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COPING: Children of Prisoners, Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health. Perspectives of Children, Parents and Carers – German Report

Original Citation

Bieganski, Justyna, Manby, Martin and Jones, Adele (2011) COPING: Children of Prisoners, Interventions and Mitigations to Strengthen Mental Health. Perspectives of Children, Parents and Carers – German Report. Research Report. University of Huddersfield.

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D02.3 Germany Interview intermediate Summary Report

Nature: Report

Dissemination Level: Public (PU)

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Context

Author(s): Justyna Bieganski
Work Package: WP2
Task: Complete Interim Report

Document Status

Version: 00.01
Last modified: 30.06.11
Status: Final
Approved by:
Date Approved:

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WP2 Interim Report

1. Introduction

WP2 requires each country to complete 40 in-depth interviews with children; 40 interviews with their parent / carer; and 40 interviews with their imprisoned parent.

The purpose of the interviews is to explore the impact of having a parent in prison on the child(ren) and their family. This includes the impact of imprisonment on all aspects of the child's life, including their welfare and development; family relationships; education; and social life. Contact with the imprisoned parent is explored. The child's wishes for the future are included.

Wherever possible complete triads (interviews with the child, the parent/carer and the imprisoned parent) should be achieved. The imprisoned parent should be interviewed at the prison if possible; or as soon after release from prison as possible.

The four countries have agreed that it may be necessary to interview more than 40 families in order to achieve high quality data.

2. Methodology

2.1 Interview schedule

Detailed interview schedules for the child, the parent/carer and the imprisoned parent were developed in Year 1 jointly by the four countries. The schedules include protocols to ensure that participants are fully informed about the scope of the interviews and are able to give informed consent. The importance of confidentiality is stressed. The content of the interviews is explained in advance.

Interview schedules include questions about family, school and social life; about changes since the parent has been in prison; about the child's experience of visiting prison, and other ways of keeping in contact. Help available from NGOs and other organisations is covered. Children's views about future plans are discussed.

The main focus of interviews with parents/carers and the imprisoned parent is also on the impact of parental imprisonment on the child.

Each interview schedule includes a number of questions with scaled (numerical) answers. Separate score sheets are provided for each interview.

Interview schedules and score sheets have all been translated into the appropriate languages.

2.2 Sampling

WP2 participants are mainly drawn from families who complete the WP1 questionnaire, and who agree to take part in the in-depth interviews.

The Delivery of Work Programme anticipated that sampling would include equal numbers of children drawn from the four quartiles of results from the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire, which is included in the WP1 survey. This was to ensure that equal numbers of more and less resilient children were included. Following advice from Huddersfield's consultant psychologist, this guideline has been amended. Each country has been tasked with obtaining equal numbers of children in the *normal*, *borderline* and *abnormal* score ranges from S&D questionnaires, as far as this can be achieved.

For children under 11 the parent S&D score must be used. For children aged 11+ both the child's and the parents' S&D scores are considered, and the more negative score is used. Each country is using its own normative range for S&DQs.

The target for WP2 is to achieve equivalent numbers of boys and girls; a spread of children across the eligible age range (7-17); and inclusion of a smaller number of looked after children. Children from different minority ethnic groups will have important contributions.

More than one child from each family can be interviewed. However, the target remains to achieve interviews with 40 families.

The aim is also to include a significant proportion of imprisoned parents who are mothers, recognising that maternal imprisonment can have even greater impact on children than paternal imprisonment.

2.3 Participants

Numbers interviewed so far –

Note. the number of children interviewed may exceed the number of families if more than one child in the family has been interviewed.

Families interviewed	Child/ren interviews completed	Interviews with non-imprisoned parent/cares completed	Interviews with imprisoned parent completed
3	3	3	2

Number of interviews where summaries have been completed (sum of child, non-imprisoned parent carer and imprisoned parent carer summaries)	child: 3, non-imprisoned parent: 3, imprisoned parent: 2
Number of interviews which have been transcribed (sum of child, non-imprisoned parent carer and imprisoned parent carer scripts)	child: 3, non-imprisoned: 3, imprisoned: 2

S&DQ Categories -

Normal.	Borderline	Abnormal	Total
2	0	1	3

Please note that, as stated above, each country has responsibility for assessing the S&DQ categories (normal, borderline and abnormal) in relation to the country's S&DQ norms; and that for children under 11, the parents' rating must be used.

