holly's reference to relatedness and putting things into perspective is important. As mentioned previously, Holly has not permitted her father's offending to dominate her sense of identity. After the interviews, however, I considered that Holly and possibly other children connected to the study were not aware of the full consequences, for example, if any of the children in this study decided as an adult to apply for a job requiring a high level of security clearance, their father's offending could be revealed as part of the application process. Furthermore, if the children in this study had children or wanted to adopt children, it is possible their father's offending would be revealed. Professionals may be best placed to explain these consequences to children. A portion of the interview focused on Holly's experience of professionals, which will be discussed in the next section.

Holly's experience of professionals

As stated in the opening section, Holly had no previous experience of children's services. Following the offence, she had contact with several professionals including a counsellor and a social worker. When I spoke to her about her experience of children's services she gave the following response:

'I remember this woman came to our house one time to speak to me and my sister individually but it wasn't like... she just spoke about like childhood, what the relationship was like then,

and I think it was more a routine thing, they had to bring someone round to check everything was ok and me and my sister were ok.'

Holly omits the use of the word social worker. It is possible that Holly didn't realise that it was a social worker, alternatively it could be that Holly's detachment from the term is linked to her preference for avoiding the reality of the nature of the meeting by referring to her as 'this woman'. Holly describes the meeting as routine. It is also possible that Holly's perception of her experience is linked to the practice of the social worker and her mother's explanation for the visit. Holly may have experienced the meeting differently if the social worker had been alarmist or derogatory in her conduct of the meeting. I asked Holly if there had been any follow up meetings; she described a recent telephone call:

'I spoke to someone on the phone recently, a couple of months ago. So, my grandpa did something, my grandpa, everything was fine in terms of going up to see my dad but then my grandpa [coughs] went to the police or said something like, I don't know: "why do we have to have all these precautions? I don't know why someone has to supervise. I don't know why there always has to be someone else there. He's not really done much wrong?" and that sent big alarm bells about the police that he obviously doesn't grasp the situation properly and then someone called to speak to me and my sister to explain what had happened and then they explained what had happened and they said that my grandpa wasn't taking things seriously and I think from that point on, they kind of lost faith in my dad's family so it makes it more difficult for me and my sister to go up there because they don't feel like anyone is taking it seriously so then, yeah, so then we're not allowed to go up. So that's the only contact we've had with them.'

It is evident from the description above that Holly has been given a good explanation of what happened. It is positive that the social worker supported

Holly's mother by explaining to Holly directly what was happening and why. Holly has a clear understanding of why the contact had to be supervised. Holly presented as feeling powerless to influence the family dynamics. These feelings will be explored in more detail in the next section. Holly's mother told me she felt concerned about being blamed for the lack of contact between Holly and the extended paternal family and therefore asked the social worker to telephone Holly. Not all parents would ask the social worker to support them in this way and therefore, in my view, it would be important for the social worker to offer to do so.

Holly did have some help and support organised by her mother, as referenced below, with a generic counsellor. It is positive that she was able to access this help, however the counsellor was not in a position to give specific guidance regarding her situation. It is likely that they did not have specialist training in this area.

'I had counselling at some point and that was just like where I spoke about school and stuff so if I had any other problems, we would speak about my dad and what was happening at home but we spoke about other stuff like school to try and get other weights off my mind as well. So yeah, I don't remember, like. I feel like... I like to keep everything like to myself so it was weird to talk about it with someone but it was fine.'

Having explored Holly's experience of professionals I will present her advice for people who might help a child in her situation.

Holly's advice for professionals

Holly presented as balanced in her views about professionals. She gave positive and negative feedback in relation to the support she received from professionals. As mentioned in the previous section, her counsellor gave generic support. Holly said she wanted more direct information, as quoted below.

'The counselling itself was fine. Mmmm I think maybe getting more direct information because when I get information from my dad and information from my mum, I kind of would like to know more direct, kind of like what's actually going on, like why I can't go up and see my dad. I would like someone to explain to me what the problem is and if there is anything I can do to fix it.'

Holly makes an important point in relation to her priorities and the problems she needs help solving. Counselling is one component of what a family might need in these circumstances. I gained the impression from Holly that she felt that she was trying to generate ways of solving the problems caused by her father's offending. It is not Holly's or any other child's responsibility to solve such problems. In the quote below, she expresses suspicion regarding her mother's view that there are no solutions. It is also evident that Holly's instincts are good in that she recognises the need for an external agency to provide a plan for the way forward. A young person should not have the burden of feeling that they have to solve the problems in their family.

'I think sometimes, although I think she tells us the truth, I feel like I always ask, like, "What can we do so that we can go up?" and she, I don't know, she just is kind of like, "There is nothing we can do" and I don't know if I believe that. I know if I was told direct by someone, like if there was anything we could do, like an outside person, like the actual facts, who wasn't affected by it, otherwise it gets twisted.'

There was a strong sense from Holly that she wanted to be given more choice and control. Holly presented as though she felt that she was having things done to her as opposed to with her. She comments that the communication with professionals is received through her mother. Given that Holly has described her mother's mental health problems and the impact of the father's offending on her mother, she would have benefited from having a direct line of communication to children's services. Holly was able to articulate in the quote below that the communication between her and the social worker was very one direction. She described having no method

of communicating with her social worker. She also notes below the importance of the venue

'They come to me, so if they feel like they need to come to me then mum's, like, "These people need to talk to you" and I'm, like, "ok". But I don't have any way to kind of talk to them, like I don't have any way to ask them questions. But I suppose when they come on the phone and talk to me for twenty minutes or they talk to me for an hour and like I can't ask, like, day-to-day questions I often forget or they are asking me questions but I don't know, I would like someone to ask what is going on. And it just gets fed through from my mum but I don't really know a lot of the time what is happening.'

While Holly laughed it was evident that the laugh was to try and shake off a feeling of exasperation and powerless. I enquired how she felt about the situation. She gave the following response:

'Well it's frustrating because I'm, I do want to go up and see my dad and his family and it's also annoying because I don't feel my dad's family probably have the right information either, because my aunty text me and my grandma text and my grandma says to me like "Oh why aren't you coming up?" like it's mine and my sister's choice that we are not going up and it makes us feel really bad because they obviously think that we don't want to see them or we can't be bothered or don't want to. And I just feel like they haven't got the right information about what's going on and I haven't either but I don't know why we can't but I've been told that we can't and I've said it like a million times before but they still text me like, "Oh do you want to come up for Christmas?" and I'm like, well I do but they don't really get why we can't.'

In the quote above there is further evidence of Holly being emotionally torn by her family's demands regarding contact. I asked Holly to tell me about what

professionals could do to make it easier for her. An example of her feedback is included below.

'In my opinion, try and make it like the least like set up and kind of 'performancy' the better. I think if they had someone there they could ask questions to, like sometimes day to day I might have a question about something and wonder, like, why is that not allowed? But I can't really ask anyone or she doesn't really know and she'll just say something and I'll think "Is that really true?"'

The data above indicates that Holly would have liked to have a person, perhaps an advocate or social worker, who she could ask questions and have a relationship with. Hearing Holly's point regarding 'performancy' led me to reflect on how she experienced the research interview. Her point regarding communication and having a point of contact for direct information was a consistent theme of the interview. The data provides some indication that being a child of a parent who has downloaded IIOC can be a lonely experience. Holly is clear that it would have been helpful to have a method of directly contacting the social worker to enable her to ask questions.

Holly's reference below to finding it easier to speak to someone her own age led me to consider how professionals and families might use peer support more effectively and also what adults can learn from young people about how they can better support young people.

'I feel like it's easier to speak to someone my age because like with counselling and stuff with an adult, and I was quite, like, formal, like you go in and it's like "Come and sit down" and it's like awkward, not awkward but formal. It's easier to speak to someone in, like, in a familiar environment, not being asked questions about it.'

Holly's remarks above regarding the environment and informality are important learning points which could be incorporated in practice with very little cost implications.

Summary

In this chapter it has been established that, for Holly, one of the most profound effects from her father's offending was the impact on her mother. She reported a relatively good experience of disclosure; she preferred to be given information in stages. With regard to the information she received, Holly felt that she would have benefited from a professional she could contact directly and see in an informal environment where she was permitted to talk at her own pace without being asked too many questions. Like many families when the parents are separated, Holly reported feeling guilty and torn. The impact of denial could be seen clearly in the fracture of the family. The paternal family do not accept that Holly's father presents a risk and therefore Holly and her sister are denied contact with their father and with the parental family. In circumstances like these, the paternal family should be given access to information and professionals who can help them process their feelings about the offence and also develop strategies to support the children in the future.

A positive finding of this chapter relates to Holly's resilience. She demonstrated educational resilience by continuing to go to school, succeeding in her exams and progressing to 6th form. She took strength from her friends. In my final chapter I will make recommendations to include Holly's insights.

Chapter 10 Discussion

The research generated three data sets: mothers, fathers and a child. In this chapter I will explore the similarities and differences between them. I will begin with children.

Children

None of the children connected to this study were offered support from a statutory agency.

A common theme among the three data sets was loss; however, the losses were experienced differently. The data showed that children were likely to experience some loss of both of their parents: loss of their presence but also in relation to how they experienced them. Some also experienced loss of extended family. In the chapter focused on Holly I highlight her primary concern being for her mother. Holly described the loss of her mother and father as she once knew them. To enable professionals to understand how they can best support a child in this situation it is important they understand the potential loss of the extended family.

A primary difference between children and adults in these circumstances relates to power. A child who has a parent who has downloaded IIOC has different choices available to them in comparison to an adult. Mothers could decide if they wanted to end the relationship with the child's father, however the child's choice is different. The data illustrated that children may not be given the choice about if, when and how they learned about the details of their father's offending.

The data showed the range of possible impacts on children. The findings were consistent with the reviewed literature in relation to resilience. As mentioned in the literature review, Zolkoski and Bullock (2012) identified the following protective factors as significant: individual characteristics in the child, the child being capable socially, self-regulation (referring to the temperament of the child), self-concept, family conditions, community supports and other factors, for example the child's developmental and cognitive abilities. Sattler and Font (2017) draw attention to the lack of research in relation to resilience in very young

children. Many of the children connected to this research were very young. It is not possible to know what the impact will be on them.

Children connected to the study did not appear to be present in the communication flow between the parents and professionals. Their voice was largely absent in the decisions that were being made about them.

The interviews with parents demonstrated that the characteristics and needs of the child should be considered when considering how to intervene. This is consistent with the literature focused on resilience. It is important to consider the possibility of children feeling powerless due to having strangers, for example the police or social workers, in their home.

The interview with Holly raised the issue of words and the meaning children attribute to them: words like 'supervision', 'risk' and 'safeguarding'. For children with no experience of children's services it would be especially important for the meaning of such words to be broken down.

Further research is needed regarding the nature of the impact. For example, Holly's sister was fearful and anxious when using the internet. Other children might engage in further risk-taking behaviour, possibly searching for images to make sense of what has happened or as an act of rebellion. They might also be afraid to ask for help if they get into trouble online. There is no available data in relation to the long-term impact on children who have a father who downloads IIOC.

The challenges for children were different than those their parents faced. Children are in an entirely different developmental stage from their parents. The research generated limited data in relation to the impact in relation to the self and identity. Holly did report concern in relation to the potential impact on her future relationships. She also referenced support from her friends as supporting her resilience.

Mothers

Unlike their children, mothers were offered support. However, I expect that this would not be case for most women whose partner has downloaded IIOC. Philpot (2009) asserts that mothers are secondary victims of the abuse perpetrated by their

partner. Philpot (2009) also argues that partners of convicted offenders are also protectors who are integral in supporting the child's recovery. They are the person in the strongest position to be able to prevent future abuse of their child. Given that, in the vast majority of families affected by the offence of downloading indecent images, it will be mothers who are responsible for managing the family home when their partner is required to leave, it is essential that they are given the tools they need to talk to and support their children. All the women I interviewed expressed shock and disbelief when the police arrived. It is possible that the women knew of or colluded with the offences and were feigning denial. I only have access to the accounts of the participants. Denial is an ordinary human psychological defence mechanism to protect against an otherwise harmful reality. Calder (2001) highlights the possible reasons a partner of a contact sexual offender might engage in denial, including fear of the loss of emotional, financial and practical support.

