



Pastoral Care in Education

An International Journal of Personal, Social and Emotional Development

ISSN: 0264-3944 (Print) 1468-0122 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/rped20

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To cite this article: Ella Buchanan, Kevin Woods & Beth Shaw (2026) Linking the United Nations on the convention on the rights of the child (1989) to the needs of children affected by parental imprisonment, *Pastoral Care in Education*, 44:2, 218-234, DOI: [10.1080/02643944.2025.2482982](https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2025.2482982)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2025.2482982>



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Published online: 25 Mar 2025.



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Linking the United Nations on the convention on the rights of the child (1989) to the needs of children affected by parental imprisonment

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ABSTRACT

Parental imprisonment is an adverse childhood experience. A recent research review has emphasised the need to explicitly consider children affected by parental imprisonment (CAPI) when promoting the children's rights (UNCRC, 1989). This systematic mapping review provides an original identification and analysis of relationships between CAPI's needs and children's rights instrumentation. Drawing from the recent research review (2022), the identified needs of, and associated provisions for, CAPI in education are linked to a range of provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Of the 12 identified needs of CAPI, nine were referenced within at least one of the UNCRC sources, with many being referenced multiple times within and/or across sources. The significance of this linking of children's needs and children's rights to educational theory, to professional practice, and for future research, is highlighted.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 11 February 2025
Accepted 17 March 2025

KEYWORDS

Parental imprisonment;
adverse childhood
experience; children's rights;
UNCRC

Introduction

Adverse childhood experiences

Since the early 2000s research into the impact of a specific set of ACEs has received increasing interest from policy writers, service managers and practitioners working within health, educational and social care contexts (Blodgett & Dorado, 2017; Johnson, 2018; Smith, 2018). When referred to within this research, ACEs refer to five specific traumatic events (sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect) and five chronic stressors (substance addiction, witnessing abuse, family member imprisonment, family member mental illness, caregiver disappearance through abandonment or divorce) which impact on, but are outside the control of, the child (Paterson,

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This article was originally published with errors, which have now been corrected in the online version. Please see Correction (<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02643944.2025.2482982>)

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2017). A clear link between the existence of ACEs and negative health and social outcomes has been consistently identified (Bellis et al., 2013; Felitti et al., 1998; Public Health Wales, 2016).

Although increasing evidence highlights the impact of ACEs on development and outcomes, some critique queries the robustness of conclusions drawn from research. For example, substantial differences have been identified between adult self-reported ACEs and independent reports. ACE measurement is frequently imprecise, not accounting for the degree or duration of the adverse experience, which can vary substantially. Also, 'resilience' is under-considered – how some children in similarly adverse circumstances may manage better, or recover from difficulties – potentially obscuring helpful learning for intervention (Johnson, 2018; Newbury et al., 2018).

Nonetheless, evidence attributing ACEs as being a substantial risk factor for healthy development into adulthood is adequately convincing to influence health, education and social care policy (e.g. Education Scotland, 2018; Paterson, 2017; Smith, 2018). This, in turn, has resulted in the implementation of ACE and trauma-informed interventions throughout settings (e.g. Blodgett & Dorado, 2017; Sethi et al., 2013; Smith, 2018; Thomas et al., 2015). Johnson (2018) argues that a fundamental role for psychologists exists to provide training, evidence-based trauma-informed intervention, and the development of systemic principles.

Shaw et al. (2021) explored how and why educational psychology services (EPSs) had adopted an ACE-informed approach and found that educational psychologists (EPs) recognised that an ACEs approach was relevant to their service users and could meet an identified need. The approach is holistic and can be implemented flexibly alongside existing approaches. Shaw et al. (2021) found that ACE-informed approaches were facilitated by relevance to the local context and by school staff interest and understanding of the approach. A local authority research commission conducted by Sparling et al. (2021), assessed the 'roll-out' of an ACE-informed approach throughout schools within the local authority. This was via a health-education-social care partnership, in which the local EPS was the key education delivery service. The authors subsequently identified the value of pragmatic goals, effective project management and evaluation.

