Supporting children who offend to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges, and aspirations.

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Abstract

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experiences of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported children who offend and their family and/or whānau.

The qualitative exploratory study involved semi-structured interviews with social workers to gather rich and descriptive data. The study results highlighted the complexity of working with children who offend due to the offending behaviour often being related to other difficulties in the child's life. The child's engagement with the justice system added to this complexity requiring a balance of holding the child accountable for their offending, ensuring the child's safety and those around them, and providing support within a resource-constrained environment.

The study found that to increase positive outcomes for children who offend, social workers needed to be skilled in building and maintaining relationships with the child and their family and/or whānau, gathering relevant information to enable a holistic understanding of the child's home environment and to encourage positive connections. These connections, either within the home environment, community or with other professionals, provide a basis upon which change can be supported. Ecological systems theory can be useful in helping the child and their family and/or whānau to build on skills and strengths to create change within the home environment. Building those skills often requires a variety of supports to address the different domains within the child's life and that of their family and/or whānau. Often these supports are limited or only become available as part of an intervention once the child's offending behaviour is serious enough to require Oranga Tamariki involvement. The study highlighted the importance of prevention, assisting children who offend and their family and/or whānau early rather than intervening only once the offending is more serious. This could reduce the need for youth justice involvement and possibly prevent children from engaging in future offending behaviour.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This research seeks to explore how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experience of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported these children and their family and/or whānau.

International research shows that a relatively small number of constant offenders in adolescence and adulthood account for more than half of all crimes, including serious property crime and violence (Loeber et al., 2008/2016a). Most of these young people start their offending in childhood. Consequently, children who offend have a two to three times higher likelihood of becoming violent, chronic offenders and have a higher rate of youth justice involvement (Loeber et al., 2008/2016b). Understanding the social environment of the family and/or whānau and the physical and social resources available can help social workers determine what elements of the client's overall system is working well and not so well (Haight et al., 2020).

New Zealand defines children who offend as children between the ages of 10 – 13 who have committed an offence and has a separate way of working with these children (Social Services Committee, 2012). There is limited understanding of how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free and achieve positive outcomes. This research seeks to contribute to this body of knowledge and provide information which social workers can utilise when working in this area.

This chapter introduces the research by explaining the rationale, identifying the research aim and objectives, and outlining the study design and key terms. The chapter also includes an introduction to the topic and some background on New Zealand's response to children who offend. The chapter concludes with the structure of the report and the chapter summary.

Rationale

New Zealand Youth Court Judge John Walker described having seen serious offending committed by children, both boys and girls, with many complexities in their lives (Walker, 2017). These young offenders are often responsible for many crimes, and they often start offending before the age of 14. They have a two to three times

higher likelihood of becoming violent, chronic offenders and have a higher rate of youth justice involvement (Loeber et al., 2008/2016a; McLaren, 2000; Moffitt et al., 2002).

The assessment and subsequent intervention with children who offend and their families and/or whānau is often initiated by social workers, which raises questions on how this is done. This process of applying evidence-based practice and working with the child and their family and/or whānau on appropriate intervention and determining the risks and needs involved is often informal and not always observable or recorded (Bonta & Andrews, 2017; Farrington et al., 2001). Reasons behind these decisions by professionals are often subjective and led by intuition (Bonta & Andrews, 2017).

While previous studies have explored how to reduce offending with young people (e.g. Basto-Pereira et al., 2015; Byrne & Case, 2016; McMahon & Jump, 2018; Sharkey et al., 2017; Villeneuve et al., 2019), it is important to gain a better understanding on how social workers support children who offend and achieve positive outcomes with these children and their family and/or whānau as well as the community. Too many practice innovations remain lost to those who would benefit from the thinking and action of others. Without this knowledge-sharing, an essential part of effective practice would be lost (DePoy & Gilson, 2017). This research aims to build on existing knowledge by exploring the perspective of New Zealand social workers who work with children who offend. The study is intended to offer insight into what these practitioners have found helpful in their practice and the barriers to achieving positive outcomes when working with this population group.

Research Objectives

This study explores how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free and achieve positive outcomes. Two research objectives informed the study: (1) To explore the facilitators and barriers social workers experience in working with children who offend and their families and/or whānau; and (2) To gain an understanding of the social workers' perspectives on how to improve outcomes for children who offend.

Study Design

A qualitative exploratory process was chosen for this research. The qualitative exploratory approach aims to gain new insights or increase understanding through

intentional, systematic data collection to understand an area of social life (Stebbins, 2008; Steinberg, 2015). Social constructivism provided a lens for interpreting the research data. Social constructivism recognises that knowledge and understanding about the world are constructed during social interaction among people and is based on the role language has in those exchanges and its social functions. Therefore, knowledge is built within cultural, historical, and local contexts through the language used to interpret social experiences (Flick, 2018; Payne, 2005). The study utilised semi-structured interviews with six social workers. Further detail relating to the methodology and method are provided in chapter three.

Definition of Key Terms

The following terms are defined below to ensure consistency of understanding across the report:

Alternative education: refers to the alternative educational setting for children and young people who have disengaged from mainstream school and is used to support children and young people in addressing behavioural, emotional, social, and academic needs.

Care and protection concerns: concerns that anyone might have about a child or young person possibly being unsafe or in danger of harm, suffering from ill-treatment, abuse or neglect as per section 14 of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989).

Child: a person of 13 years or younger.

Children who offend: children who commit criminal acts before the age of 14.

Crime free: not committing criminal acts.

Family: a group of people who are connected through marriage, blood relations or adoption.

Oranga Tamariki or OT: refers to the Ministry for Children, which is a New Zealand government department that is responsible for the wellbeing of children and young people, especially those at risk of harm, children and young people in care and children and young people who offend.

Oranga Tamariki Act 1989: The Act provides rules regarding the decision-making process with children and young people who require care and protection and/or come into contact with youth justice due to their offending.

Police: refers to the New Zealand government department responsible for maintaining law and order in New Zealand.

Positive outcome: all the changes that a child and their family and/or whānau make regarding their attitudes, values and decision making alongside a socio-cultural context change that encourages a reduction and cessation of offending (McMahon & Jump, 2018).

School: refers to the educational institute that includes primary, intermediate and high school that most children and young people will attend.

Social worker: While a variety of definitions of the term 'social worker' exist, this thesis will use elements from the Social Workers Registration Board (2021) social work practice statement to define social workers as: "Social workers establish caring and respectful relationships with authenticity, intention, and purpose, to strengthen, restore and uphold the safety and wellbeing of those they work with. Social workers identify strengths, needs and support networks to prioritise goals that will enhance social connectedness, and assist in addressing life challenges and major events. Social workers use a range of indigenous and social work theories, methods and techniques drawn from a recognised social work qualification, training, and experience. Social workers apply their knowledge and expertise in a variety of ways and roles at micro, meso and macro levels. This includes direct work with people and whānau, therapeutic social work, community-led development, consultancy, research, education, supervision, facilitation, advocacy, management, policy development and leadership" (par. 7).

Tamariki: meaning children in te reo Māori (Ka'ai et al., 2004).

Whānau: this thesis will use elements of the many meanings of whānau as offered by Metge (1995): descendants of a particular ancestor; a family group of one or two parents and their children; a group of people who are kin related in a variety of ways and people who are like-minded and are together for a common purpose.

Youth Justice Family Group Conference: the process as part of section 14(1)e of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989) referral for a youth justice family group conference for children who offend that allows the child, their family and/or whānau, victims and relevant professionals to come together and make a plan on how to hold the child accountable for their offending while also focusing on the child's overall wellbeing and taking any care and protection concerns in consideration (Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children, 2019).

New Zealand Response to Child Offending

In New Zealand, children who offend between the ages of 10-13 are addressed differently than young people between the ages of 14-17 who offend. The New Zealand Government's approach to children who offend focuses on ensuring the safety of the child and their overall wellbeing rather than a criminal justice approach (Social Services Committee, 2012). The Office of the Children's Commissioner [1](2020) recommends that children who offend should not be charged under the criminal justice system but still need to be held to account while avoiding pushing them into further offending. Many children who offend do not get the support or interventions they need to be crime-free. Some become youth offenders and end up dealing with the youth justice system; or might become adult criminals (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020).

Conversely, the Ministry of Social Development [2](2016) estimated that one in twenty New Zealand children offend before age 14 and that theft, particularly shoplifting, is the most common crime committed by children, followed by burglary and property damage (Ministry of Social Development, 2016). When a child commits an offence in New Zealand, they often come to the attention of police, and the police use an alternative action plan with the child that considers holding the child accountable, making amends, and addressing any needs of the child. Addressing these needs might include referrals to relevant social service agencies where the child and their

[1] The Office of the Children's Commissioner is an independent Crown entity that focusses on ensuring all children in New Zealand can flourish. The current Children's Commissioner is Judge Frances Eivers. The Commissioner regularly meets with relevant government ministers and provides information regarding the interests, rights and welfare of children, as compiled by the Office of the Children's Commissioner. https://www.occ.org.nz/about-us/our-role-and-purpose/

[2] The New Zealand Ministry of Social Development is responsible for supporting people with employment, income support and superannuation services. They also provide funding to community service providers and student allowances and loans. https://www.msd.govt.nz/

family and/or whānau could be supported by a social worker (Ministry of Social Development, 2017; Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). Social workers can provide support through thorough, ongoing, solution-focused, and culturally appropriate community services for family and/or whānau that go beyond just focusing on the offending (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). Interventions can focus on more than just psychosocial needs and pay attention to socio-structural factors like childhood poverty or living in a low socio-economic community that can make children more vulnerable to engaging in offending behaviour (Byrne & Case, 2016).

The use of an alternative action by police with children who offend is guided by section 4 (i) of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989), which discusses the importance of working with the child in a way that considers their needs to try and prevent further offending (Oranga Tamariki Act, 1989). Section 208 of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989) also guides the use of alternative action plans by police. It highlights that unless it is needed for public interest, a child should not be subjected to criminal proceedings and should be worked with in an alternative way (McLaren, 2010). When the child's offending is more serious, the police can make a referral for a youth justice Family Group Conference (FGC) under section 14 1 (e) of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, which would be run by Oranga Tamariki (Oranga Tamariki – Ministry for Children, 2019). The child is at the centre of the FGC process, which as per sections 4A and 5 of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989), means that the wellbeing and best interest of the child always need to be paramount and that the child needs to be supported to express their view about any decisions or proceedings and those views need to be considered. It is made sure by the FGC coordinator and relevant professionals present that the child and their family and/or whānau understand and are part of any decisions made. As per section 4(i) of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989), the youth justice FGC aims to hold the child accountable for their offending, learn from their mistakes, and encourage better choices for their future. The family and/or whānau and the child will formulate a plan which is then agreed upon by everyone in the conference (Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children, 2019). Should a child's offending be more serious and/or repeated or matters cannot be resolved through a youth justice FGC under section 14(1) e of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, a more robust intervention may be required. The Family Court can then make orders that can include placing the child in OT

custody and/or providing supports for parents. Any Court order would aim not to punish but provide support (Boshier et al., 2007).

New Zealand's youth crime rates are lowering. In New Zealand, there has been a reduction in the numbers of children who offend aged 10 to 13, down by 63% between 2009/10 and 2019/20 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). According to the Ministry of Justice (2020), in New Zealand in 2019/20 there were per 10.000 children, 117 police proceedings (which could include warnings, alternative action, intention to charge FGC's and prosecution) compared to 305 per 10.000 children in 2009/10. In 2019/20, the number of children referred for a youth justice FGC accounted for 8.1%. This number has reduced from 10.6% in 2015/16 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). In contrast, between 2014/15 and 2019/20, 97% of children referred for a youth justice FGC had previous reports of concern with Oranga Tamariki regarding their care and protection (Ministry of Justice, 2020).

Some reports of concern to Oranga Tamariki may result in no further action. This could be due to various reasons like OT social workers having to prioritise urgent cases due to high caseloads, or early signs of offending may be viewed as behavioural issues that do not meet the threshold for an FGC referral, rather than being indicators of trauma or ongoing neglect (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). The rate of Māori tamariki who offended in 2019/20 and were referred for an FGC due to the seriousness of their offending was 2.1 times higher than for non – Māori children (Ministry of Justice, 2020). Also, the Ministry of Social Development (2016) estimated that Māori children were three times more likely to be noticed by police before they turned 14 than non – Māori children. There are several reasons for this disparity, including the impacts of colonisation, modernisation, and globalisation (Joseph, 2007), thus making social work support for Māori tamariki important.

Structure of Report

The overall structure of the thesis takes the form of six chapters. This chapter introduces the research, provides background information, and defines key terms. Chapter two is a literature review providing a foundation of knowledge upon which the study can build. The third chapter is concerned with the methodology and method used for this research. The fourth chapter presents the research findings pertaining to the research aims. The fifth chapter discusses the results. The sixth chapter pulls together

the conclusions of the research, the significance of the results, limitations and makes suggestions for future research.

Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has introduced the research and explained the various parts of the study that will be discussed further in the following chapters. The rationale was then explored, highlighting the need to understand how social workers achieve positive outcomes with children who offend and their families and/or whānau. The research aim was then considered before explaining the research design that emphasised a qualitative exploratory framework and utilised social constructivism as part of the epistemology. Finally, the remaining sections focussed on defining key terms within the study and provided a discussion about the New Zealand response to child offending. The chapter concluded with an explanation of the thesis structure. The next chapter will give an overview of the literature about children who offend.

Chapter Two: Literature review

This research explores how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experience of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported children who offend and their family and/or whānau.

This chapter provides an overview of literature related to children who offend and the processes social workers use in supporting these children to reduce their offending. A growing body of literature recognises the importance of professional intervention with children who offend (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Loeber & Farrington, 2001; Menon & Cheung, 2018; Loeber et al., 2008/2016; Van Hazebroek et al., 2019). To understand the significance of children who offend in New Zealand, the chapter will start by exploring the factors impacting children who offend, the influence neoliberalism has, and the alternative analysis offered by ecological systems theory. This is followed by an exploration of social work practice with children who offend and the support for Māori tamariki. The chapter then continues by exploring the critical role of family and/or whānau, school and peers. Following on, group work, mentoring and individual interventions are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the impact of labelling on children who offend and an explanation of the role of the multidisciplinary team in this area.

Factors Impacting on Children Who Offend

In New Zealand, professionals work alongside children who offend on the understanding that the child is more than their offending behaviour and that multiple factors like individual, family and/or whānau, school and peer factors influence their offending (Becroft, 2006). Many children who offend have both been a victim and offender and are subject to personal and structural oppression and discrimination and therefore are more at risk of harm (Fox & Arnull, 2013). Consequently, children who offend often experience individual and family and/or whānau challenges and might have histories of abuse and environmental dysfunction, making them vulnerable and in need of support (Becroft, 2006). There is a conflict within society that relates to the welfare versus justice debate and the question of nature versus nurture; whether children are innocent and need support or if children can make conscious decisions regarding crime (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012). This dilemma between justice and

welfare continues to influence public opinion and the way government approaches children and young people who offend (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

The Impact of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism within Western countries emphasises a reduction in universal or 'needs' focussed social policies and targets fewer resources to those most at risk (Beddoe, 2014). Within neoliberal societies, there is a focus on risk within physical and social environments, and thus there is an expectation that people and institutions identify and manage these risks. Any unaddressed risk is considered a threat to the security, health and wellbeing of society (Beddoe, 2014). Applying this neoliberal framework in New Zealand has seen the Government investing services in children and their families and/or whānau at risk of bad outcomes. However, these services are aimed at individual characteristics of those at risk of poor outcomes (O'Brien, 2016). Thus, the poverty and inequality that these children and their family and/or whānau experience is not addressed and framed as part of an individual experience rather than structural inequality (O'Brien, 2016).

Working with this variety of influences is complex as children experience individual and family and/or whānau risk factors, including histories of abuse and environmental dysfunction, making them vulnerable and in need of support (Becroft, 2006). Also, school and peer factors may influence whether a child has the skills people use to live crime-free, like social skills, emotional regulation or thinking ahead (Becroft, 2006). Supporting children and their families and/or whānau to create lasting and meaningful change within their environment often requires multiple factors to interact with them and their system and utilise various techniques and approaches (Becroft, 2006; Haight et al., 2020).

It is important to favour a support approach within a neoliberal environment that acknowledges that childhood can be a time of risky and impulsive behaviour that sometimes leads to unwise choices that could see a child become involved with the police (Becroft, 2006). Another reason that would justify a support approach is that no child is born deviant or a criminal but can potentially engage in offending behaviour through association and interaction with others (Parackal & Panicker, 2019). Also, children are more adventurous, less future-oriented, impulsive, and susceptible to peer influences (Parackal & Panicker, 2019). Vulnerability, immaturity, and disadvantage

influence child offending directly and make it primarily a social and environmental problem (Becroft, 2006; Parackal & Panicker, 2019). Within New Zealand, most of these children are well known to different government departments and community agencies, which makes a supportive and focused response possible (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). Ecological systems theory is therefore beneficial when the Government has a neoliberal aim. It emphasises a holistic focus on supporting family and/or whānau to engage in problem-solving rather than blaming them for their problems (Smith, 2008).

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological systems theory highlights how children and their families and/or whānau are part of a holistic system of interrelationships with individuals and systems that they are connected to at different points in their life (Haight et al., 2020; Payne, 2020). These individuals and systems all present possible opportunities for support and a way of working through problems but can also cause difficulties and stress due to each system and individual coming with their own needs and resources (Haight et al., 2020; Payne, 2020). School and peer factors may influence whether a child has the skills people use to live crime-free, like social skills, emotional regulation or thinking ahead (Becroft, 2006). At a structural level, issues like poverty, insufficient housing and marginalisation can impact a child and their family and/or whānau (Atwool, 2013). Also, influences from within the home environment, for example, family violence, abuse and parents who experience mental health, alcohol and drug dependence and gambling issues, affect the child and their family and/or whānau (Atwool, 2013). Any interventions, therefore, requires practitioners to consider as many identified needs as possible and utilise a variety of techniques and approaches (Becroft, 2006).