Craissati (2004) advises that mothers who experience denial can change their perspective. She also comments that adversarial or judgemental approaches are likely to be counter-productive. The women in this study, who were all mothers or carers of children, reported seeing no other behaviour demonstrated by their partner that would indicate their partner had a sexual interest in children. It is important to acknowledge that it is entirely possible that the women who participated did not feel able to disclose any concerns to a person they had only just met for the purpose of a research project. Such a disclosure may cause them to feel that they should have taken action sooner. Furthermore, any acknowledgement that their current or ex-partner may pose a risk may cause fear of repercussions from children's services. That said, there is a significant opportunity for the police to communicate information about the alleged offending at the point of arrest in a manner which enables the non-offending parent to understand the potential risk.

Stubley (2015) made similar observations in relation to women's initial responses when they discovered their male partner's offending. Stubley utilised Janoff-Bulman's (1989 'shattered assumptions' theory to further understand the reaction of women in this scenario. Shattered assumptions theory provides a framework for understanding reactions from people when their conceptual framework of the

world is threatened. Stubbley (2015) notes that mothers not only experience the trauma of their partner having offended but also an attack on how they understand the world. As a result, mothers are left in a state of questioning their role as a sexual partner, their partner as a father, their life as they knew it and their future as they thought it might be. In light of these shattered assumptions, the professionals involved in the case need to be capable of containing the emotional responses of the family to enable them to recover. The data in relation to mothers in my research was consistent with Stubbley's findings.

While the primary focus of this research project is the impact on the child, the data suggests that the responses to the parents are equally important to understand. The way the offending parent is treated by professionals is likely to contribute to the likelihood of that parent seeking and engaging with a programme of intervention. If the parent does not engage in intervention, it is more likely that their contact with the child will be stopped. Therefore, the child may suffer. Therefore, interaction at the point of arrest has a significant part to play in terms of minimising the harm caused to the child, both in the short and long term.

The data suggested that there is no mechanism for automatically sharing information about the outcome of sentencing with partners, despite this information being in the public domain. There are several possibilities in this situation. It is possible that there is a diffusion of responsibility among professionals which leads to each professional thinking that someone else will tell the mother; it is also possible that each professional attached to the family perceives the act as another's responsibility; or alternatively it is possible that professionals believe the family should talk to one another. In my view, women and their children in these circumstances should be treated as being at risk of harm and automatically receive support from an appropriate agency, for example victim support. The women reported that they did not feel supported by children's services.

Stubley (2015) also found that women experienced social workers as lacking knowledge and experience with regard to internet-related offences. This was consistent with the data generated from my interviews with mothers. In the context of having experienced the trauma of discovering their partner's offending, it is likely that the additional unpredictable nature of impromptu visits from children's services would result in heightened anxiety for the non-offending partner. Unannounced visits from children's services are necessary in some circumstances: if, for example, the parent is not considered likely to be cooperative or there are concerns that risk management plans are not being implemented. In terms of learning how to help mothers, it is important to consider whether unannounced visits are necessary and defensible. Stubley (2015) also found that the involvement of children's services was an additional stressor for mothers who had a partner who had downloaded indecent images.

An important point for future training and guidance for professionals working with people in similar circumstances in the future is to expect the non-offending parent to experience some level of denial. Unless there is specific evidence to suggest that the offender's partner is involved, then the partner should not be treated with suspicion or prejudice.

The primary difference between fathers and mothers in this research related to care giving. Mothers were most commonly the primary care giver. When they discovered their parents offending, they not only had to cope with the destruction of life as they knew it but they also needed to help their children cope. The data revealed that coping may be difficult.

After the offences were discovered, fathers were asked to leave in all but one case, meaning that mothers became the sole carers. They were also financially affected. A partner of one of the men interviewed discovered she was pregnant after the arrest. A non-offending partner's pregnancy should indicate to the police and other professionals that the mother may require additional emotional and practical support.

Both mothers and fathers were fearful about disclosure. Professionals supporting families in similar situations would benefit from acknowledging and talking through fears which could provide a barrier to disclosure. In my view, withholding disclosure from children removes their right to know about something that will affect their life, possibly for a long time.

Further advice and guidance for the police and other attending agencies should include reference to helping parents know what to say. In my view, at that stage it would be important to be honest and factual. Depending on the age and understanding of the child, a helpful response would include the police simply stating that they are investigating a crime. At the point of arrest, the parent is under investigation, guilt has not yet been established.

Fathers

A key difference in the data between fathers and non-offending family members is that fathers were offered support.

The data raised concerns about possible prejudiced practice resulting from thoughts and feelings about people who commit sexual offences. It was evident that some of the men felt that they were treated in a prejudiced manner. The data illustrated that the men felt they were not treated as individuals and the nature of their offending led to them to being discriminated against.

There was a theme of fathers feeling isolated and negative regarding the responses they received from the professionals they came into contact with. The data suggested that in order to meet the needs of the child, it was also important to be responsive to the needs of the adults. There was limited evidence of the families involved in the study achieving effective working relationships with children's services.

In terms of risk assessment and intervention with sexual offenders, it is widely accepted that confrontational approaches are ineffective and counter-productive. Offenders who are subjected to such approaches are less likely to be open regarding any on-going risk and more likely to engage in denial of the impact of their offending behaviours. Furthermore, confrontational approaches are less

likely to promote self-efficacy or motivation to engage in treatment. Yet it is not standard practice for social work staff to be given training regarding how to engage and intervene with sexual offenders. The data would suggest a need for further training.

In the literature review I explored Munro's (2011:44) views with regard to professionals needing to be 'risk sensible' and not attempting to avoid risk altogether. The possibility of professionals being overly cautious was also explored in Kemshall and Maguire (2001). The experiences reported by the fathers did not evidence rigorous and objective assessment being consistently undertaken by children's services. It is important to recognise the limitations as the data only includes the views of the men, not children's services practitioners who might have a different understanding of the levels of support provided and the extent to which risk assessments were used to assess harm presented by the offenders.

A significant difference in the interviews with the fathers related to suicide. The findings are consistent with recent research conducted in relation to suicide rates for men who have been arrested for downloading IIOC.

There was little evidence that the men understood the processes of children's services, relevant legislation, their rights as a parent or the risk assessment procedure.

In the literature review I set out the research regarding the possibility that a person who downloads IIOC may have committed contact offences in the past. I also highlighted the fact that people who commit contact sexual offences against children do not necessarily offend against their biological children. It is possible that people who download IIOC pose a slightly elevated risk to children they are not related to. It is important for professionals to be aware of the fact that a person who downloads IIOC may, or may not, have committed contact sexual offences in the past. It is, therefore, important to explore their relationships with their children before the offences came to light. It is also imperative to consider the potential for future risk while recognising that the risk is not solely that the father would commit contact offences in the future, but also includes the risk of the negative impact on the future relationship between the child and their father.

There was consistency across the data sets in relation to positive reports about the father being a good parent.

There was also consistency across the data sets in relation to an absence of established process. In most cases the outcome was that contact between the child and father needed to be supervised. There was no reference to a review process or plan for moving forward.

In the UK, anyone sentenced to more than 30 months in custody for a sexual offence is automatically placed on the sex offender register indefinitely. In 2008 two convicted sex offenders appealed to the High Court with regard to the right of offenders to appeal against lifelong sex offender registration if they could prove they were no longer a risk. It was established that the denial of a right to appeal was incompatible with article 8 of the Human Rights Act. The ruling was upheld in the Court of Appeal by three Judges. The Home Office presented a challenge to the Supreme Court, but the challenge was not accepted. This means offenders can continue to appeal lifelong sex offender registration if they can demonstrate they have reformed and no longer present a risk. It could be argued that offenders should have the right to a thorough assessment to establish whether they can have unsupervised contact with their children.

Chapter 11 Summary and Recommendations

Introduction

In this final chapter I will begin by revisiting the original ambition of the research. Secondly, I will present a summary of the theoretical frameworks, the literature review and the methodology. The theoretical frameworks include: resilience, social constructionism, symbolic interactionism and risk. I will summarise how these frameworks contributed to the study and also provide examples of their relevance to the study. Thirdly I will explore the strengths, limitations and challenges presented by the available literature and the subsequent design, collection and analysis of the data for my thesis.

Fourthly I will review the themes which emerged throughout the research process. These include the child's experience of the arrest, the relationship between risk and resilience, the child's experience of disclosure, and the family's experience of intervention and support. Description and discussion in relation to the field research outcomes will be examined in the context of the established themes.

My observations of the data and my recommendations for policy and practice will be presented in final stage of this chapter.

Aims

The original ambition of this thesis was to address the following questions:

- What do mothers report about the impact on their child(ren) when the child(ren)'s father was arrested for downloading indecent images of children?
- What do fathers who have been arrested for and/or convicted of downloading indecent images of children report about the impact on their child(ren)?
- What is the impact on children when their parent is arrested for downloading indecent images of children?

- What support is made available to children when their father is arrested for downloading indecent images of children?
- What are children whose father is convicted of downloading indecent images of children told about their father's offending?

The research has been successful in achieving some answers to the questions above. The study revealed a unique insight into the impact on the child, the immediate and the extended family when a father downloads IIOC. Due to the fact that this study is the first of its kind, further questions were also raised. It was not possible to interview a valid sample of children directly. However, I was able to gain an exclusive insight into the lives of 27 children who had parents who downloaded IIOC, primarily through the eyes of their parents. I was also able to complete an interview with a 17-year-old girl. When I revisit the methodology chapter I will summarise the challenges in accessing a sample.

I will begin by providing an overview and discussion of the theoretical framework and provide reflections on how it contributed to the design and interpretation of the findings.

Theoretical framework

The theoretical underpinnings of this study included 'risk', 'resilience', 'symbolic interactionism' and 'social constructionism'. Social constructionism provided a lens to analyse the concepts of childhood and sex offenders. It was established that the concept and meaning of childhood are dependent upon time and culture. The evolution of the concept of childhood led to discussion of how children are perceived as being in need of protection. Using social constructionism I examined current child safeguarding policy and practice. I also drew on social constructionism when exploring the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and how those rights are upheld. The study revealed some

potential problems in relation to contact and the child's right to have a relationship with their parent.

Social constructionism informed my analysis of how risk is viewed and reported by the media, the public and child protection professionals. Kemshall (2009), Beck (1992) and Munro (2011) established that professionals were operating in a climate of risk and uncertainty. Should their assessment be deemed wrong, professionals might be exposed to media coverage, lose their job and/or feel personally responsible. There was some evidence of precautionary practice, however future research should explore the professional perspective. Following on from this, it was argued that there was a risk that professionals may be overly cautious when undertaking risk assessments, through fear of making a mistake and underestimating risk. One possible mitigating factor to prevent the over estimation of risk, or risk-averse behaviour, could be national policy and statutory guidance. It was established that the statutory guidance Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015, 2018) did not offer any guidance for professionals intervening with a child who has a parent who downloaded IIOC. The absence of statutory guidance creates vulnerability to an inconsistent experience of risk management for the child. The relationship between risk and the reduction or prevention of harm to children is complex.

Symbolic interactionism helped me to capture the impact of interactions between parents, professionals and children, and to explore the journey of the child in light of these interactions. Within the research, the symbol of 'parent' and the symbol of 'sex offender' were explored. In Chapter 2 I discussed media representations of sex offenders and concluded that the term sex offender is a dominant negative symbol. Symbolic interactionism was used to inform the research design. I drew on symbolic interactionism to help me explore the nature of interaction at each stage, including the flow of communication and the relationship to impact on the child. I approached questions surrounding the topic of sex offenders with the child in the study in a sensitive manner. I was motivated to avoid causing an additional stress or harm to the child in this study, Holly. Holly was able to provide details of her thought processes and coping strategy in

relation to her experience of her father and his status as a registered sex offender. I was able to explore the dynamics between the adults surrounding the child and how those dynamics affected the child's experience. For example symbolic interactionism informed the design of the semi-structured interview framework. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism informed analysis of the interviews and the meaning of family.

During the study it became apparent that the meaning of family was important in a qualitative sense. Symbolic interactionism provided insight into the meaning of family and the context in which the child experienced their family and how the child experienced how professionals saw their family. Furthermore, symbolic interactionism was useful with regard to interpreting data in relation to the child's father having the label of sex offender. The children attached to the study were subject to significant change in their understanding of their family following the offence, both in terms of how the child perceived their family and also in their awareness of how other people perceived their family. Most children connected to the research had no prior experience of children's services. The adults in the study referred to their families as being 'normal' prior to the discovery of the offences. The discovery of the offence could present a threat to how the child defined their family and how they perceived themselves. Future research into children's perceptions of their families before and after intervention would be beneficial to help professionals understand how best to support children in maintaining their sense of self and family.