Children affected by parental imprisonment

The Prison Advice and Care Trust (2024) details that the Ministry of Justice estimates around 200,000 children and young people in the UK have a parent in prison each year. However, some organisations speculate that the figure could be as high as 310,000. There is an increasing body of research which links the imprisonment of a parent to adverse outcomes such as being discriminated against, mental health difficulties and committing crimes

(Department for Education, 2019; Glover, 2009; Kincaid et al., 2019; Murray & Farrington, 2008). King (2002) equates the loss experienced through parental imprisonment as similar to experiencing a parental bereavement. However, CAPI are less likely to gain the support they need due to stigmatisation (Glover, 2009). Additionally, as there is not a system which is in existence to formally identify CAPI, practitioners are dependent on families feeling comfortable to share this information (Kincaid et al., 2019; Roberts, 2012).

With the aim of creating a succinct, accessible resource for EPs and other practitioners, Shaw et al. (2022) evaluated existing literature on successful education-based intervention and support for CAPI, one of the five chronic stressor ACEs.¹ Their review highlighted numerous strategies which were reported to have been used with this population with some success. These included strategies in different domains such as the development of strategic policy linked to practice around CAPI; training and raising awareness for practitioners; actively working to reduce stigmatisation and enhance an inclusive ethos; capitalising on opportunities within the curriculum; providing support to the imprisoned and home parent; practical and emotional support to the child and their family, e.g. supporting contact through prison visits between the child and their parent; facilitating frequent opportunities for CAPI to be heard.

Children's rights and children affected by parental imprisonment

With regard to supporting strategies for CAPI in education, Shaw et al. (2022) emphasised the relevance of children's rights and queried whether these rights are being actualised for this vulnerable group. While a report published by the Department for Education (2010) communicates that schools promote children's rights within school policies, Shaw et al. (2022) highlight the value in explicitly considering CAPI. Jones et al. (2013) and Leeson and Morgan (2014) emphasise the importance of outlining the rights of the child whilst developing policy for CAPI. Notably, Fairhall et al. (2021) gained positive feedback whilst evaluating the transition of students from primary to secondary school, incorporating a rights-based approach. They found that creating a transition programme in which children's rights were integral had a positive impact and the inclusion of children's rights was 'facilitative' to the transition process.

It is possible to identify, as Shaw et al. (2022) claim, how aspects of The Unicef UK (1989) may be relevant to promoting the needs of CAPI. For example, in the UNCRC Article 29 (1) (b & c) (1989), the right of the child to be treated with understanding and tolerance is promoted, as is that their education encourages respect for their parents. This, in turn, arguably highlights areas in which schools could develop their practice in respect of CAPI. Firstly, to reduce stigma (increasing the likelihood that families will share information about parental imprisonment so that CAPI have access to appropriate provision) and secondly, by

supporting and promoting child contact with their imprisoned parent, on the proviso that this is in the child's best interests (Department for Education, 2010, Morgan et al., 2014; O'Keefe, 2014).

Similarly, UNCRC Article 12 states: *'Every child has the right to express their views, feelings and wishes in all matters affecting them, and to have their views considered and taken seriously'* (Article 12, Unicef UK, 1989). It is significant that Action for Prisoners Families (APF) (2001) document that CAPI report feeling that they have 'no voice'. Those who reported more positive experiences referred to practitioners asking for and listening to their views. Recommendations submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child by APF (2011), requested support for obtaining CAPI views and other research suggests that the consideration of a child's views in informing support increases engagement and ultimately, effectiveness of support (Halliday et al., 2018).

Rationale

The aim of this mapping review is to provide a comprehensive and novel analysis of the links between CAPI's needs and children's rights instrumentation. The significance and practical utility of this aim is attested by this research having been commissioned by Local Authority EPS in England, within which EPs were seeking to explore support for CAPI and how this may link to, and be promoted through, a children's rights perspective.

Methodology

A systematic mapping review was identified as an appropriate approach as it provides for organisation of existing literature on a particular topic against another framework in order to make informed and reliable judgements about their relatedness (Grant & Booth, 2009; Morley et al., 2020; O'Cathain et al., 2013). In this case, the identified needs of CAPI were mapped onto the provisions of the UNCRC.

A recent review by Shaw et al. (2022) was selected as a means of identifying the needs of, and associated provisions for, CAPI in education. The justification for this specific research being selected was because it was the most recently published literature review synthesising the needs and provision identified as being relevant to CAPI in education.

