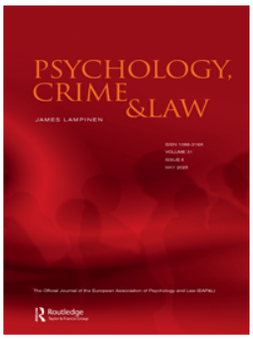

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Home is where the start is: qualitatively exploring the role of accommodation in desistance, for people with sexual convictions living in the U.K.

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ABSTRACT

Attaining accommodation upon prison release is a key reintegration need. It is recognised by academics, policy makers, and practitioners, as an important risk factor to consider. This consideration, however, largely focuses on the importance of accommodation in terms of attaining a structural dwelling. Furthermore, many investigations do not consider the unique experiences of people with sexual convictions, who arguably require distinct considerations due to added risk management and increased stigma. This research explored the holistic accommodation experiences of men with sexual offences, now living within the community. Interviews were conducted with 15 men who had all served a prison sentence for a sexual offence. Participants discussed what they needed from their accommodation, emphasising desires for a sense of ownership, autonomy, control, safety, and socialisation. These needs were immaterial, reflecting psychosocial and affective ties to accommodation, capturing the importance of *home*. By considering these components of living spaces, theoretical comparisons are drawn between factors contributing to home and factors contributing to desistance. Accommodation is not merely important as a physical building necessary for risk reduction, but also as a place for individuals to ascertain feelings of home, facilitating an individual's ability to desist, and lead a positive, offence-free, life.

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Introduction

Having shelter is a basic human need (Holland, 2018; Maslow, 1943). Access to adequate housing is a human right, with the United Nations stating that all people should have 'the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity' (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2009, p. 3). Cohen (2007) further highlights the benefits of accommodation beyond just the provision of physical shelter, such as mental health improvements, reduced stress, enhanced self-esteem, and an increased sense of security.

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These psychological benefits are emphasised in discussions that explore the concept of *home*. Home is about 'more than bricks and mortar' (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016, p. 44), capturing the affective ties a person may develop to a given place. Having a sense of home can instil feelings of safety, autonomy, ownership, self-identity, and belonging, as well as various other psychological feelings (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Graham et al., 2015; Kearns et al., 2000).

For people who have committed an offence however, accessing accommodation can be challenging (Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). People with convictions are often perceived to have the least entitlement to goods or services, compared to law-abiding others (LeBel, 2017). Members of the public are less supportive of offending populations receiving helpful housing policies compared to non-offending individuals, and research highlights that the public are least supportive towards people with sexual offences (Dum et al., 2017).

People with sexual offence convictions warrant distinct investigations regarding resettlement issues like accommodation. This is mainly for two prevailing reasons: unique risk management procedures (Sexual Offences Act, 2003) and increased hostility and stigma (Harper et al., 2017). Particularly within the U.S., strict residency restrictions mean that housing options are significantly reduced (Tewksbury et al., 2016; Zgoba et al., 2009). In addition, landlords may demonstrate resistance when asked to rent their properties to people with sexual convictions (Evans & Porter, 2015; Furst & Evans, 2017). Public hostility (Williams, 2018) and a lack of political support (Stojkovic & Farkas, 2014) exacerbate such issues. As Clark (2007) summarises: 'Sex offenders face an especially difficult time finding housing, not just because of the location restrictions placed upon them, but due to the landlord dislike of the type of crime' (p. 24). Of note, much of these research insights are U.S. based. Further U.K. research is required regarding accommodation issues for people with sexual offence convictions, particularly as laws and risk management procedures differ vastly between the U.K. and U.S. (McCartan et al., 2018).

Accommodation as risk reduction

Despite the lack of public support, the attainment of accommodation for people leaving prison is important. Governments and academic researchers continually stress this (HM Government, 2019; O'Leary, 2013; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). The Social Exclusion Unit (2002) state that accommodation is one of seven pathways to reduce reoffending. Accommodation is also listed as one of eight, key, *criminogenic needs* important to consider when assessing a person's risk in the community; those individuals with higher criminogenic needs are more likely to reoffend (Ministry of Justice, 2019). O'Leary (2013) conducted a review to explore the relationship between accommodation and reoffending, concluding that:

> Stable accommodation has a role to play in reducing the risk of recidivism. What is less than clear, though, is the nature and extent of this role. Does stable accommodation in of itself reduce the risk of someone re-offending? If so, how? (p. 10)

Analysing O'Leary's (2013) conclusion, perhaps the limited success in identifying a clear causal relationship is due to it being a somewhat restrictive question. Attaining accommodation upon prison release is not a discrete event that can be compared to the likes of taking part in a clinical trial; treating it as such may be overly reductionist. Research

regarding accommodation for people with convictions has often considered the impact of (not) attaining a structural dwelling (O'Leary, 2013; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002), and the outcomes associated with this. Comparisons of people who are housed versus not housed have previously highlighted the importance of acquiring physical accommodation in reducing reoffending (Ellison et al., 2013). This focus on the attainment of accommodation for people with convictions largely positions itself within a risk-based framework focused on structural dwellings. Less well documented however, are the positive benefits and needs instilled from living environments.