A good example of the application of symbolic interaction was when Holly described her experience of the communication process following her father's arrest. I was able to analyse the flow of communication between professionals, Holly, her father, the extended family, her sister and her mother. Holly's experience of her father being arrested and the consequences that followed was altered by the flow of communication around her. Specifically, her mother had no contact with Holly's father. Holly's father's arrest significantly altered the dynamics in Holly's family.

The flow of interaction between the professionals, the parents and the child also affected risk management. The police did not inform Holly's mother of the outcome of the criminal investigation, which led to anger and frustration and meant that she was not able to give her children information. From Holly's account, it was evident that her father had given limited information to the paternal grandparents and therefore they felt that the restrictions on contact were punitive and unnecessary. It was apparent that the information given to the paternal grandparents fuelled the grandfather's frustration and led him to contact the police and express his frustration. The police reported concerns about the paternal family and therefore contact between Holly, her sister and the paternal family was stopped. Despite these concerns Holly continued to have unsupervised telephone contact with her father, creating vulnerability for manipulation. During unsupervised telephone contact, Holly's father would tell her that there were no problems with contact, which led her to feel confused and suspicious of her mother. Holly's case draws attention to the importance of managing the flow of communication in order to reduce the risk of harm to a minimum. As such, symbolic interactionism was a helpful theoretical framework. Application of symbolic interactionism was useful in designing and undertaking the interviews as it helps to elicit information regarding the process for the child as a whole.

During the literature review I explored the risk of a parent who downloads IIOC committing a contact offence against his child. I will now revisit the literature review.

Literature review

A review of the literature revealed there was no available research regarding the impact on children when a parent downloads IIOC. The available literature did, however, provide important insights with regard to what is known in relation to people who download IIOC. There is available literature with regard to the risk that a person who downloads IIOC poses of being reconvicted. There is also

research regarding the risk that a person who downloads IIOC will commit a contact offence.

There is a distinct lack of research into the level of risk a parent who downloads IIOC presents to their biological children. In a family context, it was deemed important to consider the spectrum of risk (i.e. risk of harm by the offender to their child, risk of reoffending and risks associated with intervention). However, the available literature focused on the risk the offender presented of committing a sexual offence in the future, or on the possibility that they had committed a contact sexual offence in the past.

Furthermore, there was no research in relation to offenders who had been convicted of abusing their children and subsequently convicted of downloading IIOC. Again, the literature primarily concerned the risk of future sexual harm presented by the offender. There was no specific research to evidence the level of risk the offender posed to his own child.

Given the lack of research it was considered likely that families may experience inconsistent responses from intervening agencies. The lack of evidence, and therefore guidance, poses important challenges to professionals who may be uncertain regarding how to manage risk.

In light of the lack of research I sought out literature which gave insight into children's experience of loss and stigma in other circumstances. I discovered some literature in relation to the impact on children when a parent commits suicide. In my view the impact of a suicide on a family has some parallels with sexual offending. The parallels include the loss, difficulty applying meaning, stigma, police procedures, media coverage, shock, anger, betrayal, and depression. Furthermore, like suicide, sexual offending is something that many people find difficult to talk about. The literature stated that children benefited from engaging in established rituals, for example attending funerals (Trickey, 2005). In my view the act of apologising when you have done something wrong is, in a sense, a ritual. The data provided some indication [from the parents] that some children benefited from receiving an apology from their father. The literature also gave

insights into the isolation a child might feel due to the stigma attached to suicide. In addition, there were some pertinent insights into what might assist the child in maintaining resilience, for example: sensitive practice by the police, good communication between professionals and the adult family members, the child's mother being supported, and being given information about the offences in a child-focused manner.

Methodology

Accessing the sample proved much more challenging than I had originally anticipated. I interviewed nine adult fathers who had been arrested for downloading indecent images of children, three mothers of children whose fathers had downloaded IIOC, one step mother of children whose father had downloaded IIOC and one child whose father had downloaded IIOC. In total there were 27 children attached to the nine fathers, three mothers and one step mother within the study. The number of children who were under 18 at the time of the offence was 19. The number of children over eighteen at the time of the offence was seven (one child was born after the offence). I was able to directly interview one 17-year-old child.

Age presented a challenge to accessing a sample of children. I had agreed with the Lucy Faithfull Foundation that I would only interview children over the age of thirteen. Many of the parents who expressed a willingness to participate had children who were too young to interview. When the child was too young to interview the parent's views were included. It was very difficult to take the decision to focus on gaining insights about the child's experience from the parents' perspective. I resolved to seek views from parents as a springboard to inspire further research undertaken directly with children.

In preparation for the research interviews I wanted to ensure I facilitated the opportunity to explore how the parents, children and professionals interacted with one another. By doing so I was able to identify how those interactions contributed to the impact in either a positive or negative way. I wanted to ensure

that I created an opportunity for the individuals to tell their story in a way that left them feeling empowered. As there was no previous research available there was no structure or framework to draw upon. I drew upon my professional experience working with families affected by sexual abuse to develop a semi-structured interview schedule.

My experience working with families affected by sexual abuse enabled me to gain credibility with the parents. Despite agreeing to participate in the research it was evident that, initially, some parents were fearful about engaging. Their fears included further intervention from children's services.

All interviews were conducted with informed consent. After completing all interviews, quotes containing personal information, or information that could impact upon connected participants, were rigorously considered and appropriate steps were taken to ensure anonymity. There was no way of preventing participants recognising their own quotes. I reflected upon the nature of the quotes and how the participants might feel about having revealed such personal information. I also paused to consider the potential impact on those participants who were connected to each other. If I were to replicate the study I would warn participants of this possibility in the early stages. I also reflected that in future a larger sample would assist in maintaining confidentiality.

While manually transcribing the data I was simultaneously able to trawl and develop a coding framework with which to capture the themes, as described in Chapter 4.

Ethics were a continuous consideration. At times I struggled with the boundary between practitioner and researcher. On balance I believe my knowledge and experience working with families affected by sexual abuse was beneficial. I was able to elicit rich data. It is possible my prior knowledge and experience affected my analysis of the data, however I believe the supervision process has enabled me to achieve a balanced analysis.

In the methodology chapter I raised the point that children who are not aware of the parent's offence will experience impact, but without an awareness of why their world has changed. These children are not being afforded a voice and therefore there is a systemic gap in research as to what the impact of withholding the information has on a child. Furthermore, their choice about knowing what their parent has done is being taken from them.

Having explored the theoretical framework, literature review and methodology, I will now move on to review the results of the study, beginning with the family experience of arrest.

The arrest

The arrest proved to be a significant source of insight into the journey of children who have a parent who downloaded IIOC; this is explored in full in Chapter 5. In this section I will summarise the experience of children as provided through the eyes of mothers and fathers.

In the initial stages of the research I did not expect the arrest to be a key theme. It was evident from the data that the arrest was, potentially, a highly traumatic experience for the child. The study revealed that the child was at risk of harm during the arrest, which is important for professionals to consider. The majority of the children and mothers in the study had no experience of children's services or the police prior to the father's arrest. In addition to the potential distress caused to the child, this was also a time of shock and distress for the mother. Relevant factors reported by mothers included having uniformed officers in marked cars arrive at their home at 6am, which raised significant concern with regard to the possibility that a child would be present. In total eleven children were present at the point of their father's arrest. A major finding of my research is that there is a significant risk that the child will be present when their parent is arrested.

The fact that the child may be present raises the importance of providing a narrative for any child(ren) present at the time. At this point of an investigation the parent would be accurately described as having been accused of committing an offence. In my view it would be appropriate, at this stage in the investigation, for the child to be made aware that their parent is accused of breaking the law.

At this juncture it is likely that the non-offending parent may be in a state of denial and distress. She or he may not be in a position to know what to tell their child(ren). Furthermore, this is the first opportunity to help non-offending parents to understand the nature of the risk that her/his partner may pose to their child(ren). It would be beneficial if training for arresting officers could include material detailing how to talk to the non-offending parent in a manner which will help them understand the risk rather than entrench denial. This is particularly important as the data highlighted that the women in the study struggled to reconcile their experience of their partner with the nature of the offence. All the women in the study reported their partners being good fathers to their children prior to the discovery of the offence.

An important risk to consider is the risk that both the offending and non-offending parents will have suicidal thoughts, attempt or commit suicide. Two of the male respondents reported having attempted suicide. Two male respondents explicitly reported suicidal thoughts and one alluded to them. One non-offending partner reported her concerns that her partner would commit suicide and the child reported that her mother had also reported suicidal thoughts. While this sample is small the frequency of the reports is significant. I am aware that some police forces currently provide suicide prevention packs to people who are arrested for downloading IIOC. In my view this needs to become standard practice. Preventing parents committing suicide is an important child safeguarding and public health issue.

To enhance the likelihood that the child will be able to maintain resilience, it is important that the risk of suicide is reduced to a minimum. In a similar vein while the mother may not wish to continue a relationship, she is likely to want to ensure

that her previous partner does not commit suicide. If the mother is reassured that her partner is being supported then it is more likely that she will be able to support her child(ren). Enhancing the resilience of the non-offending partner is crucial in order to enable her to provide the child with a secure base.

Both mothers and fathers reported significant delays after the initial arrest. There is a risk, therefore, that the child's world will be changed for a significant period. It could be argued that the prolonged change to the child's circumstances increases the need for an explanation to be given to them. In my professional experience the police often attribute delays to lack of resources, specifically staff to search the devices for illegal images. It would be beneficial for the causes of delay to be explored further through research undertaken with the police. In the interim, however, the point of arrest is the first opportunity to manage expectations in relation to timescales and provide a narrative for the children affected.

At the point of arrest there is a risk the child's confidentiality will be compromised, particularly if uniformed officers attend the address. The data revealed it is important officers should not be uniformed when undertaking an arrest of a father when he is in a home where children are present. The removal of laptops and other electronic devices from the family home provides an indication to the local community of the nature of the offence and therefore compromises the confidentiality of the child. In one case, the child lived on a commonly used route to school meaning that his friends saw officers removing devices. In another case, the 18-year-old son of the offender was arrested as his father wasn't home. The confidentiality of the child must be given full consideration. Children's confidentiality, especially in this context, is a safeguarding issue. Guidance and training for the police is an important opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of maintaining the child's confidentiality.

The data revealed the fears of both mothers and fathers in relation to offences being reported in the media. There were also fears of vigilante action. While the

child's name would not be featured by the media, the child could still be connected to their parent by people in the local community. It was not only media reporting of the offence that caused fear but also that the possibility that the issue would be discussed by peers on social media. In the event that a parent's offence is reported in the media, there is a risk that their child(ren) will be subject to bullying. In the event that a child is bullied it is possible that the child will feel less able to attend school and therefore may not achieve academically. It was evident that the parents needed advice and guidance with regard to how to manage social media accounts and prepare for the possibility of the offence appearing in the local or national media. Professionals trying to support families need to be aware that these are important issues to explore with the family. Furthermore, it is important that professionals are able to give advice and guidance to reduce fear and increase the family's resilience.

Fear of media reporting was one factor which motivated parents to want to tell their children about the offences. They reported wanting to tell the child before anyone else did. The findings in relation to disclosure will now be summarised.

Disclosure

One of the key research questions included what children were told about their fathers' offending. The answers to this question varied. The willingness of the parents to give the child an explanation partly depended on the age of the child. As stated previously, eleven children were present when their parent was arrested. However, even when they were present at the point of the arrest, children were not always told about the alleged offence. Two families reported giving false accounts to children present at the point of arrest. For one of the families, denial was the primary driver for giving a false account.

Mothers who do not initially believe the allegations are perhaps less likely to tell their child the reason why their father has been arrested. Some of the children were given alternative explanations for the arrest and removal of computer devices from the family home. In my view, children should be given age-

appropriate, objective and factual information as soon as possible. When writing about children bereaved by suicide, Trickey (2005) states that during times of trauma children need an adult they can trust. Giving false accounts can undermine trust.

The data revealed a pattern of older children being told soon after the offence. The data illustrated some of the fathers' concerns in relation to the way their child was given information about the offence. For example, they were concerned that mothers who were experiencing emotional difficulty processing the offence may not be in a good position to tell their children about it in an objective way. The evidence demonstrated that telling members of sibling groups at different times creates the risk that children will tell their other siblings.

Age was an important consideration in terms of disclosure. Parents expressed concern about their child(ren)'s capacity to understand any information that they were given in relation to their parent's offending. The child's level of understanding about sex and the law is important: if, for example, a child has no meaningful understanding of consent, sex, sexual abuse and IIOC, they are unlikely to be able to effectively absorb information regarding their parent's offending. Decisions about what information to give and when should be guided by the child's existing understanding.