Within this mapping review, a directed content analysis deductive approach was undertaken to analyse the literature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The needs of CAPI identified in Shaw et al. (2022) were selected as the themes and the qualitative data within the UNCRC sources were categorised and then analysed numerically (Braun & Clarke, 2013). The first author and second author first independently identified the needs and the provisions linked to CAPI within the Shaw et al. (2022) review, followed by a process of corroborating those

identifications. Following this, a tabular summary was created (contact first author for a copy of this) showing the needs of CAPI (column 1) and the corresponding provision (column 2). The organisation of needs and provision within the table was agreed between the first author and second author before being finalised. In some instances, the Shaw et al. (2022) review highlighted a need but no corresponding provision, so the first author and second author, both specialists in practitioner educational psychology, inferred possible corresponding provision, informed by their own professional knowledge and by the literature review within a preliminary study (Buchanan, 2023). Inferred provisions are identified within the document in italics and were, again, corroborated with the second author.

In line with the aim of this research, the first author used the Unicef UK (1989) as a framework to ascertain whether and where children's rights support, or link with, the identified needs and/or corresponding provisions for CAPI in education. The rationale for using the Unicef UK (1989) is that it is the most extensive and comprehensive human/children's rights treaty, is widely ratified across the world and is commonly referenced (e.g. Gadda et al., 2019; Hart & Hart, 2014; Toland et al. 2022; UK Children's Third authors, 2020).

To 'furnish' the children's rights framework for this research, the following three sources were taken as the starting point:

- Articles of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989)
- UN concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2023)
- General Comment (GC) Number 1 (2001) Article 29: The Aims of Education (Cf. Unicef, 2014).

The first author and second author then selected a need and its associated provision from the CAPI needs/provision summary table (Table 1) ('maintaining contact with imprisoned parent') in order to independently identify if and how this was referenced, or could be linked, within the initial three UNCRC sources. The first author and second author then met to discuss their findings and agreed it was important that links between the CAPI needs and provision within the sources should be reasonably explicit to ensure that findings from the mapping review could be read as clear and valid, rather than tenuous. This process, whereby the first author and second author first worked independently to identify links between the needs and provision of CAPI within the sources was repeated for a further three identified needs drawn from the summary to ensure that the first author and second author had established a shared understanding of how the links would be identified, before this process was continued independently by the first author in respect of all needs/provisions within the summary (Table 1). However, there were regular opportunities for re-

Table 1.

Child's Needs	Provision
The need to benefit from a whole school and multiagency approach (P420, L12–13 & L25) (P422, L23–24)	• Whole school training • Designated leads in schools and colleges • Schools to develop a policy for CoPiPs which should identify a named person to coordinate the support – link to authorisation of related absences • Key adult • Multiagency support • Guidelines for working with CoPiPs, which refer to the role of schools • Regular communication between school/home • Informed by CYP
To reduce anti-social behaviour and prevent inter-generational offending (P411, L14–17)	• Using the curriculum to reduce stigma, for example, discussing imprisonment in citizenship lessons • Citizenship lessons re-participation in society • Input from YJS • Funding into supporting academic achievement
Need for positive wellbeing and reduction in ill health (P422, L31–34) (P423, L9–10)	• Therapeutic support from school counselling services • Support groups within area bring CoPiPs together, so they have others who they can relate to? • Support around developing their own identity • Built in support around visits with key adults in safe space
Need to develop strategies for dealing with experienced loss (P411, L17)	• Therapeutic support from school counselling services • Utilisation of relational approach • Recognition from those around the child that the child has had a loss (through training)
To be formally identified as a 'specific vulnerable group' which is regularly reviewed and monitored (P420, L17–21)	• Reducing stigma • An inclusive, understanding and welcoming school ethos • Designated leads in schools and colleges • LA specific policy for supporting CoPiPs • Access to additional funding (e.g. PP)
Timely and effective academic support (P425, L8) (P411, L30)	• Designated leads in schools and colleges (who would have responsibility for their achievement) • Access to additional funding? To support intervention and raise achievement • Inclusive ethos
Maintain contact with imprisoned parent (P420, L34–36) (P421, L13–17) (P422, L12 & 16) (P423, L5–6)	• Whole-school understanding of related absences • Consider the impact of visits on a CoPiP's wellbeing and behaviour • Facilitating communication with imprisoned parents, specifically fathers • Schools authorise absences for prison visits. • Staff showing sensitivity towards CoPiP • Multiagency support • Key adult to provide emotional support • Links to children in care and 'contact visits' e.g. relational approach/trauma-informed
'Staff to develop skills in building trust with the families of imprisoned parents' (P420, L37–39) (P421, L11) (P422, L1–2)	• Support to develop an understanding of the impact of parental imprisonment on a child (e.g. training provided to staff around having open, sensitive, supportive conversations with parents without judgement) • Practical and emotional support to the parent/carer at home • Potential difficulty of becoming a lone parent and with understanding their child/children's emotions • Schools should engage in communication with imprisoned parents to share work and reports • Anti-discriminative approach