Furthermore, such research regarding risk reduction is not always applicable to people with sexual convictions, as many investigations exclude people with sexual offences from their sample (e.g. Ellison et al., 2013). It is notable that people with sexual offence convictions are often cited as a cohort of individuals that are least likely to reoffend, with recidivism rates estimated to be between 5-25% (Hanson & Bussière, 1998; Helmus et al., 2012; Lussier, McCuish et al., 2023). Whilst recidivism estimations vary according to numerous methodological and individual level factors (Lussier, Chouinard Thivierge et al., 2023), the remaining group of non-reoffending individuals require consideration. Other researchers have supported this stance. As Harris (2014) states, 'the empirical reality of low sexual recidivism is essentially evidence of desistance' (p. 1555).

Theories of desistance

Desistance is defined as the long-term abstinence from offending behaviour and the processes people go through to reach this (Bushway et al., 2001; Maruna, 2001). Desistance theories emphasise positive human change, stressing the importance of both social and structural factors, as well as personal and subjective factors important in leading an offence free life (McNeill et al., 2012). Numerous academics have put forward their accounts of desistance, amounting to a 'diversity of theoretical conceptualizations' (Weaver, 2019, p. 642).

In a review of desistance theories of general offending, Weaver (2019) categorises the different theoretical approaches into four broad domains. The first of these, *individual and agentic theories*, capture the importance of individual factors such as age, a sense of agency, identity implications, and pursuing a non-offending future (Blumstein & Cohen, 1987; Healy, 2013). *Social and structural theories* emphasise events external to the individual such as employment and relationships (Laub & Sampson, 2003), yet offer limited consideration for an individual's cognitive processes (Weaver, 2019). *Interactionist theories* focus on a combination of these aspects, examining the interplay between internal cognitions and external events, to explore how particular social contexts may enable or inhibit cognitions related to identity change, agency, and hope (Healy, 2013; King, 2013; LeBel et al., 2008; Maruna, 2001). The more recently emerging *situational desistance theories* emphasise the importance of spatial context (Bottoms, 2014), exploring how identity, goal attainment, and structure is often tied to place (Hunter & Farrall, 2015).

The first three of these theoretical domains (individual and agentic; social and structural; and interactionist theories) are influential within the desistance field (Weaver, 2019). However, explicit links to the relevance of accommodation within these theories is somewhat limited. As an exception, interactionist theories have previously referred to housing as a 'macro-level structural issue' (Farrall et al., 2010, p. 546). For example, the

availability of housing might influence a person's living situation and ultimately impact their individual desistance efforts. This considers the importance of housing from a sociological perspective. The relatively understudied situational theories of desistance (Weaver, 2019) make greater explicit links between accommodation and desistance. These theories emphasise the importance of spatial context and the places people inhabit (Bottoms, 2014). Hunter and Farrall (2015) investigated the role of place and space in desistance from drug use. They conclude that 'places are not just the locations within which desistance takes place. Understanding what certain places mean, underpins efforts to desist' (p. 964).

Weaver's (2019) review focuses on desistance from general offending. Literature regarding desistance for people with sexual convictions specifically is growing (Göbbels et al., 2012; Hulley, 2016; McAlinden et al., 2017). Göbbels et al. (2012) developed the Integrated Theory of Desistance from Sexual Offending (ITDSO) and McAlinden et al. (2017) have applied some of the 'mainstream' theories of desistance to sexual offending. Again, these ideas capture the importance of psychological, social, and environmental processes (Göbbels et al., 2012). The strengths-based Good Lives Model (GLM, Ward, 2002) is also accounted for by the ITDSO. This strengths-based approach to rehabilitation posits that should certain goals (termed *primary goods*) be fulfilled then people's efforts to desist will be enhanced. Some examples of the eleven primary goods outlined by the GLM include needs for agency, community and relatedness.

Considering the importance of accommodation from a desistance-based framework has not received much attention within the academic literature. Insights relating to desistance, accommodation, and sexual offending specifically, are even fewer. Of the arguments that have been made, researchers mainly stress the importance of attaining housing as an event that is external to the individual (Farrall et al., 2010 Göbbels et al., 2012). Hunter and Farrall's (2015) call to understand 'what certain places mean' (p. 964) to individuals could develop further insights about such conceptual links between desistance and accommodation. The current paper attempts to address this by gaining a deeper understanding of what accommodation means to people with sexual convictions.

The current investigation

Research regarding accommodation considerations specifically for people with sexual offence convictions broadly falls within two domains. The first of these research domains relates to the distinct challenges they may face, in particular, landlord hesitance (Clark, 2007; Evans & Porter, 2015; Furst & Evans, 2017), legal restrictions (Clark, 2007; Sexual Offences Act, 2003), and stigma (Harper et al., 2017; Stojkovic & Farkas, 2014; Williams, 2018).