An additional consideration in relation to disclosure is the possibility that the child has already experienced abuse at the hands of their parent. The fathers in this study preferred to give their children information about their offending themselves. If the child had experienced abuse by their father, professionals would need to ensure that appropriate steps had been taken to ensure the child is safe.

Professionals could reasonably argue that the child should be given information about their parent's offending to enable them to protect themselves from future abuse. The child might have children of their own in the future and therefore will need to have information to enable them to protect their children.

The data did not demonstrate any consistent messages being given by professionals in relation to how and when parents disclose to their child. Perhaps of more concern, there was no evidence of any message being given to parents by statutory agencies with regard to disclosure. There were mixed responses regarding how, when and if they would tell their children in the future.

Some parents reported conflicting feelings about telling their children about the offence. Analysis of the parents' reasons for reluctance to tell their children about the offences revealed fear as a common theme. The fear often related to being rejected by the child, or of causing additional harm to the child by telling them. Despite their fears, parents appeared motivated to receive more information in relation to disclosing to their child.

The decision to disclose the details of the father's offending was a point of discussion in all the interviews. Some of the children were very young and therefore the parents had not given much consideration to what they might say to their children or when. Even those children who were present at the point of arrest were not always told about the offending. There were many barriers to parents telling, including fear of what reaction they might receive and how they might respond. Some parents feared that their children would reject them if they knew about the offences. For other parents, the decision to tell the children appeared to be automatic and non-negotiable. Those who had told their children expressed a desire to be honest. Fathers reported feeling that their children deserved to know. Fathers shared their experiences of having disclosed to older children. In the main they reported their children being empathic and supportive, however sometimes their reactions changed over time. The fathers attributed the positive response to their having provided good parenting in the past.

The data did reveal one case which involved specialist intervention being undertaken regarding disclosure, which is taken to be evidence of emerging good practice. The father wanted to tell his 12-year-old daughter about the offence because he was concerned that her older sister (aged 15) might tell her in an unhelpful way. Significant preparation was undertaken by the parents with a

professional before the child was informed. Both parents agreed what the child would be told prior to the disclosure and both were present at the point of disclosure. The information was given in a neutral venue. The child was given the opportunity to ask questions. The child's father felt that it was a positive experience for his daughter. Unfortunately, the child in question was under the age of 13 and therefore I was not able to approach her for inclusion in the study. This example of promising practice is consistent with Trickey's (2005) literature which highlights the importance of rituals for children surviving difficult experiences. In my professional experience, the ritual of 'confession' and a commitment to change is an important part of the healing process for a child. However, this is yet to be tested or explored with young people who have gone through similar experiences.

Several parents reported concerns in relation to their child telling their friends about the offences. They were concerned about repercussions for themselves and their child. Holly informed me that confiding in her friends was a source of great comfort to her. She reported feeling validated by their reaction of shock. The experience of telling her friends was important in helping her to cope with her home circumstances. The consequences for the child's friends have been discussed; there is potential for them to feel victimised by the information. It is important that a child's friends do not feel unable to talk to anyone about the information they have been given. If a child wants to talk to his or her friends it would be important that their parent is also made aware. It is also important to consider that the child may have had contact with the offender and therefore may have been abused. Even if the child has not been abused it is possible that they will fear that they could have been or that the offender has been looking at them in a sexual manner. Despite the risks in Holly's case, being able to talk to her friends enhanced her resilience.

Risk and resilience

The data revealed that children could be exposed to secondary impacts, for example if their mother experienced difficulty coping. It was evident from Holly's journey that the most profound impact on her was experiencing the impact on her mother. The accounts given by the mothers in the study illustrated that support was not readily available for them. To reduce the risk of harm to the child to a minimum and enhance resilience it is essential that professionals responsible for intervening ensure that mothers are enabled to access appropriate support.

Children experienced multiple losses after their father was arrested. Many of the children connected to the study were living with their father at the point of the arrest. In all but one case the father was required to leave the family home, meaning the children experienced the physical loss of their father. The men who were not living with the child at the point of arrest were having regular contact prior to the arrest. The nature of the contact changed after the offence, as no overnight or unsupervised contact was permitted. Those children who were informed of their father's offending lost their father as they once knew him. Holly reported coping with the loss of the father she thought she knew by compartmentalising her ideas of him. She was aware that he was a registered sex offender but she separated this from how she knew him as a father. Holly reported positive experiences of her father prior to and after the arrest. To reduce the impact to a minimum it is important that professionals intervening are able to acknowledge and validate any positive experiences the child reports of their father.

On a practical level, many children lost a two-income family and therefore might not have enjoyed the same privileges as before. Some of the children in the study were given no explanation for the changes. There was limited evidence of the fathers providing support for the children in the data. Furthermore, there is no established template for coping when a parent is arrested for downloading IIOC. The family, the local community and professionals lacked direction as to how to help the children cope and recover. Despite the lack of support for the children in the study, most of them, according to the parents, continued to thrive. As such the children demonstrated resilience.

While emotional resilience is difficult to measure, it was evident that most of the children in the study could demonstrate an ability to continue to function after their father's arrest. Their relationship with their father changed. A minority of the adult children connected to the study chose not to have contact with their father following the offence.

All of the children connected to the study continued to attend school and overcome their difficulties. I have explored resilience in Chapters 7 and 9. The support a child received is relevant to their resilience. I will now explore what support was made available for children and their families.

Support and moving on

There was limited evidence of professionals and families achieving effective working relationships. Both fathers and mothers reported predominantly negative experiences of children's services. Fathers reported feeling isolated and negative when describing their experience of children's services. One set of parents asserted that the social worker was frightened when she visited the family home. The data did not suggest that there was an established practice or process in place for the police or children's services when a parent was arrested. There was a consistent message from parents that there were no established processes to hold professionals to account to.

Parents were also concerned that their children were not being listened to or heard by children's services. Further research is needed to explore the experience and views of professionals working for children's services to ascertain their experience and views with regard to how children are treated.

As a contrast to their experience of children's services, fathers reported largely positive experiences of the police. The mothers who participated in the research, however did not receive any signpost from the police as to where they could find support.

The data did not indicate that the mothers in the study were complicit in the offending and yet there was no evidence to suggest that they were treated as being in need of legal advice, emotional support and guidance. The data did suggest that there was a risk that the impact of discovering the offending could have a negative impact on their ability to provide support and guidance for their children. Treating mothers as secondary victims is an important part of increasing families' resilience and ability to move on.

The data revealed that an important consideration for professionals intervening with families was the family dynamics. The sample included families in a variety of situations: for example, those who were in cohabiting relationships prior to the offence; those who separated as a result of the offence; parents who were living separately prior to the offence; and one child who was living with her father as a single parent (her mother had died). The family dynamics were important factors for professionals to be aware of to enable them to establish the likely support the children required.

In several cases, grandparents were referenced by participants as sources of support. The accounts given by the parents indicated that the grandparents could help reduce harm, especially in terms of supporting the mother. Intervening agencies should investigate potential sources of support for the family to increase the resilience of the child's environment.

Denial was important factor. There was a risk that parents and grandparents may experience denial in terms of denying the offence occurred or denying the possibility of future risk. Denial of risk can be perceived by professionals as evidence that the parent or family member cannot protect a child. If family members maintain their denial, there is a risk the child will lose contact with their family members.

It would be beneficial for training for intervening agencies to cover the function denial might serve. Furthermore, training on how to effectively engage families who deny the risk would be beneficial.

Consistent with the available literature (Elliott et al 2013), none of the men in this study denied their offences. They were ready, willing and motivated to seek out and find specialist support.

All of the men reported a positive experience of the support they received from the Lucy Faithfull Foundation. It could be argued that their feedback is unsurprising given that they volunteered to participate in the study after having completed a specialist programme run by the Foundation and therefore may have wanted to please the gatekeeper or me as the researcher. There was a consistent message with regard to the fathers feeling that they had been treated with respect. It is possible that the support they received enabled them to provide more positive parenting, though further research is needed.

Analysis of the data established that there was no evidence of children receiving specialist support or therapy as a matter of protocol. In one case the children received generic counselling which was organised and funded by their mother. One respondent reported his daughter being provided with an advocate. The data revealed that a package of support urgently needs to be developed for children in these circumstances.

Holly reported needing someone she could contact to ask questions about the risk management process. It was evident that she was confused about supervised contact and what mechanism there was for galvanising ideas about how to move things forward.

There was a consistent reference to compassion when parents described what had helped them. When describing their responses when the offence came to light, the mothers in the study referred to shock, denial and devastation. Parents who deny risk are unlikely to be perceived as being protective. Confrontational approaches are likely to entrench denial. Those who experienced compassionate practice appeared more able to process the information they were given. The implementation of compassionate practice is, therefore, important to enable the mother to be protective.

Recommendations

In light of the findings I have generated a list of recommendations for professionals, policy makers and researchers working in the field:

1. National statutory guidance is needed for children's services and safeguarding professionals.

I have highlighted the failure of Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018) to address the issue of IIOC and parents. Such guidance should include a summary of the literature relating to risk. Child-friendly terminology regarding sex offending should be included. It should also include principles for good practice and guidance regarding how the child might be affected.

Details of available resources for affected parents should be highlighted. Principles for ensuring intervention is child focused and proportional to the risk posed should also be included. Professionals should inform parents of their parental and human rights. Children should also be made aware of their right to be protected and their right to have a relationship with their parent.

2. Statutory guidance is needed for the police on how to conduct arrests when children are in the home.

In my view, there is an urgent need for statutory guidance for the police in relation to how to minimise harm to children when parents who download IIOC are arrested. This guidance should specifically address the timing of arrest, the role of non-uniformed officers, what to say to children who might be present and how to give information to non-offending partners in a manner that enhances their capacity to protect their children (i.e. with compassion). Information on support services for non-offending parents should be provided.

Statutory guidance for the police could build on the examples of compassionate practice by officers found in this research. The data also highlights the need for a mechanism for informing the non-offending partner of the outcome of criminal proceedings.

3. Training should be made available for intervening agencies.

Multi-agency training should be made available to those who are most likely to have contact with affected families, including general practitioners, education services, community and mental health services, children's services and the police. The training should aim to enhance understanding of the risks posed by IIOC offenders.

That training should cover the fact that confrontational approaches are likely to be counterproductive and unlikely to result in a reduction in risk to the child. Such approaches are likely to increase stress and anxiety for the mother. Intervention should focus on enhancing the family's resilience and providing a secure base for the child.

Given the potential risks presented to the child in the event the case is reported in the media, it would be beneficial for professionals to be made aware of how to support families in this regard. This should also include reference to social media accounts and the potential for the child to be bullied online and/or made aware of the offences.

Professionals should be made aware of the dangers of breaches of confidentiality in terms of vigilante activity. Training should provide guidance on preparing the family for delays in decision making. Furthermore, training should include guidance on written agreements regarding contact between the father and the child. There should be an emphasis on clear communication to avoid manipulation by the offender and confusion for the child.

4. Children need a package of specialist support.

Consideration should be given to providing children with an advocate to enable them to feel heard by services. The possibility of peer support should be explored with the child. Children should not be made to feel as though they have to keep secrets. They should be enabled to feel absolved of blame and shame.

Children need to be prepared with basic information about the law and sex before being given information about their parent's offending. In addition, they

should be given information about safe and legal internet use. They should be provided with a safe space in which they can ask questions. Children should be given guidance about searching the internet for information regarding their parent's offending.

Children should be validated in feeling grief and loss. Positive memories of the parent should not be undermined.

Children should be enabled to participate in decisions about contact. They should also be encouraged, possibly through family therapy, to talk to their mothers, siblings and other family members about how the discovery of the offence has affected them.

5. Mothers need a package of support.

Mothers should be encouraged to seek counselling to process their own feelings of grief and loss. Furthermore, they should be given information about services that can assist them. They should be validated in their own experiences of being victimised.

6. More research is needed.

Further research is needed in relation to how professionals experience intervening when a parent downloads IIOC. Such research could inform training and guidance for professionals.

In addition, further research is needed in relation to what therapy or support children and young people feel they would benefit from. Future research regarding children's perception of their family before and after intervention would be beneficial to help professionals understand how best to support children in maintaining their sense of self and family

More research is needed regarding how best to disclose to children when their parent downloads IIOC and also when a parent commits any type of sexual offence. I would also argue that further research is needed in relation to the impact of children being separated from parents. The complexity of harm in these circumstances raises a spectrum of questions including when is intervening

unintentionally causing more harm than it is preventing? It is possible that it would be more achievable to generate a larger sample of adult children whose father has been arrested for downloading IIOC. A larger sample would enable deeper exploration of the differing needs of children from diverse backgrounds and family circumstances. To tailor interventions effectively further enquiry is needed in relation to the children's characteristics, for example age and gender affect impact.

