

# Understanding The Influence Of An Early Life Criminal Record On Adult Life Courses; Preliminary Findings And Reflections

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# Research Overview

The aim of this research is to explore how an early life criminal record may have subsequently had an impact of individuals affectively, and in relation to their life course from childhood to adulthood. This research will try to capture the narratives which are currently under-represented in existing literature.

## Research Questions

1. What meanings have individuals assigned to their criminal record (learning experience, catalyst for change, not able to shake it off etc.)?
2. How do individuals believe their criminal record has impacted their life chances in different domains (employment, education, relationships)?
3. How do individuals think that their criminal record has impacted their identity and sense of self?
4. How did they negotiate life course as a result (pro-active change, self-exclusion, coping strategies)?

# METHODOLOGY

## Who?

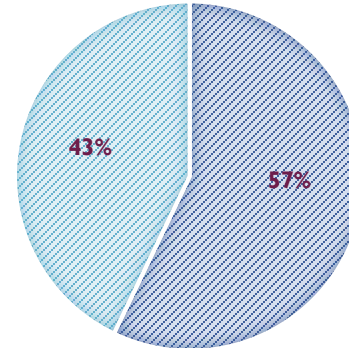
Individuals living in the UK now over the age of 25 with a criminal record. Specifically, a criminal record attained aged 25 or under, relating to one or more non-custodial offence(s). For logistical purposes, research focused on individuals living in the North West and Midlands.

## How?

- Supported by Unlock a nationwide charity providing voice and support for people with convictions in the UK.
- Two in-depth interviews based upon storytelling. I asked: *“Could you tell me about your experiences as an individual with a criminal record?”*