	Count
Children interviewed alone	2
Children interviewed with a parent present	1

2.4 Demographic data

Table 1: age and gender of children interviewed

Age (years)	Girls	Boys	Total
7		1	1
8			
9			
10	1		1
11			
12			
13		1	1
14			
15			
16			
17			
Total	1	2	3

Table 2: Nationality

Nationality	non-impisoned parent/carer	imprisoned parent/carer	child
Germany	3	2	3
Romanian			
Turkish		1	
Russian			
Ukrainian			
Croatian			
Serbian			
Others			

Note: The number of the nationalities may exceed the number of families if the participants have more than one nationality.

Table 3: Spoken language

Spoken language/s	non-imprisoned parent/carer	imprisoned parent/carer	child
Germany	3	3	3
Romanian			
Turkish	1	1	1
Russian			
Ukrainian			
Croatian			
Serbian			
Others			

Note: The number of the spoken language may exceed the number of families if more than one language is spoken by the participants.

Table 4: relationship of non-imprisoned and imprisoned parent/carer to child

	Non-imprisoned parent/ carer	Imprisoned parent/carer
Mother	3	
Father		1
Stepmother		
Stepfather		1
Grandmother		
Grandfather		
Great grandmother		
Great grandfather		
Sister		
Brother		
Aunt		
Uncle		
Female friend of family		
Male friend of family		
Girlfriend/Boyfriend of the non-imprisoned parent/carer (not living together)		1
non-married partner of the non imprisoned parent/carer (living together)		

(add others as required)

Table 5: status of imprisoned parent/carer

	Count
On remand/ unconvicted/ convicted but not yet sentenced	0
Sentenced	3
For those who have been sentenced indicate sentence lengths	1 x 82 months 1 x 76 months 1 x 15 months

2.5 Procedure

Location of interviews	<i>All the present interviews were conducted at the families' home. The interviews with the two prisoners were conducted in the prison in Nuermberg.</i>
Describe how access to prisons has been negotiated	<i>TRE has received approval of the prison administration of the prison in Nuermberg to conduct the interviews with the imprisoned parents/cares. For the interviews the prison allowed to use rooms, that are reserved for lawyers. A social worker has reserved two of these rooms and settled all formalities with the prison staff, allowing Justyna Bieganski and Sylvia Starke from TRE to conduct the interviews at the same time with different participants.</i>
Who has conducted the interviews	<i>Justyna Bieganski and Sylvia Starke from TRE have conducted the interviews with the children, the non-imprisoned parents/carers and the imprisoned parents/carers.</i>
Role played by NGO in facilitating interviews	<i>TRE is a partner of the prison in Nuermberg, therefore there were no difficulties in conducting the interviews with the prisoners. TRE had easy access to the detainees.</i>
Additional comments on methodology: e.g. use of drawings for younger children	<i>No comments.</i>
Techniques for involving children less able to talk or with learning disabilities	<i>In the previously conducted interviews there was no such experience yet.</i>

3. Results

3.1 Coding Framework

A draft coding framework was developed by the four countries in January/February 2011. this will be further developed in the light of experience. A copy is attached (Appendix i).

3.2 Analysis

Summaries of all interviews are to be completed to aid data analysis.

The four countries have agreed to use the N.Vivo software package to analyse transcript data.

Training in the use of N.Vivo was provided by the University of Huddersfield for representatives of all four countries in January 2011. Analysis will commence while interviews are being completed, and will be finalised in November/December 2011.

Each country will produce a report on WP2 (end of Year 2 / early Year 3). An overview report will be compiled bringing together key findings and recommendations.

3.3 Emerging findings

In Germany we have interviewed 3 children from 3 families for WP2 so far. SDQ scores for the children are: normal: 2; borderline: 0; abnormal: 1;

We have interviewed 2 imprisoned parents/carers in the prison in Nuermberg/Bavaria so far.

All children interviewed have know that the parent/carer is in prison, but the children don't know the reason why.

Two of the three children interviewed don't suffer a lot from the situation. In all three cases the mother said that the imprisonment of the father didn't affect the performance in school. Two interviewed mothers are unemployed and have to struggle with financial difficulties.

It was interesting to observe in one family, where the father and the mother are divorced, that one child has more regular and frequent contact to the father after the imprisonment than before. The child visits the father every two weeks in the form of the father-child-group in Nuremberg prison.

Over all it is very difficult (like in WP1) to get children to participate, whose mothers are incarcerated. When the mother incarcerated the children often live in foster families or institutional homes. Experience has shown that access to the children through the children's homes and foster families can not be achieved taking into account the German data protection regulations.

At this stage of the conduction it is difficult to produce preliminary findings. The N-Vivo analysis should begin in July 2011.