The study has highlighted the need for further research regarding risk posed by parents who download IIOC.

Conclusions

The absence of available research which has investigated the impact on children when a parent downloads IIOC has meant that this study has pioneered new territory. The insights gained from this research have the potential to add significant value in terms of galvanising further research and improving policy and practice with children.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that the evidence regarding the risk posed by people who download IIOC is inconclusive. There is no research specifically regarding the risk posed by people who download IIOC toward their biological children. Despite the complexity of managing risk posed by a parent who downloads IIOC, none of the men in the study were subject to specialist risk assessment. All of the men except one were prevented from seeing their children unsupervised. None of the fathers or children expressed awareness of their human rights or parental responsibility in this context. It is important to emphasise the seriousness of the crimes committed by the men in this study, but the seriousness of the crime cannot and should not overshadow the need to protect children from the risk of harm in all forms.

I have argued that the risk of harm to children when a parent downloads IIOC is complex. There are a wide variety of risks, including but not limited to:

- a risk that the child's confidentiality will be compromised
- a risk that the parent's conviction will be featured by social, local or national media
- a risk that the child will suffer delays/long-term adversity
- a risk that the child has been exposed to IIOC
- a risk that the child has been abused by their parent
- a risk that the child, the child's own children or the child's friends could be abused by their parent in the future
- a risk that the child will be separated from a parent who may have provided good parenting
- a risk that the child will be isolated from their peers.
- a risk that the child's non-offending parent will experience difficulty coping
- a risk that the child's mother or father will be at risk of suicide
- a risk that the child will engage in illegal behaviour online
- a risk the child will be fearful when using the internet.

The response from intervening agencies must be led by the needs of the children in the family. The first point of consideration for the child is the arrest. Steps must be taken to ensure the experience causes minimal harm. Suicide prevention measures need to be put in place to reduce the risk that the child's father will commit suicide. To reduce the risk of harm to the child, it is essential mothers are supported. To increase the likelihood that the child will maintain their resilience, it is essential they are supported in continuing to attend school.

The data gained from this study has informed some recommendations in terms of guidance for professionals and the need for further research. The concept of harm must not only be considered in terms of the potential for a child to experience sexual abuse but also in terms of their right to have a relationship with their parent. The child's decision to have a relationship with their parent should be informed by all the information they need in relation to their father's offending. Further research is needed to establish the best method of disclosing to children.

There is also the wider issue of what type of therapy would be most beneficial for affected children and their families. This too requires further investigation.

The data has produced some valuable insights into how a child might 'see it' if their father downloaded IIOC. Above all the data has illuminated the need for children who have a parent who has downloaded IIOC to be listened to, supported and heard.

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Appendix 1 Information Sheet Professionals

<p>Information Sheet Professionals: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children (IIOC)</p>	
<p>What is the research about? Research regarding the risk posed by people who download IIOC is complex, particularly when applying the existing research to a family setting. Professionals responsible for managing the risk posed by a person who has been convicted of IIOC offences have the difficult task of using the research regarding the risk posed to a child while balancing the need of the child to be protected.</p> <p>There is no current research which addresses the impact on children and young people when a parent is convicted. This research project aims to give children and young people a voice. In the first instance parents will be invited to comment about the impact upon their child(ren). With parental consent, children and young people will be invited to give their views. Only children and young people with some knowledge of their parent’s offending will be interviewed.</p>	
<p>What is my role? Professionals in contact with parents with a conviction for downloading IIOC are being asked to pass on information about the project.</p>	
<p>Ethical considerations All participants will be advised that all information will be kept strictly confidential unless there is disclosure of abuse or harm.</p> <p>Parents will be assured that children participating in the study will not be given information about their parent’s offending.</p> <p>Parents will be provided with details of the STOP IT NOW confidential helpline number and an advice sheet regarding talking to their children.</p> <p>This research design has been approved by the Bedfordshire University Ethics Board.</p>	
<p>Practicalities Interviews with parents and children will be completed at a mutually convenient venue. Interviews can be completed in family homes if appropriate.</p>	
<p>What if participants want to leave the research? Participants will be informed they have the right to leave the research at any time and will suffer no negative consequences if they do leave. If they no longer wish to be involved in the research they can leave by telling the researcher or the professional who told them about the research. If they decide to leave the research any information they may already have provided will not be used by the researchers and will be destroyed.</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research? I understand that if I have any concerns about the research project I can contact the head of the Research Graduate School who you can contact on 01582 489056 or research@beds.ac.uk</p>	

Appendix 2 Information Sheet for Young People

Information Sheet for Children and Young People: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children (IIOC)

What is the research about?

No one has done any research which involves talking to young people about how they feel about what happens when their parent breaks the law by looking at indecent images of children. My name is Lisa Thornhill, I'm a researcher and I think it's important that adults take time to learn more about how children and young people feel when their parent is convicted so I would like to talk to children and young people like you.

I think that it is difficult for adults to know what the best way is to keep children and young people safe and happy. I want to help children and young people tell people whose job it is to keep them safe how they can be better at helping.

Why are you asking me?

This research project aims to give children and young people the chance to say how they feel about what has happened in their family.

If you decide you want to take part, during a short interview you will be invited to talk about how you have felt about what has happened to you and your family. We might also talk about teachers, nurses, social workers or police officers you have spoken with that you feel have been very helpful or not very helpful.

I only want you to talk about things that you want to chat through and that you feel ok about talking about.

Keeping safe

Before I talk to you I will talk to the person who looks after you (usually your mum and/or dad) and ask their permission to talk to you.

Anything you say will be kept private unless you say something that makes me think you might get hurt.

If you would like a person you already know to be there when you talk to me this is ok.

Where will I talk to Lisa ?

The interview can take place in your home or a place agreed with the person who looks after you if you want them there.

What if I change my mind?

It is ok to change your mind at any time about taking part and you won't be in any trouble.

Questions or concerns about the research?

If you have any questions or concerns you can contact Lisa Thornhill's Supervisor Professor Jenny Pearce who can be contacted via [email jenny.pearce@beds.ac.uk](mailto:jenny.pearce@beds.ac.uk) or through the Research Graduate School 01582 489056 research@beds.ac.uk.

Appendix 3 Information Sheet Parents

Information Sheet for Parents: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children (IIOC)
What is the research about? <p>Parents have the difficult task of knowing how to talk to their child(ren) about what has happened when the child's other parent has been convicted of downloading indecent images of children.</p> <p>There is no current research which addresses the impact on children and young people when a parent is convicted or arrested for downloading indecent images of children. This research project aims to give children and young people a voice about how they have been affected. Findings from this research will help to inform practitioners and parents in the future how they can best support children.</p> <p>In the first instance I am asking you as a parent to comment about the impact on your child(ren). With parental consent, children and young people will be invited to give their views. Only children and young people with some knowledge of their parent's offending will be interviewed.</p>
What is your role? <p>I would like you, as a parent, to give your views about the impact on your child(ren) following your or your partner's conviction for downloading indecent images of children.</p>
Ethical considerations <p>Your information will be kept strictly confidential unless you tell me about abuse or harm affecting you or someone else.</p> <p>If you permit your child(ren) to participate in the study they will not be given information about yours or your partner's offending.</p> <p>You will be provided with details of the STOP IT NOW confidential helpline number and an advice sheet regarding talking to your children.</p> <p>This research design has been approved by the Bedfordshire University Ethics Board.</p>
Practicalities <p>Interviews with parents and children will be completed at a mutually convenient venue. Interviews can be completed in family homes if appropriate.</p>
What I want to leave the research? <p>If you decide you would like to leave the research you can tell the researcher or the professional who told you about the research. There will be no negative consequences if you choose to leave.</p>
Questions or concerns about the research? <p>If you have any questions or concerns you can contact the Head of the Research Graduate School 01582 489056 research@beds.ac.uk.</p>
Expression of interest <p>If you are interested in participating in the research then you can contact me, Lisa Thornhill lthornhill@lucyfaithfull.org.uk or on 07984762744 or if you agree I will contact you.</p>

Appendix 4 Consent Form Children

Consent Form: Exploratory research about the impact on children when their parent is convicted of downloading IIOC

Statement to be read to the participant	Tick if agree
<p>What is the research about? I understand that I will be interviewed by Lisa Thornhill, a professional doctorate student at Bedfordshire University. She will talk to me about what has happened since my dad was arrested for downloading IIOC, specifically what the impact has been on me. I understand that if there is anything I am asked that I do not want to talk about I do not have to answer. I understand that the information I provide will be used to write a report and make recommendations to help people like me. I understand that I will not be identified in any reports and I will be given a false name.</p>	
<p>Recording the interview I understand that, with my permission, interviews will be tape recorded to make a good record of what I say. This recording will be destroyed after the project.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality I understand that everything I say will be kept confidential.</p> <p>The only time something I say will be passed on is if I say anything that makes the researcher worried about my safety or another person's safety. If that happens the researcher will let someone know who might be able to help.</p>	
<p>Deciding I want to leave the research? I understand that I have the right to leave the research at any time and will suffer no negative consequences if I do leave. If I no longer wish to be involved in the research I can leave by telling Lisa. If I do decide to leave the research any information I may already have provided will not be used by the researchers and will be destroyed.</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research? I understand that if I have any concerns about the research project I can contact the head of the Research Graduate School on 01582 489056 or research@beds.ac.uk</p>	

I (name) _____ understand the above and agree to take

part

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 5 Consent Form Offender

Consent Form: Exploratory research about the impact on children when their parent is convicted of downloading IIOC

Statement to be read to the participant (by the researcher)	Tick if agree
<p>What is the research about? I understand that I will be interviewed by Lisa Thornhill, a professional doctorate student at Bedfordshire University. She will talk to me about what has happened since I was arrested for downloading IIOC, specifically what the impact has been on my child and what support has been made available to them. I understand that if there is anything I am asked that I do not want to talk about I do not have to answer. I understand that the information I provide will be used to write a report and make recommendations to help people like me and their children. I understand that I will not be identified in any reports and I will be given a false name.</p>	
<p>Recording the interview I understand that, with my permission, interviews will be tape recorded to make a good record of what I say. This recording will be destroyed after the project.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality I understand that everything I say will be kept confidential.</p> <p>The only time something I say will be passed on is if I say anything that makes the researcher worried about my safety or another person's safety. If that happens the researcher will let someone know who might be able to help.</p>	
<p>Deciding I want to leave the research? I understand that I have the right to leave the research at any time and will suffer no negative consequences if I do leave. If I no longer wish to be involved in the research I can leave by telling Lisa. If I do decide to leave the research any information I may already have provided will not be used by the researchers and will be destroyed.</p>	

I (name) _____ understand the above and agree to take part

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 6 Consent form for parents giving permission to talk to their children

Consent Form: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC

Statement to be read to the participant	Tick if agree
<p>What is the research about? I understand that my child will be interviewed by Lisa Thornhill, a professional doctorate student at Bedfordshire University. She will talk to my child about my family and any professionals that my child has come into contact with. I understand that if there is anything my child is asked that they do not want to talk about they do not have to answer. I understand that the information they provide will be used to write a report designed to help professionals understand how they can best help children. I understand that my child's real name will not be in the report but a pretend name so no one will know it is them.</p>	
<p>How long will the interview take and where will it take place? I understand the interview will take approximately 1 hour and will take place at the Epsom office.</p>	
<p>Recording the interview I understand that, with my permission, interviews will be tape recorded to make a good record of what my child says. This recording will be destroyed after the project.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality I understand that everything my child says will be kept confidential. The only time something my child says will be passed on is if they say anything that makes the researcher worried about their safety or another person's safety. If that happens the researcher will let someone know who might be able to help.</p>	
<p>Deciding I want to leave the research? I understand that my child has the right to leave the research at any time and will suffer no negative consequences if they do leave. If they no longer wish to be involved in the research they can leave by telling the researcher. If my child does decide to leave the research any information s/he may already have provided will not be used by the researchers and will be destroyed.</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research? I understand that if I have any concerns about the research project I can contact the head of the Research Graduate School on 01582 489056 or research@beds.ac.uk</p>	

I (name) _____ understand the above and agree for my child(ren) _____ to take part. Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 7 Consent form non-offending parent