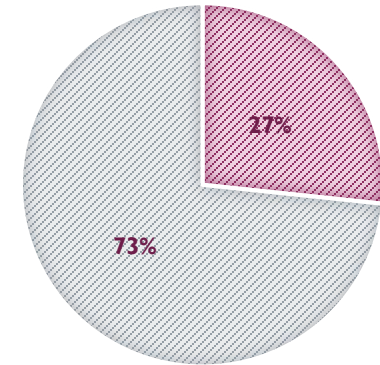
### GENDER

■ Female ■ Male



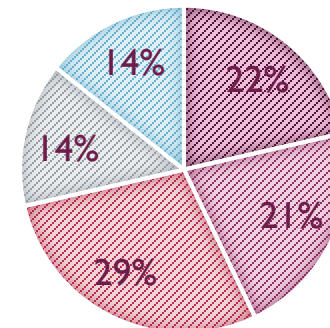
### SENTENCES

■ Custodial  
■ Non-custodial



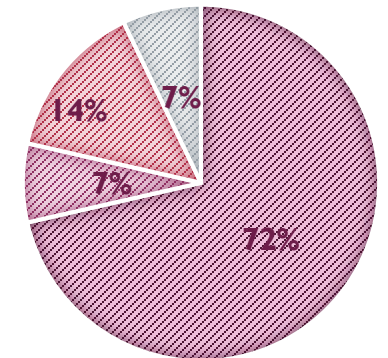
### AGE DISTRIBUTION

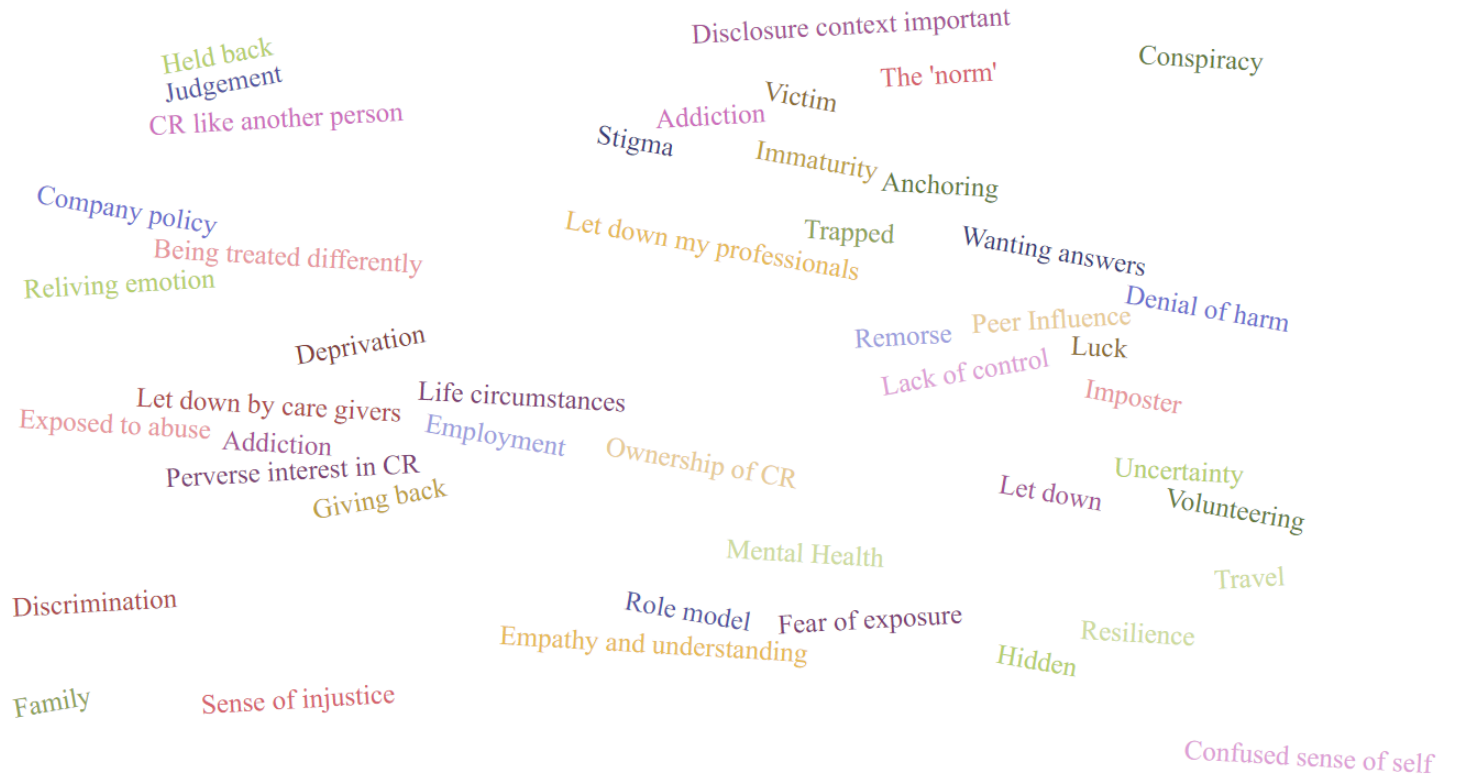
■ 20s  
■ 30s  
■ 40s  
■ 50s  
■ 60s



### ETHNICITY

■ White  
■ Mixed  
■ Asian  
■ Black Carribean





# PRELIMINARY THEMES

Four Examples to Highlight the Complexities of Living with a Criminal Record from Youth



## ANCHORING

“...it was a really traumatic erm period of time in my life so when I have to disclose it or talk about it not only I've got the actions of the things I've done wrong [R: mmhmm] I've got the erm context of it all as well [R: yeah] which for me feels worse it's like [pause 1 second] I don't know a little bit re-tr- **re-traumatising**”

“...this caution had an effect on me for [pause 1 second] years. Literally for *years*. You know what it was was it caused me a lot of grief in the sense that **I had to re-live that situation *over and over again***”

“I don't want to say like a depression but I did get a bit like down [...] I don't know it just threw [pause 2 seconds] like **how I identify with myself** [R: mmhmm] it **just kind of threw all that into question again** [R: yeah?] and I thought [pause 2 seconds] **I'm a bit of a shit person** [..] for quite a few weeks and it was kind of making me forget a lot of the good things [pause 1 second] and the good traits that I've got now”

## EVERLASTING

“...it’s had an impact on my life when I thought it was done you know? I thought I’d **I’d reinvented myself I’d left that life behind.** I’ve I’ve done everythin' since I've done volunteerin' I've worked [...] I came from *nothin'* [...] all I've done is jump through hurdles [R: mmhmm] for like ten years [...] I've had a clean slate throughout uni nothin's gone wrong but still [pause 2 seconds] **this is apparently the pinnacle of my life that should dictate where I can go**”

“...you just think to yourself [pause 3 seconds] it's *so* much regret you know but what can you do? What can you do? Remorse counts for nothing now [pause 2 seconds] and the fact that I *still* went to court [pause 1 second] prosecuted all these people [pause 4 seconds] and yet [pause 1 second] I'm really a criminal. You know? That's what it boils down to. **I've repaid my debt** but still [pause 1 second] I can't go to America [pause 3 seconds] can't go to Australia and you think to yourself well [pause 2 seconds] **where does equality come into all this?**”

## UNCERTAINTY

“...I [...] **live in the fear of the government changing the law** [R: sure] [pause 1 second] and going back to the old way and obviously I don't declare that I've got convictions now [...] so my worry is that then if the d- the law did change I've just go this paranoid fear about [laughing] umm the law changing and **not finding out about it** and then continuing to say I don't have convictions [R: ok] [pause 1 second] and then you know a DBS comes through and [pause 1 second] bang there's these two [pause 1 second] things on it”

“...**I worry** that in the future if something really bad happened and they said well actually all this [pause 1 second] liberal crap of you know tryin'a make things better [...] well actually we're not gonna have this [...] **it's always a possibility in my mind** that [R: yeah] [pause 1 second] it could just. And especially with travel as well because they've gotta' obviously clamp down with everything [pause 1 second] I think that's another area where [pause 1 second] **we can get pulled into that.**”

“I think it's always that thought I think **it's always there** I think it's always that [pause 1 second] that thing in the back of ya mind [pause 2 seconds] that **it will stop ya from from future opportunities from travelling erm from future job prospects**”

## RESILIENCE

“...in terms of my life like I said it was like an albatross around my neck and it was weighing me down. But **I had to find the strength** to kind of like not let that happen”

“...the thing that I um you know I rate myself for is that fact that **I stood strong** [R: mmhmm] and **I persevered** do you know what I mean? [R: sure] I never I never like let it get me down”

“I've had to kill an identity that I identified with and create a new one [pause 1 second] and that's about change and change is *hard* and it's very hard and like there were times early on that I struggled but I **ha- I created that support network** I had family friends the alcohol workers the structure and that so [clears throat] I was able to do that and everyone can do it [pause 1 second] **you just gotta' have that fight in ya** and that's what it boils down to...”



## CONCLUDING REMARKS



- The majority of those who took part did not present as ‘criminal’ individuals trying to move away from crime. Rather, the majority were ‘everyday people’ who have had interaction(s) with the CJS in youth, and who are now trying to continue with their lives navigating adulthood with a criminal record.
- No two individuals reflected upon their criminal record in the same way even when they had very similar experiences. Living with a criminal record is a therefore a highly unique and personal experience.
- Whilst the majority of stories shared reflected negative experiences, some individuals were able to use their criminal record for the better and/or have found a resilience and strength within themselves for overcoming barriers.

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