Children who offend are exposed to multiple influences on a personal and structural level. Neoliberalism affects children who offend by emphasising the use of fewer resources and more focus on those who the Government deems to be at risk. This presents challenges for social workers as fewer children and their families and/or whānau are eligible for services. On the other hand, ecological systems theory highlights a universal holistic approach that may address multiple factors in a child's life. It steps away from labelling children who offend as a problem or are just 'at risk' and sees them more like children with families and/or whānau in need. The next

section will consider the possible ways social workers practice with children who offend.

Social Work Practice with Children Who Offend

A holistic understanding of the child and their environment enables social workers to work with the different elements influencing them (Fox & Arnull, 2013). The literature on child offending has highlighted several factors, such as family and/or whānau, peers and school that impact the child and their risk for engaging in offending behaviour (e.g., Fergusson et al., 2004; Loeber et al., 2008/2016b; Sutherland, 2007). Through talking with the child and their family and/or whānau, the social worker can undertake an assessment and consider what is going on within the child's environment, gauge what the needs and risks are and take into account any structural factors that might have influenced the child to engage in offending behaviour (Weld & Appleton, 2008). Social workers can choose to utilise several different theoretical approaches and/or models in engaging with children who offend. However, one particularly useful model is ecological systems theory, as mentioned above.

From an ecological systems perspective, a social work approach focuses on working out how the child and their family and/or whānau function in their environment (Maidment, 2016). The environment in which the child and their family and/or whānau exist involves interconnecting relationships with other social structures and organisations (Payne, 2020). Understanding these systems elements will support the child and their family and/or whānau to improve their choices in how they want to participate in social institutions like schools and workplaces (Payne, 2020). This means social workers need to work with the socioeconomic factors that might influence the child and their family and/or whānau but also endeavour to strengthen the resources already present to address the needs identified (Maidment, 2016).

Critical to reducing offending are interventions that are supportive to children who offend and simultaneously encourage integration and inclusion (Byrne & Case, 2016). Making a genuine connection with a child and assisting them to hope and believe in themselves can impact the reduction in offending (Nugent & McNeill, 2016). A trusting working relationship between the social worker and the child and their family and/or whānau is fundamental in encouraging the child and their family and/or whānau

to view themselves as productive community members with opportunities for growth and success (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

Another point to consider is the philosophy of empowerment which is a key social work value and encourages and strengthens the child and their family and/or whānau skill and competence to make positive choices (Healy, 2014). Empowerment can facilitate skill-building and enhance coping mechanisms and influence the process of reducing offending (Cheung et al., 2018). Empowerment work starts with acknowledging that the child and their family and/or whānau have their views on creating change but that there might be barriers or difficulties in achieving the necessary change (Healy, 2014). More specifically, for the child, there is powerlessness or lack of control over destiny and being in a reactive place. The child may be reacting to the world due to not feeling in control and not knowing the options (Maynard & Stuart, 2017). Many children are locked in this behavioural pattern and would not describe themselves as powerless, but this only becomes apparent once they are shown other ways of being. The role of professionals is to create time and space for the child who offends to discover they have some control, that there are options, and they are capable (Maynard & Stuart, 2017).

Hampson (2018) sees two particular aspects of professionals working with children as key in providing an environment in which offending can be reduced, and empowerment can happen – having a strong relationship between the social worker and the child (in which the social worker believes that the child can change) and the identification of an action plan towards personal goals (Hampson, 2018). As discussed, ecological systems theory and empowerment theory can be useful in building a good relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau. They both emphasise a holistic understanding and the aim of supporting children and their family and/or whānau to build on their skills and strengths to create change in their wider environment to allow for a better fit for what the family and/or whānau needs (Gitterman et al., 2021). The needs of children and their families and/or whānau can be quite diverse. Therefore the support social workers provide aims to assist the family and/or whānau to develop new skills and coping strategies to thrive better in their environment (Gitterman et al., 2021).

Social Work Support for Māori Tamariki

Māori tamariki need to be supported in their sense of belonging and being through whakapapa (genealogy) and whanaungatanga (family connections) (Rameka, 2018). Through colonisation, urban environments, institutions and social structures have long only focussed on European cultural values and beliefs and with Māori culture largely ignored. Recognising and comprehending Māori cultural views is vital to understanding what is needed for Māori tamariki to feel like they belong (Rameka, 2018). To work with Māori tamariki and their whānau, social workers need to build strong working relationships and be perceptive of the child's context within their whānau, community and their historical and current whānau connections (Munford & Sanders, 2011). As a result, strengthening Māori tamariki's identity can be encouraged through elements like language (Te Reo Māori), access to ancestral land (turangawaewae) and knowledge of whakapapa (genealogy) (Ruwhiu, 2018).

Likewise, whānau narratives emphasise how interconnected social structures and a shared whakapapa can promote a collective history and a distinctive identity (Ruwhiu, 2018). An awareness of their whakapapa can benefit Māori tamariki and provide a sense of stability and belonging. Increasing whakapapa knowledge can enhance Māori tamariki's sense of identity from connections between people, the land, history, and associated memories (Kidman, 2012). These connections can provide opportunities for Māori tamariki and their whānau to learn more about themselves and enhance their social support system, which can be a source of help in time of need (Makoare et al., 2021; Penehira et al., 2014). Before starting any intervention, social workers must set aside time to make connections to where the child now lives and where they have come from and connect with the people the tamariki is connected to both currently and through generational connection. These connections are needed for a good basis for an intervention to develop (Munford & Sanders, 2011).

Family and/ or Whānau

There are many different approaches a social worker can take in supporting family and/or whānau and each social worker has their preferences on how social work is practised (Payne, 2014). While working with family and/or whānau to create change, social workers need to consider that the difficulties family and/or whānau present with are only a portion of what is going on for them (Munford & Sanders, 2010). Therefore, social workers adjust their approach and way of working according to the needs of the

family and/or whānau (Munford & Sanders, 2010). This means that social workers work in a collaborative and meaningful way with family and/or whānau to ensure they can participate fully in developing a plan (Stabler et al., 2019). Hence, this relates to self – determination, which as a concept highlights how individuals are the experts in their own lives and are best suited to make informed decisions about their own life, which is essential within social work (Akbar, 2019). This enables the opportunity for trust to be built between the social worker and the family and/or whānau, which could help work through possible difficulties in implementing support from either social services or extended family and/or whānau (Stabler et al., 2019). Through this collaboration, the social worker can provide practical support and resources to build links between family and/or whānau and external supports that can increase social capital, offer a sense of belonging and knowledge of identity (Payne, 2020).

Physical and mental resources are needed for family and/or whānau to maintain their wellbeing, such as enough material resources to ensure proper food and housing, which influences how well a family and/or whānau can support themselves (Haight et al., 2020). Consequently, if the family and/or whānau do not have enough physical resources, it could be difficult to have regular positive social interactions and feel like a contributing member of their community, limiting their social support system (Haight et al., 2020). Living in low socio-economic circumstances influences children and their behaviour (Fergusson et al., 2004). Fergusson et al., (2004) showed a clear association in New Zealand between young people growing up in low socio-economic families and engaging in crime. An increase in socio-economic disadvantages also corresponded with a rise in family and/or whānau difficulties, childhood adjustment problems, school problems and engagement with offending and substance-using peers (Fergusson et al., 2004). Consequently, children in poverty often do not reach their potential in New Zealand (Boston & Chapple, 2014).

Boston and Chapple (2014) define child poverty as children who do not have enough money or material resources to thrive. Issues like inadequate housing, transience, minimal access to early childhood education and poor health impact children's opportunities (Boston & Chapple, 2014). As a result, family and/or whānau structure influences the overall wellbeing of children through the economic and parental resources they have (Lucero et al., 2015; Prinzie et al., 2008/2016). Added to that could be the worries about food security, or there not being enough healthy

food at home, which could influence children to find food elsewhere through stealing, for example (Jackson et al., 2018). With the pressures of financial worries on families and/or whānau, it can be challenging for children to thrive in school. Children might be tempted to leave school prematurely, increasing opportunities to engage with troublesome peers or offending behaviour. Families and/or whānau pressured by their financial situation might not be able to prioritise children's education or adequately provide parental supervision (Shong et al., 2019).

Family and/or whānau act within physical, social, and cultural environments, are in a constant reciprocal relationship, and influence each other over time (Walker, 2012). Family and/or whānau and social systems often work through problems by seeing them as being caused by an individual and not always acknowledge the combination of learned behaviour and dysfunctional systems that impact family and/or whānau (Walker, 2012). From an ecological systems perspective, children who offend and their family and/or whānau will often come to the attention of social services when they can no longer keep up with their environmental demands and/or their needs are too great for their environment to respond to. Another reason could be that family and/or whānau may not have the ability to manage their environment to get the resources they need and/or the environment is not meeting their needs (Gitterman et al., 2021). Encouraging children and their family and/or whānau to engage with supports early on, when the need is first identified, could support a family and/or whānau to grow and create change within the home environment and reduce the risk of children engaging in offending behaviour (Walker, 2012). Early intervention with children who offend is beneficial when a holistic approach is taken, and all aspects of the child's system are looked at (physically, psychologically, within the family and/or whānau, socially and in school), rather than targeting the child alone (Gluckman, 2018).

Viewing the family and/or whānau separate from the 'problem' acknowledges that the family and/ or whānau know themselves best and what will be beneficial for them and what is not (Maidment, 2016; Munford & Sanders, 2010). This process can be supported by the social worker using micro skills like listening, reflecting, clarifying, and reframing, which demonstrates empathy to the family and/or whānau (Maidment, 2016; Munford & Sanders, 2010). Social workers need to work with the family and/or whānau to create a mutual understanding of the situation at hand, indicate possibilities for change and negotiate the support required and what that would look like rather

than impose what the best way forward is (Killick & Taylor, 2020; Schiettecat et al., 2017).

Parenting Support

Family and/or whānau - based initiatives to support children who offend often involve some form of parenting programme aimed at improving relationships with the child and preventing emotional or behavioural problems. These programmes often focus on preventing or reducing offending behaviour (Hayden, 2007). This is echoed in the New Zealand Youth Crime Action Plan (2013), which emphasises early intervention to promote positive development and address factors influencing offending behaviour (Ministry of Justice, 2013). Instead, focusing solely on parents alone may not work, and family and/or whānau interventions should improve communication, reduce bad peer influences, increase parental monitoring, and attend to parent and child behaviour (Walters, 2018; Yoo, 2017). Parent management training teaches parents how to improve their parenting skills and behavioural management skills. For example, effective communication, empathic listening and basic interaction skills will assist with consistent discipline practices and provide a platform to use positive reinforcement and reduce opportunities for children to offend at a younger age (Hawkins & Weis, 2017; King et al., 2018).

In terms of being involved with family and/or whānau, the social worker must be aware of relevant background information like the main issue, gender, age, cultural background and what other professionals might already be working with the family and/or whānau (Van Hook, 2019). This information can define how the working relationship will develop and what possible external supports might be required (Van Hook, 2019). Encouraging the family and/or whānau to be engaged is enhanced when the social worker shows empathy and develops a professional partnership with them (Bowden, 2019).

Parental engagement is an essential component of interventions with children, but not all parents can be involved, can communicate or be supportive to their children (Ministry of Social Development, 2006). There could be many barriers preventing parents from engaging with social services that are not always obvious. Consequently, a lack of awareness, lack of confidence in social service professionals, pride, shame, and suspicion of support services can prevent parents from engaging with support

(Ministry of Social Development, 2006). Low engagement can be influenced by individual family and/or whānau characteristics like large families and/or whānau, or a history of family and/or whānau mental illness, but also practical reasons could have an effect like time demands or scheduling conflicts (Duppong-Hurley et al., 2016). Other reasons could be that the intervention style may not suit the family and/or whānau needs, or they might not believe the intervention will help (Duppong-Hurley et al., 2016). For example, transport can be a barrier to parents engaging. To mediate this, meetings could be held in the home or community, which conveys a sense of trust and reduce the power differential somewhat (Pellechia et al., 2018). Strategies such as assistance with childcare transportation, cultural responsiveness, flexible scheduling, and appointment reminders can encourage parental engagement. Sometimes putting parents in touch with other parents who are going through the same issues can allow them to share information and experiences. This could reduce isolation and provide more social support for parents. (Pellecchia et al., 2018).

As discussed in the previous section, family and/or whānau require sufficient physical and mental resources to address the needs within their environment (Haight et al., 2020). Social workers support family and/or whānau to acquire appropriate resources and develop skills and strengths within the family and/or whānau. Social workers acknowledge the many factors that influence family and/or whānau directly and their ability to engage with support services. It is then up to the social worker to partner with the family and/or whānau to try and address these different factors. School is another important consideration and will be discussed further in the next section.

School

A school is a place where children spend a significant amount of time, meet others their age and learn how to be around and interact with their peers (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). It is also the place where the child's behaviour is judged for how well they do academically, their social skills and whether they show any disruptive or angry behaviour (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). For some children, school can be a haven, a way not to worry about problems outside of school. For other children, school might feel like a place where they feel daily frustration, humiliation or isolation (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). If a child is not achieving academically, the school can become a place of personal failure and could increase the feeling of not belonging, unsuccessful, and/or excluded (Sutherland, 2007).

Since school attendance is a legal requirement, children might use, for example, aggression, abuse substances or avoid school altogether to escape (Sutherland, 2007). Schools might struggle with non – compliance and anti-social behaviours and use punitive approaches like suspension, exclusion and expulsion, which pushes children onto the street to potentially mix with other anti-social peers or adults (Sutherland, 2007). About 70% of youth offenders are estimated not to be engaged in school or enrolled in secondary school, making non-enrolment rather than truancy a big problem (Becroft, 2016). Education Counts (2021) highlights that in New Zealand in 2019, there was an increase in suspension, stand – down and expulsion rates, while exclusion rates did not change. Māori students were more often stood down, suspended, and excluded than any other ethnic group (Education Counts, 2021). In addition, male students were two times more likely to be stood down, suspended, or excluded and three times more likely to be expelled than female peers. Students aged 14 continued to have the highest rate of stand-downs and suspensions (Education Counts, 2021). Some students may have been influenced by the cumulative effect of negative school experiences that can result in the child disengaging from school. This disengagement can aggravate pre-existing risk factors and cause vulnerable children to turn towards criminal offending (Sutherland, 2016). A risk factor in excluding and suspending students is that it prevents young people from in-class educational instruction and risks students falling behind academically, having to repeat a school year, or dropping out. This increases the risk of youth justice involvement (McCarter, 2017).

The education system alone does not cause a child to commit offences. However, the cumulative effect of negative school experiences can contribute to a child's feelings of frustration and resentment, increasing their alienation from the school system (Sutherland, 2007). This section has provided a summary of the literature relating to the school system's influence on children who offend. In addition, it is essential to ask what supports there available for children who offend at school, which is addressed in the following section.

School Support

Schools have an opportunity to support children who offend due to school attendance being compulsory, combined with experienced school staff; they are in an excellent position to identify children at risk of offending and support early intervention

(Sutherland, 2007). Children who offend may not want to be in a classroom or follow school rules, but most will want to learn (Sutherland, 2007). Working closely with early education centres, iwi and child welfare agencies can ensure that ‘at risk’ children are supported to transition to the new school environment. Offering low cost or free food like breakfast, morning tea or lunch can make school attendance more desirable (Sutherland, 2016).

Another example of supporting children struggling with school is alternative education, which has been described as an alternative to mainstream education and encourages students to either engage or re-engage with mainstream school (Vaughan, 2002). Alternative education initiatives focus on assisting children with behavioural, emotional, and social issues that cause them to disengage from their education (Vaughan, 2002). The emphasis is less on academic needs and more about managing the risk the student might present to themselves or others in an environment that is better set up to support students with their academic skills and enhance their independence (Vaughan, 2002). There is an understanding within the education system of learning difficulties that students might have and the need for alternative ways of educating children (Thompson, 2006). This focus alone creates obstacles for children, for the focus is on the individual and their challenges rather than how the education system is set up or other factors impacting them (Thompson, 2006).

Students in alternative education tend to experience more socio-economic difficulties, be exposed to harmful home environments, tend to exhibit more risk-taking behaviour and often need extra support to reduce the impact these factors could have on their health and wellbeing (Clark et al., 2010). Therefore, social workers can provide support as they are not confined to the classroom and can work with the child and their family and/or whānau directly in and out of school, which in turn supports schools and assist teachers in working better with challenging students (Hollis-English & Selby, 2015; Sanders et al., 2018). Interventions that keep children attending school and have opportunities for normative social activities are likely to significantly influence reducing risk factors for offending (Sanders et al., 2018). Programmes that isolate children who offend by providing targeted programs that isolate them from everyday contexts are less likely to be beneficial (Sanders et al., 2018).

School belonging is an important factor in addressing child offending. Children with a perceived connection to school tend to have better relationships with teachers, engage in after school activities, are more engaged with school and are less likely to offend (Lucero et al., 2015). Social workers are well placed to support children to learn self-management, life and communication skills that will assist children in doing better in school and their interaction with others and could help them in managing the difficulties at home and in their neighbourhood better (Hawkins & Weis, 2017; Sanders et al., 2018). This individual approach could support the child to build internal coping mechanisms and problem-solving skills that may allow the child a better response to life stressors (Gitterman et al., 2021). Subsequently, the social worker may support the child and their family and/or whānau to access environmental resources like connecting the family and/or whānau to social services and encourage the family and/or whānau to enhance their informal networks with, for example, other relatives, colleagues or friends (Gitterman et al., 2021). These formal and informal support networks can act as a barrier against stress, and connections through school are a vital part of that (Gitterman et al., 2021). Byrne and Case (2016) point out that it is crucial to look at the socio-cultural factors that leave children vulnerable to exclusion arising from social inequalities like childhood poverty or living in a deprived neighbourhood. By professionals involved with children who offend, a focus on inclusion strengthens prosocial relationships and ties to family and/or whānau, peers and school (Byrne & Case, 2016).

School presents opportunities for supporting children and their families and/or whānau early when difficulties first start appearing. This can be difficult for teachers to do alone and therefore emphasises the importance of social workers who can provide support in and out of the classroom. Social workers can assist the child and their family and/or whānau through skill-building and connecting with resources to better manage the school and home environment. Peers are a vital element in children's lives, and the influence of peers on children who offend will be discussed in the next section.

