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The young offenders: reducing reoffending rates among young adult offenders aged 18-24 years in Ireland

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**Rapid Evidence
Assessment
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Executive Summary

This Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) was done in collaboration with the Irish Council of Churches and Irish Inter Church Meeting to assess how the Irish prison and justice system could be made fairer and more humane in a public policy context.

Examining the current policy context and issues in the Irish penal system, it was found that young adults aged 18-24 are over-represented in the criminal justice system; this group amounts to 20.2% of the adult prison population (Irish Prison Service, 2020), when they are 11.94% of the Irish national adult population (Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, 2016 using the Irish Census (2011)). This group also had a high rate of re-offending; within a year 59.5% of offenders committed another criminal offence (Central Statistics Office, 2021). From this, the REA group focussed on interventions that would reduce recidivism in this group, with another outcome being a reduction in their proportion of the prison population.

A brief environmental scan of policies and strategies in place in Ireland was completed; most notably, young adults were a large focus in the Youth Justice Strategy (Department of Justice, 2021), particularly in tackling re-offending, which was welcomed by the Irish Penal Reform Trust (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021). Theories and concepts were then examined, especially in examining why particular individuals commit offences, and what frameworks would encourage “desistance” from criminal activity. The need to ensure young adults were given a specific focus in criminal justice approaches was found throughout the literature (Farrington, Loeber and Howell, 2012; Coyle, 2019; Mizel and Abrams, 2018). Thereafter, research was conducted examining the most common and influential factors associated with offending, and re-offending in this group before investigating the interventions implemented internationally to curb reoffending rates in young adults. The factors that were commonly found to influence offending behaviour were unstable housing, unemployment, a lack of education, poor mental health and mental illness, and negative social networks and environments (Costello, 2016; Drummond et al., 2018). The intervention-types found often varied from case to case but generally targeted one or multiple of the factors mentioned. It was found that the culture of offending was

rarely influenced by one single factor but multiple pressures all at once, so a multi-faceted approach to reduce recidivism appeared to be the best approach.

This REA recognised and highlighted the input of Drummond et al. (2018), O'Driscoll, Larney, Indig, and Basson (2012), Braga, Piehl, and Hureau (2009), Hunter et al. (2016), Angell et al. (2014), and Van der Laan et al (2021), as defining pieces when considering how to reduce recidivism. These pieces focused on recidivism but emphasised varying interventions; including the adjustment and expansion of juvenile sanction to young adults, and projects and schemes which offered assistance in education, employability, mental health, medical treatment, housing, utilising inter-agency collaboration, and promoting positive social networks between offenders and the community. This REA recognised that to tackle the varied negative influences which encourage offending that a cumulative 'wrap-around' approach would be best suited to reducing recidivism. By addressing a multitude of factors young offenders would have a better opportunity to desist from crime and prosper. For example; factors such as stable housing depend on positive relationships with family, which may have been strained, or financial stability which is linked to employment, which may rest on an offender's level of education, which may be threatened by underlying health issues. This negative cycle must be addressed by interventions which tackle all factors which can influence recidivism .

This is why this REA provides a variety of actions and policy recommendations that can be implemented through a robust policy agenda with a cross-departmental approach led by the government. The success of these interventions also depends on the features in their implementation; looking beyond just statistics in re-offending, ensuring past offenders are contributing actively to their community and have gone through further personal development (McNeill et al., 2012) is also crucial to consider in any strategic actions that take place.

Introduction

Crime Prevention In Ireland

The issue of crime prevention in Ireland has been under increased focus in recent years as high offending rates continue despite current interventions. Crime as public offences have major impacts on an entire society; the 2019 Crime and Victimisation Survey illustrated that between 15-23% of persons aged 18 or over were worried "all the time" or "often" about being a victim of crimes that result in physical harm or damage or loss of property. 29% of respondents felt that anti-social behaviour had had a negative impact on their lives, and only 46% of respondents had confidence in the criminal justice system (Central Statistics Office, 2020).

At 75 people per 100,000 in prison, we have approximately less than half of the prison population per capita than England and Wales, and we are at similar levels to Denmark and the Netherlands. This more positive news is to be taken cautiously due to artificially lower figures during the COVID-19 pandemic (Irish Legal News, 2022).

Table 1: Incarceration rates per country, 2021. (Fair and Walmsley, 2021)

Country	Prison Population Total	Prison Population per 100,000 of national population
Ireland	3,802	75
Northern Ireland	1,480	78
England and Wales	78,789	131
Scotland	7,509	137
Netherlands	10,542	60
Iceland	106	29
Denmark	4,227	72

An estimate on the economic costs of crime in Ireland were estimated to be €7.6 billion by the Department of Justice and Equality in 2017 (Crowe, 2017); this does not include the costs borne by offenders, including missed employment opportunities and contributions to their own household and community. Government officials also reported that it costs €68,000 a year to keep offenders in jail; this is partly due to the need to have prison act as a deterrent and to reduce recidivism according to officials (Cionnaith, 2019).

Impacts on Offenders

Imprisonment can have profound impacts on the long-term health outcomes of offenders. Studies have found that people incarcerated face a higher risk of chronic disease, increased mortality in prison, and immediately after release (Massoglia and Pridemore, 2015). Several reasons for increased health risks have been examined, from increased exposure to infectious diseases, incarceration as an acute and chronic stressor, and as a mechanism for social isolation. Studies found excess mortality is caused due to increased incidence of cancer, infectious diseases, drug overdose, and heart disease (Massoglia and Pridemore, 2015).

Imprisonment, even for a short sentence, can be extremely destabilising for offenders and their families. Offenders' children may have an increased long-term risk of mental health effects (Gaston, 2016), social exclusion (Cochran, Siennick and Mears, 2018), and worsened physical health and reduced educational attainment (Miller and Barnes, 2015). It has been shown that any contact with the justice system from dealing with an arrest, a conviction, or a short prison stay to completing a prison sentence can have profound effects on employment and work opportunities for people (Fernandes, 2020).

Characteristics of Offenders

Little recent data is available on the characteristics of adults in the justice system in Ireland; research in 2007 indicated that individuals in prison were 23 times more likely to come from, and return to, deprived areas (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2022). The lack of data on this population is concerning; for this REA the most insightful data on

Ireland's prison population is on the under 18 yrs population in Oberstown juvenile detention centre. In 2018, a report on the centre's population reported (Oberstown Children Detention Campus, 2018):

- 22% were members of the Travelling community.
- 36% had suffered the loss of one or both parents either through death or imprisonment, or had no long-term contact.
- 40% of young people were either in care or had significant involvement with Tusla.
- 52% had mental health needs, with 27% of the population prescribed medication for mental health needs.
- 72% had problems with substance abuse.
- 49% were not engaged in education prior to their detention.

These stark figures show a disproportionate amount of young people under 18 years of age are being held in detention that come from disadvantaged backgrounds. Their detention and high rates of being in the care of the state, as well as the high proportion of those with mental health issues shows that unstable upbringings and adverse childhood experiences make them vulnerable when encountering the Irish justice system. This shows who, and what activities are criminalised in Ireland.

Re-Offending

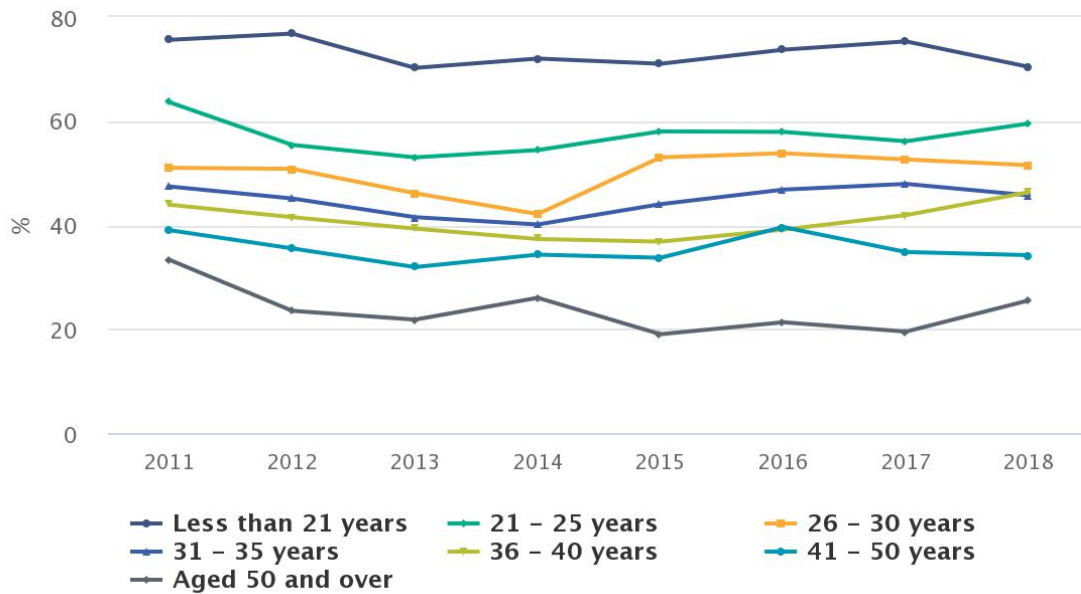
Reducing reoffending rates is a key objective of crime prevention in Ireland; repeated offences by the same individual. The rehabilitation of these individuals could bring about major reductions in offences, while also bringing about other positive outcomes for the individual and greater society. Re-offending rates are high in Ireland, particularly among younger individuals. For individuals placed under the supervision of the probation service in 2017, 29% re-offended within one year. This was higher in young adults, with 35% reoffending within one year. People under probation services re-offending rates were highest at 35.4% in theft and related offences, and 38.2% in public order and other social code offences respectively (Central Statistics Office, 2021b).

The official reporting of recidivism in Ireland is not comprehensive, as systems are not equipped to gather this specific information. The latest data on official recidivism figures in Ireland was completed in 2013, through data linkages and manual cross-checking, giving a 95% confidence of publishing official statistics on this subject. It showed that recidivism is highest in younger people, and that the general rate of recidivism is 62.3% within 3 years; 80% of these are committed within 12 months (Irish Prison Service, 2013).

This pattern of re-offending continues in the statistics “under reservation” by the Central Statistics Office¹. 1 year reoffending data by age group shows that that highest rates are in younger age groups; in 2018, 70.4% of those under 21, 59.5% of the 21-25 yrs group reoffended within a year, compared to 25.5% in the over 50’s (Central Statistics Office, 2021a).

Fig. 1 Individuals released from custody 2011-2018 by 1-year re-offending indicator and age group (Central Statistics Office (2021a))

¹ According to the CSO “The calculation of re-offending rates relies on matching data from the Irish Prison Service to the PULSE database of An Garda Síochána. As this exercise relies on PULSE data, the data in this Prisoner Re-offending publication is classed as "Under Reservation", as are all crime statistics produced by CSO which rely, wholly or in part, on data from PULSE" (Central Statistics Office, 2022).



Source: CSO Ireland

The group of 18-24 year olds in prison in 2020 is 1,087, or 20.7% of the adult prison population (Irish Prison Service, 2020). This is an over-representation of this group, which is 11.94% of the general population (Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, 2016 using the Irish Census (2011)).

Why Do Young Adults Offend?