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Child's Needs	Provision
Practical information about what happens in a prison → Access to information to understand imprisonment (P422, L27–29)	• Link to probation officer? • Consideration of CYP age • Key adult • Multiagency support • Curriculum • Home/school communication
Support to deal with the stigma (P421, L9 & L31) (P422, L29–30)	• school staff could engage in whole-class activities such as reading stories related to CoPiPs experiences • Whole-school training • Designated leads in schools and colleges • Schools to develop a policy for CoPiPs • Whole school approach • Anti-discriminative approach
'Strong friendships' and 'social relationships' (P422, L40 & P423, L1–3)	• The benefits of a trusted friend • Promote children's social relationships through intervention • Should be supported and time with friends should be encouraged.
Consider the children's perspective when planning support. (P423, L14 & 21)	• Key adult • Gain child voice • Opportunity to reflect on provision with child regularly • Person centred planning

consultation between the first author and second author throughout this process of mapping to the UNCRC sources. For example, the first authors re-consulted on 'need for positive wellbeing and reduction in ill health' to ensure that links identified were explicit.

During the process of corroborating links between needs/provisions and sources, the first author identified additional UNCRC sources which they felt could support links between CAPI needs and children's rights. At this stage, these included:

- GC Number 4 (2003) Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Cf. Unicef, 2014).
- GC Number 7 (2005) Implementing Child Rights in Early Childhood (Cf. Unicef, 2014).
- GC Number 12 (2009) The right of the child to be heard (Cf. Unicef, 2014).
- GC Number 14 (2013) The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration (Cf. Unicef, 2014).
- Report and recommendations of the day of general discussion on 'Children of incarcerated parents.' (Committee on the rights of the child, 2011)
- GC Number 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence (UNCRC, 2016)
- GC No.15 (2013): The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health (Cf. Unicef, 2014).

From the outset of the mapping process, to develop a clear audit trail, the first authors utilised a tabulated 'tracking document' (Table 2) to record identified links between the specific needs of CAPI within a particular UNCRC source. In this table, UNCRC sources are listed on the x-axis, and CAPI needs are listed on the y-axis. This allowed links identified within each source to be recorded against the appropriate need using their page, line and/or paragraph/sub-section number (as appropriate). This cross-referencing enables the first authors/reader to identify quickly where evidence of a link to CAPI needs/associated provisions is located within each UNCRC source.

Through the mapping process, refinements to the needs/provisions summary table (Table 1) were made to ensure that the first author's reviewing of UNCRC sources comprehensively and parsimoniously identified specific, explicit and relevant links to the needs of CAPI: First, the first authors slightly refined the content of the provision and needs summary table (Table 1), in order to more clearly define needs, as some instances more specifically reflected 'difficulty' that may be seen as a result of a 'need'. For example, the original need 'More likely to struggle academically' was refined to 'need for timely and effective academic support'; similarly, 'anti-social behaviour and intergenerational offending' was refined to 'need to reduce anti-social behaviour and prevent inter-generational offending'. Second, the first author combined some identified needs; for example, 'to be formally identified as a specific vulnerable group which is regularly monitored' in effect encapsulated both 'families required to self-identify' and 'to be identified as a specific vulnerable group'. This process of combining needs reduced the number of identified needs from 16 to 12. To maintain a transparent audit trail, the specific reference (page and line number) from the Shaw et al. (2022) research review was included within Table 1.