Peers

Friends are an important aspect of life, especially for children during adolescence when trying out new things requires a supportive and sympathetic network. Therefore, the way friends behave and perceive the world influences how children act in the presence of others and what they do for relaxation (Claiborne &

Drewery, 2010). Sustaining friendships and the concerns around not fitting in can be significant in supporting bad behaviour towards those who are different and do not have the same advantages (Claiborne & Drewery, 2010). The importance of peers during adolescence cannot be underestimated, as the communication between children creates distinctive social constructions of events and circumstances, making risk-taking behaviour more exciting and/or appealing (Burr, 2015). Children who engage with other children who offend are more exposed to criminal behaviour and thus can encourage more offending behaviour, and this risk increases as they get older (Cho & Lee, 2018; Loeber et al., 2008/2016b). Anti-social peer relationships can occur when children with challenging or aggressive behaviours become isolated from other peers (Sutherland, 2016). Some children could already be well known in their community and could be viewed as individuals to avoid. This could lead to children who offend becoming more secluded from their normal peer group, and consequently, they may form friendships with those who exhibit similar behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989; Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011). Enhancing or creating more social networks with other non-offending peers through, for example, group work or mentoring could support the child to follow socially accepted values and normative behaviours and reduce the risk of offending (Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011).

Group Work and Mentoring

Group work could be useful for children who offend and have more involvement with their friends than they do with their family and/or whānau (Cheung & Sek – yum Ngai, 2007). Interaction with like-minded people or peers in a group setting is essential in people's lives. It can teach the limits of behaviour, and the impact behaviour has on others (McMaster, 2016). Group work is an important element within social work practice and a common intervention with children who offend and can be used in a beneficial way to support children who have been disenfranchised or are struggling (McMaster, 2016; Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

Group work tends to focus on assisting children to build on and practice skills that could support them to take the skills they learned with them to their home environment (McMaster, 2016). It is vital to assess the emotional and social development of the child to ensure the group would be suitable for all those involved (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012). An example of a group work intervention suggested by Hawkins and Weis (2017) advocates for peer leadership groups comprising leaders

from all major student cliques and groups, not just those in trouble. The idea is for the peer leaders to identify school problems and work with the school administration to solve the problem. Peer leadership groups aim to have leaders of groups of children who offend, connected to conventional peers and possibly influence members of their group to a more positive path (Hawkins & Weis, 2017).

Mentoring could also assist children who offend, are at risk of offending, are not finishing school, experiencing violence, or are involved in other anti-social behaviour (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007; Tolan et al., 2013). An important component of mentoring is the possibility for change and growth that can occur through the one–on–one voluntary relationship between the child and the adult mentor (Burnett & Appleton, 2004). Mentoring and group work can give opportunities for children to engage in supportive interventions that focus on positive change, personal development, grow the number of supportive relationships a child has and assist the child in adjusting and trying out different ways of engaging with their environment (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Joliffe & Farrington, 2007; Payne, 2020). In supporting this change, effective, cognitive, and behavioural skills are also important in a child's personal and social life. High-risk children often do not develop these skills and could be supported through more individual intervention (McWhirter et al., 2013).

Individual Intervention

Individual interventions often target the behavioural aspect of offending since it is considered the most critical factor in reducing offending (Loeber et al., 2008/2016a). Most of the time, the behaviour associated with reducing offending is observable, directly related to the improvement in behaviour and is often the focal point for interventions (Loeber et al., 2008/2016a). For example, cognitive-behavioural methods are often used in working with a wide range of problematic behaviours for both adults and children. The method focuses on the person's thinking and reasoning and, therefore, change associated behaviour (Hayden, 2007). Previous studies have explored the relationship between reducing offending and improving cognitive and behavioural skills (Burke & Loeber, 2015; Child Development Institute, 2016; Wainwright & Nee, 2014; Zemel et al., 2018).

Na and Paternoster (2018) highlight that for a person to reduce their offending, they need hope and self-belief that they can be crime-free and have positive and

relevant ways of engaging in that process. A reduction in offending can happen when the person commits to change by improving social relationships and no longer engaging with peers who offend (Na & Paternoster, 2018). Significant cognitive, relational and identity transformations happen during the process of reducing offending, where sometimes prosocial relationships need to be created or re-created (Villeneuve et al., 2019). This process could involve losses in friendships, status, and recognition. Quality of the ties with the family and/or whānau, the association with prosocial peers and the assistance of a helping professional can help the process of reducing offending (Villeneuve et al., 2019). Munford and Sanders (2015) highlight that social workers are well placed to support children in forming strong connections that can assist with creating and maintaining relationships with others outside of the professional intervention. With a positive support network, children can better understand how risk influences their lives by learning how to be safe and engaging in pro-social activities (Munford & Sanders, 2015). Although intervening at an early age with children who offend may seem necessary to prevent the possible development of chronic offending, unnecessary intervention resulting from labelling high-risk children who offend as criminals can cause more issues for the child (Van Hazebroek et al., 2019).

Labelling

Being labelled as the offender, criminal or deviant can cause a child to develop a negative self–view and be more exposed to stigmatisation. Stigmatisation can cause the label of child offender to be the main thing people see when working with the child, causing the strengths and attributes to be often ignored (Bates & Swan, 2018). A multi-agency response has a structural separation of specifically being for youth – or child offenders and increases the stigmatising impact of receiving these services (Byrne & Case, 2016). Often, what children have done, their status as offenders sees them in contact with youth justice. This risks developing the development of offender identities (Byrne & Case, 2016).

This view is supported by Wright (2017), who argues that the problem child is viewed as the potential future offender, which presents youth offending as an example of what would happen to problem children if they did not get help. There has been a push for earlier identification of maladjusted children so that an intervention could happen (Wright, 2017). Wright (2017) maintains that there is an acknowledgement that

the environment impacts on risk factors associated with children who offend but that the increase in psychological interventions with children who offend have focussed on individual techniques to compensate for the failings of families and societies (Wright, 2017). In working with children who offend, there is a need to focus on what makes for a better life and go beyond the label of the offender. Hence, social workers aim to practice with children who offend by understanding what success looks like for this generation of children concerning social integration, inclusion, and participation by utilising a variety of methods (Nugent & McNeill, 2016). Supporting children also means acknowledging that they are part of an overall system. A broader understanding is needed that might require multiple professionals to address the influences the child and their family and/or whānau experience (Parackal & Panicker, 2019; Ryon et al., 2017).

Multi-Disciplinary Practice

Multidisciplinary practice with children who offend demonstrates the importance of a holistic viewpoint in working with children and their families and/or whānau to address the presenting needs across relevant psychosocial and environmental factors (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Fox & Arnull, 2013). Children who offend often require different interventions from multiple agencies (e.g. special education, counselling, social services, youth agencies) at different times (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Menon & Cheung, 2018).

A multidisciplinary approach is needed across all major areas of social wellbeing that addresses changes in factors such as housing, employment, health, education and targeted interventions to meet the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau that could support a reduction in children engaging in offending behaviour (Boston & Chapple, 2014; Fergusson et al., 2004; Reil et al., 2020). The variation in professional expertise and advice can be different depending on the community's needs, the location and the professional's background (Fox & Arnull, 2013). Collaboration with other professionals is essential in formulating a thorough assessment and ensuring that the family and/or whānau are clear on the messages they receive (Killick & Taylor, 2020). Confusion and conflict can occur between professionals. This can be mitigated by the social worker being clear in their communication and role and being open to disagreeing and learning from other professionals, especially when decisions are made in a group (Killick & Taylor, 2020).

Professional collaboration allows social workers the opportunity to work with other professionals like youth workers, educational staff and police, who all come from different professional backgrounds and will have different perspectives and social constructions about situations (Martinez-Brawley, 2020). Multidisciplinary collaboration is not necessarily about the individual organisations working together but focuses more on the cooperation between people, which involves trust (Payne, 2009). This trust is affected by variations in how organisations operate and the values and traditions held by professionals. Elements that can ensure a good professional partnership are well–defined processes, current contact details, and professionals who are aware of their organisational procedures and can work together with others (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Payne, 2009).

Chapter Summary

This chapter highlights the various factors impacting children who offend, including neoliberalism's influence and the Government's approach of preventing individual risk versus an alternative social work analysis through ecological systems theory. Social work practice with children who offend was then discussed and the varying impacts family and/or whānau experience. This was followed by suggestions around supporting Māori tamariki and possible intervention and support options for family and/or whānau. The impact of school and relevant school supports was highlighted, and how peers influence children who offend was discussed. Several interventions options were considered, including groupwork, mentoring, and individual interventions focused on personal skills building. This was followed by an explanation of the impact of labelling on children who offend. Lastly, a multidisciplinary response was examined and how it could provide a holistic intervention for the child and their family and/ or whānau. The next chapter describes the methodology and methods used for the study.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experience of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported these children and their family and/or whānau.

This chapter describes the qualitative exploratory process used and how the research was influenced by social constructivism. This is followed by an explanation of the sampling, data collection and analysis processes that were utilised. The chapter concludes by discussing the study limitations and ethical considerations.

Methodology

Often research methods are divided between quantitative and qualitative approaches that emphasise different elements about the world (Tolich & Davidson, 2003). Quantitative research gathers data about the variables between certain relationships and translates those into numbers. The focus is on counting because its data is measurable, and researchers know beforehand what theoretical relationship they want to test (Tolich & Davidson, 2003). Qualitative methods pay attention to words, narratives, observations, and documents and focus on how individuals interpret, create meaning, and create shared understandings (McLaughlin, 2012; Patton, 2015). Qualitative methods can explore how processes change over time to understand the meaning people give to elements of life and adapt to new issues and ideas when they come up (McLaughlin, 2012).

Qualitative research lends itself to investigating participants' lived experiences, interpretation, and meaning. In the case of this research, this is to provide an analysis of social workers' experience working with children who offend and/ or their family, whanāu and community (Carey, 2012). The characteristics of qualitative research are the focus on a research objective that is aimed at an in-depth and interpreted understanding of a phenomenon through the view of research participants (Ormston et al., 2014). The literature discussed in the previous chapter highlights the importance of social workers supporting children who offend to reduce their offending and that this requires a multidisciplinary response. A qualitative research process was considered useful in exploring how social workers help children who offend as clarifying the strengths and challenges in the social workers' practice provides new insight for other

professionals working with this particular cohort of children. It could present a platform to consider offending behaviours and risk factors and what it means to enhance protective factors in each of the domains linked with prosocial behaviour and reducing offending.

A qualitative exploratory process was therefore chosen for this research. The qualitative exploratory process aims to gain new insights or increase understanding through intentional, systematic data collection to understand an area of social life (Stebbins, 2012; Steinberg, 2015). Researchers explore when they believe something is worth knowing more about but currently do not have enough knowledge on the topic. To explore a topic, the researcher must be flexible to gain access to data and be open-minded about where to find the data (Stebbins, 2012; Steinberg, 2015). This research started by exploring relevant literature on the topic to provide a context for the study (Carey, 2012). Utilising a qualitative exploratory process is a way to link professionals to their organisational or environmental experience and better understand their behaviour or values (Carey, 2012). The emphasis in qualitative exploratory research is on the inductive generation of new concepts (Stebbins, 2012). The inductive logic highlights collecting evidence first and building knowledge and theories from this (Ormston et al., 2014). Subsequently, the ontological assumption was that the reality of working with children who offend is made up of shared interpretations by various social workers in everyday practice (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Hence, the epistemological assumption from this research was that to discover the social reality of working with children who offend, it was necessary to speak with the professionals already working with children who offend (Blaikie & Priest, 2017).

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism provides a lens for interpreting the research data. Social constructivism asserts that knowledge and understanding about the world are constructed during social interaction among people and is based on the role language has in those exchanges and its social functions (Flick, 2018; Payne, 2005). Therefore, knowledge is constructed within cultural, historical, and local contexts through the language used to interpret social experiences (Flick, 2018; Payne, 2005). Social constructivism is a research approach often used when focussing on exploring and understanding the social world of participants through analysing human interaction by utilising video or audiotaped records of interactions such as the semi-structured

interviews used in this research. These are then analysed to uncover patterns of communication and behaviour (Ormston et al., 2014; Payne, 2005).

Social constructivism informed the research by ensuring the participants' voices were represented. A lens of social constructivism highlighted the understanding of how social workers support children who offend, which is made up of the professionals' interaction with their personal and professional world and thus informs their practice. This informs the broader practice picture that justifies, sustains and transforms practice (Gergen, 2008). The participants created different meanings of their world and thus contributed their knowledge on how to work effectively with children who offend. Social constructivism, therefore, does not value any particular form of knowledge but values that what works for some professionals may not work for everybody (Gergen, 2008).

Methods

Semi-structured interviewing was used as the research method. The semi-structured interview is a qualitative data collection process, where the researcher asks participants a range of pre-determined but open-ended questions. This allows the researcher more control over which topics are discussed and does not limit the responses to the questions (Ayres, 2008). The value of interviews is based on the belief that participants are individuals who actively construct their social worlds and can verbally communicate about that (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014). Therefore, semi-structured interviews helped gather in-depth personal accounts, understand participants' context, and explore issues in-depth and in detail (Lewis & McNaughton Nicholls, 2014).

Semi-structured interviews tend to use a list of predetermined questions with an open-ended format, which is asked of all the participants in the same manner (Patton, 2015). This list of questions is often used as an interview guide which is a tool used to summarise the content the researcher intends to cover during the interview. The researcher can ask questions in a different order or delve deeper into a certain topic depending on the topic discussed with the individual participant (Morgan & Guevara, 2008). The interview guide (see appendix A) was developed following a thematic analysis of the relevant literature. The interview guide allowed for a degree of freedom and adaptability in gathering the information from the participant and

allowed for unexpected data to be captured (Faulkner & Faulkner, 2014; O'Leary, 2017).

Participant Recruitment

A purposive sample was used to select participants. Purposive sampling is a strategic method of selecting professionals with relevant and practical experience that through their professional experience, will be able to illuminate more about the topic of children who offend. By selecting relevant participants with a strong connection to the research topic, a purposive sample was created (Flick, 2018; Patton, 2015; Steinberg, 2015). Purposeful sampling had the benefit of selecting those professionals from which the researcher could learn the most about children who offend and look for their insights and ideas. It was not as much about developing theory but gaining insights into the topic from the participants, thus reflecting an inductive approach (Flick, 2018; Patton, 2015). The purposive sample focused on recruiting six professionals (for example, social workers, youth workers, community workers) who had a minimum of two years of experience in working with children who offend, to determine what they considered strengths, challenges, and aspirations in supporting these children to reduce their offending. This aided in creating a sample of participants that had expertise or 'reputable' judgement about children who offend and therefore increased the ability to gain information regarding the research aim (Steinberg, 2015).

Following ethical approval, the information sheet (see appendix B) was emailed to various social service agencies in South Taranaki and outside of Taranaki that work with children and young people, requesting to circulate the information sheet (see appendix C) among staff. This email was followed up with a phone call a week later to answer any potential questions from the organisation regarding the research. Following this, the researcher visited the South Taranaki social service agencies that were contacted in person to ask whether staff at the organisations would be interested in participating in the research. Unfortunately, this recruitment method was unsuccessful, and hence the researcher broadened their geographical area and recruitment methods. The researcher then contacted the Aotearoa New Zealand Association of Social Workers (ANZASW) with the request to circulate information about the research with its members (see appendix D). This request was granted, and five out of the six participants were recruited through the ANZASW website. A variation to the original ethics application was applied for through the Massey University Human

Ethics Committee regarding using Facebook pages to circulate information about the research (see appendix E). The ethics committee permitted the use of Facebook as a recruitment tool, through which the sixth participant was recruited (see appendix F). The first six professionals that responded to the researcher's invitation to participate and had a minimum of two years of work experience with children who offend were invited to participate in the interview. The six participants were all social workers who either had current or historical experience in working with children who offend. The participants contacted the researcher if they wanted to participate in the research, and the informed consent process (see appendix G) was completed before the semi-structured interview.

Data Collection

Online semi-structured interviews were used as the data collection method. The interview guide contained a list of basic questions that were explored during the interviews to ensure that the same type of questions was asked of each participant (Patton, 2015). The interviews were audio-recorded, and if a participant had become uneasy with the audio recording during the interview, the recording would have been stopped, and further hand-written notes were taken. No participants became uneasy or requested the recording or interview to be stopped. All the interviews were conducted online using an online video conferencing program of the participants choosing and were conducted at a mutually agreed time and lasted about one hour. Immediately following the interview, the researcher took field notes to record any immediate reactions or observations about the interview. The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, and the transcripts were sent to the participants to check that the transcripts were correct (O'Leary, 2017). One participant requested some minor changes around spelling in the transcript. The researcher promptly corrected the transcript, and the corrected transcript was returned to the participant for approval, which was granted.

Semi-structured interviews help gain qualitative information due to the data being words rather than numbers and not having predetermined categories (Patton,2015). The advantages of doing interviews were the ability to clarify questions and responses, ask about complex issues and observe body language (Steinberg, 2015). Some disadvantages of using interviews are that the interviewer's personality and presence may affect the process or elicit socially desirable responses (Steinberg,

2015). The researcher managed this by being non-judgmental or neutral, which meant that the participant could tell the researcher anything without worrying about the researchers' response (Patton, 2015). Rapport was built with the participant at the start of the interview and throughout by being empathetic to highlight the importance that the participant is sharing their story, but neutral to the content the participant shared (Patton, 2015).

Data Analysis

The participants' understanding and perspective on the research topic gave detailed, rich, and complex data. A thematic analysis was applied to the generated data and was considered beneficial as it involved the process of finding repeated patterns of meaning within research data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns of meaning are also referred to as themes that highlight something important about the data concerning the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This data was then analysed to acknowledge the participants' uniqueness and highlighted reoccurring themes. Consequently, qualitative research highlights an openness to categories emerging through analysis and interpretation (Ormston et al., 2014). The critical part of a theme is not necessarily reliant on how often the theme emerges – but rather on whether it captures something important concerning the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The use of semi-structured interviews supported rich and thick descriptions to emerge in the thematic analysis, which encouraged an in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives (O'Leary, 2017). Giving rich descriptive details about the social workers' experiences, beliefs, or attitudes, places the study in context (Carey, 2012). Therefore, an inductive approach is common with thematic analysis as the themes come from the data and the data is compared against categories that are created, followed by going back through the data to alter categories if needed (Lapadat, 2010). Using the strategy of induction allows for themes to emerge from the research data without assuming in advance what the results would be (Patton, 2015). Through this process of induction, the research builds a complex exploratory thematic analysis (Lapadat, 2010).