As Barry (2007, p.16) acknowledged, “it is the socially negotiated life course, not chronological age, that most shapes young people’s experiences of youth and crime”. With this in mind, this section will analyse the dynamic situations of a young adult’s life and how they may facilitate offending. There is not a definitive cause of offending but there is a consensus that an accumulation of negative stimuli promotes unlawful behaviour.

A strong body of research has demonstrated that the human brain and a person’s maturity continues to develop beyond adolescence into their mid-to-late twenties (Costello, 2016). Key cognitive functions which are aligned with adulthood, social conformity and maturity are still developing well after one has turned eighteen. Young adults have a lower capacity for self-regulation, to make decisions based on immediate concerns or rewards rather than long-term outcomes, and are heavily influenced by

sensation-seeking (Prior et al., 2011; Costello, 2016). lower development means young adults lack the foundations of full maturity; such as learning from mistakes, critical and moral consideration before action, planning, developing and executing long-term plans, developing positive relationships, as well as recognising and responding to positive motivations (Mizel and Abrams, 2018). Ultimately, as young adults continue cognitive development they are susceptible to temptations, impulses, rash decision making, and peer pressure. In a criminogenic environment, young adults may lack the cognitive ability to make the right and moral decision.

The environment which young adults find themselves in and their relationships are crucial to their relationship with the law. According to Hayden, Nguyen and Twigg (2017, p.235), a “family environment is the first ‘school’ in which children learn about the world”. Adolescents and young adults perform better when they are encouraged in pro-social surroundings (Baysinger Henson Reimer & Cresswel, 2018), without this they can fall into delinquency and crime. Increased negative relationships with family can lead to further issues such as substance abuse and homelessness which also promotes offending. Living in disadvantaged areas; areas with fewer social and economic opportunities, also facilitates offending. Communities and peers which historically and habitually offend play a leading role in influencing young adults to offend (Johns, Williams and Haines, 2017).

Low levels of education, leaving education at a young age, and having a history of truancy are recurring themes among young adult offenders (Young People in Focus, 2011; Gyateng et al., 2013). Lower levels of education have been accredited with increased levels of social exclusion and isolation, less access to healthcare, increased levels of instability, and poor lifestyle choices; such as heavy alcohol or substance use (O’Dea et al., 2014). Education can be seen as more than just academic learning as it is also a crucial period in which one learns responsibility, teamwork, time-management, social norms and practices, and occupational practicalities (O’Dea et al., 2014). If a young adult’s education is disrupted, there is a higher likelihood that they will have difficulties adhering to social norms. In the UK, in 2008, 53% of young offenders were found to have education or training limitations (Young People in Focus, 2011).

Verbruggen et al. (2012) cites employment as a key element in one's transition into adulthood and a life of desistance as it provides income and, therefore, independence and opportunities to excel in other parts of life. Research has shown that those who are unemployed or have gone through long periods of unemployment have higher rates of offending (Verbruggen et al., 2012). Unemployment often incurs financial instability and poverty, encouraging theft, burglary, robbery, fraud, and the handling of stolen goods (Farrington et al., 2016). Long-term unemployment results in long periods of boredom and isolation which, according to Farrington et al. (2016), leads to increased negative behaviour. A study in the UK demonstrated that young people who were not involved in education or employment were twenty times more likely to offend, and 40% of those arrested in 2008 aged 18-20 were unemployed for one year beforehand (Young People in Focus, 2011).

Problem drinking, such as binge drinking, has been found to be a serious issue among young adults; in Ireland those aged 18-24 are responsible for approximately 40% of drunk and disorderly crimes and assault, while the same cohort in the UK are accredited with the majority of late night arrests in cities (Richardson and Budd, 2003; Costello, 2016). Drug use and abuse also instigates negative behaviour; inducing crime, health issues, and inhibits conformity to social norms and practices. It has been recognised that young people are drinking and experimenting with drugs at a younger age which impacts many aspects of a young person's life and increases chances of addiction (Bonnie and Scott, 2013). Drugs, such as cannabis, have been associated with hampering educational attainment and social functioning, and increased alcohol consumption and binge drinking correlates with increased violent crime (Richardson and Budd, 2003; Costello, 2016).

According to Costello (2016), housing instability and homelessness increases the likelihood of offending six-fold and induces a cycle of incarceration, homelessness, and re-incarceration. Young offenders, not yet accustomed to or prepared for adult living, are vulnerable of becoming homeless, especially if they do not have strong family or community bonds to fall back on (Hayden, Nguyen and Twigg, 2017). Housing instability and poverty encourage young people to get involved in criminality, often as a means to achieve stability or obtain a social status or commodity otherwise out of reach. Young adults and offenders experience increased issues in accessing the private rental market which forces them into deprived areas or poverty limiting their

opportunities to desist. Housing instability also negatively impacts mental health; increasing the likelihood of depression, anger, low self-esteem and resentment, which can be a factor in the decision to commit crime. Housing instability, according to Jacobs and Gottlieb (2020), increases the chances of offending by 50%.

Poor mental health has been associated with negative expectations of one's self and future plans inducing anti-social behaviour. Research also demonstrates that chronic mental illnesses most often emerge in adolescence or from ages 18-25 (Casswell, French and Rogers, 2012) compounding the cognitive stress of young adults. Psychological problems have been associated with increased violent crimes and offences of all types in men and women respectively (Case and Haines, 2007). Negative views of one's self and poor relationships with the community encourages a 'feedback loop' where young adults become stuck, both mentally and physically, in a cycle of criminal behaviour (Johns, Williams and Haines, 2017). Being faced with recurring issues or social exclusions, such as when one is part of a minority group, has been seen to cause both negative mental effects and criminogenic behaviour.

Youth Justice: Policy Context

The unique needs of the 18-24 group was highlighted in "Developing inside: transforming prison for young adults. A new approach to the unique needs of young adults (aged 18–24) in prison" (Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, 2016). The report generated several recommendations to reform the justice system to align with the specific needs of young adults; they noted the dearth of data available on young adult prisoners, and the need to have up to date information available on this group to inform youth justice policy.

The high rates in the younger age groups have become a cause for concern, with wide media reporting (O'Keefe, 2020; The Irish Times, 2020) and relatively higher rates in comparison to neighbouring EU countries. As a result, strategic action, directed by the Department of Justice, has culminated in specific youth justice strategies, the latest being the 'Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027' (Department of Justice, 2021). The wide-ranging document aims to link with other existing strategic initiatives, and proposes involving cross-sectoral organisations, government departments, community organisations and families in supporting young people and ensuring they live free from

harm and crime. The strategy's aims are encompassed through three thematic objectives (Department of Justice, 2021, p. 10):

1. Governance monitoring support - overseeing the governance and implementation of the strategy.
2. Services for children and young people - providing services for "at risk" young people, and researching the best practices in the provision of these services.
3. Criminal Justice System and Processes - Ensuring criminal justice proceedings to support children and young people to make positive life choices.

The Strategy has been welcomed with its focus on early intervention, prevention and diversion, with a commitment to only using detention as a last resort; the Irish Penal Reform Trust, the leading NGO in this space is generally supportive of the strategy and its priorities, with some reservations on the policy initiatives aimed at children (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2021). A large focus on efforts to reduce recidivism is through the implementation of established garda youth diversion projects; while effective, less established community investment is required to support young people within their living situation and focus on reducing the determinants of recidivism in their locality, rather than through individualistic interventions.

Key recommendations targeting the needs of young adults detailed in strategic objectives:

- **Strategic Objective 2.10** We will support the development and dissemination of effective practices in youth diversion projects.
- **Strategic Objective 2.13** We will develop specific protocols for management and care of young adult offenders aged 18-24 in the prison system.
- **Strategic Objective 2.15** We will pursue enhanced effective services for young adults (18-24 years) on release from prison
- **Strategic Objective 3.3** Ensure provision of effective specialised representation and appropriate information services to assist young persons throughout the Courts process.
- **Strategic Objective 3.4** Prioritise processing of children and young adult cases to minimise delays including with regard to the role of Garda Case managers.

The budget allocated to the implementation of this strategy now stands at over €21 million (The Department of Justice, 2021).

The Focus on Desistance Vs. Risked-Based Offending

Basing the identification of risk factors, and criminogenic features of young people has long been the approach of previous justice practices. The “risk-based” model was adopted following research based on delinquency, and focuses on the negative, offender and individualistic factors that predisposes an individual to offending (Farrington, 1999). The Risk Factors Prevention Paradigm (RFPP) shaped youth justice policy for several years in Ireland and the UK, although within the punitive practice several methodological gaps and theoretical flaws have been identified, particularly when dealing with the young population of offenders (O’Mahony, 2009).

The risks identified were wide ranging, and nondescript, with little evidence to show the relative magnitude each of these risks contributed to criminal behaviour. This narrows the focus and negates the influence of more protective factors that prevent offending, and how to enable the entire population from leading a life away from criminal behaviour. Instead, current models have moved towards a model of desistance, or a more positive framework of the promotion of protective factors, and the desistance from crime (Case and Haines, 2015). It is generally understood that offending behaviours naturally decrease as people age; this is now understood to be because of improved personal development and achievement outside of criminal activity; promotion of desistance, therefore, is a means to accelerate this personal development, so desistance comes at an earlier life stage for offenders (McNeill et al., 2012).

Models of Desistance Promotion

The Good Lives Model (GLM)

The GLM has been a recent development in the field of promoting offender rehabilitation and subsequent desistance from criminal behaviour. The model focuses on a strength-based framework that promotes the generation of positive behaviours

and attitudes, rather than reducing negative ones. GLM is based on the generation of “primary goods” for each individual, that each person seeks to live a good life, e.g. “agency”, “knowledge” and “excellence in work” (Mallion, Wood and Mallion, 2020). The model sees criminality as a flawed activity to achieve primary goods. Through a Good Lives treatment plan people should be provided alternate pathways to achieving these primary goods through pro-social activities (Mallion, Wood and Mallion, 2020). The systematic review did show positive outcomes and behaviour change when programmes were implemented using the GLM, however more empirical evidence is required before it can be widely implemented as standard practice across the justice system as a model to reduce recidivism (Mallion, Wood and Mallion, 2020).

Health Based Model of Desistance

Much of the studies have found that fulfilment of adult roles after offending plays a strong role in promoting desistance; this includes finding employment, and having strong family support. The health based model of desistance conceived by Link et al. (2019) looks at the role health plays in the fulfilment of these roles following incarceration; their study found that poorer physical and mental health had indirect and direct impacts on these roles, which can lead to increased risk of recidivism. For example, having poor health can weaken family support through several mechanisms (such as stigmatisation of poor mental health); this can lead to financial issues, and directly to committing crimes. This study used data of 1,532 men from the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI) longitudinal study (Lattimore and Visser, 2013).

Alongside the models emphasising the promotion of a positive identity and creating agency through psychological support, promoting the mental and physical health of this group would bring great effects in ensuring they have the capacity to seek the roles they need to desist from criminal activity (Link, Ward and Stansfield, 2019). This model highlights the central, rather than auxiliary, role health promotion plays in promoting desistance to ensure they can fulfil adult roles after criminal offending.