Findings

The links between the identified needs of CAPI and children's rights instrumentation can be seen in Table 2 (below). Table 2 illustrates that a number of the 12 needs of CAPI are more prominent than others within the 10 instruments of the UNCRC. For example, three of the needs identified (maintaining contact with the imprisoned parent, support to deal with the stigma and consider the children's perspective when planning support) are identified at least 17 times and across the majority of the 10 UNCRC sources. In contrast, three of the identified needs are not referenced at all within the instrumentation. The remaining six needs were identified within the UNCRC sources between one and nine times. A more detailed description of the links recognised between the UNCRC sources and CAPI's needs now follows.

The need for CAPI to maintain contact with their imprisoned parent was identified 21 times across six sources. Within the Unicef UK (1989) alone there are three articles which explicitly reference maintaining contact with parents.

Table 2.

Needs	Sources	UNCRC summary	Obs 2023	GC 1	GC 4	GC 7	GC 12	GC 14	2011 recs	GC 20	GC 15
Maintaining contact with imprisoned parent		Articles 7, 9 18	P13, 38b P13, 39a&b			P62, 8 P65, 18		P160, 60 P161, 67	P4, 18&19 P5, 23, 25, 26 P6, 35 P7, 37, 39, 40 P8, 46	P6, 17a	
Support to deal with the stigma		Articles 2, 16	P5–6, 19–20a&d P17, 47f	P9, 10 P10, 19&21	P28, 6	P63, 11&12	P133, 135		P3, 8 P4, 20	P8, 26 P18, 70	
Consider the children's perspective when planning support		Article 12	P7, 23a, b&c	P8, 8	P28, 8	P63, 13 P64, 14	P119, 4 P120, 9&10 P122, 26&29 P126, 72–3 P127, 81 P129, 107	P158, 43 P159, 53–4 P163, 89–91	P7, 41	P6, 17b P7, 23	
'Strong friendships' and 'social relationships'		Article 15				P62, 6c		P161 70		P4, 9 P6 17f P12, 44 P19, 72	
Timely and effective academic support		Article 29	P17, 47a	P7, 2 P8–9, 9 P9, 12	P29, 17	P70, 38		P162, 79			
Need for positive wellbeing and reduction in ill health		Article 24	P14, 41b P15, 43f						P6, 34	P6, 17f P16, 58	P166, 11 P176, 98
To be formally identified as a 'specific vulnerable group' which is regularly reviewed and monitored			P4, 12b						P4, 20 P8, 45		
The need to benefit from a whole school and multiagency approach				P9, 13							
To reduce anti-social behaviour and prevent inter-generational offending											

(Continued)

Table 2. (Continued).

Needs	Sources	UNCRC summary	Obs 2023	GC 1	GC 4	GC 7	GC 12	GC 14	2011 recs	GC 20	GC 15
		Need to develop strategies for dealing with experienced loss									
		Staff to develop skills in building trust with the families of imprisoned parents									
		Access to information to understand imprisonment							P4, 19		

Article 7 (The United Nations, 1989) describes how ‘*every child has the right . . . to know and be cared for by their parents*’ and Article 9 (The United Nations, 1989) adds that they additionally ‘*have the right to stay in contact with both parents unless this could cause them harm*’. Article 18 (The United Nations, 1989) denotes the role of Governments in creating support services for parents and their children to provide help. The UNCRC Concluding Observations to UK State Party (2023) and the UNCRC General Discussion Report (2011), both recommend that CAPI are able to maintain contact ‘*on a regular basis*’ with their imprisoned parents and receive the practical support required to facilitate this. Suggestions for how this may be achieved are referenced within the 2011 report.

The need for CAPI to access support to deal with the stigma linked to the imprisonment of a parent was referenced 17 times across eight of the identified sources. Article 2 (The United Nations, 1989) states that the UNCRC applies to ‘*every child without discrimination*’ and state parties are required to ensure that they are ‘*protected against all forms of discrimination*’. The UNCRC General Discussion Report (2011) emphasised that CAPI should not be discriminated against because of their parent’s actions. The UNCRC Concluding Observations to UK State Party (2023) explicitly identifies CAPI as being in a disadvantaged circumstance and emphasise their previous recommendation to enforce clear policies and programmes to eliminate discrimination against this cohort (in addition to other disadvantaged groups). GC No.7 (2005) highlights that states parties have an obligation to monitor and eliminate discrimination and offers suggestions on how this may be achieved. Additionally, they suggest that states parties have a responsibility to raise awareness in relation to discrimination, particularly against more vulnerable groups.