Data management relates to the process of making qualitative data manageable through labelling and sorting the data according to a set of themes or

concepts in preparation for more interpretative analysis (Spencer et al., 2014). The research objectives provided an initial guide for themes and a list of topics to look out for that related to data connected to the strengths and weaknesses of interventions and the aspirations and challenges of the participants. The first step in the data analysis was the process of familiarisation through reading and the researcher immersing herself in the data, through which an overview of the data and topics and subjects of interest were created. Through doing this, the initial themes were created came from the data and were directly related to the research objectives (Spencer et al., 2014). Constructing an initial thematic framework (see appendix H) was accomplished by using the list of possible topics already created and then sorting the data into themes and subthemes to create an initial thematic framework (Spencer, et al., 2014). The themes were explored through the words participants used, discussed concepts, and possible linguistic devices (e.g. metaphors, proverbs) that arose (O'Leary, 2017). The emerging themes were utilised to apply labels to chunks of similar data so that similarly labelled data extracts could be analysed further. The initial themes were reviewed by re-reading the data and reviewing whether the data extracts were correct. Subsequently, the labels were assessed to determine whether they needed to be altered and reapplied to the data (Spencer et al., 2014). Some labels were altered to better reflect the themes coming forward from the data. With themes coming forward through the thematic framework, the next step was to take each theme and review all the relevant data, the range and different views and experiences, identifying core elements and dimensions and proposing key themes that could then be divided into categories. The following six core themes were identified and used to categorise the data: influences on children who offend, the process for when a child offends, relationship building, engaging services, challenges, and prevention. Once categories were identified, further links and associations within the text, experiences, behaviours, and experiences were explored and compared with relevant literature (Spencer et al., 2014).

Insider Research

Separating the process of data analysis and collection is difficult due to the many biases involved with qualitative analysis (e.g., researcher bias, prejudices, world views, paradigms both recognised and unrecognised) (O'Leary, 2017). The researchers' experience of working with children who offend prompted the desire to

do this research. Due to the researchers' professional position as a child case manager for the New Zealand Police and working with children who offend, the researcher is considered an "insider". Sherry (2008) describes an insider researcher as a researcher that is part of the topic being investigated. Thurairajah (2019) mentions that insider researchers are those who share certain world views or social locations with their participants and are therefore thought to have inside knowledge about participants' experiences. This can be further illustrated by the term positionality, which describes the researcher's position and world view and relates to the researcher's status and knowledge which influences aspects of the research (Chammas, 2020).

The researcher's bias was managed by writing down on a notepad as many assumptions and preconceived notions about what findings were expected and which ones were not. This was done after the participant had returned their informed consent and before the interview happened and was not discussed with anyone. The list was based on what the researcher thought a participant might talk about based on the participants' position and place of employment. This aided in mediating bias and helped create potential categories for exploration (O'Leary, 2017). The second step was to read all the collected data and take general impression notes during the reading process. This allowed a good impression of the data by looking at the separate data sources as a holistic overarching story (O'Leary, 2017). Additionally, inter–transcript analysis was utilised to analyse each interview and compare and contrast what respondents have said with existing literature. This enabled the researcher to make meaning of respondents as a group and be open to different ideas, themes and meanings emerging (Steinberg, 2015).

Study Limitations

A study limitation involves a systematic tendency that the researcher either did or could not control and could wrongly influence the research (Price & Murnan, 2004). A limitation of this study is the small sample size and that the findings would come from social workers who work with children who offend, hence about the participants themselves. Having a small number of participants does not allow for a broad representation of views and thus cannot be representative or generalisable to a wider population. However, generalisation was not the primary goal for the research

(O'Leary, 2017; Steinberg, 2015). The goal was to achieve a degree of transferability or emphasise the knowledge gained and can likely be applied in alternative settings or populations (O'Leary, 2017). By giving a detailed description of the research settings and the methods used, the reader of the research can decide how relevant the research is to their context (O'Leary, 2017).

Trustworthiness is a concept that allows researchers to describe the value and rigour of qualitative research (Given & Saumure, 2008). In ensuring that the research is considered trustworthy, three concepts were considered that enhance trustworthiness: credibility, transferability, dependability (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). Credibility relates to the extent that the data analysis is accurate and can be addressed through the process of member checking (Patton, 2015). Member checking happened throughout the research and is a process where collected data is repeated to the participant. This was done by asking the participants to check the transcript for perceived accuracy and reactions to it (Cho & Trent, 2006). Transferability relates to whether research findings could be applicable in a different context (O'Leary, 2017). Transferability was achieved through providing thick descriptions that allowed for a detailed representation of how professionals support children who offend to reduce offending and the context in which it exists, as perceived by the research participants (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). This could enable someone reading the research to conclude whether it could apply in a different context (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability acknowledges that reliability in social science studies might not be possible, but that research subjectivities are accounted for through systematic and well-documented methods (O'Leary, 2017). Dependability came about by describing the research procedures and instruments in the methods section of the research report in a way that allowed others to attempt to collect data in similar conditions. The idea is that if similar conditions are practised a similar explanation for the research topic can be found (Given & Saumure, 2008). By using the techniques described a high level of trustworthiness was ensured.

Ethical Issues

This research followed the Massey University Code of Ethical Conduct (2017), and ethical approval was received (see appendix I) from the Massey University Human Ethics committee. The ethical principles that informed the research were informed and

voluntary consent, minimising harm, cultural competence and mitigating potential conflict of interests. The ethical issues considered are summarised below.

Informed and voluntary consent means that participants freely agree to be part of the research and that they understand what it means to participate, how their consent will be reported and that they can withdraw from the research at any time (Punch, 2016). A brief description of the research with the researcher's contact details and the information sheet regarding the study was uploaded on the ANZASW website as well as the Taranaki ANZASW Facebook page and the researcher's personal Facebook page. This allowed potential participants to contact the researcher personally without pressure to participate. Informed consent was ensured by making sure that participants fully understood their requested involvement, that participation was voluntary, they had the right to discontinue, and were not coerced or deceived. Following that, the participants filled in and returned their signed informed consent forms to the researcher before arranging an interview date and time. Active consent was given by participants signing and returning the consent form before the interview. All participants were given a fuel voucher to compensate for time and travel costs after the interview but were not induced in any way that could compromise the participants' judgement (O'Leary, 2017).

During any form of research, there is the possibility of becoming aware of sensitive material, which requires clear boundaries to avoid harm (Sherry, 2008). The risk of harm was considered minimal to participants, and participants were made aware that they could withdraw from the research at any time. They were given information regarding relevant support services should sensitive material come up (O'Leary, 2017). The semi-structured interviews were conducted online at a mutually agreed time. To ensure confidentiality and protect participants from harm, the researcher removed any identifiable data and used pseudonyms instead of the participants' names, also referred to as anonymisation (Punch, 2016). The gathered data was stored securely and protected by a computer password, only accessible by the researcher and the supervisors.

Cultural competence is a way of approaching culture that involves being prepared to work with different communities and includes cultural and contextual dimensions important to the research (Patton, 2015). Culturally competent

researchers engage in respectful and ethical research towards the culture of participants and the culture of the communities in which they live (Patton, 2015). With Māori young people over-represented in the youth justice system, the researcher considered it worthwhile to gain cultural advice for some participants who might identify as Māori (Cleland & Quince, 2014; Lambie & Ioane, 2018).

The researcher had a cultural consultation with a local kaumātua regarding the best approach to work with participants that might identify as Māori and relevant Tikanga. The researcher used the knowledge gained from the cultural consultation and the cultural knowledge the researcher already had through professional training and study to engage in a culturally competent manner. Since the participants were not required to disclose their ethnicity, culture, or whether they identified as Māori or not, the researcher assumed that any participant could identify as Māori. There was no opportunity to offer food or a drink before starting the interview, with the interviews being conducted online. Still, the researcher asked all participants whether they would like to have a karakia before starting the interview and offered the same when the interview finished. Three participants advised appreciating a karakia before the interview and once it had finished. All participants were given a fuel voucher as a koha, which means a gift or token of appreciation (Higgins & Moorfield, 2004), for their time and for sharing their knowledge during the interview.

Insider research requires an awareness of potentially having easier access to people and the possibility for a more trusting relationship with participants. With insider research, there is the possibility of having an ongoing connection with research participants, which could create expectations around accountability and responsiveness to community concerns (Sherry, 2008). This was managed by recruiting participants through ANZASW and Facebook. There was no pressure for participants to consent, they were volunteers, and they had the right to withdraw their consent before the start of the data collection. All participants were located outside of Taranaki.

Chapter Summary

In summary, a qualitative exploratory process was considered the most appropriate methodology as qualitative research seeks to understand and gain insight into social phenomena through words. The qualitative exploratory research process

allowed the research topic to be explored in-depth. The research framework was further informed by social constructivism that highlights that knowledge is created through social interaction. A purposive sample was used to select professionals with relevant knowledge about children who offend. Semi-structured interviews were the method utilised to capture the data from the participants, and a thematic analysis was applied. The thematic analysis followed the inductive logic of using the themes from the data and comparing them with the categories created from the research aims. Lastly, the limitations of the research and the ethical issues considered were discussed. The next chapter describes the results of the research.

Chapter Four: Results

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The experiences of social workers who work with children who offend and their understanding of their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported these children and their family and/or whānau were examined.

This chapter presents the results of the semi-structured interviews conducted with the six participants. It starts by introducing the participants and provides an overview of their background and experience. The following themes were identified from the participant interviews and will be discussed further in this chapter: Influences on children who offend, the process for when a child offends, relationship building, engaging services, challenges, and prevention.

The Participants

All six participants were social workers who had experience working with children who offend and their families and/or whānau. All participants were given a pseudonym for this research, and all identifiable information was anonymised. Arthur and Fleur were working as statutory social workers for several years. Beth worked for a Non-Government Organisation (NGO) in New Zealand and spoke about her historical statutory social work experience working with children who offend in the United Kingdom (UK). Carl and Dawn worked for the same NGO, both with many years of experience in the NGO and statutory sector. Ellen used to work as a statutory social worker and then changed to work in private practice. Three participants were based in small towns, and three were based in large urban centres.

Name	**The current field of practice**	**Place of employment**	**Experience**
Arthur	Youth Justice	Small town	20+ years of experience in a wide variety of social work roles
Beth	Social services NGO	Large urban centre	Several years of experience in the U.K. in care and protection
Carl	Social services NGO	Small town	20+ years of experience in a wide variety of social work roles

Dawn	Social services NGO	Small town	20+ years of experience in a wide variety of social work roles
Ellen	Private practice	Large urban centre	Several years of experience in a variety of social work roles
Fleur	Youth Justice	Large urban centre	Several years of experience in a variety of social work roles

Influences on Children Who Offend

All the participants had worked with children who offend. They spoke at length about what this involved and the factors contributing to a child committing a crime. The types of offending the participants saw in their work with children who offend ranged from low level offending like stealing a car, drug use and thefts to more serious offending like aggravated robberies, assault with a weapon and arson. A key point several participants made was that working with children who offend could be complex as the child does not exist in isolation, and multiple factors contributed and impacted their offending behaviour.

Peers and peer pressure were reasons participants cited why some children committed offences. Arthur outlined the role peers could play in influencing a child to offend: "…when they are in their group of mates, they can't say no, and their mates want to do something dumb, and they just can't say no when they are there." Some participants discussed that not managing peer pressure increased the chance of children engaging in risky behaviour that could result in offences being committed. Dawn felt this struggle with peer pressure might be due to a lack of self–esteem and self – confidence noting:

> …a lot of our kids don't feel as though they deserve. They can't even be told that their hair looks beautiful, or I love your smile or that's really good work you're doing. A lot of our kids can't even take compliments. Everything has been so punitive to them, and everything's just being hammered into them.

Hence, Dawn suggested that it was important to change people's mindsets from seeing children who offend as "little shits" that "don't deserve anything" to children that have often been dealt with in a punitive way. Dawn discussed that sometimes children

do not understand what it means to make good choices and that choices can have positive or negative consequences.

Participants also felt that family and/or whānau played a role in some children committing crimes. For example, participants mentioned some families and/or whānau were also offending or the family and/or whānau had multi-generational difficulties. Arthur explained that the complexity of these families and/or whānau meant that wider family and/or whānau issues became part of working with the child:

> …multi-generational families who are difficult, have had lots of involvement for a lot of years, the kids are offending now. They've had C&P (care and protection) history; they've got a multitude of issues. There's trauma, alcohol and drug, lack of education, parents who aren't either engaged, aren't willing or aren't able to care for them. You know, like so we've got a whole lot of stuff going on. It's not just they have just offended and we're going to sort it out.

Carl concurred, noting that children will model the behaviour they see from their family and/or whānau and that this influences children's offending behaviour:

> If the kid is playing up and all that, the blame automatically goes on the kid as being a bad kid. Where a lot of families don't realise, well they are learning all that stuff from home. If they are having domestics at home or if they are offending at home and all that. Well, that kid is going on to do that stuff.

A child's home environment often meant they lacked consistent support, which might have led them to make wrong choices that involved crime. Commenting on the topic of support, Fleur mentioned that some children: "…they've never had anyone in their life to support them, they haven't had a constant person, they haven't been able to make those choices…"

Participants discussed that while there were the complex families and/or whānau mentioned above most of the children they worked with "…probably offended once or maybe twice, and we never saw them again" (Arthur). Fleur commented that in her experience once children had done what was required of them in their plans they were discharged from her caseload: "… I discharged two young people from their

FGC plan because they completed it. They were low level; it was low level offending, and they had that groundwork. They were ready for being able to make right choices."

Arthur and Fleur also discussed that they also worked with children who had higher levels of offending. As Fleur put it, "…there's always a small percentage that are really, really high end and that's more complex needs that come with mental health, drug addictions, you know the gang affiliations, probably huge care and protection prior to that." Arthur said that it was difficult to predict the outcome for some children who offend, stating:

> …then you've got a group that sort of can go either way that you might see three or four or five times they might do something serious, they might not and then you get the odd, really rare one that has virtually no risk factors that does something really serious.

Beth presented a different perspective on the type of child offending as she had encountered children "…who had committed or been accused of committing sexual offences against their peers". Beth commented on the complexity of working with children who were both perpetrators and victims:

> …it was this really complicated thing where children were victims and perpetrators and even the ones who perpetrated this sexual offence might have also been a victim of, for example, criminal exploitation by older teenagers or adults who had, you know, coerced them.

The participants highlighted how children who offend are often impacted by multiple factors that influence their offending behaviour, like peer pressure or family and/or whānau environment. The level of offending committed by children who offend thus also differed and ranged from what was considered by participants low level offending like "stealing a car" to more high-level offending like "aggravated robberies". Having discussed some of the influences that children who offend experience, the next section will look at the process that sometimes follows when children commit a crime.

The Process for when a Child Offends

For Oranga Tamariki (OT) to be involved with a child who offends, the police do a referral for a youth justice Family Group Conference (FGC) to OT under section 14(1) e of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989, and specific criteria must be met. Arthur

commented: “The Act says it’s a number, nature and magnitude, so they have either got to do a lot of them, sort of on an absolute spree or, or it’s really serious…,” and the offending causes concern for the wellbeing of the child. Arthur gave an example of a child who offended meeting the criteria under the Act:

> In (place) they had a couple of young guys who were really into stealing cars, so they stole like 40 cars or something. Like stealing a car in the great scheme of things isn’t actually that serious in terms of offending. However, when there’s so many of them when they are only 12 or 13, then of course that comes through to us…

Therefore, assessment is an integral part of working with children who offend and a social worker’s approach. An assessment allows the social worker to consider what is going on for the child and their family and/or whānau, assess the needs and risks and might sometimes pick up on things that have been missed before. Arthur’s comment below illustrated this:

> Like our kids, often they can’t see and hear properly, just as a real basic example. So, they’ve gone through school, and they keep getting kicked out and it’s actually not they’ve got a learning difficulty, it’s because they’ve got a hearing problem. So, that sort of stuff doesn’t get picked up so that we give them a health and education assessment just for that sort of stuff…

Interestingly, most children who offend do not come to OT’s attention and as Arthur explained, “…the police will deal with a young person under 14 for their crime with an alternative action way and it won’t come to us in the majority of times.” Despite this, when OT was involved the FGC process, wherein a plan is tailored to the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau, was positively discussed by participants. Fleur appreciated the flexibility of FGCs as it “varies per person” and the family and/or whānau “…are in charge of that plan process…”.

The participants who worked for NGOs gave a different view on how they came to work with children who offend and highlighted a need to make sure that the service was suitable for the child and their family and/or whānau rather than focussing on the amount or type of offending. Dawn commented:

> So, when we get the referral, I go out and meet with the family and gather all their information and then also talk with all professionals that might be involved as well. And then from there, we work out whether we are suitable for them. Because we need to be really focused, we are about preventing our children from going into the youth court system and into prisons. It is about reducing risk.

The previous section has shown part of the statutory process that could be followed with children who offend and how the FGC process assists in creating an individual plan for the child and their family and/or whānau. On the other hand, the NGO process showed more attention being paid to whether the service was appropriate for the child and their family and/or whānau. Having explored the process when a child offends, it is vital to acknowledge the positive outcomes participants aimed for in working with children who offend.

Outcomes

The most positive outcome for children who offend was seen as them not committing any further offences and being crime-free. Fleur's comment illustrates this sentiment: "Getting a discharge, which is called a 282, without any record and not coming back into our service. That will be gold if everyone did that." Arthur expressed a similar opinion: "That you don't see them again. That is the best outcome." Carl also said: "Seeing them grow up and they don't have to be a rocket scientist or anything but still smiling and keeping of the arrest list and that's a success."

The child gaining an insight into their offending behaviour was also an outcome that was hoped for:

> They do something dumb. They should go, actually, that was really dumb, actually, I know I'll suck it up and do what I need to do, but I don't want to go back there. I don't like standing in front of the judge. I don't like the police coming around knocking on my door at three in the morning to make sure I am home. Whatever it is and they actually don't come back (Arthur).