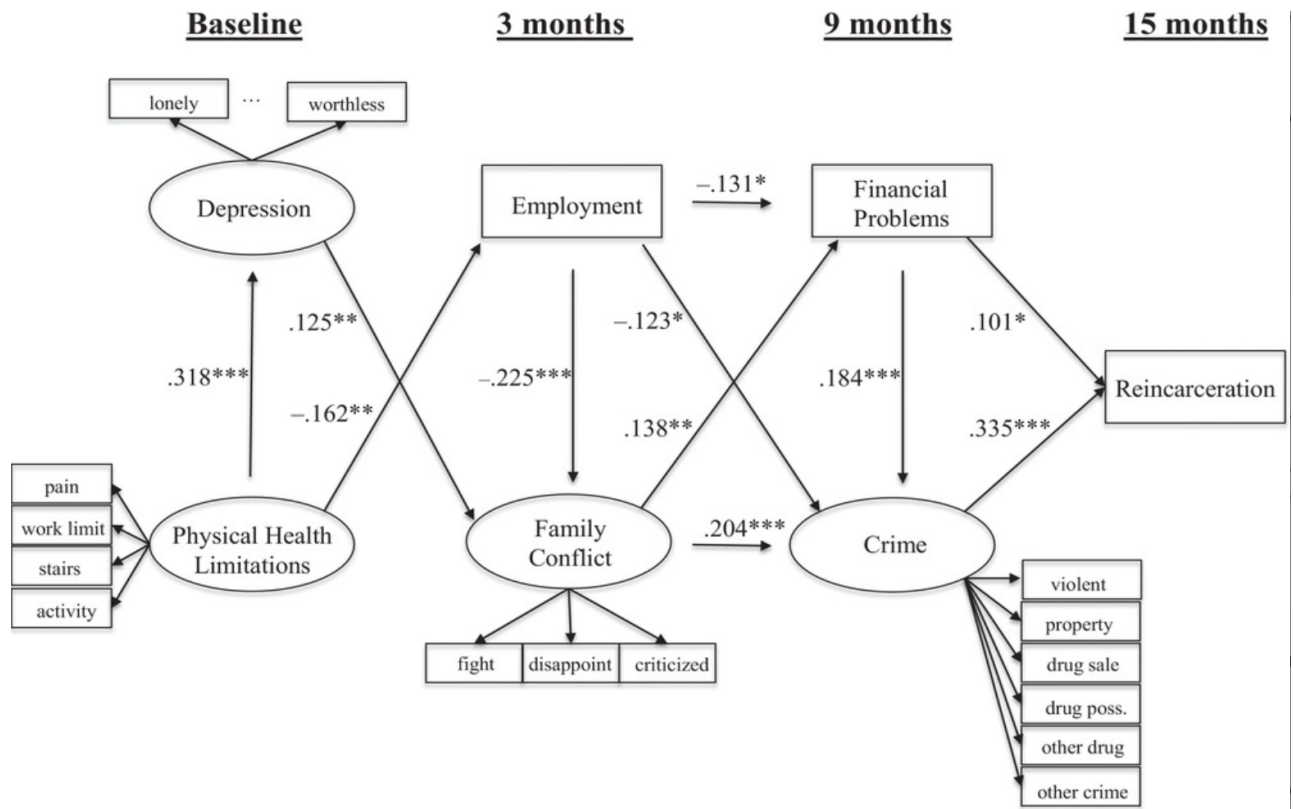


Fig. 1 Structural equation model of health, life-course, and reentry outcomes, significant pathways to reincarceration (N = 1,532).

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$; *** $p \leq .001$ (two-tailed) (Link, Ward and Stansfield, 2019).

Research of the Evidence Base

Table 2: Summary of Initial Broad Review of Relevant Research

Title	Short Citation	Topic/ Intervention	Country	Sample Size (if Applicable)	Method/ Analysis	Summary/ Key Points
Re-examining Evidence-Based Practice in Community Corrections: Beyond “A-Confined View” of What Works	Mc Neill et al., 2012	Overview of elements required to evaluate interventions in offender rehabilitation	UK	N/A	Evidence evaluation and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measuring the impact of rehabilitation interventions beyond whether the subjects re-offend. - Multiple measures are required to assess the success of rehabilitation. - Co-creation of practice with ex-offenders and corrections staff is necessary for best practice.

Juvenile Sanctions for Young Adults in the Netherlands: A Developmental Perspective	van der Laan et al., 2021	Evaluating the "recent policy intervention" of providing juvenile sanctions to young adults.	Netherlands	N/A	Evidence evaluation and recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There has been an increase in juvenile sanctions in the first 3 years since the passing of legislation. - The legislation is used on the basis of "immaturity" in young adults. - The legislation is restrictive, and may need some changes to be effective.
Consequences of Mental and Physical Health for Re-entry and Recidivism: Toward a Health-Based Model of Desistance	Link et al., 2019	Developing a health-based model in the approaches used to promote desistance	USA	N/A	Evidence evaluation and recommendations	Interventions that improve the health of offenders is required, especially as there are several pathways in which deterioration of mental or physical health leads to recidivism.

Developing Inside: Transforming Prison for Young Adults. A New Approach to the Unique Needs of Young Adults (Aged 18–24) in Prison.	Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, 2016	Improving prison conditions to suit the young adult population	Ireland	N/A	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The unique needs of young adults must be addressed in the prison system. - Contains proposals for reform, including tailored facilities for 18-24 year olds.
'Have You Got Anybody You Can Stay With?' Housing Options for Young Adults Leaving Custody	Drummond et al., 2018	Housing interventions and wrap-around services	UK	N/A	Qualitative analysis and desk-based research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Case studies are provided demonstrating the organisations, schemes, and projects in the UK that have a positive impact on facilitating re-entry. - The basis of this study notes that housing is the foundation of a stable life, and this coupled with a 'wrap-around' course of interventions leads to positive reintegration. - Policy touches on housing, financial stability, mental health, education, and employment.

Pathways to Recovery and Desistance	Best, 2019	Alcohol and drug abuse interventions	N/A	N/A	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A literature review was conducted to demonstrate the complex issues of substance abuse and the difficulties re-entering society in the rehabilitation process. - a key emphasis is on pro-social bonds and networks between offenders and family, friends, communities, and society as a whole; including local organisations, employers, authorities, etc.
The Impact of Residential Change and Housing Stability on Recidivism: Pilot Results From the Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE)	Kirk et al., 2018	Housing interventions	USA	N/A	Literature review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This article focuses on reducing recidivism by addressing housing issues; offenders are relocated and given financial assistance. - This article hypothesised that offenders returning to the same environment may facilitate negative social relationships and networks, as well as being an environment which may not be welcoming. - By relocating offenders they are given a fresh start which induces desistance.

Recovery, Ambitions, and Aspirations: An Exploratory Project to Build a Recovery Community by Generating a Skilled Recovery Workforce	Best et al., 2016	Housing, employment, and training and upskilling intervention	UK	Approx. 30	Review of project/ case study and qualitative analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This article focuses on rebuilding offenders' self-esteem, ambitions, and positive goals after release through the construction work-project 'Jobs, Friends, Houses'. - The offenders interviewed admitted that it gave them a much needed boost in confidence and insight into working as a team towards a common goal. - This project improved the offenders' relationship with the local community, reduced recidivism rates, and improved the likelihood of offenders obtaining employment after custody.
Young Adults in Conflict with the Law: Opportunities for Diversion	Ishida, 2015	Rehabilitation/ alternative punishment	USA	N/A	Quantitative analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rehabilitative, alternative punishments based on a juvenile model could be transferred to young adults. - It recommends that the discretion of the Police Department as a diversion authority could be used for young adults.

The Impact of Personality Disorders, Substance Use and Other Mental Illness on Re-Offending	O'Driscoll et al., 2012	Mental health therapy	Australia	1264	Evidence evaluation and recommendations	Mentally ill offenders' treatment should target personality disorders or substance use disorder as the root of mental health problems instead of just focusing on related symptoms or other mental illness treatments.
How Cities Can Reduce Recidivism for Young Adults	Morgan, 2018	system coordination , wrap-around approach	USA	N/A	Recommendations	Four points of Do's and Don'ts to reduce recidivism of young adult offenders: 1. Minimise policy barriers, 2. Improve cross system coordination, 3. Provide training 4. Integrative programs

Does Prison Work? A Comparative Analysis on Contemporary Prison Systems in England, Wales and Finland, 2000 to Present	Hale, 2020	Overview of differing prison systems	UK and Finland	N/A	Comparative analysis	Three point analysis of differing prison systems with the goal of addressing the British prison system in order to reduce recidivism rates to comparable rates in Finland.
Correctional Education and Recidivism: Toward a Tool for Education	Hall, 2015	education	USA	N/A	Analytic review of past research	Review of how correctional education programs help reduce recidivism.
A New Look at the Employment and Recidivism Relationship through the Lens of a Criminal Background Check	Denver et al., 2017	Criminal Background checks	USA	6648	Empirical research	Research on how employment and recidivism are related in former prisoners.

Strengths-based Approach to Prisoner Re-Entry: the Fresh Start Prisoner Re-Entry Program	Hunter et al., 2016	Community re-entry program	USA	24	Qualitative analysis	This article focuses on the re-entry of prisoners to the community via specifically based programs.
Engagement Processes in Model Programs for Community Re-entry from Prison for People with Serious Mental Illness	Angell et al., 2014	Wrap-around programs for re-entry	USA	N/A	Analysis from Qualitative research	This article focuses on two separate but linked re-entry programs. Programs are designed specifically for mentally ill prisoners with emphasis on engagement and relationship building.
Controlling Violent Offenders Released to the Community: An Evaluation of the Boston Re-Entry Initiative	Braga et al., 2009	Interagency cooperation	USA	143	Analytical review of quasi-experimental study	Analyses the impact of the Boston Re-entry Initiative for offenders released from prison back to society at a high risk of reoffending. - Examines interagency collaboration between prison service, probation services, and faith-based organisations, among others.

Expected Recidivism Among Young Offenders: Comparing Specific Deterrence under Juvenile and Adult Criminal Law	Entorf, 2012	Juvenile law	Germany	N/A	Comparative analysis	Comparing the juvenile and adult criminal court and how offenders can be categorised and transferred from one to the other. - Distinctions made between Germany and the USA.
Providing Effective Substance Abuse Treatment for Young Offenders: What Works!	Dowden and Latimer, 2006	Substance Abuse intervention	N/A	N/A	Evidence Review	This article reviews the different factors which influence substance abuse before delving into different approaches, analysed in other literature, and examining which were most effective.
Turnaround Youth: Young Adults (18-24) in the Criminal Justice System - The Case for a Distinct Approach	Costello, 2016	Factors that influence youth crime and how to intervene	Ireland	N/A	Literature review	- This report gives an overview of social factors which facilitate youth crime; utilising a literature review. - Offers recommendations on how to intervene and also the appropriate time to intervene in a young person's life.