Of all the identified needs, considering the CAPI's perspective when planning support was referenced within the greatest number of sources. Evidence was found to support this need within nine out of the ten sources, and overall was identified 26 times, making this the most referenced CAPI need within the selected UNCRC sources. Article 12 (The United Nations, 1989) stipulates that all children have the right to both express their views and for them to be given due consideration in matters which affect them. GC No. 12 (2009), the right of the child to be heard, unsurprisingly provides nine explicit links to the importance of considering the child's perspective when planning support. It acknowledges that marginalised groups encounter '*particular barriers in the realization of this right*' but also that it is not an obligation and a CAPI is entitled not to share their views. GC No.12 (2009) emphasises how Article 12 (The United Nations, 1989) refers to the right of children to express their views relating to decisions which impact on their life. Further, it outlines the states party's duty to implement the necessary mechanisms and frameworks to facilitate this and to give their views '*due weight*'.

'Strong friendships' and 'social relationships' were recognised six times across four of the sources. The need for friendships was explicitly linked three times within GC No.20 (2016), which focuses on adolescents. It outlines that adolescents require opportunities to create and sustain friendships as this increases their ability to recover from adverse events and avoid risky behaviour. Spending time with peers is reported to have additional benefits which contribute towards skills providing foundations supportive of community participation, sense of belonging and employment (GC No.20, 2016 & GC No.7, 2005).

Timely and effective academic support was evidenced within the UNCRC instrumentation nine times across seven sources and three times within GC No.1 (2001) specifically. Within this, GC No.1 expands on Article 28 (1989), the right to education, specifying this should be of a good quality, child-centred, tailored and designed to develop essential life skills. GC No. 20 (2016) refers to GC No.1 (2001), suggesting that opportunities within the pastoral curriculum could be enhanced to identify functions of imprisonment for the social good. In this respect, the curriculum should promote children's respect for human rights and for the leading of responsible lives within their communities. A recommendation noted within the UNCRC Concluding Observations to UK State Party (2023) states that measures aimed at addressing disparities in educational achievement need to be strengthened to improve academic outcomes for disadvantaged children.

The need for positive wellbeing and a reduction in ill health amongst the CAPI population was identified eight times across five of the sources. The Committee on the Rights of the Child (2011) recommends that infants living with their parent in prison have access to good quality health services. Within the UNCRC Concluding Observations (2023), there are two references to disadvantaged children in relation to addressing health inequalities. Specifically,

recommendations aim to address the causes of health inequalities in relation to disadvantaged children and the overrepresentation of this group within inpatient mental health settings (Murray & Farrington, 2008). This notion is further supported within GC No. 15 (2013) which states factors which create vulnerabilities for children should be addressed when creating legislation linked to children's health.

The need for the CAPI cohort to be formally identified as a 'specific vulnerable group' which is regularly reviewed and monitored, was referenced three times across two sources. In the UNCRC Concluding Observations to the UK State Party (2023), a recommendation was made to improve the data collection for '*children of incarcerated parents*'. In the UNCRC General Discussion Report (2011), there were two references to the formal identification of CAPI. The first highlighted the requirement to record the number of CAPI early in the criminal justice process to enable information to be shared and implement appropriate support. Secondly, this need is referenced in relation to the sharing of information about the child/family, recommending that such information be gathered and updated whether an infant is with the parent in prison or not, and provided in a format which enables the children to be provided with the support they need.

The need to benefit from a whole school and multidisciplinary approach is referenced once within GC No.1 (2001) but is not referenced within any of the other identified sources. GC No.1 (2001) refers to Article 29 (1): The Aims of Education and describes how education is likely to require a multidisciplinary approach, particularly if problems within a child's community exist. It stipulates the relevance of the school, family and community in supporting children.

Access to information to understand imprisonment is referenced once within the UNCRC General Discussion Report (2011). Within this, the right held by CAPI to information, which includes the right to information around contact with their imprisoned parent, should be accounted for.

Three of the identified needs of CAPI: to reduce anti-social behaviour and prevent intergenerational offending; the need to develop strategies for dealing with experienced loss; and staff to develop skills in building trust with the families of imprisoned parents are not explicitly referenced within any of the instrumentation. This does not, however, mean that these needs are unconnected to the Unicef UK (1989), only that this research has not identified an explicit link. The provisions of the Unicef UK (1989) are specific, and the first authors employed a conservative approach within this review. Had a broader interpretation been utilised, it could be hypothesised that broad links between the UNCRC instrumentation (1989) and these particular needs of CAPI might be identified.