The chance of a positive outcome and change for children who offended improved when the child's wider environment also changed. Dawn hoped that the home would be safe and free from violence, the children are engaging in school, involved in some community activity, they are mentally and physically well and have

the right supports in place to address any issues. Dawn suggested that for change and a better future to happen, the child needed to be supported in believing in their dreams and aspirations, as she illustrated in the following comment: “You know, it’s about opening their boxes, it’s taking that lid of them, so they’re not put into this box. That they can have these dreams and aspirations, just like everyone else, and I think that’s the biggest thing.”

Overall, multiple factors could influence a child who offends to become crime-free, like gaining more insight into their behaviour and choices, a positive change in their wider environment and for the child to be supported in believing in a better future. Hence, relationship building is an integral part of trying to achieve these positive outcomes with children who offend.

Relationship Building

A recurrent theme in the interviews was a sense amongst participants that the success of any social work approach relied on the way of working with children who offend and their family and/or whānau. All the participants spoke about the importance of building positive relationships through good rapport and trust-building. They noted that a vital part of the approach is that to work with the child, one had to also work with the family and/or whānau and work out with the family and/or whānau and child what’s best for them. Ellen asserted that:

> You can have all the interventions that you like in place that address and work with you know the most top offending in New Zealand. But if you don’t have that engagement with the rangatahi or the child and then you know what is the use of doing that? It’s like you’ve gone from step one to step ten without actually going through step one, step two, step three, four and so on.

As part of the engagement process, Ellen discussed that the process of whakawhanaungatanga or “to build relationships” aided in getting to know the whānau through conversation, so that a picture of where the whānau are from is formed. Further, Ellen expressed how kaitiakitanga was about “…letting the whānau drive, you know, what their plan would look like, who they would invite and encourage them.” Also, Arthur noted that building a relationship with the family and/or whānau is aided

by getting "…face to face with them and essentially show them over time that you are gonna do what you say you are gonna do…".

The participants emphasised that consistency and not giving up on building that relationship with the child assisted in creating trust and respect. Fleur summarised: "So, it's about respect and building a rapport and being honest and real." Arthur added that when a relationship is built with the child and their family and/or whānau "…you're much more likely to get buy into what you want to do and get them on board and they'll have trust in what you're doing for them, for their kid is in their best interest…"

While building a relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau the focus is also "…on their rehabilitative needs" (Arthur) and gaining an understanding of the reasons behind a child who is offending. Arthur stated: "How are we going to stop them? What were the causal factors that lead up to it? What are their needs?". Fleur went on to outline the process: "So, the plan has got two parts to it: one part that is making the wrong right…and then the other part is making sure that they, you know, what's going on. Why are they offending? What's the underlying causes to the offending? And addressing those….".

There were some suggestions that change is a process and that social workers need to be aware of their approach to families and/or whānau and try and adjust according to the family and/or whānau needs. A couple of participants highlighted how change is more likely to happen when the person is ready to change. Dawn informed that keeping the "door open" for children and their families is important because you never know when they're ready to make changes. Dawn suggested that "…it's about us looking at what we need to be doing differently, not what the family need to be doing differently, because it's about our practice and how we're engaging and what's working and not working."

Beth noted how assessing a child who offended and their family and/or whānau can sometimes involve a lot of paperwork and multiple assessments and combined with high caseloads, good engagement with the child and the family and/or whānau can be hard to maintain. On the other hand, Beth also expressed that even though sometimes maintaining a relationship was not possible with the child and their family and/or whānau, at least some information was being gathered that could help later down the line or assist in mapping the networks between children who offend.

The importance of building and maintaining relationships with children who offend and their families and/or whānau was explored. Suggestions were made that social workers also needed to be aware of their engagement style and adjust accordingly to the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau. The following section will consider the approach used in working with the family and/or whānau of children who offend.

Working with Family and/or Whānau

As noted earlier in the chapter working with the family and/or whānau is just as important as working with the child as Arthur stated: “Often the issues aren’t so much with the kids. It’s more the family environment and all that sort of stuff.” The participants mentioned different ways to support the family and/or whānau for example through: “home visits”, “giving updates”, “being someone they can just talk to”, “having conversations” and “getting them to do family times”. If the family and/or whānau were engaged, it increased opportunities for the child to form a connection and relationship with another person who can support them. Arthur outlined the role of family: “…a good uncle or auntie or someone who can get alongside them as someone they trust, and they already know can be absolutely crucial to helping the plan work and keep him out of trouble.”

Most participants agreed that supporting the family and/or whānau would help the child. They discussed that some families and/or whānau do not have the skills or knowledge to manage their children and by helping them to learn those skills, as Dawn pointed out “…that it is helping them to help themselves.” Even when the engagement process was a bit strained or the child and the family and/or whānau were not ready for change, change might still happen later. Dawn explained: “…you don’t realise what seed you’re planting…You know, some of our kids don’t get it or their families don’t get it, but they might get it later on. So, anything were teaching our kids and our families, nothing is wasted…”

It was suggested by participants that sometimes it was difficult to get the family and/or whānau involved and support change. Ellen discussed how money can sometimes be a barrier for family and/or whānau to do the intervention work that services expect: “They have phones, but no credit. So, how can they ring whānau? They don’t have internet connections; they don’t have cars that have warrant and

rego's that would go around and pick up all the families." She pointed out that support with the cost of getting family and/or whānau together can help with family and/or whānau engagement through for example: "…petrol vouchers, suitable vehicles that could cater for kaumātua and a venue that caters." Some family and/or whānau might also struggle with feelings of whakama or embarrassment:

> There's, always good people in the family, but finding out is the hard bit. So, they'll obviously often won't tell you. They will often say dad is not in the picture. They don't want dad's family involved because they are all whakama about it. There's a bit of embarrassment or whatever. They don't want to tell people, they don't want people to know, they don't want people at their marae to know…(Arthur)

The family and/or whānau gaining an understanding of their influence on their child's offending behaviour also presented an opportunity for encouraging connections between family and/or whānau members to support the child. A significant aspect of supporting this connection was for social workers to be culturally aware and support children to connect and gain an understanding of their whakapapa.

Cultural Responsiveness

The participants all spoke emphatically about how vital it was to support Māori tamariki to connect with their whakapapa. Fleur stated: "So, one of our big things is their whakapapa and finding out, reconnecting them." In supporting those whakapapa and whānau connections, Ellen commented:

> I think that was really important. Because a lot of the times we knew them, so we would tell: would aunty or uncle be interested in coming to the hui? And then oh we don't know; we don't want to bother them. So, you'd just say is it okay if I give them a call? Or you know, shall we call them now with both of us here?

Beth also expressed that in comparison to the UK, she felt there were more cultural and creative approaches to working with children and their families and/or whānau in New Zealand:

> …there's an obligation to, for example, respect someone's cultural background in terms of like their Māori identity, there's more effort made to

> kind of work with their whānau or with their iwi to make those connections and understand that the offending behaviour might be related to those lost connections or to kind of find different and like more creative ways about resolving conflicts in dealing with offending behaviour then there is in the UK.

Ellen gave an example of a young boy she worked with and that the process of whakapapa and whakawhanaungatanga assisted in helping her to "reintroduce" him to his whānau. Ellen reflected: "That's why I come back again to whakapapa or whakawhanaungatanga because once we got through that step, he was wanting to then talk about his whānau, his whakapapa connections…". Ellen spoke about how then "…this rangatahi had got to know his birth parents because he was adopted at birth…" and how he was: "…re-introduced because he…you know when he was born from his mother, he had that time with them at birth but when he was adopted out, he never knew, heard or anything."

Consequently, social workers need to be culturally aware and be conscious of the child's whakapapa which could further support the child and their connection with their family and/or whānau. As Ellen pointed out: "That way we knew who the whānau was, so when it was time for FGC or whānau hui we had an idea those of us that are fluent in whakapapa, fluent in the rohe that we are from, we knew straight away who the child belongs to or connects to."

Service Collaboration

Alongside building and maintaining relationships with the child and their family and/or whānau in a culturally responsive manner, participants discussed the need to also work with other professionals to support the child and their family and/or whānau. Dawn expressed that working closely with other professionals helped make sure everyone involved with the child and the family and/or whānau were on the same page and prevented replication of what other services were already doing. Beth suggested that to create and maintain professional relationships required professionals to be "…motivated to make those personal connections so that you've got the right number of the right person to call and the one who's going to be helpful."

Another point to consider is the collaboration with police who are often involved in some capacity in dealing with children who offend, their family and/or whānau and

relevant professionals. The participants all presented different ideas about how police dealt with children who offend. Arthur encapsulated these ideas: “The attitude of police is huge. The police are different everywhere and their attitude has a big impact on what you can and can’t do.” Arthur gave an example of working with some police officers with whom he had a “collegial relationship” where he could talk with the police officers and work out a plan. Arthur had also experienced the opposite where some police officers were quite punitive in their approach with children who offend and that it impacted on the outcomes for the child. Beth agreed and spoke about her experience with police in the U.K. and viewed police often as punitive and not always understanding that the child is part of a wider system. Dawn, on the other hand, shared how their organisation had “…a youth aid officer attached to us in the liaison role,” which allowed children to be spoken to by police if there was “…any offending or behaviours that would warrant being spoken to by police…” but also to teach the children about “…why the police are there and why the systems are there…” and that there is a person behind the uniform.

A good working relationship with the school or alternative education provider was highlighted as important. Arthur stated that: “Schools particularly cause they see them every day and if the kid is at school, then absolutely, we need to be, they are key to the plan.” The participants reported that one of the reasons for this is that the teacher tends to see the child regularly and are aware of what is happening with the parents or friend group of the child. Likewise, Beth pointed out the significance of “…getting insights from the child’s teachers about how they behave at school and comparing that with how they behaved at home.”

In maintaining that relationship with the school, some participants acknowledged the challenges schools faced in dealing with children with high behaviour needs that might offend. Dawn acknowledged: “You know, some of our kids are really, really difficult. They are a challenge. You’ve got to have eyes in the back of your head.” Also, Ellen noted that teachers “…are asked to work with our kids with high behaviour, high behaviour needs and then they’ve only got one teacher to thirty students.” Several issues were identified regarding schools having limited support options for dealing with behavioural problems, like when Ellen said: “…the teachers are not educated, equipped, funded to be working an intervention with our children in this way.” Again, organisational policies sometimes prevented social workers that are

not SWIS (social workers in schools) from working with children in the school as Ellen stated: “Policies also prevents us also from working in schools. So, only the SWIS social worker can do that.”

Service collaboration ensured that relevant professionals were aware of what the plan was with the child and their family and/or whānau but did require a level of commitment of professionals to maintain that professional relationship. Police are often part of any involvement with children who offend and appeared to be perceived differently by the participants. The success of service collaboration influenced how potential services are engaged for the child and their family and/or whānau.

Practice Approaches

After developing a relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau, the social worker develops an intervention plan. As part of the plan, they might recommend engaging with different services. Sometimes the child’s offending was not serious enough to be referred for an FGC or must go to court, and professionals like social workers can explore relevant needs-based interventions. Some interventions could be counselling, group work, mentoring or alternative education for the child and their family and/or whānau, which are discussed in the next sections.

Most of the participants mentioned utilising counselling as an intervention for children and their families and/or whānau. Arthur cautioned that counselling was by its nature a long-term intervention but was often delivered as a short-term intervention and therefore needs to be used with a clear purpose:

> You’re not going to have three sessions with someone and then they’re going to make a massive change, as a general rule. You got to be really, really clear about what the purpose is. Because just saying we’re going to do some counselling for grief and loss. Like if they lost their grandma six weeks ago, actually could be really effective. Two or three sessions, get in there, help them with their emotional stuff, like fantastic. But if it is about attachment or grief and loss because of their mother abandoning them when they were four and only seeing her once every year for the last ten years. That’s a whole lot different, that’s a big issue and that’s going to take a long time.

Beth voiced a similar opinion when she described how not every child would engage with counselling if it was not the right fit for them or if they weren't interested. Beth gave an example in which counselling worked well with some children: "Yeah, so children that are like that I've worked with who are really sad and really withdrawn. They were the ones that did really well." But Beth also discussed how some children who were angry or getting into fights did not do well with counselling, as she described "…it was like there was too much noise in their life to engage with counselling at that time."

It was suggested that group work or working with children who offend in groups could be a beneficial and activity-based way of supporting the children as Dawn explained:

> …we are very activity-based with our learning because trauma and all those things tell us our kids aren't going to learn when they are heightened or in stressful situations. So, we have got to make it fun and enjoyable and so while they are doing everything, they are actually learning more then what you realise.

Group work also gave a chance for children to come together and gain peer support. As Beth pointed out, "…groups where they could have talked to other young people that were going through the same thing." But this was not without challenges, as Beth highlighted:

> …even if there were like holiday activities and stuff that wasn't therapy related. There would always be loads of safety concerns and needing to share lots of information about you know this, this young person can't go to this group with this young person because they tried to stab them and be like, it can be very complicated.

A few participants indicated that mentoring was sometimes a good support option for children who offend and that this could happen with, for example, as Beth said: "…youth workers that kind of connect to the young people and like you know…come from similar backgrounds, so are better at connecting to them," when that connection might not yet be possible within the family and/or whānau. Beth informed that mentoring allowed for more flexibility as it didn't require the child "…to go to a particular place a given time each week. Was like we would come to them…"

Subsequently, Fleur considered that mentoring allowed for extra support for the child, who could stay involved when the plan was completed or when OT exited:

> …because youth justice is quite short term like it's not a long term. Whereas so we try and set them up with people maybe in their community that can stay in like for example Blue Light, so they can stay in and mentoring them for I think it's up to eighteen months.

None of the participants discussed any weaknesses relating to mentoring. This may be due to the flexible nature of mentoring and primarily focused on building a good connection rather than focusing on the reasons or circumstances surrounding the offending behaviour.

Concerns were expressed by some participants that many children who offend are not in school, which puts the children at further risk of offending. Alternative education was considered a good option for some children, as Fleur stated: "…a lot of kids that are alternative education where they have mentors and support. Which is really good for lots of our kids." However, Beth pointed out that the risk could be that children at alternative education associate more with children with "…various types of offending behaviour or like non – conforming with the rules…" and increase the risk of their behaviour getting worse.

Often other services would engage with the child to provide extra support in different areas, depending on what the needs of the child were. For some, the individual setting of counselling or mentoring might work well, whereas, for other students, group work or alternative education suited their needs more. Despite having other support services involved to support the child and, by extension, their family and/or whānau, challenges came up for the social workers that were sometimes out of their control.

Challenges

A common view amongst participants was that working with children who offend and their family and/or whānau was complex and could present challenges for achieving positive outcomes with children who offend. Some of the reasons for this were related to the seriousness of the child's offending and social pressure, while others considered the limited services and funding available for children who offend and that that contributed to the complexity and challenge of working with these children.

As noted at the start of the chapter, while most children commit relatively low-level offences, a small percentage of children who offend have more challenging behaviour and consume a lot of time due to complex circumstances. Fleur explained this complexity by outlining the myriad of issues social workers sometimes had to deal with: "…the complex needs that come with mental health, drug addictions, you know the gang affiliations, probably huge care and protection prior to that" and sometimes having committed serious offences. Arthur shared an example of a child who liked to steal cars but had a physical impairment and ended up hitting an elderly lady while driving a car. Arthur reflected further on how multiple factors needed to be considered for this child, such as holding them accountable for their offending while also keeping the child and the public safe:

> Yeah, and when they are that young. It's actually they're quite difficult 'cause you can't really just lock them up and we shouldn't. But he needed to be in a secure environment where he couldn't have access to a car because he was literally gonna kill someone.

In maintaining that safety for the child and the public, Arthur expressed that it is not easy: "…you're damned if you do, damned if you don't" and that:

> …we shouldn't be locking up young people. It's like, well, some young people find I think for everyone's safety we do need to. And it's not obviously forever, you want to try to do some work with them to try and get them out into the community and do good things, but we want to make sure that he's safe for a start. But also, everyone else is bloody safe. It could have been you driving down the road, your mother…

As previously outlined, the FGC process was discussed as often being a part of the process of working with children who offend, but that this came with its challenges. Some of the participants pointed out that a weakness of the FGC process can be that there is sometimes a struggle to get the family and/or whānau of the child to attend the FGC. This was illustrated by a comment Arthur made about something his supervisor once told him when there were only a handful of people at a child's FGC: "…she said if he'd died tomorrow there'd be 400 people at his funeral. But can you find any one of them now?" Having family and/or whānau is vital to the FGC process as Fleur commented: "…family input is really important…". Another point to consider

is that family and/or whānau are not always able to be part of the FGC plan as Fleur pointed out: “Not all family are willing” or the child does not “…have family that we can actually do that with.” If the family and/or whānau is for whatever reason not able to support the FGC plan, then Fleur suggested that “…you just check in a little bit more,” “…set them up with organisations that can be in their life for a decent while. And try and rebuild, find someone in the family that can have that connection with that young person.”

Part of the complexity of working with children was that the struggles some children and their families and/or whānau faced were on a larger scale beyond the home environment. Beth discussed that the social pressure was sometimes bigger “…than anything that a social worker could do.” Beth explained further:

> The thing was that the families themselves, the parent, would basically just be like; the solution is I need to get out of (place) because it’s impossible to be here and my kid not to become a criminal because it’s just because you know kids are stabbing each other at school. Like the parents really associated the area they were living in with the problems that were going on with their kids. And I think that was in part often correct like it was hard to deal with one family’s problems when actually it’s a part of the whole thing that’s going on in the wider community.

Compounding the challenges of working with this client group, some participants expressed how “there’s not as many services around that deal with” children who offend and their whānau and that there are limited kaupapa Māori focussed support options available as Ellen pointed out: “…now if I go back to Te Ao Māori, lot of the services that are out at the moment are Non – Māori services. So, they’re very limited for Māori whānau in terms of wanna be supported within kaupapa Māori.” With services limited for children who offend, another layer of complexity is added with the criteria imposed by some available services, like having to admit an offence to get the support, as this was illustrated by a comment Beth made:

> There’s just nothing for him and also none of those services could be offered to him while there was like this; we don’t really know what happened, he’s saying he didn’t do it, so we can’t…If he accepted those services,

would he then feel like he looked guilty? And would that compromise the police investigation?