Summary of Key Points

- Four articles gave overviews of youth crime; influencing factors and the consequences of youth crime.
- Three articles discussed housing issues and interventions – noting financial issues and difficulties in finding accommodation in the private rental market.
- Three articles reviewed alcohol and/or substance issues and interventions. Many young adults, and adolescents, have been noted as heavy drinkers and/or experimenters with drugs. Risk of addiction is high the younger one is, and intense drinking or drug taking impacts how they function in society.
- Six articles address the issue of poor education and unemployment; the need for educational interventions and further education, upskilling, and job-related skills. Poor education and employment are linked as poor education often correlates with poor employability. These factors can be addressed together to improve offenders' quality of life and contribution to society, thus, encouraging desistance.
- Three articles specifically note the importance of interagency collaboration (between the prison service, probation services, various governmental departments, local authorities, and various community organisations).
- A form of prison or court reform for young adults was discussed in four articles. As young adults' brain development was highlighted, it was argued that an adult system, imposed at 18 years of age, was unfair. Reforming justice systems in response to the specific needs of young adults was emphasised throughout.
- Alternative sanctions for young adults are found in two articles. In a similar vein to prison reform, young adults' unfinished development was highlighted. Alternative sanctions that would not stunt their development and uproot their life were considered as prison may have unneeded negative impacts.
- Three articles examine community re-entry programs or schemes. Offenders' difficulties in re-entry; issues such as reintegrating with the community, finding accommodation or employment, and resisting negative environments, are highlighted as areas in which offenders need assistance. By offering such assistance there appears to be a higher likelihood of desistance from crime.

Brief synopses of the most common interventions conducted internationally follow. These consist of prison reform and alternative punishments, education, housing, alcohol and drug abuse, mental health, and interagency collaboration based interventions. We also show which items are not under consideration for this REA.

Prison Reform and Alternative Punishments

Prison reform and strong recommendations were synthesised in the recent report “Developing Inside: Transforming Prison for Young Adults. A New Approach to the Unique Needs of Young Adults (Aged 18–24) in Prison” (Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, 2016). The in-depth report covered many policy solutions in an Irish context for supporting young adults in prison, so we explored other policies relevant to reducing recidivism outside of the prison setting to prevent duplication of efforts in this area.

There is a growing consensus that alternative punishments other than imprisonment should be utilised; punishing offenders but not inhibiting their growth (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2019). In Belgium, alternative judicial measures are exercised over young adults who commit drug offences; offering leniency and assistive services to encourage desistance from drug culture. De Wree, Ruyver and Pauwels (1996) noted the measure’s positive impact as their study participants received fewer criminal charges and convictions after its implementation, and the participants’ involvement in drug offences, property and violent crime also decreased. Restorative Justice (RJ) has been implemented, however sporadically, and with mixed results. RJ interventions typically consists of direct communication between the victim and offender; such as victim-offender mediation or family group conferencing, or programs in which community members serve as proxies for the victim (Bouffard et al., 2017). Research has shown that when offenders are “treated with fairness and respect, are involved in the decision-making process, and outcomes are achieved by genuine consensus” they are less likely to reoffend (Piggott and Wood, 2018, pp. 4-5). RJ has shown to reduce reoffending of violent crimes but has had minimal impact on property related crime. Although RJ has been used, with some success, it lacks a uniform methodology and is often used on a case-by-case basis.

Increased fining has been touted as an alternative to short-term prison sentences, however, as Kahn (1996) argues, they are not feasible for everyone as large penalties would unequally impact poor offenders more, and prison would still be needed to deter violent offences. Employing a Home Detention Curfew (HDC) through an electronic ankle tag has also been promoted as it does not prevent offenders from accessing employment or education and eases their transition back into society. However, this method has been used sparingly as only 15% of eligible cases were assigned HDC in 2017 in the UK (Drummond et al., 2018).

The traditional prison and punishment system has been challenged on a number of occasions, with some alternatives bearing fruit, but no alternative measure has been outstanding. However, elements from such alternatives could be taken to generate efficacious policy recommendations. We instead focussed on schemes that could be used outside of the prison system, and promote personal development in the individual.

Employment Schemes

Prior convictions can act as an impediment to future employment prospects and counteract the process of reintegration into society for criminal offenders. According to Denver et al. (2017) the economic opportunities and stability that legitimate sources of income provide to offenders encourages desistance. Employment opportunities can reduce the stigma associated with convicted criminals and therefore exhibit a more positive general view of this demographic (Becker, 1963). Establishing an intervention that incorporates employment to reduce recidivism may be helpful for this group.

An analysis of recidivism rates amongst ethnic minorities in the United Kingdom, utilising the findings of Woods (2012), established that employment after release is a key factor to reducing reoffending. The utilisation of education courses within UK prisons can have a positive effect upon the future employment possibilities of offenders. As a caveat, Herbert (2016) acknowledges that although certain skills can be transferable from training programs conducted within prison, the negative stereotype that exists for individuals with criminal convictions is strong, especially within minority and socially disadvantaged communities.

Research has indicated that employment lessens the chances of reoffending following release from prison and that recidivism is less likely among those with higher quality jobs (Sampson and Laub, 1997). According to Visser et al (2005) there was a vast increase in employment programs in prisons in US states; such as New York, Texas, and California, and many of these programs were community based, conducted by non-profit organisations in conjunction with the prison and justice system. This study emphasised that alongside employment programs there should be a community-based element as negative stereotyping of offenders can still inhibit offenders finding employment and that employment programs must incorporate other specific needs of offenders to facilitate desistance and successful re-entry.

Education Programmes

According to Newton et al. (2018), who analysed seven educational programs which provided vocational training to offenders, training and program participation is likely to be enhanced by those who undertake programs soon after release. The Centre for Employment Opportunities (CEO) conducted in New York showed that those prisoners who entered the CEO program within 3 months of their release benefitted the most and were less likely to reoffend. Those who found employment after partaking in the CEO educational program felt that they had a greater connection to their fellow co-workers. This contrasted to the control group whose rate of recidivism was examined post release without the provided training (Red Cross et al., 2012).

Davis et al. (2013) analysed educational interventions using a systematic review and meta-analysis of programmes that provide education to prisoners. These reports focused on the connection between correctional education participation and prisoner consequences in regard to reoffending in the US. Most educational prison programs are a mixture of academic and vocational training. These reports endorsed the theory that the receipt of educational and vocational training whilst incarcerated reduced the risk of reoffending. Further analysis showed that on average, prisoners who participated in prison education programmes had a 43% lower chance of reoffending than those who did not participate in similar programs.

Hall (2015) carried out a review of educational programs within the penal system in association with recidivism. The review was based on two key criteria; firstly, that the article must cover a primary empirical study of an approved educational course and, secondly, the study used recidivism as the measure of outcome. Hall (2015) concludes that education does work as a recognised and effective tool in preventing reoffending; including all forms of correctional education with high-level education as particularly effective (Ellison et al. 2017).

Substance/Alcohol Dependency Schemes

Much of the literature concerning substance/alcohol abuse and dependency is concerned with offenders' health; viewing the offender as a victim of addiction which facilitates a cycle of crime. There is a consensus that prisons should be used to house serious and violent offenders rather than those with substance-related issues (Evans, Huang and Hser, 2011). Substance/alcohol abuse has been heavily associated as a causal factor in reoffending; committing crime while under the influence and stealing, or selling drugs, to facilitate the addiction. The literature cites that offenders suffering with drug/alcohol abuse incur more difficulty in achieving desistance as their dependency impacts their employability, pro-social networking opportunities, and housing situation. If an offender is hampered in cultivating these pro-social networks there is an increased risk of reoffending.

Many substance and alcohol abuse programs are run within prisons; facilitating abstinence, and organising counselling and therapy. Hiller et al. (2006) cite how offenders find substance abuse programs most beneficial when conducted both in-prison and in post-release; utilising an aftercare program has been linked with reduced recidivism rates at three and five year post-release reviews. An intensive aftercare program was cited to reduce reoffending and relapsing as offenders are left vulnerable without any rehabilitative structure (James et al., 2013). A program in Florida, which consisted of in-prison treatment as well as twenty-four months of probation, recorded that 87% of its two-thousand participations desisted upon their three year review (Moore, Barongi and Rigg, 2017). This program consisted of extensive monitoring; including random drug screenings twice-per-week.

American 'Drug Courts' (DC's) are an alternative to traditional sentencing for those who qualify as an offender dependent on drugs. A DC emphasises the offenders' rehabilitation rather than punishment. However, they do hold the deterrent of imposing extended sentences if one fails a mandatory urine test (Logan and Link, 2019). DC's have been attributed with lowering recidivism rates by 12-26% (Wilson, Mitchell and MacKenzie, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2012). Critics of the DC system argue that they neglect reintegrating offenders into society, and argue that one must offset the reduced recidivism rates with the increased sentencing given to those who fail mandatory drug tests (Logan and Link, 2019).

The support provided in the re-entry process for offenders with substance/alcohol issues is vital in one's success in desistance. An extensive aftercare programme can be effective if it facilitates positive change in offenders' lives and allows them to engage in pro-social activities within their communities. The innovative 'Jobs, Friends and Houses' project, conducted in Blackpool, England, was created as a social enterprise; treating, training, and employing offenders, to facilitate positive re-entry. Offenders were employed as construction workers to renovate dwellings to be used as rehabilitation centres or housing (Best, 2019). By doing this a positive relationship was forged with the local community, offenders. Schemes that cultivate strong social bonds have been attributed with reducing recidivism and anti-social behaviour (Wu et al., 2021). Out of the twenty-eight offenders who participated in the Jobs, Friends, and Houses project only three reoffended (Best, 2019).

Substance/Alcohol dependency interventions and their linkage with recidivism are often difficult to qualify as program's results are often quantified in rates of relapse. However, it is clear that interventions focus heavily on rehabilitation rather than punishment in the hope that addicts recover and rejoin society as functioning adults. Interventions which prioritise recovery, continued care, and cultivating prosocial networking appear more successful.

Housing Schemes

Having a home is a basic need and the foundation to an offenders' reintegration into society; providing them a safe space to cultivate ambitions for the future, make inroads

into a life of employment, consider education or upskilling, and provide them with the confidence to make the transition from an offender to a functioning member of society (Bowman and Ely, 2020). Many offenders leave prison without a stable living situation forcing them to find temporary accommodation or stay with family or friends. The precarious living situation offenders find themselves in is compounded by financial difficulties and a dependence on negative social networks. Offenders are increasingly at risk of becoming homeless which increases the likelihood of reoffending by over 50% (Jacobs and Gottlieb, 2020). Housing interventions can be the bedrock of offenders' reentry into society.

Offenders encounter difficulties when acquiring accommodation; discrimination, insufficient funds to pay security deposits, as well as uncertainties around paying rents as offenders' state of employment fluctuates. Projects such as the Maryland Opportunities through Vouchers Experiment (MOVE) and Justice Bridge Housing Programme aid offenders in finding rental accommodation by paying or subsidising offenders' rents (Kirk et al., 2018; Bowman and Ely, 2020). In the United Kingdom, CentrePoint issues a rent deposit bond covering security deposits and offers assurances of tenants' reliability, over 90% of offenders who received this assistance were recorded to live independently and find employment (Drummond et al., 2018). Finding accommodation is taxing; especially for young offenders who lack the knowledge needed to effectively search, budget, or avail of financial services to find accommodation. Projects, such as Future4Me, can be set up as a broad programme to facilitate rehousing young offenders as well as encouraging employment, education, and pro-social networking – a mentor meets the offender throughout the final three months of their sentence to plan for their release and also works with them after release to continue their recovery (St. Basils, 2019). Wrap-around programmes such as these have appeared to lower recidivism rates by 30% (Drummond et al., 2018).