WP2 - NVivo

First steps towards developing a Coding Framework

Introduction

Following the WP2 training in Huddersfield on 20th / 21st January 2011, GG and MM have given further thought to the development of an initial coding framework for WP2. We have tried to keep a balance between developing a starting point while not going into too much detail. We have drawn on the productive discussion on Thursday 20th January in Huddersfield.

We have come up with about a dozen main headings which, in NVivo terms can be described as parent nodes. We have mostly tried to avoid specifying child nodes. An exception is the parent code for 'family relationships'. Here, we have developed some child nodes.

We have included 'stigma' and 'bullying' as a joint parent node. These are both substantial topics in their own right. For the purposes of our research, their relevance is how far they have potential to impact adversely on children's resilience.

We are aware that there is considerable overlap between some of the parent nodes identified. One example is the overlap between 'Communication' and 'Family relationships'. This kind of overlap seems unavoidable; and indeed, all the themes are interlocking, as they all bear on the main focus of the research (i.e. children's resilience).

We also gave some thought about how to deal with ML's and RS' suggestion that all the data obtained could be related to a theme about time: i.e. past or present or future. This idea is helpful and relevant. However, we decided that coding all the data under one of these three headings would be too cumbersome and time consuming. Instead, we have opted for a theme about significant past events, where these have a bearing on participants current view of the world. We have also included a parent code for future plans / changes.

We would welcome responses and comments on this framework, and would ask to receive these by the end of February 2011. We will need to continue the development of the coding framework beyond that, as new data and findings emerge.

This first exercise will enable GG to start putting parent codes into NVivo.

One further thought. We will need to consider how to record and analyse evidence about participants', particularly children's, attitudes, including non verbal responses and body language. This may include recording questions where children exercise their right not to answer. Or where their answer is a silence, or hesitating. Or where they appear troubled in some way. Children's responses could be related to learning or behavioural difficulties. Our suggestions at this stage include recording this kind of evidence in interview summaries; or annotations could be included in transcripts (perhaps using the tracking tool on the computer). We may need to come back to this subject.

Parent nodes: (a starting point for interviews with children and young people; parents / carers and imprisoned parents).

1. Resilience

Covers indicators / signs or resilience or stress.

Indicators can include: courage / bravery / heroism. Stress factors e.g. isolation withdrawal / low mood / behavioural problems. Sleep habits / sleep patterns. Undisturbed sleep / nightmares / night terrors

2. **Change**

Stability / healthy change / unhealthy change.

Change in family structure and roles following parental imprisonment.

Family relationships will change following a parent's imprisonment.

3. **Communication**

Quality of communication and conversation; language and terminology used.

4. **Honesty / disclosure**

Information shared openly, or not. Could be a feature of conversation between adults; between adults and children; and of children's interaction with peers.

5. **Family relationships**

Protective factors e.g. positive relationships within family / extended family / school support / friendships; positive self esteem linked to attainment at school / sports / hobbies.

COPING strategies e.g. being able to talk with parents / talk with others / talk with adults e.g. schools or professionals.

Risk factors e.g. breakdown of relationships / experience of witnessing family or domestic violence.

Quality of support for children; conflict (e.g. between parents); ambivalence; idealisation; fantasy.

Fair treatment: setting boundaries; spoiling.

Some of the above could be developed as child nodes.

6. **School**

Support; parent's communication with school; role of teachers and other staff.

Impact of imprisonment on child's attendance / behaviour / attainment.

7. **Friends / friendships**

Support; impact of imprisonment on; school friends / other friends.

8. **Achievements / special interest / sports / hobbies**

These will need to be part of the coding framework in order to develop a holistic picture of participants.

9. **Bullying / stigma**

Bullying: Child's experience / school / how dealt with / how resolved / policy implications.

Stigma: Child's experience / family's experience / policy implications.

Impact of media; perceptions of wider society.

10. ***Practical arrangements***

Impact of imprisonment on finance / income / domestic arrangements (who does the work) / moving home / changes in care givers.

11. ***Contact between child and imprisoned parent***

Visits; travel arrangements; telephone calls; text messages (if permitted); factors promoting positive contact; factors working against positive contact; policy implications.

12. ***Significant past events***

Exploring significant past events for participants impacting on present perceptions and situation.

13. ***Future changes***

Talk about the future / need for adjustments, adaptations / date of release / aspirations.

14. ***Services***

Experience of support services / interventions / family visiting services / POPs, NGOs. Views about accessing support / talking to professionals. Opportunities to meet children of other prisoners.

15. ***Practice or policy issues***

Children and other participants' views about practice / improvements / policy issues. Role of courts / police / prison staff.