Concerns were expressed about limited services usually coinciding with long waiting lists and that there can be a conflict between having to discharge quickly and focussing on what works with children who offend. Ellen reported that if children who offend and their whānau were eligible for services, that often "…the waiting list was like six to twelve months. So, by then you know the whānau has re-offended or the child has re-offended a number of times before services can even get involved." Ellen discussed how social workers would try to manage the wait for support that children and their family and/or whānau experienced by holding "…them on our caseloads for as long as we could. But again, our policies will dictate well actually your, you know they should be out of your caseload now. And let them just wait on the waiting list for that service."

Some participants argued that funding for intervention and prevention programs was hard, while others reported no such difficulties. For instance, Carl and Dawn, who both worked for an NGO, pointed out their struggles in securing funding compared to the participants who worked in a statutory capacity and had no trouble with funding. Carl discussed how funding "…creates sort of fingers being pointed at each other". Some of the funding struggles for NGO's appeared to be the lower age group and preventative nature of the work rather than being intervention based as Dawn mentioned:

> We've struggled with funding for years because we are a preventative program and we would rather be at the top but this age group, people just don't want to fund it, that five to thirteen. They've got all this money to throw at the older kids.

If funding was allocated to NGO's it seemed to be allocated to deal with specific issues like family violence or substance abuse like Dawn highlighted:

> There's all this fund because of P or there is all this funding because of family violence but we cover all, we do all that stuff, but no one is really looking at that whole picture. The whole holistic picture, they're just seeing it in isolation and so that's where we struggle.

The challenges in trying to support children who offend and their family and/or whānau are complex, mainly because there is not just one problem or issue to be solved but multiple factors that have influenced the child to start offending. The participants overall demonstrated that some of the main challenges related to working with children who offend are their complexity and the limited holistic supports available for this particular group of children, making prevention even more important.

Prevention

The participants highlighted the importance of focusing on prevention when working with children who offend. Fleur discussed how "…we need to be putting more resources and more speciality work at the beginning and not at the end when they've already fallen off the cliff." Carl explained that to support families and their children, and more emphasis should be placed on helping families with the basics of life focussed around the four cornerstones of a child's life: family, health, education, community, and recreation. Carl noted that longitudinal studies and studies by the Brain Wave Trust all highlight the importance of early prevention.

Prevention, therefore, is about getting children and their families and/or whānau support before problems occur or get worse. This can sometimes be met with hesitancy by family and/or whānau and potential perceived stigma for having services involved. Dawn said that she has noticed within her community that families are cautious about having more than one service involved with them at a time. She suggested that some families can face complex challenges and that to prevent these issues from escalating, sometimes multiple services are needed: "If they're right, if they're free services that this family are needing and are there at the right time, right supports, same plan. What's wrong with having three cars? You know, we might have families that need six cars up the driveway because of the complexity of them..."

Chapter Summary

Together these results provide important insights into how social workers can support children who offend. The results highlighted how there are multiple influences on children who offend that often relate to peer pressure and their home environment. The seriousness of the offending behaviour determines whether OT becomes involved under section 14(1)e of the Oranga Tamariki Act (1989) or whether the police will work with the child to address their needs. The outcomes that were hoped for centred

around trying to support the child not to commit any further offences, but for that to happen, the home environment also needed to change. To support change within the home environment, the results emphasised the importance of building and maintaining relationships with the child and their family and/or whānau. The relationship the social worker developed with the child and their family and/or whānau aided in facilitating connections and strengthening the home environment. The participants pointed out that supporting whakapapa connections for Māori tamariki was vital to supporting their well-being and that of their whānau. Collaborating with other professionals provided a holistic support opportunity to create change with the child and their family and/or whānau. Challenges were identified that focussed on how the level of offending from the child and limited services and funding for children who offend could make it difficult to provide support early when difficulties first appear. Prevention was highlighted within the study as a critical component to supporting children who offend and their family and/or whānau. The next chapter presents a discussion about the results.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experience of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported these children and their family and/or whānau.

This chapter will outline the level of offending, complexity and influences on children who offend. Following on from that, the social work process with children who offend is explored and how it aids in identifying the reasons behind the child's offending. Subsequently, in addressing these reasons behind child offending, various factors like whakapapa connections, peers, and family and/or whānau were found to be essential and will be discussed. The key research themes are explored through the lens of empowerment and ecological systems theory which highlights relationship building and supporting the home environment through facilitating skill-building; enhancing coping mechanisms; and integrating interventions to address social and personal factors that are impacting the child and their family and/or whānau (Cheung et al., 2018; Payne, 2014). Lastly, possible outcomes for children who offend that focus on utilising a multidisciplinary approach to support children and their families and/or whānau to be crime-free are discussed.

Level of Offending

The Ministry of Social Development (2016) estimated that about one in twenty New Zealand children would offend before the age of 14. This could lead children to become involved with police early on in life and continue problematic or offending behaviour into adolescence or adulthood (Laser & Nicotera, 2011). When police apprehend a child for an alleged offence, police youth aid officers will decide what level of action is taken, depending on the level of offending. For example, when a child only has a minimal level of offending, an alternative action plan is commonly used. This may involve a plan that focuses on holding the child accountable for their actions, making amends with the victim and addressing any needs the child might have, which might be addressed through NGO services (Ministry of Social Development, 2017). Police often utilise alternative action plans with children who offend since most children who offend do not meet the threshold required for section 14(1)e of the Oranga Tamariki Act and subsequent Oranga Tamariki's (OT) involvement (Office of the

Children's Commissioner, 2020). Participants discussed that many children they encountered were involved in minimal offending and did not come to OT's attention. The participants discussed that a smaller percentage of children had higher levels of offending. These children generally had more complex needs related to mental health, substance abuse, gang affiliations or historical involvement with OT. These results support the idea that children who offend are a small group in New Zealand, but they may experience complex issues that could influence them to continue offending.

Complexity

Within the area of youth justice or the practice of working with children and young people who offend, is a tension related to the child being seen as capable and able to make decisions for themselves but also the fact that the child is impacted by structural factors like poverty, race, class, gender, and ability (Fox & Arnull, 2013). Participants highlighted that while most children committed relatively low-level offences, a small percentage of children who offend are challenging and consume a lot of time due to complex circumstances. Participants explained this complexity by outlining the myriad issues social workers sometimes had to deal with, including mental health, substance abuse, gang connections, historical involvement with statutory agencies or serious offences. The level of complexity would often increase if the child had committed a serious crime and posed a danger to themselves or others.

Participants reflected on how multiple factors needed to be considered that included understanding structural and personal factors and holding the child accountable for their offending while also keeping the child and the public safe. This relates to the ethical dilemma within the practice of working with children who offend, which centres around the nature versus nurture debate of whether children offend because of their environment or because they were born with the potential to commit a crime (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012). These perspectives of rehabilitation versus punishment still influence public opinion and determine how professionals and governments deal with children who offend. The Government and society have struggled to recognise this dilemma and find a way forward (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

In New Zealand, statutory agencies like Police or OT work with children who offend on the understanding that there is more to the child than their offending

behaviour and that multiple factors can influence their offending (Becroft, 2006). At a social level, this may involve poverty, inadequate housing, and marginalisation. Factors impacting from within the home may include isolation, family violence, abuse, compromised parenting due to mental health, substance abuse or gambling (Atwool, 2013). The results of this study indicate a high level of complexity in working with children who offend and their family and/or whānau that could present challenges for practical work with these children. Neoliberalism within Western countries is a complicating factor as neoliberalism emphasises a move away from universal or 'needs' focussed social policies to targeting resources for those most at risk (Beddoe, 2014). Policymakers present the focus on 'at risk' individuals like children who offend as a way to pay attention to those most vulnerable. In reality, it marginalises this sector of society, blaming societal problems on this minority (Beddoe, 2014).

With that risk focus, the level and intensity of interventions a social worker might use are often related to the risk the child might pose to themselves or others and determines whether the intervention is going to include more formal outcomes like Family Group Conference (FGC), Family Court directed outcomes or be primarily welfare-related such as a focus on housing, education, and health (Boshier et al., 2007; Fox & Arnull, 2013). Finding relevant supports to work towards positive outcomes for children who offend can be challenging. Participants spoke about limited services, and limited kaupapa Māori focussed support options that work with children who offend alongside their family and/or whānau. Participants expressed concerns about limited services usually coinciding with long waiting lists; there can be a conflict between having to discharge quickly from support services and focussing on what works with children who offend. The Government has focussed investment in services with a lower long-term cost rather than positive outcomes (O'Brien, 2016). This has resulted in social services targeting people more on individual characteristics rather than supporting people with the economic and structural influences that maintain inequalities (O'Brien, 2016). This has led to a greater focus on service targets rather than outcomes, which puts pressure on a social worker's ability to work with clients who might not fit service criteria or have to wait a long time to gain access to the right support (Egan, 2016).

Social workers, therefore, need an understanding of the multifaceted system children who offend are a part of to assist with positive outcomes for the child and their

family and/or whānau. Participants mentioned that parts of the child's system included family and/or whānau, peers and school and that there can be multiple risk and protective factors within those systems that contributed and impacted their offending behaviour. Social workers can use ecological systems theory to see and understand the complexity of a child's system. Ecological systems theory emphasises how clients and the people around them are part of a holistic system of connecting relationships with different individuals at different points during their life and across different systems and that this can sometimes cause problems (Haight et al., 2020; Payne, 2020). These individuals and systems all have their own needs and resources and can be an opportunity and source of support to deal with problems or can cause risk/stress to the child and their family and/or whānau (Haight et al., 2020; Payne, 2020).

This section has discussed the complexity involved in working with children who offend and suggests that ecological systems theory can highlight interconnecting relationships and systems which may impact the wellbeing of children who offend. The next section addresses the social work process in determining what factors influence the child and their family and/or whānau and how to encourage change within the home environment.

Social Work Process

Part of the social work process is to understand the child's environment (Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011). As noted earlier, the reasons children behave in a way deemed to be criminal are often blamed on individual flaws. Still, a further analysis highlights the role structural and systemic issues may play in contributing to child offending (Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011). This study found that conducting an assessment is an integral part of a social worker's approach when working with children who offend. An assessment allows the social worker to consider what is going on for the child and their family and/or whānau, assess the needs, risks and structural factors/influences involved and might pick up on things that have been missed before (Weld & Appleton, 2008). As part of the assessment process, the participants highlighted how the focus was primarily on the child's rehabilitative needs and gaining an understanding of the reasons behind the child's offending behaviour, including the structural factors impacting the child. Hence, the social work assessment acknowledges and seeks to address the impacts on the family and/or whānau from a socioeconomic context but

also to work with the resources already available for the child and their family and/or whānau to address the needs that have been identified (Maidment, 2016).

As noted above, an ecological systems lens offers a framework for assessment. Assessment from an ecological systems perspective emphasises a need to see the child's and their family and/or whānau environment as consisting of interlocking relationships and social links that are connected to social structures and organisations (Payne, 2020). Understanding the interconnecting system's elements for the child and their family and/or whānau will help them gain more control over how they participate in their communities and social institutions like schools and workplaces (Payne, 2020). In working towards positive outcomes and addressing structural influences, the child and their family and/or whānau must be supported to participate in developing an intervention plan (Stabler et al., 2019). This supports trust to be built, and the social worker may assist the family and/or whānau to work through possible associated feelings with having services involved. It could help parents be more receptive towards having wider supports involved through support services or extended family and/or whānau (Stabler et al., 2019).

As part of the intervention plan, different services might be recommended, as children who offend often require different interventions from multiple agencies (e.g. special education, counselling, social services, youth agencies) at different points in time (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Menon & Cheung, 2018). Before starting any intervention, time must be set aside to learn about where the person lives and where they have come from and understand which people the client is connected to both currently and through generational connections (Munford & Sanders, 2011). These connections, especially whakapapa for Māori children, can link them with others who can help them learn more about themselves and strengthen their social network on which they can rely for support when needed (Makoare et al., 2021; Penehira et al., 2014). The importance of supporting whakapapa connection for Māori children will be further discussed in the following section

Whakapapa Connections

In 2016 the Ministry of Social Development estimated that Māori tamariki were three times more likely to come to police attention by age 14 than non – Māori children. Importantly, in supporting Māori tamariki and their Māori identity, different factors like

language (Te Reo Māori) and access to ancestral land (turangawaewae) and knowledge of whakapapa (genealogy) can play an important part (Ruwhiu, 2018). Whānau narratives highlight the importance of interconnected social structures and a shared whakapapa, therefore, promoting a collective history and a distinctive identity (Ruwhiu, 2018). The participants emphasised how vital it was to support Māori tamariki to connect with their whakapapa. Participants highlighted the importance of trying to work with whānau or iwi to find out and maintain whakapapa connections and to understand that the child offending might be linked to those lost connections. Various factors have impacted Māori whānau and their ability to maintain connections and provide support, including the impact of colonisation, modernisation, rapid urbanisation and globalisation, and the resulting socio-economic pressures on whānau to make a living (Joseph, 2007). This presented challenges as it caused Tikanga, social controls and the various support systems and networks within whānau to be harder to maintain (Joseph, 2007).

Understanding whakapapa can help Māori tamariki with their sense of identity as the connections are not just with other people but also to the land and the history and memories associated with it. These connections can provide a sense of stability and belonging for the child (Kidman, 2012). Therefore, to work with Māori tamariki and their whānau, a strong working relationship needs to be built and involves being perceptive of a client's context within their whānau, community and their historical and current whānau connections (Munford & Sanders, 2011). A child's context often involves friends, who are an important relationship for children during adolescence and can provide support but can also encourage risk-taking (Claiborne & Drewery, 2010). The way friends behave and view the world influences children, for example, through how they act around others and what they do during their leisure time (Claiborne & Drewery, 2010). Similarly, some participants discussed how peer influence and the ability to manage peer influence could be a contributing factor to whether children will go along with actions that might result in offending. What follows is an outline of the significance of peers on children and how peers can become part of supporting children who offend.

Peers

Maintaining friendships and the fear of not belonging can be influential and could encourage bad behaviour towards those who do not fit in or do not possess

similar character qualities (Claiborne & Drewery, 2010). This may increase the chance of children engaging in risky or offending behaviour. Any assessment should consider the impact of friends on children. The social interaction between children creates unique social constructions of events and circumstances that can make risk-taking behaviour seem more appealing, especially during adolescence (Burr, 2015). In agreement with the literature, peers and peer pressure were reasons participants cited why some children committed offences. Another point to consider is that some children may already have a reputation in their community and could be labelled as individuals to be avoided (Braithwaite, 1989; Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011). The community could exhibit a sense of exclusion, and children who offend could become more isolated from their normal peer association and therefore seek out and form relationships with other children with similar behaviour (Braithwaite, 1989; Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011). Participants suggested that for children to feel connected to positive and non – offending people in their environment, it is essential to help the child to have good connections within the family and/or whānau but also encourage positive relations with others like peers, for example, through school or within the wider community. Increasing or developing more constructive networks with other non – offending people could help the child be empowered to conform to positive values and normative behaviours and reduce the risk of offending (Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011).

Group work is a common intervention with children and young people who offend and often focuses on support with a particular part of offending like anger management or victim awareness (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012). Group work can be effective for children who may not have much involvement with family and/or whānau but spend a lot of time with friends (Cheung & Sek-yum Ngai, 2007). Participants suggested that group work could be a beneficial and activity-based way of supporting children, especially if they had experienced trauma in the past. Group work within social work is an important aspect in supporting those who, for various reasons, are marginalised or struggling to be a part of their communities (McMaster, 2016). Participants in this study discussed how group work provided peer support for the children they were working with but needed to be done safely, especially with children who might exhibit violent behaviour. Therefore, considering a child's emotional and social development to assess whether group work would be suitable for them or not is important (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

Peer support can be possible through individuals within the group context, learning that they are not alone and that there are others with similar struggles. This also supports group members to understand how certain structural factors like class and culture influence them and to make a choice to “take a position of resistance against traditions that are not helpful and develop their sense of agency” (McMaster, 2016, p. 268). Additionally, group work can help children learn how to behave in a group setting as well as how one’s behaviour impacts others. Group work tends to have a strong focus on learning and practising skills within the safety of the group, which can then be taken back to the person’s home environment and to enable possible better relationships and an awareness of social responsibility (McMaster, 2016). Group work creates possibilities for change, for “if we consider that everyone who attends a group impacts on at least 25 other people, then this can start to make a significant difference in our communities” (McMaster, 2016, pp. 278–279).

Group work and mentoring are beneficial interventions that can be utilised as a part of the social work process. Mentoring can be beneficial for children who are starting to offend, at risk of offending behaviour, dropping out of school, aggression or other anti-social behaviour (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007; Tolan et al., 2013). Participants mentioned that in maintaining this capability for change, it was vital to support the child to form a connection with another family and/or whānau member who can support them to stay out of trouble and help the plan to work. Study results showed that mentoring was sometimes considered a helpful and flexible support option for children who offend. Participants also considered mentoring to provide extra support for the child, as the mentor could often stay involved when the plan was completed or when OT exited. The essential element of mentoring is the one–on–one voluntary relationship between the child and the adult mentor, and it is this relationship that provides the dynamic for change (Burnett & Appleton, 2004). This section has explored the influences of peers and how mentoring and group work could provide an opportunity to support children who offend and has argued that this can enable opportunities for positive change, personal development and increases the number of supportive contacts that a child has which can help them to change or experiment with the way they approach their immediate environment (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2007; Payne, 2020). There are multiple ways to practice social work,

and all social workers play a part in this through the relationships they build with their clients (Payne, 2014).