Consent Form: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading IIOC	Tick if agree
<p>What is the research about? I understand that I will be interviewed by Lisa Thornhill, a professional doctorate student at Bedfordshire University. I understand that if there is anything I am asked that I do not want to talk about I do not have to answer. I understand that the information I provide will be used in a report to help professionals understand how best to help children. I understand that my real name will not be in the report and a false name will be used to protect my identity.</p>	
<p>Recording the interview I understand that, with my permission, interviews will be tape recorded to make a good record of what I say. This recording will be destroyed after the project.</p>	
<p>Confidentiality I understand that everything I say will be kept confidential.</p> <p>The only time something I say will be passed on is if I say anything that makes Lisa worried about my safety or another person's safety. If that happens Lisa will let someone know who might be able to help.</p>	
<p>Deciding I want to leave the research? I understand that I have the right to leave the research at any time and will suffer no negative consequences if I do leave. If I no longer wish to be involved in the research I can leave by telling Lisa Thornhill. If I do decide to leave the research any information I may already have provided will not be used and will be destroyed</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research? I understand that if I have any concerns about the research project I can contact the head of the Research Graduate School on 01582 489056 or research@beds.ac.uk</p>	

I (name) _____ understand the above and agree to take

part

Signed _____

Date _____

Appendix 8 Semi structured interview schedule for parents

<p>Semi structured interview schedule for parents: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children</p>	
<p>Introduction Thank you for agreeing to part of this research project. I am Lisa Thornhill, I am a Professional Doctorate student at Bedfordshire University, my supervisor is Professor Jenny Pearce. I have been struck by the limited research regarding the risk posed by people who download indecent images of children. We know that the issues are complex, particularly in a family setting. Parents have the difficult task of knowing how to talk to their child(ren) about what has happened in the family. We need to know more about how children and young people are affected when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children. This research project aims to give children and young people a voice about their experiences. I would like your permission please to spend some time talking to you about the impact you think that you or your partner's conviction, and any subsequent intervention from the local authority, has had on your family. Your information will be kept confidential unless you disclose a new offence or information that indicates risk of harm, in that event I will need to pass on that information. If this were to happen, I would make sure that you know that it was to take place and include you in that process if possible. If you need a break please ask for one. If you don't understand any questions please let me know and I will explain.</p>	
<p>Your child(ren) Do you know what information was your child given? And if so, what was it? What was the impact on your child of receiving this information? Please describe your child before the conviction, the child's behaviours: did they stay the same, did they change after the conviction?</p>	
<p>Support What support were you given to manage the impact on the family (or on you)? Who offered that support? How did you access that support? What support were you given in relation to talking to your child about the conviction? What support was your child offered?</p>	
<p>Consent to speak to child(ren) With your permission I would like to speak directly with your child to give them the opportunity to share their experiences. I will not be providing them with any information. How does that sound?</p>	
<p>Information sheet Provided with information sheet. Opportunity for questions.</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research? If you have any questions or concerns you can contact the Head of the Research Graduate School 01582 489056 research@beds.ac.uk.</p>	

Appendix 9 Semi structured interview schedule for children and young people

<p>Semi structured interview schedule for children and young people: Exploratory research about the impact on children when a parent is convicted of downloading indecent images of children</p>	
<p>Introduction</p> <p>My name is Lisa Thornhill. I am a research student at Bedfordshire University. I have worked with families for a long time and I think it's important that adults take time to learn more about how children and young people feel when their parent breaks the law. I would like to thank you for coming to talk to me today. Your views are really important and will help adults who have the job of helping to keep young people like you safe and happy. It will help them to know how they can do their job as well as possible.</p> <p>Today I would like to spend about an hour with you learning more about you and your family. During the time we spend together today it is my job to keep us both safe. To keep us safe it's important for us to agree some rules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • you don't have to answer any questions you don't want to, • you can tell me if you don't understand something I ask, • any time you would like a break you can have one. <p>It is important for us to be nice and respectful to each other. There will be no touch except for handshakes and we will make sure we finish on time.</p> <p>How does that sound? Is there anything you would like to add?</p> <p>The things you tell me will be kept private unless you tell me something that makes me think you might get hurt then I will need to tell someone so I can make sure you're safe. If I do think that I need to tell anyone else, I will talk to you about this first. How does that sound?</p>	
<p>All about you</p> <p>I would like to take some time to get to know you. What are your favourite things to do? Who is your best friend? Who is your favourite teacher? What are your best qualities?</p> <p>Family picture</p> <p>To help me get to know you and your family, can you draw a picture of your family? I would also like you to tell me two things about each member of your family. Could you do that?</p>	
<p>Professionals you have met</p>	

<p>I'm going to read a list of people who have jobs that involve children. I would like you to tell me which of them you have met before and then I'll ask you to tell me a little bit about what you thought of them. Does that make sense?</p> <p>List: Teacher, Doctor, Nurse, Social Worker, Police Officer, Counsellor? What was good about your contact with them? What could they have done better?</p>	
<p>Your views</p> <p>What important things have happened in your life in the last six months? (If child struggles with time frame use a marker eg before Christmas/Easter, etc) On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being very sad and 10 being super happy, how would you say you feel about what has happened in the last six months? What do you think could you have made you feel happier now/then?</p>	
<p>Relaxation exercise</p> <p>To finish off I would like to teach you a relaxation exercise. Relaxation exercises are good for both adults and children. If you feel ok to do so I would like you to close your eyes and take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Now I would like you to breathe in like you are a big balloon so take a deep breath and squeeze your hands tightly into a fist. Now your muscles are tense. When you breathe out I would like you to breathe out slowly and let your muscles go all floppy and loose. Now they are relaxed. Next I would like you to stand up and take a big balloon breath in and raise your arms up over your head and now slowly breathe out as you let your arms relax to your side (repeat x3).</p> <p>Thank you very much!</p>	
<p>Questions or concerns about the research?</p> <p>If I have any worries I can talk to the person who looks after me and they can talk to the head of the Research Graduate School on 01582 489056 or research@beds.ac.uk</p>	

Appendix 10 Resources

Resources

Association for Young People's Health

<http://www.youngpeopleshealth.org.uk/>

Child Exploitation Online Protection Centre

<http://ceop.police.uk/>

Rape Crisis

Freephone helpline
0808 802 9999

<http://www.rapecrisis.org.uk/>

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP): 0870 443 5252

www.bacp.co.uk

Mothers of Sexually Abused Children

0800 980 1958

www.mosac.org.uk

Parent Line Plus

0808 800 2222 24 hour helpline

Web: www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Email: contact@parentlineplus.org.uk

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Web: www.nspcc.org.uk

Action for Children: 0845 762 6579

Web: <http://www.actionforchildren.org.uk>

Childline: 0800 1111

Web: www.childline.org.uk

The Samaritans: 08457 909090

Web: www.samaritans.org.uk

National Association for People Abused as Children: 0800 085 3330

Web: www.napac.org.uk

Churches Child Protection Advisory Service: 0845 120 45 50

Web: www.ccpas.co.uk

Email: info@ccpas.co.uk

Lucy Faithfull Foundation: 01527 591922

Web: www.lucyfaithfull.org

<http://www.parentsprotect.co.uk/resources.htm>

Stop It Now: Helpline – 0808 1000 900 – their website features an A–Z list of useful links and help groups.

Kidscape

Helpline – 0845 120 5205

Web: www.kidscape.org.uk

Victim Support: 0845 3030 900

Youth Access: 020 8772 9900 for info and advice/counselling

Young Minds: 0800 0182 138 Mon & Fri 10AM – 1PM Tu/Wed/Th 1PM – 4PM

Web: www.stopitnow.org.uk

Barnardos: 020 8550 8822

www.barnardos.org.uk

BECTA: BECTA is the Government's lead agency for information and communications technology in education.

BECTA has a selection of Superhighway Safety websites for Internet safety for schools:

Call BECTA – 024 7641 6994

Web: www.becta.org

Government and other publications on child protection:

Matters2Me – using Enough Abuse research and data, voiceover by Julie Walters
– a DVD and booklet purchased online

“A must have DVD for every parent, teacher and child carer” Julie Walters

www.matters2me.org

“What to do if you’re worried a child is abused”

Call 08701 555455

Web: www.publications.doh.gov.uk/safeguardingchildren

Call 0870 0012345

Email: info@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Web: www.dfes.gov.uk

Enough Abuse UK & EA Protection Ltd

Email: marilyn@enoughabuseuk.com

Mob: 07738 238242

Office: 01462 337419

SKYPE: enoughabuseuk

Twitter: enoughabuseuk

<http://www.enoughabuseuk.com/helpful-services/>

Appendix 11 Advice for talking to children by The Lucy Faithfull Foundation

Talking to children when a parent has been arrested or convicted with regard to child abuse material on the internet

General issues for parents to consider

- 1) It is important for children to have some understanding of what has occurred (because of the reasons given below). However, this should not be done in such a way as to alienate the child from the parent who may have offended.
- 2) It is essential for the child's well-being that estranged parents continue to talk to and about each other with respect in front of their children. Any criticism of the other parent is inviting the child to take sides. Criticism of the other parent undermines the child's self-identity which is formed, in part, from their relationship with and their view of both parents.
- 3) The child should not be made to feel responsible for the distress caused to parents by the offending, or to be subtly invited to take up a caring role in relation to a parent going through distress.
- 4) In the absence of an explanation as to why significant changes have occurred in their family, children will try to make sense of it by guessing, 'filling in the gaps' and sometimes making wrong assumptions – for example they may feel they are part of the problem and feel rejected by a father who now sees them only occasionally.
- 5) Children usually feel love for their parent even though the parent may have done something wrong. Different family members may well feel and respond differently and each needs to be able to express their own views and have them acknowledged, and not criticised.
- 6) Children will probably, at some stage, want to know why Dad did what he did. It may help them to know that the adults are struggling to make sense of this also, as it is usually very complicated. It can be useful to tell

the children that Dad may be getting (or have already got) some help, and is trying to work things out.

- 7) Children will have numerous, often complex, feelings about their father's offending. They will need time to process the information. They may well feel angry about the impact the offences have/might have on their own and other's lives. They may be worried about friends finding out. They may be anxious about their father's future behaviour, and/or the possibility of him going to prison and being unable to cope. Children may feel unable to express/discuss these feelings with parents as they may worry about upsetting them further. They need to know that their parents understand this and, if possible, be directed towards another trusted adult they may be able to talk to and confide in.
- 8) One of the greatest difficulties for a parent is the fear that the child might reject them or become fearful of them, if the child is told about the sexual offending. It is important to bear in mind, however, that the child is likely to find out at some point and it is better that they find out in a controlled way from a supportive adult than by other means. Children can often be angry if they feel significant information has been withheld from them, if they feel they had a right to know about it.
- 9) Too much detail can be very disturbing for children. Keep the details to a minimum when young but let the child know it's OK to ask questions, although you may not be able to answer them all.

Possible ways of conveying information about what has happened

It is important that both parents agree on the choice of words, if possible, arriving at a statement or account that is an accurate reflection of the truth, and with which each is comfortable. Both parents should stick with the agreed account.

If the parent who has offended wants to tell the child, this should be done with the mother or another appropriate adult. It is too much to expect a child to respond to the disclosing adult who has sexually offended, without the presence of another supportive, trusted adult.

The following is only a guide. Each set of parents knows their own child, and may prefer to come up with their own choice of words.

- *Dad has had a problem looking at sexual stuff on the internet, some of which has involved young people and children. The police are involved and Dad has been/may be charged with an offence, and this is why Dad is no longer living with us. He is very sorry about all the trouble it has caused and has been getting/trying to get help, but until it is sorted out Dad/everybody/Social Services/I think it best that you don't see him alone/we see him together/other people are there when you see him. Dad has got support and we don't want you to worry.*
- *Dad did something wrong. He's been looking or talking about rude things on the internet, sexual things, and some of those things were to do with children and are against the law, so the police are involved and are deciding what to do about it.*
- *Dad's got problems with his thinking about what's OK and what's not when it comes to sexual things. He's been looking at sexual stuff on the internet and some of it was to do with children, which is against the law.*
- *Dad's been spending a lot of time on the internet and I/we have found out that some of that time was spent looking at sexual pictures of children. It's against the law to look at that kind of thing and Dad is in trouble for doing it.*

If relevant, parents may want to include comments such as:

- a) Dad still loves and cares for you*
- b) Dad is very upset to have caused so much upset for all the family*
- c) Dad is trying to get some help with his problem*
- d) We really didn't want you to have to hear this but thought you had a right to know what was going on*
- e) We don't know if Dad will go to prison. If he does he will be in a special part of the prison that will keep him safe*
- f) It is unlikely that Dad will go to prison (if this is the case)*

g) The story might appear in the local press. If it does we will help you handle it

Generally, there is little point in putting e, f and g in the child's mind, if they haven't been thinking of these possibilities. However, they may raise these issues, or be worried about them. It is also important to give the child the signals (in words and attitude) at the time of talking to them, and subsequently, that they are free to ask any questions, although you may not be able to answer them all.