Discussion

Summary of findings

This systematic mapping review aimed to ascertain whether, and to what extent, the UNCRC instrumentation links with and thereby may support provisions in education for the needs of CAPI. This original review highlights uniquely that UNCRC sources support the majority of identified needs of CAPI. Some needs are highly prominent within many of the sources, whilst others are referenced multiple times within fewer sources; three are not referenced in any of the 10 sources. This review therefore confirms that, as suggested by Shaw et al. (2022), the needs of CAPI are to a significant extent supported by a framework for children's rights, namely the UNCRC. This is particularly significant in the current UK education context where there is an increasing focus within schools on children's rights (Fairhall & Woods, 2021; UK Children's Third authors, 2020). The identified CAPI's needs which are not referenced within the UNCRC instrumentation (i.e. to reduce anti-social behaviour and prevent intergenerational offending; the need to develop strategies for dealing with experienced loss; and the need for staff to develop skills in building trust with the families of imprisoned parents) are particularly specific to CAPI and it is notable that only one of the UNCRC sources utilised in this review was focused specifically upon CAPI.

This paper has made novel conceptual links between two important areas – children's rights and children's needs. The significance and utility of such 'linking' has been demonstrated previously, for example, in linking between UNCRC instrumentation and educational assessment (Woods et al., 2018) and in linking between UNCRC instrumentation and school psychology practice (Woods & Bond, 2014). In each of these previous examples, as with the present review, the purpose of making conceptual linkages was to support academic/intellectual coherence within educational theory and to thereby provide a more secure and accessible basis for application of concepts within professional/educational practice.

Implications for practice and policy

Educators, including EPs, are aware of, and seek to respond to the needs of children with ACEs, including those affected by parental imprisonment (Johnson, 2018; Shaw et al., 2021; Sparling et al., 2021). Additionally, educators are aware of, and seek to promote, the rights of children (Dunhill, 2018; Fairhall & Woods, 2021). This research has identified a network of positive links between the needs of CAPI and children's rights. These links potentially strengthen the mandate for professional action both in relation to children's needs and children's rights, positioning each as mutually supportive; in practice, therefore, educators could utilise these links to enhance work across both children's needs and children's rights. For example, a local authority service, such as an EPS, may seek to develop a strategy and action plans which

details their approach in relation to supporting the needs of CAPI, within which, specific links to children's rights will reinforce such initiatives.

Implications for future research

Future research could seek to ascertain empirically the hypothesised utility to practice of links identified in this research between UNCRC instrumentation and the needs of CAPI.

More broadly, this research has extended previous research that has made links between children's rights and educational practices (Woods & Bond, 2014; Woods et al., 2018). Future research could usefully further explore links between children's rights and priority areas of educational policy and practice. This could involve looking at another identified ACE to see if, and to what extent, there are links to UNCRC instrumentation.

Limitations

Two limitations to this research are identified. First, to ensure that this research presents a compelling case, the first author was conservative in their approach to the mapping process, including only the most explicit links between the identified needs of CAPI and the children's rights instrumentation. This approach may have reduced, to some extent, the number of *possible* links to CAPI's needs within the UNCRC instrumentation, and therefore there may, by more broader interpretations, be more evidence available than is described within this research on the link between UNCRC and how it supports the needs of CAPI. For example, within GC 20, the first author identified a potential link to the need 'Support to deal with the stigma' (GC 20, p7, 21). However, as neither 'stigma' nor CAPI was explicitly referred to, this was discounted as not being a sufficiently explicit link.

A second limitation identified is that although this research presents clear evidence of indicated links between UNCRC instrumentation and the needs of CAPI, the utility of such links is, at present, hypothetical rather than demonstrated. However, this research was specifically commissioned by an EPS, suggesting the assumed value of its findings to their professional practice; also, the first authors also work in practitioner roles lending further credibility to the likely utility of links identified within this research.

Note

1. Note that the terminology used by Shaw et al. (2022) was 'children of parent in prison' (CoPiP) whereas the first author, in consultation with second author and research third author, consider 'children affected by parental imprisonment' (CAPI) a preferable better reference term.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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