The environments that offenders find themselves in post-release have been accredited with inducing or preventing recidivism. Research has shown that relocating offenders to alternative or more affluent areas reduces recidivism (Kirk et al., 2018; Clark, 2016). Offenders relocated as part of the MOVE project had recidivism rates at less than half of those who returned to their previous regions (Kirk et al., 2018). Social bonds are a recurring theme throughout housing interventions; living with a supportive family, spouse, or cohabitant were all linked to increased desistance (Steiner, Makarios and

Travis, 2015). The Oxford Houses project represents a project that empowers offenders; subsidising rent for offenders but entrusting them with complete financial management, the only rule being that drugs and alcohol are prohibited (Jason et al., 2007). This project has been seen to lower recidivism rates among participants by 60%.

Housing interventions still incorporate programs such as half-way houses, however many modern interventions focus on the independence of the offender, such as living with family, being contractually part of a lease, and building up credit in the renting sector. By emphasising offenders' transition into a well-functioning member of society, and removing instability, anxieties, and negative influences, housing interventions can encourage desistance.

Mental Health Treatments

The literature indicates that mental health treatment may be preferred instead of incarceration for young adults with mental health issues. Treating mental illness appears to be an efficacious, more humane and cost effective way of tackling reoffending in cases involving mental illnesses.

In 2001, an Australian mental health survey was conducted, analysing reoffending rates after five years. The survey showed that participants with severe personality disorders had a 26% increased risk of re-offending, while anxiety disorders, mood disorders and psychotic symptoms - often accompanied severe disorders- did not greatly impact re-offending rates. (O'Driscoll et al., 2012). This study argued that treatment of mentally ill offenders; diagnosed with severe mental illnesses, should target the underlying personality disorders rather than treating symptoms of associated issues. Furthermore, individualised treatment for offenders should be organised post-release (O'Driscoll et al., 2012).

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common mental disorders, which impacts one's mood, behaviour and thinking. A study conducted in Germany, examined 283 male young adults to find out whether ADHD predicts recidivism (Grieger and Hosser, 2012). The study found that ADHD is more prevalent among offenders than in the general population. The analysis did not identify ADHD as a predictor of recidivism, although it found that when an offender with ADHD was

released they were more likely to reoffend sooner than offenders without ADHD (Grieger and Hosser, 2012). This finding could be useful for policy makers as relevant actors could have the opportunity to start the reintegration process and mental health support sooner after release for offenders diagnosed with ADHD.

In the United States, there are two pathways for mentally ill offenders; being placed in a 'Forensic Hospital' or being sentenced by a 'Mental Health Court'. One is placed in a forensic hospital if they are proven insane; approximately only 1% of the offenders qualify (Sahlin, 2018). Forensic hospitals focus on the rehabilitation of offenders and treatment rather than on punishment. Offenders released from forensic hospitals are less likely to reoffend than offenders released from non-forensic hospital institutes (Sahlin, 2018). Mental health courts are concerned with offenders who have mental health concerns but are ineligible to plea for insanity. Sahlin adds that participants in mental health courts had their risk of recidivism reduced by 50% for violent offences and offenders were found to desist for longer according to a study conducted in 2007. Evidence also shows that incarceration is likely to worsen one's mental health and counter-intuitively lead to recidivism. Offenders who receive treatment for mental health problems are less likely to reoffend, therefore the focus should be more on treatment rather than on punishment.

Another successful measure of tackling recidivism with treating mental illness was done in 2000 in Marin County (Adams and Rice, 2017) where California State funded a 3 year pilot program to create and demonstrate success in reducing recidivism of offenders with mental illness. Marin county established the Support and Treatment After Release (STAR) Program for non-violent mentally ill offenders, where a task force with experts in criminal justice and behavioural health worked collaboratively to support offenders after release. STAR showed great success as the recidivism rate decreased by 75%-85% (Adams and Rice, 2017). The programme appears to indicate that service collaboration within youth justice can contribute to reducing recidivism as well as supporting mentally ill offenders.

Inter-agency Cooperation

There are many scholarly sources advocating for inter-agency cooperation between different organisations in order to tackle recidivism.

The Boston Re-entry Initiative (BRI) is an interagency initiative to help transition violent adult offenders released from local prison back to their neighbourhood (Braga, Piehl and Hureau, 2009). The BRI is built on the foundation of interagency partnership. It connects the local prison, probation services and community organisations. It focuses criminal justice and social service resources on inmates who have higher risks for reoffending when released to the community. BRI participants attend panel sessions where they meet representatives from justice agencies, social service providers, faith-based organisations and additional law enforcement agencies. After these sessions, inmates start working with assigned jail staff caseworkers and faith based mentors. Mentors stay involved for 12-18 months after their release. Important feature of the faith-based mentoring program is that they can be found in the neighbourhood where the inmate returns, thus reachable for the released. Individualised, mentor facilitated, criminal justice-social service-community organisation network based programs show significant improvement in recidivism. BRI participants were found to be 30% less likely to reoffend.

The Penal Policy Review Group (PPRG) in Ireland was established by the Minister for Justice and Equality in 2012 to conduct a wide-ranging review on penal policy which included a review of which policy offers better outcome to reduce recidivism. The PPRG noted that penal policy is best created in an environment which prioritises inter-agency cooperation, and thus will facilitate desistance in previous offenders (Department of Justice, 2014). PPRG encourages improved data sharing capacity as it's believed that making data available for researchers and stakeholders will improve cooperation.

PPRG does not specifically target young adult offenders in its recommendations, although it proposes a programme similar to the Youth Diversion Programme for young adults between the ages 18-21. It recommends that departments and agencies should consult each other on targeted interventions for this age group (Working Group on Penal Policy Department of Justice, 2013). The Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures 2014-2020 strategy recognised the importance of young people who are at high- risk behaviour and advocates that young adults do not “*fall through the cracks because of fragmented services*” into criminality (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, 2019, p.11).

The Irish example shows there are promising strategies in place regarding interagency cooperation in Ireland, although it may need to be developed and underpinned by policy frameworks in order to reduce reoffending rates significantly.

Critique of Six Main Articles

This section provides a critical review of six articles that were identified throughout our research. After deliberation, the themes, strengths and mechanism alluded to in these articles were recognised as the most relevant and important in terms of addressing key issues for young adult offenders and applying efficacious interventions to re-integrate young adults into society and encourage desistance.

‘Have You Got Anybody You Can Stay With?’ Housing Options for Young Adults Leaving Custody (Drummond et al., 2018)

Research into housing as the foundation of a young offender’s re-entry into society in the context of the United Kingdom was produced by Drummond et al. Although the central topic of this policy brief is housing, there is a keen focus on the multi-faceted nature of a young offender’s journey towards societal integration. This piece was chosen as it gives practical insight into issues within the UK and how they are combatted through inter-agency collaboration; working with charities and non-governmental organisations (NGO) to orchestrate schemes and projects to facilitate purposeful re-entry for offenders.

This brief utilised qualitative research; consisting of semi-structured interviews with both young offenders and practitioners from various organisations. This was coupled with desk-based research which included case studies of projects and schemes orchestrated around the UK to facilitate young offender’s integration after release and encourage desistance. This research was conducted in 2017. Although this brief lacks a core quantitative research element, quantitative data and results are explored throughout to show the impact of certain projects and schemes. As one of the main themes of this piece is housing and young offenders’ risk of homelessness, the brief notes that data on this is difficult to quantify as offenders’ living situation may not be disclosed, offenders may live in unstable accommodation or regularly move.

The brief argues that to facilitate young offenders’ re-entry into society and achieve stable housing they must be afforded three main factors before leaving custody: the right preparation, access to a safe and stable home with an ongoing support network,

and financial support. Before leaving custody the brief notes that young offenders must be met before their release to discuss an exit plan. This would be done by a single probation officer or mentor through collaboration between rehabilitation companies, the probation service and the prison. Efforts must be made to minimise disruptions to this process; such as delays in organising meetings, various parole officers meeting the same offender, or the offender being transferred. Once young offenders leave custody community rehabilitation centres, non-governmental organisations, and charities, as well as the probation service must work together to facilitate the offender in finding stable accommodation or return to a stable family home. Furthermore, continued support in areas such as education, employment, social services, and mental health are imperative. The brief emphasises the importance of having a blanket approach to assisting young offenders. The brief posits that young offenders, alongside their criminal background, often lack employment experience and financial stability. This instability induces homelessness and recidivism. This brief emphasises the need for financial instruments that aid young offenders to reintegrate into society; notably to aid offenders in paying deposits and the initial rent charges.

These three main factors are embodied in the schemes mentioned below, orchestrated by various organisations through inter-agency collaboration:

Intensive Community Order (ICO):

The ICO is a scheme in place in the Cheshire and Greater Manchester areas aimed at young men aged 18-25 serving prison sentences of less than twelve months. It is noted that offenders in this age group pass through a “revolving door” into prison. A key pillar of this scheme is that staff are trained in young adult practice and research with a focus on stabilisation and psychology. While offenders are in prison they go through a learning disability and difficulty screening and a maturity assessment. Offenders are then placed in an adulthood and maturity program to identify a pathway towards improved education, training, and employment. Each offender works with a mentor to create a personalised exit strategy. The ICO has had a positive impact as the reconviction rate for those participating is a third lower than the regional average. Over 20% of the participants find employment after custody, and over 60% find stable housing and upkeep tenancy agreements

Switchback:

Switchback is a London based charity aimed at offenders aged 18-30. Their work covers many hurdles within offenders' re-integration: accommodation, employability, education and training, relationships and family, finance, interaction with the criminal justice system, attitudes and behaviours, independent living skills, drugs and alcohol, and mental and physical health. This program is based on mentoring; a mentor meets a young offender three months before release to strategize their release, establish a positive relationship, and continues mentoring after release to promote desistance. Although recidivism was not addressed specifically, the switchback programme categorised 80% of their offenders' situation as 'unstable' initially but after mentoring categorised over 90% as living stably and over 80% being financially stable. Switchback can be seen as offering a stable base for offenders to build from, and advising offenders how to deal with issues or setbacks which occur outside of prison.

Rent Deposit Schemes:

It has been noted that a lack of financial stability and having a criminal background are barriers for offenders to acquire accommodation. CentrePoint and Nacro offer schemes where they become the guarantors of deposits; entering into an agreement with landlords. CentrePoint have noted a 94% success rate among their cases as offenders successfully enter the private renters market. Nacro, based in Bedfordshire and Kent, noted that it has reduced recidivism and also significantly negated homelessness among young offenders newly released from custody.

These different schemes endorse the thematic factors that facilitate young offenders' re-entry into society. There is an emphasis on the maturity levels of the offenders. This approach can be seen in Irish frameworks such as the Turnaround Youth: Young Adults (18–24) in the Criminal Justice System (2016), and the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 (2021). Schemes such as these would meet our client's goals as it treats offenders as people with a strong focus on humane treatment; meeting offenders' basic needs such as housing and facilitating their second chance at becoming a functioning member of society. Young offenders' precarious situation; taking into consideration their financial, employment, and family circumstances, must be acknowledged.

The Impact of Personality Disorders, Substance Use, and Other Mental Illness on Reoffending (O'Driscoll, Larney, Indig, and Basson, 2012)

This article utilised the 2001 Mental Health Survey which contained data on 1,264 prisoners. The results of the survey were analysed alongside the reoffending rates of the offenders over a five-year period. The main findings were that offenders with severe personality disorders had a 26% higher rate of reoffending, and those with substance abuse disorder were 33% more at risk of reoffending. However it was found that anxiety, mood disorders and prisoners with psychotic symptoms did not have a profound impact on recidivism rates. In many incidents offenders often suffered with more than one mental health issue, and severe mental health disorders exist together with further mental health issues. This study argues that in order to reduce the risk of recidivism, interventions should target severe mental disorders and drug abuse as the leading cause of re-offending.