Appendix 12 Written Agreement

Written Agreement

- I, Donald Findlater, Research and Development Director, agree that the researcher (Lisa Thornhill) can indirectly invite parents who have downloaded IIOC to participate in research exploring the impact of the conviction on children. I understand that the researcher will request permission from the said parents to speak with their children.
- I understand that the researcher (Lisa Thornhill) will only be requesting to talk to children over thirteen years old.
- I understand that the researcher (Lisa Thornhill) will not be giving children any information about their parents' offending.
- The researcher (Lisa Thornhill) will ensure the rights and needs of the child are prioritised above the research.
- The researcher (Lisa Thornhill) will maintain the client's confidentiality unless a participant tells her about significant harm affecting them or someone else.
- The researcher (Lisa Thornhill) will ensure records are stored safely.
- The research design has been approved by the Bedfordshire University Ethics Committee.

Signed

Date

Appendix 13 Sample of Coded Transcripts

Data coded at 'experience of arrest code' – child present

R8 well my partner left for work early about quarter past six as always, I was getting my daughter ready to go round to her grandmas for where I went to work, I was combing her hair about quarter to eight in the morning. There was a knock at the door and there were two police officers

R8 two, two and half, she's three now, it's her birthday in January. So she was clinging onto me, she could obviously tell that something wasn't right. Then when I took her to her nan's she was crying a lot, which wasn't very nice for me, she was in tears. But I knew I had to leave her, I had to come back

R2 so, it was completely out of the blue erm er so he used to work abroad so he would work in abroadville during the week and then he would return home on a Friday evening and I was at home with my youngest daughter so she was 12 and erm and he had literally just got into *the train station* and I got a text from him and he was annoyed because the timings hadn't worked for something so he was asking me to check trains so I literally just heard from him and there was a knock and ring of the door, so I went to the door and er there were, a police officer who asked if she could come in and she said it was to do with him erm my daughter was there at the time, I told her to go upstairs, there were four police officers and er they basically explained that they had arrested him so there was a coordinated arrest as he got off the train

R2 erm yeah confused she just did, she said to me she just took it at face value when I spoke to her and said it was about bringing wine into the country she just took it at face value. I mean she was upset in terms of crying at the time she was just completely bewildered

R10 erm yep back in March on the 26th R11 got arrested in the morning. He was travelling to work on his way to workville and it was the police on MC1 018's phone and erm how it worked with me. I thought it was mum and she turned poorly so I didn't understand what was going on except he told me in a voicemail that the police were coming to fetch him and that was all I knew and then I found out in the afternoon that R11 had got arrested and MC1 018 had got arrested because before they got into the

police car they didn't know who it was and then I found out that it was R11 that got arrested for downloading indecent images.

Me ok and who is MC1 018?

R10 MC1 018 is his eldest son, the 18 year old

R10 because he was over the age of 18 he got arrested as well because they didn't know who it was in the house who was downloading the indecent images

Lisa Thornhill and what impact did that have on MC1 018?

R10 all I can say is luckily not that much because he went to the police station he didn't know what was going on. So on the way to the police station R11 was in the back of the car and he said it was him. So they didn't need to do anything to MC1 018. I even heard in the court that R11 said straight away, it's me you're after.

R12 They said they wouldn't be doing their job properly if they didn't follow me upstairs so she waited outside the bedroom and it got to the point where I were getting quite.... frantic probably isn't the right word kind of panicked

Lisa Thornhill yeah

R12 cos I really wanted to just shout at her and say just get out of bed

Lisa Thornhill yeah

R12 so I just said to her you need to get out of bed there is a police officer outside your door

Lisa Thornhill oh

R12 and she just went what? and I just said please FC1 get up, get dressed and then this police officer appeared, it were a female police officer that come upstairs and she was just like hello and I was like oh she's just being friendly just get dressed and I'll be in a minute. So FC1 was very compliant at that point erm

Lisa Thornhill was she a uniformed officer?

R12 yeah they were all in uniform

Lisa Thornhill right

R12 erm

Lisa Thornhill did they give you an explanation as to why they needed so many people?

R12 well no [sighs] not really I mean they basically said afterward that they didn't know how big the house was... well they could have gone on google earth and had a look because they could have been. Also I found out later, cos basically a friend of mine who I have confided used to work in HR for homeville police and he's told me that, for these kind of offences when they know there's children in the house, which I know damn well that they knew that there were children in the house

R12 there's no way that they didn't know that because they can find out everything erm is well they [inaudible] they got to the house they'd got social care and everybody lined up and ready to interview they'd got child protection police, ready to interview FC1 everything so they knew, my friend told me that they are supposed to wait until the children are not in the house

R12 and then go and get them from somewhere else. I mean the thing is if I'd had any advance warning I would have taken em down to the police station myself

R12 but I appreciate they didn't know me but what they should've done is gone and picked him up at work and then the kids would have been safe and they wouldn't have known so FC1 was like oh, I remember her saying to me outside how disgus.. she didn't ask about her dad at that point she was like oh mum are they going to arrest you? and I said no don't be daft so erm she went off with grandma. We told grandma very limited information they were then, there were only two officers left in the house, searching the house erm but the they took everything, they were in the loft they were everywhere, and where we live, * workplace is just behind the house and so all his colleagues has seen all the police cars outside the house, all his friends were talking about it in the village and erm one of his friends used to clean for me, she used to clean on a Thursday and the police come on the Friday erm I went round and said you can't clean for me any more we've split up I can't. The bail conditions were that he couldn't have no contact with children

R12 but he couldn't come within 50 yards of the house and he wasn't allowed to contact me because I was a potential witness for the prosecution

Data coded at 'Emotional Resilience'

R3: My wife told her soon after my arrest. I was in London and it hasn't been, and FC4 has refused contact with me. Prior to my arrest my relationship with FC4 was very, er, good, we were had a strong connection, she's a very active, intelligent girl, who also has... she feels things very strongly. I'll give you one example to try and put in into some

kind of context, she's a very high achiever, musically, when she received things like results music exam results in the post she would run to tell me. Erm... [Very tearful]

R6 yeah yeah, erm that in part [inaudible] the teachers said that because of MC4's character it doesn't show that there has been any impact.

R9 erm she, she, she was erm she was supporting me and er I don't really know obviously she doesn't really tell me so it's difficult to say but she is always strong and erm and erm you know she is always involved in activities which takes her mind off things

R9 She's a very opinionated young girl, erm I found out about the costs of the phones I've bought her and the coats she wants she is very strong willed, very strong willed, she she's, she's the head of the gang, erm people listen to her, you know she's a lovely child you know we got her involved in running and she is involved in this homeville athletics club which is brilliant and she's into her fitness so she goes to the gym as well.

R9 you know you know if it had been someone who was never there for them and didn't give a damn and didn't think about them I'm sure they would have acted differently... but I am empathic and I did care it it it I was always mindful that they should be out doing stuff so I no matter how tired I was I would take them out and get them out in the fresh air, I got MC1(O18) involved in several football teams, FC2 (O18) has now run forty marathons now all around the world

R9 and now she is going for a triathlon and stuff, MC1 (O18) totally involved in sport you know. He's very highly qualified in what he does so that's the basis that I, and I was like that with FC1 constantly involved in stuff and I think they must look back and think how can I be angry, you've done something wrong, you've understood that you've done something wrong, let's make it better, let's get back to where we were and that will happen whether social services like it or not she'll be an adult soon and when she's an adult, she'll have a lot to say

Data coded at 'RF relationship between the child and the father before the offence'

Lisa Thornhill: tell me about your relationship with MC1 before all of this happened?

R4: incredibly healthy relationship, he's erm really active lots of sports, regional tennis, he plays football, swimming, he's a year ahead at school. I built a bike from scratch, from this old bike I bought, you know redone all the paint on it, to give to him when I

see him, I absolutely dote on him. I've had no thoughts of harming him or being sexual with him or anything like that at all. I see being a father as being you know, a process where you know, my last offence was 2005/6 actually having a child and recognising what a child is and what's in their world, you know Minecraft, sport and stuff and actually having my son has made me realise they are not sexual beings at all. They're not even interested, they're not, not that I've even broached it, it hasn't come up. You know he wants to know when he can go and play tennis next

R8 great we've always had a really strong bond, you know she's my little girl she's my first. Erm since, in between the police coming and the social workers turning up me and my partner had unprotected sex once and she, well we had another baby and he was born on the 31st May so he is only two months old so all this happened when she was pregnant, but no me and FC1 have always been close

R8 oh FC1, she was on maternity I had two weeks off but no I was straight to work

R9 oh brilliant, brilliant, I was a hands on dad

R9 oh bowling the lot, cinema you know as a family, you know [inaudible], the lot

R9 fantastic and you know thankfully... I don't think much about my ex wife but nonetheless she was, and she was asked about the relationship and she said he was an incredible father to the children

R9 She said I could say things about him but I can't knock him for that you know. There is backings from many people

Lisa Thornhill how long were you with your wife for?

R9 about twenty years

R9 you'll find that out whether their 29 or 9 it doesn't matter, it's still your child and although he's a big fitness fanatic. Oh he's got right medical as well, he's a big chap, big hairy chest, he must have got that from his mother, he's gone medical, he goes into hospitals and does research about the heart and stuff. You know dealing with people who have had heart attacks and stuff and their coming back for exercise, he's a credit to me as well

R9 you know you know if it had been someone who was never there for them and didn't give a damn and didn't think about them I'm sure they would have acted differently... but I am empathic and I did care it it it I was always mindful that they should be out doing stuff so I no matter how tired I was I would take them out and get them out in the fresh air, I got * involved in several football teams, * has now run forty marathons now all around the world

R9 and now she is going for a triathlon and stuff, *'s totally involved in sport you know. He's very highly qualified in what he does so that's the basis that I, and I was like that with * constantly involved in stuff and I think they must look back and think how can I be angry, you've done something wrong, you've understood that you've done something wrong, let's make it better, let's get back to where we were and that will happen whether social services like it or not she'll be an adult soon and when she's an adult, she'll have a lot to say

R2 er yeah very erm very kind of involved, I mean he travelled a lot on business but when he was when he was at home he was very very erm typical kind of family man, you know he would be involved with the girls he was very erm, he would say a very good and still is a very good father he would say, he has a complete, almost like a split personality so he would say that what he did online has absolutely nothing to do with his children

Lisa Thornhill what would FC1 and FC2 say about how they experience their dad as younger children?

R2 erm that he was really erm just a great dad, a lot of fun to be with you know, lively outgoing, they were close to him. The only reservation that my eldest might have is that she definitely noticed a change in him when she got to about ten or eleven and we were living in the States at the time, we followed work so we had to move out there and she went to quite a demanding school and he was very very harsh on her in terms of grades but there was definitely a change in him in terms of attitudes looking back on it maybe it's hindsight but looking back on it but as she became a teenager I don't know perhaps it gave him unsettling thoughts, he became far more harsh towards her and indulgent towards FC2 so there was more a split. FC1 would say that's when she felt that FC2 became the favourite

R10 well MC4 was living with him at the time so, he's the sixteen year old and MC1 018. FC2 and MC3, the younger ones they live full time with the mum but on a weekly basis

they go and tea with R11 and MC1 018 and MC4 would go to their mum once a week. But, it was all good, they used to come to the cottage once a month we would have them over the school holidays for a week, we would have them over Christmas for a week. Erm R11 would help out if one needed a dental appointment and he would always take MC4 to his yeah it was it was fine and I loved it because when they came to the cottage cos sometimes we would like to take them out of city living and take them off for country living and drag them out for walks, they didn't always like it but it was getting them out in the fresh air. He was, to me, he was a very good dad, it wasn't that he was strict with them but if they pushed the boundaries, they would get a telling off but we could always have smiles and laughs

Holly erm he was jokey and quite like erm yeah it's really weird because he seems like a completely normal person like my relationship with him, like the relationships I see with my friends and their dads is like now it was the same. He was quite like, with school work, he was very strict on and if I was like did badly in anything I got a massive telling off for it basically. I was a lot younger then but I got a telling off for it but then I stopped it was kind of like in stages. Did my mum tell you we used to live in awayville?