Relationship Building

In determining how to build a relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau, it is vital for social workers before contacting the family and/or whānau, to consider the available information about: the nature of the problem, gender, ages, cultural background, and other professionals involved (Van Hook, 2019). This information could determine what the engagement process would be like and what type of statutory or NGO support might be suitable (Van Hook, 2019). The first meeting with a child and their family and/or whānau is important in establishing a good working relationship. It is enhanced by social workers who show empathy, work together with the family and/or whānau professionally and engagingly (Bowden, 2019). An important facilitator of social work emphasised in this study was that the success of any social work approach relied on the way of working with children who offend and their families and/or whānau. All the participants discussed the importance of building rapport and trust. Participants drew attention to the importance of relationships for family and/or whānau since they often do not know the social worker, and it would be up to the social worker to show that they will follow through with support and build trust over time. Building and maintaining relationships with children and their families and/or whānau is necessary. It starts with the social worker understanding that the challenges that families and/or whānau bring to social services are only part of their current situation, and the social worker has a choice about how to approach these challenges (Munford & Sanders, 2010).

Participants explained that a vital part of the social work approach is to work in partnership with the child and their family and/or whānau. Consistency and not giving up on building that relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau assisted in creating trust and respect. It is vital then to separate the ‘problem’ from the people involved and recognise that the family and/or whānau are the experts in their own lives and know what works for them and what does not (Maidment, 2016; Munford & Sanders, 2010). In supporting the working relationship with the family and/or whānau further, the social worker can use micro-skills like listening, reflecting, clarifying and reframing to show empathy throughout to support the family and/or whānau to use their existing strengths and capacities to create change (Maidment, 2016; Munford &

Sanders, 2010). The importance of a trusting relationship cannot be underestimated, for it can have a positive effect where the relationship with the child and their family and/or whānau is used as a tool to help them to perceive themselves as constructive members of their community with opportunities for growth and success (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012) Social workers can provide practical resources to support a family and/or whānau in their home environment. Further, they can broaden their support network by facilitating links between family and/or whānau and external supports through people and groups to promote a sense of identity, belonging and increase social capital (Payne, 2020).

Supporting the Child and their Family and/or Whānau

Empowerment is often a fundamental philosophy for social workers supporting the child's and their family and/or whānau's ability and desire to make good choices. Empowerment can be a useful concept in working with children who offend, for empowerment aims to recognise and affirm the resilience and capacity within children and their family and/or whānau (Healy, 2014). Empowerment can facilitate skill-building and enhance coping mechanisms and influence the process of reducing offending (Cheung et al., 2018). This study found that the participants were hopeful, wishing to empower the children they worked with to make good choices and be crime-free. Participants highlighted that for change and a better future, the child needed to be supported in believing in their dreams and aspirations. Working to empower the child and their family and/or whānau starts with acknowledging that they have their perspective on how to create change but that they may struggle with a lack of certain skills or confidence in their ability to make that change happen (Healy, 2014).

Supporting children and their family and/or whānau within their social environment early, when problems first occur, could support family and/or whānau to build on their strengths and reduce the risk of children being exposed to influences that could encourage offending behaviour (Walker, 2012). The participants emphasised the importance of prevention in working with children who offend and the need to put more resources and more speciality work with children when they start to have behavioural difficulties rather than when they've already started offending. Prevention with children will work best when all aspects of the child's environment are addressed with the aim for change in the whole system (physically, psychologically, within the family and/or whānau, socially and in education) rather than just focussing

on the individual (Gluckman, 2018). Participants suggested that to support families and/or whānau and their children; more emphasis should be placed on helping them with the basics of life, focusing on family, health, education, community, and recreation. Problems within a family and/or whānau social network are often a combination of learned behaviours and the impact of broader dysfunctional societal systems (Walker, 2012). The results of this study affirm that the child does not exist in isolation and is part of the wider family and/or whānau system, which can play a role in some children committing crimes and that the family and/or whānau issues should be part of working with the child. Participants pointed out that family and/or whānau often have other things going on that may impact their ability to engage with services. Participants stated that keeping engagement open with the family and/or whānau enabled support when they were ready to engage. Participants highlighted some of the contributing factors that placed additional stress on the family and/or whānau for example, some families and/or whānau who were offending themselves as well as the children; family and/or whānau who had multiple generations of statutory involvement; or mental health and/or substance abuse issues.

For a family and/or whānau to thrive and support their children well, specific resources that sustain one physically and mentally need to be present. For instance, some families and/or whānau may struggle in maintaining enough physical resources to have adequate food and accommodation, which has a significant impact on how well they can sustain themselves and their children (Haight et al., 2020). Secondly, suppose there are not enough physical resources. In that case, it can be hard for family and/or whānau to maintain regular and positive social interactions with those around them and be part of their social environment which can limit social resources (Haight et al., 2020). Family and/ or whānau operate within physical, social and cultural environments. It is in those environments that social work can help enable the wider environment to fit better with the family and/or whānau (Gitterman et al., 2021).

This section highlighted empowerment as an essential concept within social work and how it can be utilised to support children and their families and/or whānau in making good choices and building on skills and strengths. Providing this support early for children and their families and/or whānau and addressing change within the whole system was considered vital. This emphasised the importance of having enough social and physical resources to create change. Social workers are ideally suited to support

the child and their family and/or whānau to connect with relevant supports and build on strengths and resources within their home environment, which will be discussed further in the next section.

Supporting the Home Environment

Children who offend and their family and/or whānau often come to a social worker's attention when the demands of their day to day life exceed their ability to deal with them; their needs cannot be met by the environment they live in; they do not have the skills to utilise their environment to get the resources and support required and/or the environment does not respond to their need (Gitterman et al., 2021). This study found that through working with the family and/or whānau, the social workers were able to support the home environment and respond to the risk and protective factors within the home by looking at the interlocking relationships and social links the family and/or whānau had with wider social structures and organisations (Payne, 2020). Strategies like assistance with childcare transportation, cultural responsiveness, flexible scheduling, and appointment reminders can encourage parental engagement. A combination of strategies might be required to try and address the issues within the home (Pellechia, 2018).

Part of the social work role is to understand the family and/or whānau situation and to indicate possible areas for change or alternative possibilities, and have family and/or whānau be part of the process (Killick & Taylor, 2020). In supporting the change process, it is vital that social workers are aware of their approach with families and/or whānau and try and adjust according to the family and/or whānau needs (Munford & Sanders, 2010). The participants in this study confirmed that change was more likely to happen when the person was ready to change. This is linked with self–determination, the idea that people are the best at making their own decisions about their own lives, which is an important social work value (Akbar, 2019). As noted earlier in this chapter, the family and/or whānau are partners in the change process, and opportunities for change are more likely to occur when they are active in the change process. This requires patience and adjusting social work practice to meet the client's needs. (Munford & Sanders, 2010).

Participants noted some families and/or whānau within the community are cautious about having more than one service involved with them at a time. Participants

suggested that some families can face complex challenges and that to prevent these issues from escalating, sometimes multiple services are needed. The social workers' responsibility then relates to helping the family and/or whānau to improve their environment through engagement with various supports. Some of the supports might be focused on helping the family and/or whānau to develop new skills and coping strategies to meet the demands of their environment and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents (Gitterman et al., 2021). Secondly, support services could work towards influencing the social and physical environments of the family and/or whānau and to try and make them more in tune with what the family and/or whānau need (Gitterman et al., 2021). Therefore, family and/or whānau often need support within their home environment when they are struggling to meet the demands of their environment (Gitterman et al., 2021). This is where the social worker would work in partnership with the family and/or whānau to create change in the home environment which often requires a multi-faceted collaborative services approach that involves and addresses the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau and which may influence a reduction in offending behaviour (Reil et al., 2020).

Service Collaboration

Connections with other social services can provide a holistic intervention approach that could address relevant psychosocial and environmental factors (Burnett & Appleton, 2004). When working with other professionals, social workers can observe the variations in how other people can experience the same phenomena (Martinez-Brawley, 2020). Professionals like youth workers, educational staff, police, and social workers have different professional backgrounds and, therefore, different social constructions and perceptions of the situation at hand (Martinez-Brawley, 2020). Participants considered the different perspectives and resulting knowledge critical by discussing how working with other professionals and agencies could benefit the child and their family and/or whānau. Participants reported that working closely with other professionals helped ensure everyone involved with the child and the family and/or whānau understood the situation, preventing replication of what other services were already doing. These findings are consistent with other research, which found that children who offend often require different interventions from multiple agencies (e.g. special education, counselling, social services, youth agencies) at different points in time (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Menon & Cheung, 2018). To ensure there is a good

overview of a complex situation acquiring the views of other professionals to support the family and/or whānau is often necessary. However, there is the potential for conflict and misunderstandings between the professionals involved (Killick & Taylor, 2020). Therefore, working in a multidisciplinary context requires the social worker to develop and promote effective communication between the professionals and ensure clarity of the variety of professional roles involved, especially when decisions are made in a group (Killick & Taylor, 2020).

Multidisciplinary and multi-agency practice with children who offend shows the understanding that a holistic approach is needed to address the challenges children who offend experience (Fox & Arnull, 2013). The support and specialist advice within the multi-agency approach can vary greatly depending on training and the education of the professionals involved, and the agency's location (Fox & Arnull, 2013). Police are often involved in some capacity in dealing with children who offend, their families and/or whānau and relevant professionals. The participants all presented different perspectives about how they worked with police and how police dealt with children who offend. A possible explanation for this might be that the professional relationship with the police is influenced by personality and professional differences. Participants described sometimes being able to have a good working relationship with some police officers but also occasionally experiencing the opposite where police were quite punitive in their approach, and it was harder for participants to work with police effectively. As part of an interagency process it is not really about the organisations cooperating but it is more about the people working together and that cooperation requires trust (Payne, 2009). Building this mutual trust is influenced by the differences in professional values and traditions and how well structures are put in place to make the professional partnership work like for example, having clear joined procedures, up to date contact information and people within each organisation that is clear about their organisational procedures and able to work collaboratively for the benefit of the people they serve (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Payne, 2009).

It is also vital for social workers to build a good working relationship with schools and encourage a sense of school belonging in addressing child offending (Lucero et al., 2015). A good working relationship with the school or alternative education provider was highlighted as necessary in the study. The participants reported that one of the reasons for this is that the teacher tends to see the child regularly and are aware

of what is happening with the parents or friend group of the child. This working relationship with schools or alternative education can support children to maintain a connection to their education and could result in having better relationships with teachers, children engaging in after school activities and being more engaged with school and therefore less likely to offend (Lucero et al., 2015).

Several issues were identified in this study regarding schools having limited support options for dealing with children with behavioural problems. According to some participants, these issues are often related to teachers not having enough training, the right resources or funding to support children with challenging behaviour. Therefore, social services may be well placed to support schools with resources and assist teachers in working better with challenging students (Sanders et al., 2018). Social workers can support children to learn self-management and life skills like communication, negotiation and conflict resolution and ways of dealing with the challenges at home and in their neighbourhood (Hawkins & Weis, 2017; Sanders et al., 2018). These individual responses can help the child build internal coping resources that could allow them to respond better to life stressors and improve the child's problem-solving skills (Gitterman et al., 2021). Ideally, this would coincide with the social worker supporting the child and their wider family and/or whānau with environmental resources such as connecting them with other formal support services and increasing their informal network, for example, relatives, friends, or schoolmates (Gitterman et al., 2021). Having either formal or informal support networks available for the child and their family and/or whānau can act as a buffer against some of life's stressors and connections through school are an essential part of that (Gitterman et al., 2021).

An aspect of the school system is alternative education which has been viewed as a form of education that focuses on either engagement or re-engagement of students with school (Vaughan, 2002). Alternative education programs concentrate on dealing with the student's behavioural, emotional, and social issues that have caused them to become disconnected from their school. Thus, focussing less on the academic needs but managing the possible risk of the student to themselves or others within an appropriately contained environment where students can work on their educational skills and achieve a level of independence (Vaughan, 2002). Concerns were expressed by some participants that many children who offend are not in school, which

they felt puts the children at further risk of offending. Some participants considered alternative education a good option for some children who offend due to often being able to work with mentors and have extra support. However, participants also pointed out that the risk could be that children at alternative education associate more with children with a variety of offending behaviour or non – conforming with the rules and increase the risk of their behaviour getting worse. It is crucial to bear in mind the possible bias in the response from the participants due to their focus primarily being on children who offend rather than students who struggle in mainstream education. However, the social response to children who have different learning requirements has focussed more on 'special needs', and this on its own creates barriers for children to be full members of their community since the focus stays on the individual and their apparent challenges rather than on the way the education system is organised (Thompson, 2006). Therefore, social workers could support interventions that keep children attending school and that have opportunities for normative social activities that are likely to have a more significant influence at reducing risk factors for offending and empowering the child (Sanders et al., 2018).

Working with other support services allows the child's varying needs and their family and/or whānau to be addressed by relevant professionals. Police and the school or alternative education are often an important part of services that come together to support children who offend and their family and/or whānau together with social workers.

Chapter Summary

This study explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free and achieve positive outcomes with them and their families and/or whānau. The level of offending from children who offend was discussed and highlighted how police and OT respond. Then the complexity in working with children who offend was explored and how neoliberal ideology influences a risk focus with children who offend. The social work process was examined and focused on understanding the interconnecting systems that influence the child and their family and/or whānau. Whakapapa connections were considered an important part of supporting the identity and wellbeing of Māori tamariki. Following that, peers and peer influence were discussed and how group work and mentoring could positively influence a peer setting. Leading on from that, the concept of relationship building was analysed and the

significance for social workers to build trust and work in partnership. The importance of family and/or whānau was then highlighted as an integral part of a child's system and how the concepts of empowerment and prevention could support the family and/or whānau. Supporting the home environment was then discussed that underlined the need for social workers to understand the impact the immediate environment has on the child and their family and/or whānau and that to support change within the wider environment, multiple services are often needed. The concept of service collaboration was then considered and how multiple perspectives and different skill sets could support the child and their family and/or whānau on multiple levels. The next chapter will present the conclusion.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The experiences of social workers who work with children who offend and their understanding of their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported these children and their family and/or whānau were examined.

Young people who offend are often responsible for a significant number of criminal offences, often start offending before the age of 14 and have a higher chance of becoming violent, chronic offenders with a high rate of youth justice involvement (Loeber et al., 2008/2016a; McLaren, 2000; Moffitt et al., 2002). Social workers are often involved in the assessment and intervention with children who offend and their family and/or whānau and work alongside other professionals to support children to be crime-free. This chapter concludes the research by pulling together the ideas from across the thesis into key findings and suggesting possible future practice implications. The chapter will briefly discuss the research study design and then outline the key findings. The implications and limitations of the research are then considered, and the chapter finishes with the recommendations and the conclusion.

Study Design

As noted in chapter one, two research objectives informed the study: (1) To explore the facilitators and barriers social workers experience in working with children who offend and their families and/or whānau; and (2) To gain an understanding of the social workers' perspectives on how to improve outcomes for children who offend.

A qualitative exploratory process was chosen for this study as it emphasises induction which focused on gathering data first and then generating knowledge (Ormston et al., 2014; Stebbins, 2008). The qualitative exploratory method was used as a way to increase understanding through systematically gathering data from social workers on how they work with children who offend (Stebbins, 2008; Steinberg, 2015). Six social workers participated in semi-structured interviews, which is a qualitative data collection process, where the researcher asks participants a range of pre-determined but open-ended questions. This allowed the researcher more control over which topics were discussed, and responses to the questions were not limited (Ayres, 2008). An

interview schedule was created that aided in exploring the research aims with the participants, and thematic analysis was used to analyse the results.

Key Findings

The key findings focused on facilitators and barriers regarding social work practice with children who offend and suggestions regarding how to improve outcomes for children who offend:

1. Social workers need to have skills around building and maintaining relationships with the child and their family and/or whānau, which aids in building trust and rapport and can further support the child and their family and/or whānau to connect with other positive people in their environment.
2. Professional collaboration enables the possibility of creating change by addressing a wide range of needs the child and their family and/or whānau might experience.
3. The complexity around working with children who offend was influenced by the often-multiple challenges a family and/or whānau would experience.
4. Competing demands of working alongside the justice system can force social workers to focus more on intervention rather than prevention with children who offend.
5. Ecological systems theory supports a holistic understanding of the child and their family and/or whānau and enables opportunities for change within the home environment.

These key findings will be discussed further in the next few sections.

1. Relationships

Building and maintaining relationships was considered an important skill for social workers to have in working with children who offend. Encouraging positive connections was identified by participants as necessary in supporting the child to stay out of trouble and make any intervention plans work. Time should be set aside to piece together where the child and their family and/or whānau now live, where they have come from, and their current and generational connection with other people (Munford & Sanders, 2011). These connections are needed to understand the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau and allow for a strong basis upon which an intervention can develop (Munford & Sanders, 2011). Participants suggested that for children to

feel connected to positive and non – offending people in their environment, it is essential to help the child to have good connections within the family and/or whānau but also encourage positive relations with others like peers, for example, through school or within the wider community. Increasing or developing relationships with other non – offending people could help the child be empowered to conform to positive values and normative behaviours and reduce the risk of offending (Thorpe & Shepherd, 2011).

2. Professional Collaboration

Participants described that collaborating with other professionals helped respond to the different needs the child and their family and/or whānau might experience. This was consistent with other research, which found that children who offend often require different interventions from multiple agencies (e.g. special education, counselling, social services, youth agencies) at different points in time (Bright & Jonson-Reid, 2015; Menon & Cheung, 2018).

Participants noted some families and/or whānau within the community were cautious about having more than one service involved with them at a time. Participants suggested that some families can face complex challenges and that to prevent these issues from escalating, sometimes multiple services are needed. The social workers' responsibility then relates to helping the family and/or whānau to improve their environment through engagement with various supports. Some of the supports might be focused on helping the family and/or whānau to develop new skills and coping strategies to meet the demands of their environment and to take advantage of the opportunities it presents (Gitterman et al., 2021).

The support and specialist advice within the multi-agency approach can vary greatly depending on training and the education of the professionals involved, and the agency's location (Fox & Arnull, 2013). Making this collaboration work is not really about the organisations cooperating but more about the people working together, which requires trust (Payne, 2009). Building this mutual trust is influenced by the differences in professional values and traditions and how well structures are put in place to make the professional partnership work like for example, having clear joined procedures, up to date contact information and people within each organisation that is

clear about their organisational procedures and able to work collaboratively for the benefit of the people they serve (Burnett & Appleton, 2004; Payne, 2009).