O'Driscoll et al. based the premise that seriously mentally ill people are more commonly incarcerated than those without mental disorders. This was demonstrated in Coid et al. 's (2007) study conducted in the UK as offenders with severe personality disorders were reconvicted more frequently than non-severe personality offenders. It is noted that offenders are twelve times more likely to suffer from a mental disorder and eleven times more likely to suffer from substance abuse than the general population. O'Driscoll acknowledges the consensus that mentally ill people should receive treatments needed for their conditions but advises that consideration should be given towards which treatment would be most efficacious for reducing offending.

The data analysed in this study contained 1,264 offenders, of which 81% of the participants were male and 18% female. The median age was 28 years. Only personality disorders and substance abuse disorders that were diagnosed definitively were assessed in this survey. The reoffending rate was calculated with finalised court appearances. According to the Mental Health Survey 9% of participants experienced psychotic symptoms, 20% had mood disorders, 38% had anxiety disorders, 44% had personality disorders and 59% had substance use disorders. 24% of the participants

had no mental illnesses. The amount of time between release and follow-up for this study ranged between 1 day to 7 years; the median being 318 days.

O'Driscoll et al. stated the cohort that reoffended the most were young men who had more previous court appearances. Only two types of mental illnesses: substance use and personality disorders were associated with recidivism. However, offenders with anxiety disorders, mood disorder and prisoners with psychotic symptoms – collated into the category 'other mental illnesses' – did not affect the recidivism rate. Conclusively O'Driscoll et al indicated that to have an effective impact on recidivism proactive treatment must be made available for offenders struggling with severe mental disorders and substance use disorders; the core of their issues, rather than focusing on associated issues such as anxiety. Further information illustrates that many offenders struggle with overlapping mental health issues, so treatment must address the prime causes of their struggle. Efforts must be made to continuously address them. This is especially important within the first 6-12 months after release in an effort to prevent reoffending.

In conclusion proactive treatment for personality and substance use disorder has a greater chance to reduce the risk of recidivism. For mental treatment providers, it is important information as, due to comorbidity with personality and substance abuse problems, the risk of re-offending is high. The limitations of this study, noted by the authors, are that there may have been an underestimation of reoffending and not taking into account if participants were deceased. The lack of differentiation between personality disorders and mental health issues in the analysis might be at a disadvantage also. Ultimately, the article advocates that mental health services should not merely focus on treating symptoms of mental illness but combine various interventions.

This statement is underpinned by another study by Pullmann et al. (2006) conducted on mental health treatment for juvenile offenders. Pullman uses two groups of juvenile offenders with mental health problems. For one group, they used a 'wrap-around' treatment that involved the offenders' families, juvenile justice and other services. For the comparison group they used traditional mental health services only. Participants treated with the wrap-around treatments showed significantly lower risk of reoffending and shorter detention time. Existing examples in the Irish penal system for mental health intervention are included in the Youth Justice Strategy (Department of Justice,

2021). It emphasises the importance of dealing with mental health among Young people. The Strategy Intends to enhance cooperation and facilitate training for organisations dealing with substance misuse, trauma and mental health.

Controlling Violent Offenders Released to the Community: An Evaluation of the Boston Re-Entry Initiative (Braga, Piehl, and Hureau, 2009)

This article is based on the evaluation of the Boston Re-Entry Initiative (BRI). BRI is based on interagency partnerships between the prison service, probation service and local faith-based organisations of Boston. It aims to facilitate violent offenders' re-entry back into their communities. The program is rooted in establishing pro-social bonds and mentorship with offenders while in prison, and assisting offenders in vocational development and accessing social services. In an effort to ensure the safety of communities, as well as positive reintegration of offenders, the BRI targets violent offenders often excluded from re-entry programs. The BRI has been accredited with, according to a randomised control test, making offenders 30% less likely to reoffend. Re-entry programs, such as BRI, came into being in response to the growing American prison population from 1980-2000. From 1981-2001 the prison population quadrupled with sentences of less than twelve months being the most prominent. Although re-entry programmes in the United States have received substantial financial investment; the government invested 100 million dollars for re-entry programs, additional 300 million dollars to establish jobs, transitional houses and for community support in 2004, there is very little evidence that can help to develop and improve re-entry programmes. At the time of the study (2001), very few re-entry programmes were established across the US which prioritised preparing inmates for a purposeful return to life after release. Due to the high number of traffic in regional jails, the BRI targets offenders in such facilities.

At the time of study, jailed offenders were incarcerated for violent crimes (25%), property-related crimes (24%), drug-related crimes (25%), public-order offences (25%), and 'other' offences (1%). The authors noted serious issues to be addressed; such as drug abuse, mental illness, homelessness and unemployment. Additionally, it was recognised that 70% and 85% of the jailed population suffered with substance

abuse and/or mental health issues respectively. In establishing the BRI, it was realised that addressing these common issues, increasing education and job skills and establishing positive networks for offenders outside of custody would reduce recidivism. Most importantly could be enhanced after returning to the community, if it could link to services outside the prisons.

What is BRI?

Each month the Boston Police Department (BPD) selects 15-20 high risk inmates by objective and subjective criteria. The selection targets male offenders between the age of 18-32 residents in Boston. The BPD's Boston Regional Intelligence Centre uses subjective criteria; such as whether the offender is a gang member, is a known violent threat, or is a possible shooter or gunshot victim, to select participants. One hundred and forty three offenders were selected to participate in this BRI study.

Rigorous interventions begin within forty-five days of an inmate's sentence, prioritising prolonged and consistent action while the offender is in custody.

Within forty-five days a panel session is organised where the participants are informed about the agencies, organisations, programs, and community resources and how they can help them. The parole and probation representatives inform the participants about the consequences of continuing down a path of violent crime. However, it is noted that this intervention conveys the message that offenders can recognise this moment as a turning-point and they have the power to "choose their own destiny".

After the panel meeting, offenders are assigned caseworkers/mentors from faith-based organisations. These faith-based organisations are located in the same areas which the offenders will return to after custody. It is thought that the relationship developed between them can continue after incarceration, thus, being an initial pro-social network post-release. The caseworkers work with offenders immediately and together they construct a transition accountability plan. Case managers steer offenders towards programs that are functional and proven to be helpful for offenders looking to reintegrate into communities and the labour market (substance abuse treatment, mental health treatment, education). Additional partnerships were established with local career centres, health commissions, community colleges, halfway house operators, and child support services. On-average, mentors worked

with offenders up to eighteen months after their release. If the participant is on parole or probation, the supervisor agency is asked to participate in the BRI.

The main features of BRI are extensive case management; covering a wide range of treatment programs, and interagency and community partnership; utilising governmental departments, local law enforcement, local stakeholders, and faith-based and community organisations. This utilisation of multiple services make BRI more efficacious.

Evaluation of BRI:

BRI had a positive impact on reducing recidivism among its participants. Evaluations were done after two and three years post-release, and the evaluation was split between general reoffending and violent crimes. After 2 years post-release 67.6% of BRI participants had been arrested for new crimes compared to 78% in the comparison group – this is a 10.4% decrease. After 3 years post-release 77.8% of BRI participants had been arrested for new crimes compared to 87.7% in the comparison group – this is a 9.9% decrease. For violent crimes we see a similar effect. After 2 years post-release 20.4% of BRI participants had been arrested for a violent crime compared to 34.6% in the comparison group – this is a 14.4% decrease. After 3 years 27.8% BRI participants had been arrested for a violent crime compared to 39.2% of the comparison group – this is an 11.4% reduction. As a whole, it is estimated that the likelihood of a BRI participant of reoffending decreases by 30% compared to non-participants.

In sum, even though recidivism rates were continuously high among this cohort, participating in BRI reduced recidivism significantly and reduced the likelihood of offenders to reoffend. This particular cohort, consisting of young, male, high-risk offenders, are often out of reach for re-entry programs, or even excluded. BRI demonstrates that an inclusive mechanism which utilises interagency and organisation relationships can be fruitful in reducing recidivism and facilitating offenders in changing their lives for the better. The findings suggest that individualised treatment plans, supported by a network of criminal justice, social service, and community-based organisations can positively impact recidivism.

The Youth Justice Strategy (2021) demonstrates a plan for better coordination and improved cooperation between the various organisations of the Irish justice system. It was recognised that a system-wide collaborative approach is necessary when it comes to youth and young adult justice, which involves all relevant agencies and partners from the community. The Strategy emphasises the vital role of community-based organisations, in delivering important public services. Although the strategy does not prescribe particular mechanisms for interagency cooperation, it does give a framework that helps cooperative solutions.

Strengths-Based Approach to Prisoner Re-Entry: the Fresh Start Prisoner Re-Entry Program (Hunter et al., 2016)

Summary of Study:

The Community Re-entry Initiative (CRI), was introduced in Connecticut as an intervention to reduce recidivism. Hunter et al. (2016) highlighted CRI as a strengths-based approach to re-entry initiative that has provided adequate provisions to incarcerated male prisoners both prior to and immediately after their release. This approach concentrates on the skills that are required by those hoping to reintegrate into the community upon release. In order to enhance the effectiveness of this approach case managers are assigned to help focus upon resilience, transformation, empowerment and civic engagement (Saleebey, 1996). The article also presents how case management begins with an assessment that categorises the goals of the client, their capabilities, and what resources can be used to overcome difficulties. This approach also incorporates the material utilised in the initial assessment that is converted into a focused treatment plan that is tailored to the strengths and needs of the individual.

Theoretical Approach:

The article elaborates on the specific theoretical model followed by the authors on their assessment of these community-based initiatives. Initial comparable theoretical approaches, such as the Risk, Needs, Responsiveness (RNR) framework, an

approach mainly utilised in the analysis of prisoner assessment and classification and the Good Lives Model (GLM) framework, which is a theoretical framework that conceptualises offender treatment from a strengths-based perspective (Ward & Stewart, 2003), the authors draw on both in the expansion of their theoretical approach to community reintegration of prisoners.

Impact of Intervention:

The impact of this study was mainly confined to the results of two focus groups consisting of prisoners who had enrolled in a community-based re-entry program. Consisting of twelve members in each group, one group consisted of prisoners enrolled in the program prior to their release from prison and the other whose members contained twelve prisoners post release experiencing the effects of the program in community life. The responses of the focus groups members of both groups, in particular with the group that were post release, expressed their satisfaction that the program followed through in helping them achieve their goals and was responsive to their needs. Participants emphasised the trust and respect they felt for program staff and case managers and also the support they received as they worked toward their goals. Program strategies such as the program culture, being responsive to needs, and a focus on strengths were all deemed as being successful.

Major Themes & Similar Studies:

The article established a number of themes and concepts that are incorporated within the community re-entry programs. The dominant concept within this type of intervention would be the prior need to identify the needs, and goals of the individuals that are enrolled within the program. Enhanced classification and assessment are concepts that are paramount to the inner workings of this community-based intervention to recidivism.

The Transition from Prison to the Community Initiative (TCPI) is a similar intervention that has been utilised in various US states. Holtfreter and Wattanaporn (2014) examine this framework of preventing reoffending in regard to the female prison population of those who partook in the initiative. The TCPI follows similar lines of the CRI in the early assessment of the needs, assets and goals of the individuals concerned. Comparing two individual states where this intervention has been

implemented, the initiative is deemed a “superior re-entry model for female offenders” (Holtfreter and Wattanaporn, 2014).