Holly oh well we all used to live in Abroadville, he used to travel a lot but then he got a job in America and he would be travelling less so we all moved over to abroadville and that's when I felt like he was being very strict about what I was doing where I was going, what my grades were that was it was all a bit pressured but apart from that it was normal it was just a little bit strict and he kind of tended to overshadow my mum as well but when we moved back to England and he got a job in awayville but we didn't want to live in awayville so he would stay in awayville during the week and then he would come back on a weekend so I would only really see him on a weekend anyway but erm yeah and that made it difficult because I would want to go out on a weekend but it would be the only time I would get to see my dad like do I go out I won't get to see my dad and he was like where are you going? what are you doing? Why aren't you here? So in that sense it got worse living in England as opposed to abroadville

Holly, he was quite charming, he had friends and he was quite good at, everyone he met he got quite friendly with them quickly he won people over very easily I think but he was also quite controlling, you would only see it at certain times but he was quite controlling he liked things to be a certain way and like to behave a certain way so yeah he was quite charming but also quite controlling which is weird yeah

Holly we used to do it like me and my sister but not together because we wouldn't fit laughs. He liked his motorbike so we went on his motorbike a couple of times. This was in abroadville. We used to do stuff when I was younger like in our garden we built like paving thing I was only really young but I remember it for some reason. We used to go on dog walks and stuff. We used to have two but one died and we've still got one.

Holly yeah I used to get stressed. Well English school start like a year earlier than abroadville schools so I was when I came to abroadville I was technically a year ahead of everyone else so they put me in this gifted and talented academy it was quite full on and it was just because I was a year ahead but erm I had to submit this essay thing and I submitted it and I got in and I think because I was at this academy that was meant to be at this academy that was supposed to be for gifted and talented people it sounds funny when I say it, you know what I mean it was like when I got my reports and stuff it was always like scrutinised and it was like what am I falling behind in and what do I need to do

Holly and it was yeah and I remember having a few episodes when I got a B instead of an A and there would be a massive drama about it. My mum was angry about it but I think she said since then, since my dad's left that my dad was controlling and she recognised that he was being a bit hard on me but she did want to say anything

Holly I think she felt a bit overshadowed by him maybe because she felt like she had to support him like they were my parents and I think she felt quite controlled by him and I think I felt that as well because my mum would be like backing him up but he would be the main person who would be telling me what to do

Holly yeah I didn't see anything. I didn't see anything wrong with it. It wasn't I mean apart from the fact that maybe my mum was a bit overshadowed by him which I didn't see that as much then as I do looking back now and now you look back and you pick up on little things and you're like oh maybe like I can see how that happened

R11 I honestly don't know because erm at the end of the day I had been released on bail. It was the night that I used to, once a week, I used to have all the kids round my house for a meal so they could see each other. Erm once a week they used to go to their mother's house so they were always seeing each other twice a week so we had this arrangement and then one weekend at my cottage with R10, one weekend with their mother and her partner and then for two weekends in the summer and then the same with their mum. So that night I had made em all a meal and I apologised to them and

told them what I'd been arrested for and I explained as much as I could about it I couldn't say why I'd done it and then I got a call from social services about quarter to six saying that they understood I'd been arrested and I said yeah and they said this and that, you've got to get the children out of the house. They have got to go back to their mother's now and I said they've had just sat to the table can they eat their meal and I can have them back at their mum's by half past? And after that I've not seen them or heard anything about them. I've had the odd text now and again between R10 and the kids. I haven't seen her to say how you are. Social services told me not to get in touch since I've been sentenced last week erm MC4's text me because he's sixteen now he's said he's missing me and he would like to see me. I've asked my probation officer and she's asking my erm oh what they called my liaison officer, I don't know what his name is, what do you call them?

R11 erm what did I do well as a parent? I cos I did materially for the kids, they never went without, they had what they needed. They had a good diet, I made sure they had good erm support because mum was there all the time so they were always picked up and dropped off at nursery erm we used to, when they were very little we used to read em in bed every night before they went to sleep. I sat up with them to sleep train them as babies so they didn't get stressed out. From my recollection sort of left them in their cot swaddled I used to sit with them while they were in the cot so they could be reassured that they were going to sleep with somebody there. We used always take them out and expose them to erm nature, beaches, walks, social history tried to do everything that was not necessarily be provided through school because school had become more aligned with er meeting targets and standards rather than around education, giving them the opportunity to try things like horseriding erm playing instruments, trying other sports, and things like that, being there and doing everything I feel I missed out on as a kid. All that at the expense of the one thing I did wrong has now ruined everything else that I was doing for the kids we're back to that positions where after I've everything I've done I've probably done some harm as well now. It's just untenable

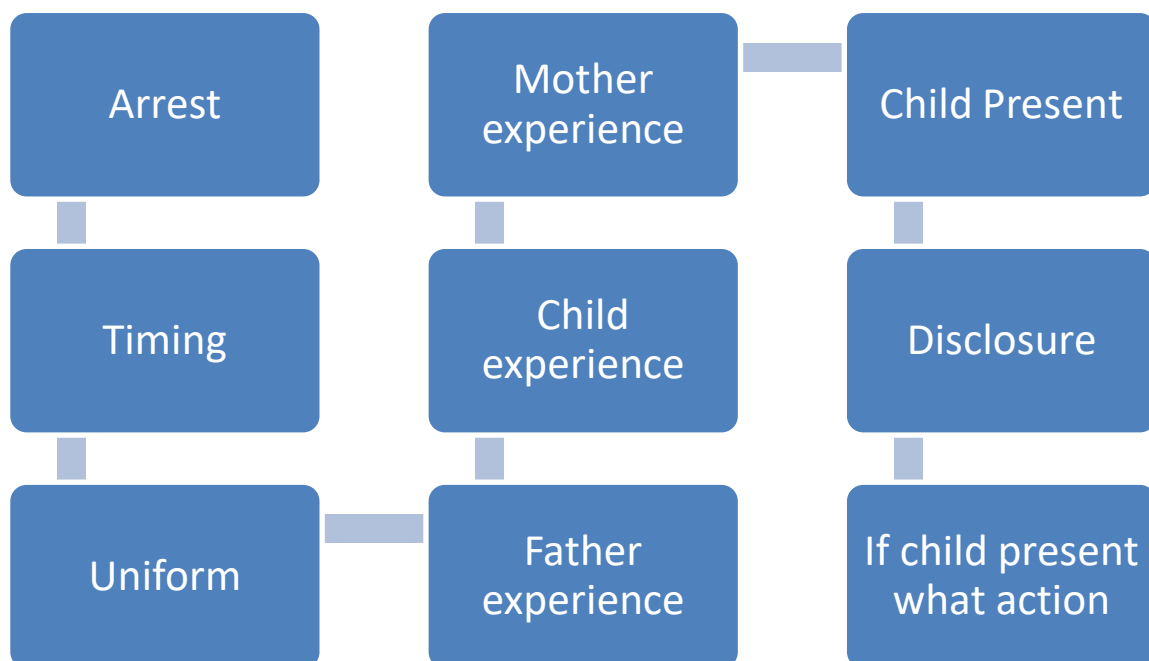
R4: He's my son I love him very much, the... he's a big priority of mine. I do love him to bits. We have a good relationship. We obviously had the trauma before of the divorce, breaking the news to him about that, my wife and I discussed it carefully and be as gentle as possible with him about that. so erm he was very surprised as we didn't row or anything like that it was quite amicable. We both realised we wanted different things out of life and that it would be better for us to be apart erms so the relationship was, to ease the thing I have moved about half an hour away by the coast. My son totally loved to come and stay by the sea, loved did boy things together and stuff, I loved having him over we did boy things together he's a good lad

Appendix 13 Thematic map

Initial coding framework



The Arrest



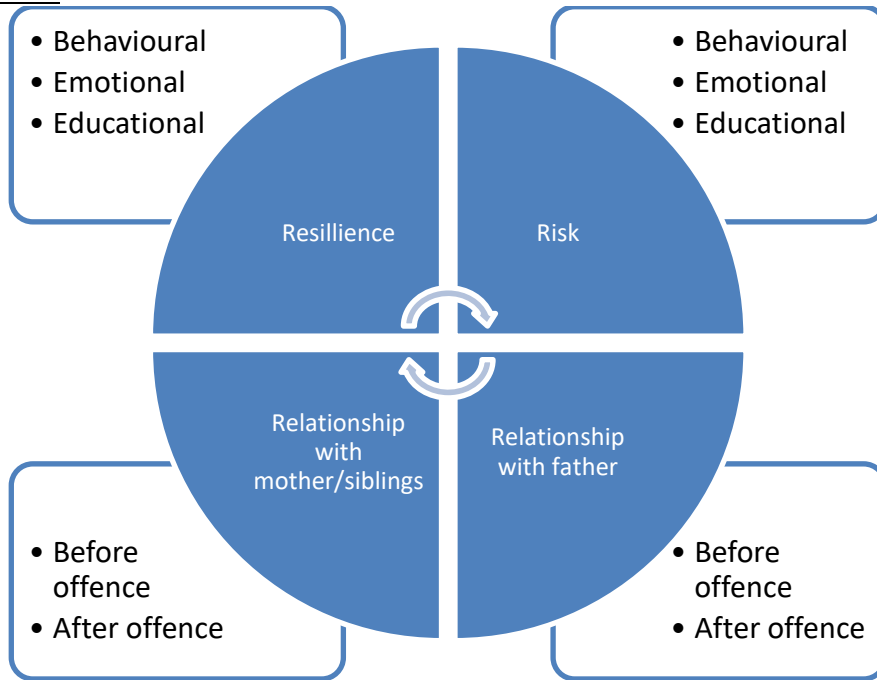
Disclosure

Disclosure	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•What does the child know•Reasons for disclosing•Reasons against disclosing
Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•By who/when?•Siblings... the same time different?•Environment•Advice
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none">•Child's reaction•Sibling's reaction•Friends

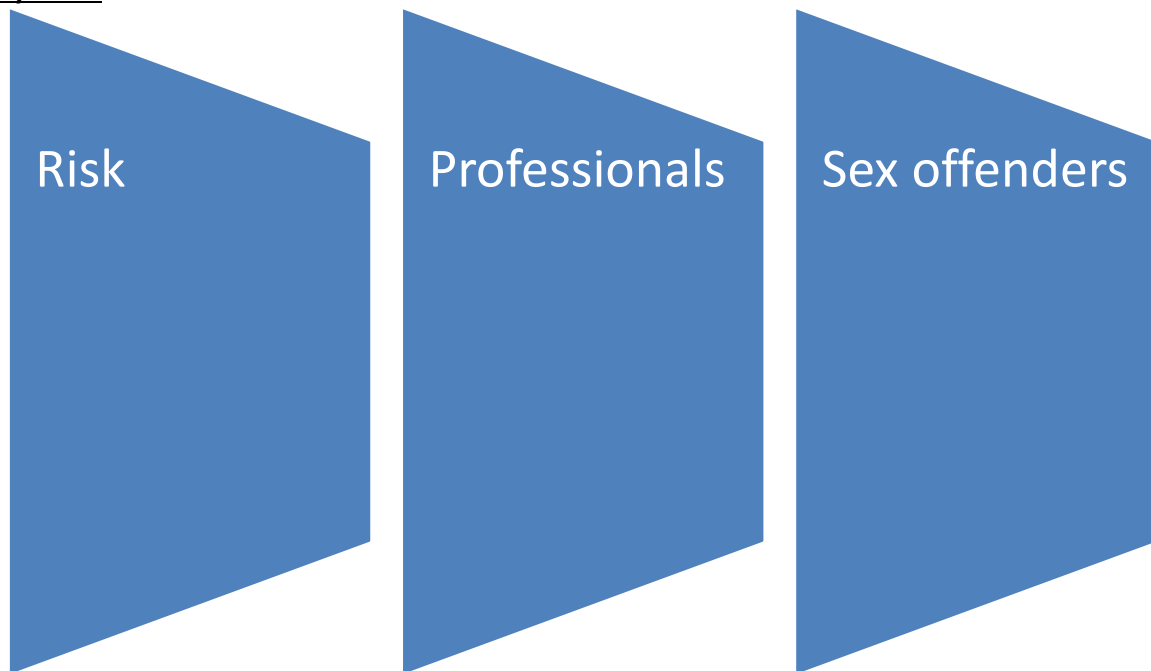
Contact

Contact refused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• By the child• By the mother• By children's services
Challenges to contact	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Father being removed from family home• Relationship ended• Availability of friends/family
Contact permitted	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supervised• Mother's experience of supervised contact• Mother

Impact on child



Symbols



Support offered