3. Complexity

The research also found that the barriers social workers experienced while working with children who offend related to the complexity of this group. The complexity appeared to increase when social workers worked with children who had wider issues in multiple domains of their lives, such as within the family and/or whānau or peers. Children who offend experience complex needs across different domains of their life and the offending behaviour is often a symptom of more significant underlying difficulties within the home environment (Becroft, 2006). Some of these difficulties could be related to poverty and inequality experienced by the child and their family and/or whānau and are sometimes viewed as an individual problem rather than structural inequality (O'Brien, 2016). These structural disparities can make it harder for children and their families and/or whānau to cope, which can result in experiences of, for example, family violence, parental mental health, substance dependency and/or gambling problems (Atwool, 2013).

Every child is part of a broader system that presents opportunities for working through issues. Still, that same system can also make it hard for the child to thrive if the resources available within their system do not meet the needs of the child and their family and/or whānau (Haight et al., 2020; Payne, 2020). Participants suggested that to support families and/or whānau and their children; more emphasis should be placed on helping them with the basics of life, focusing on family, health, education, community, and recreation. Problems within a family and/or whānau social network are often a combination of learned behaviours and the impact of wider dysfunctional societal systems (Walker, 2012). Any interventions, therefore, requires the need to deal with as many identified needs as possible and utilise a variety of techniques and approaches (Becroft, 2006).

4. Intervention Focus

The study identified a challenge for social workers working alongside the justice system and managing the often-competing demands of being held accountable for ensuring the child is supported and to make sure the child is safe and those around them. These different requirements often force social workers to focus more on

intervention with children who offend, which would often increase if the child had committed a serious crime and posed a danger to themselves or others. Thus, it is harder to pay attention to the preventative supports that could be put in place. Participants reflected on how multiple factors needed to be considered that included understanding structural and personal factors and holding the child accountable for their offending while also keeping the child and the public safe. This relates to the ethical dilemma within the practice of working with children who offend, which centres around the nature versus nurture debate of whether children offend because of their environment or because they were born with the potential to commit a crime (Pickford & Dugmore, 2012).

Police youth aid officers are often the first in trying to resolve some of this dilemma by deciding on what level of action is taken when a child has offended. For example, when a child only has a minimal level of offending, an alternative action plan is commonly used. This may involve a plan that focuses on holding the child accountable for their actions, making amends with the victim and addressing any needs the child might have, which might be addressed through NGO services (Ministry of Social Development, 2017). Police often utilise alternative action plans with children who offend since most children who offend do not meet the threshold required for section 14(1)e of the Oranga Tamariki Act 1989 and subsequent Oranga Tamariki's (OT) involvement (Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2020). If children who offend do meet that threshold, the youth justice FGC aims to hold the child accountable for their offending, learn from their mistakes and encourage better choices for their future. The family and/or whānau and the child will formulate a plan which is then agreed upon by everyone in the conference (Oranga Tamariki - Ministry for Children, 2019). Should a child's offending be more seriously and/or repeatedly, a more robust intervention may be required. The Family Court can make orders concerning the child, including placing the child in OT custody and/or providing support for parents (Boshier et al., 2007).

5. Holistic Assessment

A key finding of this study is the importance of a holistic assessment to gain an understanding of children who offend and the different influences they experience. Social workers are often the professionals that encounter children who offend, either through OT or through other community social service organisations. To gain a holistic

understanding of the child and their circumstances, it is vital for the social worker, before contacting the family and/or whānau, to look at the available information about the nature of the problem, gender, ages, cultural background, and other professionals involved. This information could determine the engagement process and what type of support would be suitable (Van Hook, 2019).

The ecological systems approach can be of value here as it aims to support children and their families and/or whānau to understand the holistic system they are a part of and how the interconnecting relationships within their system can cause problems but can also offer opportunities (Payne, 2020). Social workers have an essential role here in assisting children and their families and/or whānau in building on their skills and strengths to work on having a sustainable living environment in which they can endure, develop and grow (Payne, 2020). The study highlighted that the emphasis during assessment was to support the child's rehabilitative needs and understand the reasons behind the child's offending behaviour.

Ecological systems theory emphasises a holistic focus and acknowledges the other factors impacting the child beyond their offending behaviour. Ecological systems theory focuses not just on the child but also on their family and/or whānau and to work on further strength and skill development for all those involved with the child and possibly enabling change in different facets of the child's life. Assessment from an ecological systems perspective concentrates on understanding the child's and their family and/or whānau environment as consisting of interlocking relationships and social links that are connected to social structures and organisations (Payne, 2020). Understanding the interconnecting system's elements for the child and their family and/or whānau will help them gain more control over how they participate in their communities and social institutions like schools and workplaces (Payne, 2020).

Limitations

A limitation of this study is the small sample size which did not allow for a broad representation of participants and thus cannot be representative or generalisable to a wider population. However, generalisation was not the primary goal for the research (Steinberg, 2015; O'Leary, 2017). The goal was to achieve a degree of transferability or emphasise the knowledge gained, which could be applied by social workers who either work with or have come across children who offend in alternative settings or

populations. By giving a detailed description of the research settings and the methods used in the methodology chapter, the reader of the research can decide how relevant the research is to their context (O'Leary, 2017). While there is no guarantee that the results from the sample will relate to every social worker that works with children who offend, through the interviews with willing and open participants, the study does offer valuable insights and sheds more light on the under-researched area of children who offend.

Recommendations

Recommendations for policy and practice are made concerning the main objectives of the study: (1) To explore the facilitators and barriers social workers experience in working with children who offend and their families and/or whānau; and (2) To gain an understanding of the social workers' perspectives on how to improve outcomes for children who offend.

Considering the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

Increasing facilitators: A reasonable approach to working with children who offend and their family and/or whānau is through ecological systems theory and could be used as part of a social worker's assessment framework. Ecological systems theory highlights the multiple systems that the child and their family and/or whānau are connected to and the multi-faceted elements within. Suppose social workers support the child and their family and/or whānau to understand these systems better. In that case, it could open further collaboration between family and/or whānau and other support services. This, in turn, could influence more opportunities for the child and their family and/or whānau to increase their physical and mental resources and have more control over how they interact with external systems.

Reducing barriers: From a practice perspective, children who offend need to be acknowledged as a group within society, as they are at risk of entering the youth justice system and possibly becoming chronic offenders. It is the recognition that children under the age of 14 and their family and/or whānau can experience many challenges, of which offending by children can be a symptom of unmet needs. Rather than waiting for offending to escalate, addressing these needs earlier could support children and their families and/or whānau and possibly prevent future victims. Therefore, children

who offend and their family and/or whānau require a preventative approach to prevent these children from turning to a life of crime.

Ensuring appropriate systems, services and supports for children who offend and their family and/or whānau early should be a priority for the government. Focussing primarily on the risk, children who offend present misses opportunities to support these children with challenging behaviour at home or at school when they come to police attention for minor offences. For example, making sure that social workers in schools are equipped and resourced to support children with challenging behaviour early and their family and/or whānau. This preventative approach could involve police referring children who offend and their family and/or whānau to other supports earlier rather than waiting for the offending to become serious enough to warrant an alternative action plan. Police could build better partnerships with social services to ensure an easy referral pathway when children come to the attention of police.

Improving outcomes: Further research might explore the perspective of children who offend and their family and/or whānau about what they consider useful in achieving positive outcomes. An understanding of what they believe works and does not work for them and what their hopes are could support social workers to target their interventions to address specific needs.

Conclusion

This research explored how social workers support children who offend to be crime-free. The study focussed on the experience of social workers who work with children who offend and sought to understand their strengths, challenges, and aspirations as they supported children who offend and their family and/or whānau.
The key findings emphasised different elements within social work practice that were considered important. One of the findings focused on how gaining a holistic understanding of the child and their family and/or whānau situation would be conducive to building on strengths and resources already present within the home environment, and ecological systems theory was highlighted as a suitable approach in doing so. Another finding considered that to support change, it would be vital for the social worker to build and maintain relationships with the child and their family and/or whānau and other relevant professionals to facilitate connections to address the

presenting needs. Also, the complexity of working with children who offend was emphasised through the multiple challenges they and their family and/or whānau experience. Addressing these challenges was sometimes viewed as hard due to the demands of working alongside the justice system and its focus on intervention and not always having the opportunity to work preventatively.

The small sample size was a limitation of the research, but the study aimed more for a transferability of knowledge rather than generalisation. This meant that social workers who either have an interest or are working with children who offend could decide what part of the research might relate to them. Recommendations focused on ecological systems theory being a valuable tool in working with children who offend. Another recommendation was that ideally, support for children with challenging behaviour should happen earlier rather than when the behaviour has become a problem. The last suggestion was that further research could focus on what children who offend and their family and/or whānau consider positive outcomes and the best way to achieve them.

Recognising children who offend early, when they first start displaying behaviour that causes concern or comes to police attention for offending, is the time to provide support. Relevant support, be it within the home, school and/or community, could prevent or reduce the risk of some of these children continuing to offend into adolescence or adulthood and could decrease future victims and cost to society.

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Appendix A – Interview Guide

Qualitative interview schedule

The interviews will be semi – structured as it encourages two – way communication between the researcher and the participant. The interview schedule will be used a guide to ensure relevant areas are covered and provides an opportunity to go deeper into topics.

Introduction

- Main aim of study is to: (1) identify the existing interventions with child offenders and their strengths and weaknesses; and (2) explore aspirations and challenges faced by professionals who work with child offenders and/or their family, whānau and community.
- Should any questions make you uncomfortable or if you wish to stop the interview or want the recorder switched off, please ask.
- Just drawing your attention to the information, here regarding relevant support services should any sensitive topics come up. (Support service information will be available for the participant to take home)
- This interview would take approximately one hour. Do you have a time limit or is there anything else you would like to share before we begin?

Background

- Name
- What is your role within your organisation?
- How long have you been in this role?
- What experience have you had in working with child offenders?
- How many child offenders are currently on your case load?
    - Can you describe a typical case that you have worked with?
    - Could you tell me a bit about what they are like?
    - How often do you encounter child offenders in your work?

Existing interventions

- How would you describe your way of working with child offenders?
    - Could you tell me a bit more about this?
- What type of interventions do you use with child offenders?
    - Can you give an example of what you consider to be an effective intervention?
- What do you consider to be a positive outcome when working with a child offender?
    - How do you work with the child's family or whānau to support good outcomes?
    - Could you give an example of when you felt a positive outcome was achieved?

Strengths and weaknesses of interventions

- In order to support child offenders to be crime free, what interventions do you consider working well?
    - Could you give an example of this?
    - What interventions do you think do not work well?
    - Why do you think this? Can you give an example of this?
- How do organisational policies or procedures influence the intervention with the child offender?
    - Could you give an example of this? If they don't influence the intervention, is there anything that does have an influence?

Aspirations and challenges of professionals

- What do you consider a challenge or barrier in working with child offenders?
    - How come?
    - How do you deal with this challenge/ barrier?
- If anything was possible in terms of working with child offenders, would there be anything you would change about the way you work?
    - Could you give an example of this?
- Would there be anything you would change about the way your organisation supports you in working with child offenders?
    - Could you elaborate a bit more on that?

Work with clients, family, whānau and community

- What involvement do you have with the child's wider family or whānau?
    - Can you tell me more about this?
- What is helpful in enabling positive outcomes for the child and their wider family or whānau?
    - Can you give an example of this?
- What is not helpful in working with the child's wider family or whānau?
    - Could you elaborate further?
- How much of your time is spend working with the child's family or whānau?
- What role does the child's school play in your work?
    - In what way do you engage with the school?
    - If you don't engage with the school, is there anyone else part of your intervention with the child?
- The concept of community focusses on social relationships that are based on commonality, either through geographical location and/or through shared interests or goals.
    - How much does the community you live and work in, influence your intervention with the child?
    - Could you explain that a bit more?
- How do you think the community the child lives in, influences the intervention you put in place?
    - Could you elaborate further on that?

Conclusion

- That covers the things I wanted to ask. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

- Thank you and acknowledgement for participating in interview
- Discuss send out of transcript and opportunity to change, alter or withdraw from research if needed
- Discuss assurances regarding confidentiality and ask if there are any further questions.

Appendix B – Information Sheet

Supporting child offenders to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations.

INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher Introduction

My name is Romy Heijnen, I am currently enrolled in the Master of Social Work program through Massey University.

The objective of this research is to explore how professionals support child offenders to be crime free and achieve positive outcomes with child offenders and/ or their family, whānau and community. To achieve this objective, this research aims to (1) identify the existing interventions professionals use with child offenders and their strengths and weaknesses; and (2) explore aspirations and challenges faced by professionals who work with child offenders and/or their family, whānau and community.

Child offenders are children under the age of 14 who might commit (illegal, criminal) actions and, or behavior towards self, others or property.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. If you agree to be interviewed it will involve participating in one interview of approximately 60 minutes and 10 minutes for setting up and closing the interview. The transcript will be sent to you for verification and would likely take 30 minutes to review. With your permission the interviews will be digitally recorded using a Dictaphone or online using Zoom. All information will be treated confidentially. The data collected from the project will only be used for completion of this research project and any subsequent publications. Should you agree to participate in this research, a $20 petrol voucher will be given after the interview either in person or via post, as koha and to assist with possible travel costs.

Participant's Rights

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- decline to answer any question;
- withdraw from the study until you have confirmed your transcript
- stop the interview at anytime
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Project Contacts

If you are interested in participating in the research or have any questions, please contact me directly. Alternatively, you can contact my supervisors as well.

Researcher: Romy Heijnen, ……..., ……..

Supervisors: Dr. Nicky Stanley – Clarke, ……..... ext. ……, email address

Associate Professor Kathryn Hay, …… ext. ……., email address

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/12. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz .

Kind regards,

Romy Heijnen

Appendix C – Request for Circulating Information

Date
(Name of person)
Name of social service organisation
Address

RE: Research study information

Dear ……..:

I am writing to ask if you would be willing to circulate information about my research study. The study is entitled: Supporting child offenders to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations. I would appreciate it if you could circulate the attached information to all staff.

I will follow up with a telephone call next week and would be happy to answer any questions or concerns that you may have at that time. Alternatively, you can contact me on my email address: …….or by phone on ……...

This research has been approved by the Massey University Ethics Committee and a copy of the information sheet is attached, for your information. If you agree to circulate the information sheet, please email me back.

Sincerely,

Romy Heijnen

Appendix D – ANZASW Research Invitation

Kia ora,

My name is Romy Heijnen. I am currently studying for a Master of Social Work at Massey University and am undertaking my thesis research. My supervisors are Dr. Nicky Stanley – Clarke and Associate Professor Kathryn Hay.

The purpose of this research is to explore how professionals support child offenders to be crime – free and achieve positive outcomes.

I would like to interview:

- Social, youth and/or community workers
- Who have a minimum of two years' experience in working with child offenders

If this sounds like you, I would like to invite you to participate in this research by contacting me on (phone number) or (email address) I will then send you an information sheet and the interview guide.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Ngā mihi,

Romy Heijnen

Appendix E – Variation letter

Chair: …….
Human Ethics Committee: Southern B
Massey University

21st of August 2020

Ethics Ref: **SOB 20/12 Supporting the child offenders to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations**

Romy Heijnen (HEC: Southern B Application SOB 20/12)

Department: School of Social Work

Supervisors: Dr Nicky Stanley-Clarke, A/Prof Kathryn Hay

Dear ……,

I hereby would like to request a small variation to my ethics process that would allow me to recruit participants via social media website Facebook. My recruitment process has so far consisted of approaching social service agencies in South Taranaki and outside of Taranaki in person, via phone and via email. I have also started the recruitment process via ANZASW. I would like to expand on my recruitment process by utilising Facebook to reach more possible participants.

The aim is to either post a message about the research directly onto the Facebook page or ask the administrator/ moderator of the Facebook page to put the message on the page. Potential participants would be invited to contact me via private message if they are interested in participating and thus ensuring they remain anonymous from other people that might visit the Facebook page. I would like to approach the following Facebook pages regarding my research: Taranaki ANZASW, Just Speak NZ, Werry Workforce Wharaurau, The Y, Social Work in Aotearoa New Zealand, own personal page.

Thank you for your consideration of this variation. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further information is required.

Yours faithfully
Romy Heijnen

Appendix F – Facebook post

Supporting child offenders to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations.

Do you have experience working with children (under the age of 14) who might display criminal/illegal behaviour?

I am interested in hearing how you work with child offenders.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research. If you agree it would mean participating in one interview (of approximately one hour) either online or in person. This research project has ethics approval and is supervised.

If you are interested, please do not post a message on the Facebook page but send me a private message instead and I can provide you with more information.

Appendix G – Consent Form

Supporting child offenders to be crime-free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. Any questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time.

Please tick the following relevant boxes.

- ☐ I wish to have my recordings returned to me.
- ☐ I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix H – Initial Draft Thematic Framework

Thematic framework draft

1. Intervention

1.1 Statutory

FGC

Health – Education assessment

Investigation – action

1.2 Needs based

Case by case

Counselling

Group work

Mentoring

2. Way of working

2.1 Approach

Rapport and trust building, relationships, be real

Work with everyone in family

Logic behind child offending, practice wisdom versus evidence-based practice

Community/collegial collaboration

2.2 Cultural

Whakapapa

Whakawhanaungatanga

Kaitiakitanga

Rangatahi court

3. Family/Whanau

3.1 Engagement

Support

Connection

3.2 Parent/behaviour influence

3.3 Helping them to help themselves

4. External influence

4.1 Education

Not in school

Alternative education

Information

4.2 Community

Social pressure

Community hub

4.3 Police

Attitude

Prevention

5. Aspiration

5.1 Change

Crime free

Holistic change
Open door

5.2 Prevention

6. Challenge

6.1 Safety

Complex
Keeping balance

6.2 Limited services

Waiting list

6.3 Funding

Division

Appendix I – Massey University Human Ethics Approval

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

Date: 15 June 2020

Dear Romy Heijnen

Re: Ethics Notification - **SOB 20/12 - Supporting child offenders to be crime free: Strengths, challenges and aspirations.**

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: **Human Ethics Southern B Committee** at their meeting held on **Monday, 15 June, 2020**.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand **T** 06 350 5573; 06 350 5575 **F** 06 355 7973
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz **W** http://humanethics.massey.ac.nz