Limitations & Application to Ireland:

A limitation to this article is the lack of statistical evidence on whether this intervention helps reduce the level of reoffending. Another limitation within the context of the study fails to highlight the dropout rate from these community programs for re-entry and within that examine the reasons why those that drop out of the initiative do so. In relation to this REA, the study looked at the entire adult population of offenders, not just young adults; however, we believe the models and approaches used would be a good basis for tailored interventions for 18-24 year olds.

In the Irish context, making such an intervention applicable, would certainly have a rational basis for implementation and success. The role of community would undoubtedly be an essential element, however with the community-based charities that already exist in Ireland, assistance in implementing this initiative would be aided by those with vast experience in dealing with people within the community. This intervention would complement the framework set out in the Youth Justice Strategy 2021-2027 (Dept of Justice, 2021) in how one of the core elements of this strategy is working with community agencies to tackle recidivism.

Engagement Processes in Model Programs for Community Re-Entry from Prison for People with Serious Mental Illness (Angell et al., 2014)

Type of Intervention:

The Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) and the Critical Time Intervention (CTI) programs are long-term wrap-around approaches that seek to boost stability of care by concentrating all services within one interdisciplinary team. This type of intervention promotes connections to outside services within the community and encourages support systems for post release prisoners. A study conducted by Angell et al. (2014) presents an analysis of these ‘wrap-around’ programs, as an

intervention to reduce recidivism among a specific demographic of prisoners. These therapies focus on prisoners' re-entry back into the community as an intervention to ending the cycle of recidivism (Petersilia, 2003).

The CTI designates a case manager; charged with assisting the offender in enrolling in treatment programs such as therapy, housing programs, and day treatments. Their role also includes establishing and maintaining community networks for the prisoner. The FACT program embodies a variation of another evidence-based treatment, Assertive Community Treatment (ACT). ACT is a type of case management program in which a multidisciplinary team provides supports to an individual using a customised approach. The CTI model is restrained by focusing on time within prison while FACT assumes the necessity for continuous support after release; which is constantly re-measured to the level of need of the individual.

Measures and Target Demographic:

The study addresses and examines the processes of engagement that is entailed across two re-entry models in an effort to build concrete understanding regarding effective engagement upon this specific demographic (Angell et al, 2014).

Impacts of Intervention:

Core to the potential success and overall impact of 'wrap-around' intervention is the concept of engagement, not just on the side of the individual prisoners but with the community at large. Both treatments hold the concept of engagement as a core tenet, that staff in both programs engage with former prisoners in pursuing mental health treatment through advocating for and accompanying the former prisoners as they look for basic needs such as housing, welfare and insurance benefits, and employment. The providing of active and emotional support, provided for the clients with empathy is considered essential in cultivating successful relationships (Marsh et al. 2012).

Major Themes:

The major theme throughout this study is engagement. The role of engagement is broken down into three distinct phases. Those being the relationships that are created and maintained between the program staff and the clients. Staff from both programs

saw the development of a relationship bond with the prisoner as essential to program engagement. Client provider relationships are generally considered as crucial in mental health treatment. A second level of engagement described within the study is the pre-release engagement. This initial engagement process established the important purpose of safeguarding that the criminal would be familiar with the program upon being released. The third aspect of the engagement theme was the engagement of the strategies utilised upon the release of the subject and subsequent re-entry to the community. The actions of the program then change from efforts to locate the client to helping them to secure basic needs. During these activities, staff members continue to engage with clients, both as a means of motivating them to remain in contact with the program and also to encourage their participation in enacting treatment goals, such as drug abstinence, maintaining their housing, and forming and reactivating social connections.

Limitations of Study:

One of the limitations of this study is, although the research covers a triangulated area that is inclusive of the perspectives of the staff involved like the case managers, the participants of the treatment programs; the prisoners themselves and the observations of the researchers, the findings in regard to reoffending and the success of the treatments are limited. While the study is qualitative in nature and does focus upon the detailed needs that are required for the successful transition of mentally ill prisoners back into the community, the limitations of this study is that it fails to measure the success rate.

Feasibility in Irish Context:

The feasibility of 'wrap-around' programs as a response to reducing recidivism within an Irish context can be assured in conjunction with the Youth Justice Strategy 2021 - 2027 (Dept of Justice, 2021). With the strategy published by the Department of Justice to develop a framework that can address the challenges faced in regard to juvenile and young adult offending. In addressing the potential of prevention and early intervention, 'wrap-around' services/programs are included in utilising new approaches to intervening with young adult offending and therefore recidivism.

Juvenile Sanctions for Young Adults in the Netherlands: A Developmental Perspective (Van der Laan, Beerthuizen and Barendregt, 2021)

“Adolescent Criminal Law” (ACL) has been implemented in the Netherlands since 2014. This increased the age up to 22 years for young adults to be subjected to juvenile sanctions for crimes, if they meet specific criteria. A “Recently Introduced Policy Instrument” evaluation was conducted by van der Laan et al. to assess the application of this instrument on the young adult cohort.

The reason for this legislation is to provide special treatment to younger adults, as they are overrepresented in the justice system. Reasoning provided in the literature is that the entry age of 18 into adulthood is an arbitrary measure, that research has shown that young adults may not be able to fully be assigned responsibility for their actions, and that juvenile sanctions provide better rehabilitative measures. On this basis, juvenile sanctions may be provided on a flexible basis for 16 to 22 year old offenders, with the aims of providing special treatment to young adults, and the hopeful result that a reduction in recidivism would occur. Juvenile justice in the Netherlands focuses on the developmental model for offenders, in which interventions such as education and re-socialisation is promoted, unlike in the adult justice system. As a result of access to this pedagogical focus young adults will reduce their rate of recidivism.

Indeed, the application of juvenile sanctions has been in practice in other European countries in differing procedures; the Council of Europe recommended that young adults may be treated “in a way comparable to juveniles and to be subject to the same interventions” as they have yet to reach full adulthood and thus claim full responsibility for their actions (Council of Europe, 2003).

In their evaluation, van der Laan et al. used the ‘Recently Introduced Policy Instrument’ (RIPI) (Kautto and Similä, 2005) to assess the relevance and impact of the intervention. In order to assess the impact of the legislation, they gathered empirical evidence on trend indicators of its use; two indicators picked the first being the number of criminal cases against young adults sentenced with a juvenile sanction, the second being the number of reports written by forensic behaviour experts from the Dutch Probation Service.

The implementation of the legislation was scrutinised based on the aims it was trying to achieve, and its basis on targeting these issues. Van der Laan identified some

issues in the concepts underpinning the rationale for the legislation, and how these concepts influence the legislation as a result:

- The immaturity of young adults is used to explain this implementation, however, there is little explanation in the legislation on what this is based on; literature on the concept of immaturity in offenders shows this is not found uniformly in the young adult population.
- The target population of 18-22 year olds is vague in identifying who exactly the target group is, instead leaving this decision to the legal professionals overseeing the practical implementation. This could lead to a mixed use of ACL in different groups and dependent on the jurisdiction the offender is being tried in.
- They found limited evidence of positive effects on the pedagogical approach for young adults, and that its impact would be varied in comparison to the juvenile group.

In the short-term analysis of the implementation of the ACL, the study found an increase in the use of the ACL instrument for young adult offenders, indicating that it's a useful tool for the justice system. However, this increase was largely seen in the younger range, rather than the 20-22 range. In predictive models, the study estimated that actual implementation of ACL fell in the middle ranges of estimates, with 4-5% of tried cases using the ACL in practice. This remains low in comparison to other countries who have similar practices in use across the EU.

There are lessons to be learned for other countries if they were to approach this policy instrument as a method to cater for the needs of young adults in the justice system, and how to apply in a fair manner that is available to every applicable young adult offender. Key assumptions are to be met in order to bring about the changes hoped in the Netherlands, i.e., a reduction in the recidivism, and the reduction of overrepresentation of young adults in the justice system.

The main limitation of this study is that the time elapsed from the date of implementation of the ACL limits the study in measuring the long term intended impacts of the intervention; while the authors could measure the use of the instrument in the Dutch justice system, they are unable to assess the impact of recidivism rates in this group; a quasi-experiment on this topic has been funded (but yet to be

published) by the Dutch government. Limited evidence is available internationally on whether juvenile sanctions have an impact on recidivism in the young adult group specifically.

The study shows an interesting limitation from the flexibility of the legislation, in that the application of the ACL is an exception, rather than the rule of applying sanctions to young adults. The vast majority of the young adults in the justice system will be subjected to adult sanctions, limiting its impact on the target population. Germany, as an example, automatically applies juvenile sanctions on young adults, with higher rates of juvenile sanctions as a result. The rationale of the ACL shows that young adults are a group that require special treatment, so the resulting legislation fails to actually bring this into practice. Indeed, the first iteration of the legislation mandated legal professionals to explain why young adult offenders should be exempt from the ACL; this was watered down in the resulting legislation (Schmidt, Rap and Liefwaard, 2021).

In order to apply this legislation in Ireland, the supportive pedagogy available currently to juveniles would need to be expanded to young adults; this is currently unachievable, as young adults move to adult prisons once they turn 18; the Oberstown detention campus for children would be required to expand their service provision. The significantly higher costs of detention in juveniles may prove a barrier if this kind of detention was expanded to include young adults (Cionnaith, 2019).

The legislation does take into account the unique needs of young adults in the justice system; their immaturity and the transition process they are going through requires supports that aren't currently available in the adult system. However, with the main aim of this REA is finding support for young adults after they commit crimes and to aid their reduction in recidivism, while the concept is plausible, it has not been proven to bring about this change yet through longitudinal research evaluation (Schmidt, Rap and Liefwaard, 2021). The implementation of this legislation and thus the implementation of positive resocialisation measures for young adults appears to be a good step towards recognising the needs of young adults; it is not a measure, however, that would bring about the transformative change young adults need to ensure they pursue their perception of "the good life" once they leave prison.

Policy Recommendation

Synthesis of Policy Recommendations

Ultimately, we agree that young adults aged 18-24 should be considered a distinct cohort; unlike children and adolescents or fully grown adults, as they are in a transitional period towards adulthood (Farrington, Loeber and Howell, 2012). In light of this view, our group concluded that legislative action should be considered so young adult offenders can receive leniency in criminal punishment and rehabilitative assistance, thus improving their life rather than being severely punished (Irish Penal Reform Trust, 2019). Furthermore, we recognised that recidivism occurs mostly in the community setting, and that policy options should be highly focused on promoting desistance once young offenders reintegrate into society. There are many factors that induce criminogenic behaviour without a single solution available to ameliorate the high recidivism rates among young adult offenders (Mizel and Abrams, 2018). We came to the conclusion that an approach utilising wrap-around interventions would be the most efficacious in encouraging desistance and bettering young offenders' lives. This approach would focus on rehabilitating and empowering young offenders and establishing positive social networks between them and the community they return to. This would not only benefit the offenders but also their families and communities as it would encourage integrating into and contributing to society.

Research has shown that young adults are still developing cognitively. As discussed by Mizel and Abrams (2018), this means that they are susceptible to temptations, impulses, peer pressure, and have an inferior ability to consider short-term gains and long-term consequences. With this in mind, Van der Laan's (2021) work offered great insight into an alternative way to address young adult offending. Rather than punishing young adults, potentially ensuing mental and physical harm as well as accruing further social and economic issues (Sahlin, 2018), rehabilitation is prioritised as a level of flexibility is shown towards offenders in sanctioning. As children and adolescents are given leeway, due to their immaturity, we believe that certain young adult cases should also be offered such flexibility. Young adult offenders have their whole lives ahead of them; they are the future generations of society, and must be provided with assistance and treatment rather than harsh sanctions. By focusing on rehabilitation young adults

can work towards being a proactive member of society and escape the ‘revolving door’ of crime (Drummond et al., 2018).

There are many factors which influence young adults to offend; unstable housing, poverty, unemployment, lack of education, negative social networks, and poor mental health (Costello, 2016; Drummond et al., 2018). Each case is different, there is no one fundamental reason for offending, however research shows that there are usually numerous factors at play at one time that induce recidivism. Due to the multiplicity of factors that influence reoffending, as a group, we figured that a ‘wrap-around’ approach would be most efficacious. From housing assistance; ensuring the offender has a strong base from where they can begin to change their life (Drummond et al., 2018), to services where they can learn, upskill, or obtain necessary qualifications to obtain a job (Hunter et al., 2016; Davis et al., 2013), all of these interventions play a vital role in rebuilding a young offender. Additionally, the mental well-being of young adults must also be taken into account to encourage positive goal-setting, continued motivation, and a transformative mind-set for when young offenders are released from custody (Hunter et al., 2016, Angell et al., 2014; Braga, Piehl, and Hureau, 2009). The literature cites that the most beneficial process includes rehabilitation within prison; equipping young adults with the tools and treatment they need, before offering continued support after release. Young adults are vulnerable after being released from custody as they must endeavour to find accommodation, employment, financial security, and form new social networks (Drummond et al., 2018). We agreed continued support post-release would be paramount to reducing recidivism.

The literature demonstrates that young adults who offend and reoffend are often surrounded by disadvantaged social circumstances (Johns, Williams and Haines, 2017). Coupled with this, we found serving a prison sentence would cut young adults off from society further, making re-entry even more difficult. Due to this, we agreed that our policy recommendations must promote positive relationships between young adult offenders and their families, friends, work colleagues, and social services, as well as focusing on nurturing pro-social networks within the wider community. This can be done through community based cooperation and collaboration as well as mentoring (Braga, Piehl, and Hureau, 2009). By utilising such mechanisms, we agreed that offenders would establish a pro-social bond with the community and individuals

outside of their previous negative networks and environment; demonstrating that there is a way out of their previously unfavourable environment. Coupling positive community networking and rehabilitative services would facilitate an environment where young adults could thrive.

Ultimately, the rehabilitation, treatment, and growth of young adult offenders is at the heart of our policy recommendations. Due to the multi-faceted nature of the factors which influence re-offending, our recommendation prioritises a specialised approach to sanctioning, treating, and rehabilitating young adult offenders. By using a cumulative approach which targets various aspects of young offenders' lives the most efficacious results in reducing recidivism can be achieved.

Finally, we agree that the success in the implementation of strategies to reduce re-offending must be assessed with multiple measures (McNeill et al., 2012). The measures must be co-created with the people who will be at the forefront of their implementation; from community workers, those in the youth justice system, and past offenders, these groups must be involved to ensure evidence-based practice is paired with the lived experiences of people who are dealing with these issues on a daily basis. Measures must go beyond just reducing re-offending rates (McNeill et al., 2012); satisfaction levels and the overall wellbeing of offenders and their communities must also be assessed before an intervention is called a "success".

We have considered each policy option to compare against indicators for their successful implementation, particularly in an Irish context. Indicators of importance are shaped by; their appropriateness for this age group, political feasibility, cost effectiveness, the intervention's impact on society and on the offenders themselves (McNeill et al., 2012), their impact on the reduction in the risk of reoffending, and whether the outputs of these policy options would align strongly with the ICC's aim of "making society fairer".

Table: Policy Recommendation Comparison against Indicators of Success

Policy Option	Community Networks	Housing	Education	Mental Health	Juvenile Sanctions	Employment
Action	Collaboration with local community organisations (faith, sports)	Start a fund so financial assistance can be given to offenders looking for accommodation in the private renting market. Money can be given towards initial months' rent and/or deposit.	Offer educational programs pre release	Targeted Treatment for mental illnesses	All offenders 18-22 years old can be subjected to juvenile sanctions	Training programs pre-release coupled with employment post-release
Age Appropriate? (18-24 yrs)	Yes - Encourages positive environment for a cohort easily coerced or influenced	Yes - The vulnerability of this cohort means assistance is essential	Yes - Applies to all age groups	Yes - Applies to all age group	Yes - Aligns with needs for personal development.	Yes - Facilitates the transition from young adult to adult through the milestone of employment
Reduction in risk for re-offending (Low/Medium/High)	High - Evidence of high reduction of reoffending	Medium - It would require other support and continued support. It would be the basis of desistance	Medium - Research shows improved educations provides positive opportunities encouraging	Medium - Addressing mental health issues and offering continued assistance facilitates positive development and desistance	Medium - It requires further supports following re-entry into the community	Medium to High - increasing employability inhibits social isolation, poverty, and discourages criminogenic behaviour

			desistance			
Political feasibility (Low/Medium/High)	Medium -the existing interagency models need to be expanded to organisations for young adults	Low to Medium - the current housing crisis makes feasibility low. However low numbers needing assistance may mean that exceptions could be made.	Medium to High - Plausible potential to enact such programs in Irish prison system	Medium - Mental health is receiving more attention but moves slowly. New mental health hospital is the pipeline but its predicted impact is questionable	Medium - requires legislative change and tailored facilities	Medium - Lesser paid vacancies may be easily filled by recently released prisoners but higher paying jobs may be more difficult to access without coordination
Financial Cost (Low/Medium/High)	Medium- Already existing organisations in place. Collective action and agreed coordination is needed	Medium - It depends on numbers and rental costs (varies for each region)	Medium - Main cost entailed would be for staff involved in programs	High - Mental health therapist, therapies and coordination is expensive	Medium - Depends on the extent of the group it will apply too	Medium to High - Would have to take into account staffing costs, gratuities and consumables
Alignment with the aim of "making society fairer"	Yes - It would be a more humane approach that focuses on rehabilitation in custody, and inclusivity post-release	Yes - Housing is a basic human need.	Yes - Education can be used to advance an individual both personally and professionally. Also based upon the right to an	Yes - Mentally ill offenders should have same chance after release as healthy offenders	Yes - It obliges the justice system to tailor sanctions to the offender's situation	Yes - Gives former prisoners a second chance at desistance and improving their quality of life

			education.			
Scale of impact for the offender and/or community (Low/Medium/High)	High - integrates offenders positively into communities	Medium to High - Can offer a 'turning point' for offenders and a stable base to start a new life. Would also reduce homelessness in the community.	Low to Medium - must be accompanied by community involvement and enhanced employment prospects	Medium to High - Safer community because it reduces the risk of violent and general crime	Low - It must be accompanied by community re-entry support, and does not cater to the needs of those above the age of 23yrs.	Medium to High - Involves the community/employers in the rehabilitation process. Gives the ex-prisoner an opportunity to gain legitimate employment

Policy Options Explained

Examining the above policy options, whereby all options are applicable to the targeted demographic of 18- to 24-year-old, each option offers varying degrees of success in reducing recidivism. This REA recommends that each action is implemented as part of a cumulative approach to address the multitude of factors which influence recidivism. This theoretically could be provided through local community facilities that provide these services for young adults once they leave prison; a pilot initiative of this type of scheme is underway in the UK (Ministry of Justice, 2021).

The **Community Networks** option would offer an extremely viable instrument in reducing recidivism. The network of community-based organisations is already in place within Ireland when considering structures like sporting, religious groups, and charitable organisations. A requirement of expanding their reach through interagency collaboration would be utilised to include young adult offenders and integrate them into the community. As many of these organisations are currently in existence and play a vital role in communities there would be minimal costs incurred while offenders would be offered a pathway towards being a well-functioning member of the community.

The inclusion of a **Housing** fund to aid in procuring accommodation within the private housing market as a policy option for the reduction of recidivism would align with the aim of “making society fairer”, be inclusive and applicable to the targeted demographic, and have some measure of success in reducing reoffending. By acquiring accommodation offenders can work towards bettering themselves confidently. Unfortunately external factors threaten the viability of this option; access to the rental market and availability of housing. The current state of housing in Ireland would reduce the political feasibility of this being a genuine workable option.

Education courses supplied within prison with potential continuation after release would be beneficial in presenting offenders with the opportunity to progress out of a cycle of crime. Educational courses would have to be age appropriate and varied; including maturation workshops, primary education, and work-related skills. Expanded educational courses align with the aim of “making society fairer” and have a high degree of political feasibility. The costs that would generally be incurred would potentially mainly centre on the remuneration of required educational staff within the

prison service. The only caveat that would present itself in this context would be the requirement for continued support beyond prison walls which would need inter-agency collaboration with educational institutes and governmental departments to approve funding, scholarship, or available placement for offenders.

Focusing on **Mental Health** treatment for mentally ill prisoners post release, in a separate environment from mentally ill non-offenders would have a notable effect on the rates of reoffending within that demographic. The policy option of segregated mental health treatment would be applicable to the target group and fall in with the objective of “making society fairer”. The location of appropriate facilities for conducting such treatment could prove to be an issue whereby current hospital space is at a premium. Although a new hospital is due for completion, opportunities for a specialised sector for mentally ill offenders may not come to fruition. Also, the high financial cost of providing mental health treatment would act as a caveat.

Juvenile Sanctions as a policy option falls within the requirements of plausibility whereby all offenders between the ages 18 to 22 years old can be subject to juvenile sanctions. This option aligns with the need for personal development and as it would produce tailored sanctions from the justice system in line with the personal situational circumstances of the offender. As a viable policy option it adheres to the goal of “making society fairer”. The potential effects that juvenile sanctions would have on reducing reoffending, would depend on the allocation and implementation of further supports upon re-entry. Political feasibility would require legislative change and appropriate facilities, therefore the financial cost of implementing juvenile sanctions as a policy option would be dependent on the applicability to the group of offenders.

Employment post release coupled with appropriate training programs prior to re-entry to the community would be an applicable policy option to the targeted demographic. The provision of employment to offenders would align with “making society fairer” and also aid in reducing reoffending. The allocation of offenders into positions of low paid work for the reasons of preventing reoffending would politically comply with the current fall off of workers within low paid unskilled positions. The financial cost of implementing, running, and maintaining the courses needed and the post release support would potentially run higher than the cost of the previously mentioned policy options.

A final policy option, that was examined and discussed throughout this REA, is improving the paucity of research and data available on the Irish population of young adult offenders in Ireland. This issue has been noted by several institutions (Central Statistics Office, 2022, Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice p. 40, 2016, Irish Penal Reform Trust p. 13, 2012), and has left us looking internationally to find reliable sources of information on young adults in prison. The Department of Justice needs to resource further into data collection on the entire prison population and those who come into contact with the justice system; high quality, statistically significant research, such as randomised control trials and longitudinal studies are required in order to develop the knowledge base in this area of youth justice.

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