The second area of research captures the experiences of people with sexual convictions living within certain facilities. For example, Reeves (2013) investigated the experiences of men with sexual offences living within a U.K. approved premise[1] and highlighted how approved premises may reinforce a 'sex offender identity'. Reeves (2016) later expanded on these findings by exploring the interplay between social identities and place identities for people residing in approved premises. Within this publication Reeves alluded to the overlaps between living spaces and desistance. These U.K. findings were reiterated within a U.S. context by Kras et al. (2016). Kras and colleagues explored people's experiences

within a transitional facility and found that participants experienced being 'grouped under the sex offender label' (p. 525), further showing how identity considerations are tied to places. Mills and Grimshaw (2012) also reported the living experiences of individuals with sexual convictions, though their sample consisted of people living within a charity-based housing project just for people with sexual offences. This report identified how people felt a sense of safety because of not needing to conceal their offence type. These insights demonstrate what living places *mean* to people (Hunter & Farrall, 2015) extending beyond just the attainment of accommodation itself.

Whilst these research insights offer in-depth findings in relation to the facility investigated (Kras et al., 2016; Mills & Grimshaw, 2012; Reeves, 2013), less is known about accommodation experiences more holistically for people with sexual convictions. The broader accommodation experiences people endure across a variety of settings and the meaning attached to such settings requires further study. This paper seeks to address this gap.

This investigation formed part of a wider research project which explored the accommodation needs and experiences of people with sexual convictions. The aim of this paper specifically is to further explore the accommodation experiences of people with sexual offences living within any type of U.K. community environment, whilst simultaneously exploring theoretical links to desistance and emphasising the importance of accommodation beyond just the structural dwelling. The research question that will be addressed within this paper asks; what are the accommodation experiences and the meanings attached to living environments for people with sexual offence convictions?

Methods

Recruitment

Purposive and convenience sampling methods were used to recruit people who had served a prison sentence for a sexual offence and were now living within a community environment in the U.K. Purposive sampling involves the deliberate targeting of relevant individuals based on the qualities they possess (Tongco, 2007), thus organisations who work with males convicted of sexual offences were approached. This involved emailing managerial staff at relevant charities, housing organisations, and National Probation Service (NPS) divisions to (i) garner the organisations interest in supporting the research, and (ii) identify potentially interested participants. Convenience sampling is used to attain participants based on certain practicalities such as location, resources, and their willingness to participate (Robinson, 2014), therefore organisations that were closer in proximity to the interviewer (first author) were contacted first.

Although recruitment required the need for gatekeepers to access the sample, all participants were reminded by the interviewer that their participation was entirely voluntary. As people with sexual offence convictions constitute a hard-to-reach population (Lussier et al., 2016), this recruitment strategy was deemed the most feasible and ethically appropriate.

Sample demographics

A total sample of 15 was obtained. This included one pilot participant whose data was also included for analysis. All participants were male and had served a prison sentence for a

sexual offence. Ages ranged from 33–75 years ($M = 55.27$, $SD = 11.65$). Most were aged 50 or over ($n = 11$). Participants lived in a variety of accommodation settings; approved premises ($n = 2$), offending specific supported facilities run by third sector organisations ($n = 5$), social housing properties ($n = 2$), private rented properties ($n = 3$), temporary emergency facilities ($n = 2$), and a Psychologically Informed Planned Environment (PIPE) ($n = 1$). Time spent living in the community since their release ranged from 3 months to 11 years, representing a diversity of viewpoints from people at different stages in their resettlement. Table 1 outlines participant information to offer further context.

Specific details about participants prison sentence and offences were not sought from participants, for purposes of rapport building, ethical implications of minimising distress, and staying close to the research topic of post-prison accommodation.

Procedure

Recruitment and data collection took place between August 2017 and February 2018. Once permission was attained to recruit from the various organisations, professionals (e.g. housing managers, charity managers, or offender managers) aided facilitation of the interviews by arranging a suitable time and location for participant interviews. Once scheduled, participants took part in a face-to-face interview within a secure, private location. Interviews were conducted by the first author. Upon meeting the participant, they were told about the aims of the research and asked to provide informed consent.

A semi-structured interview schedule was devised. This paper outlines findings from a larger research investigation which looked broadly at general accommodation issues

Table 1. Demographic participant information, obtained at the time of interview.

	Age	Time since release	Accommodation Facility	Further context
P1	49	11 years	Private Rented Property	Living with partner
P2	54	1 year 2 months	Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions	Self-contained bedroom with shared communal facilities
P3	75	1 year	Probation Approved Premises	Extended the usual 12-week stay rule
P4	63	2 years 6 months	Local Authority Sheltered Housing	Independent living scheme for over 55's
P5	33	3 months	Probation Approved Premises	Recently released, only community experience so far
P6	49	2 years 4 months	Private Rented Property	Living alone
P7	62	4 years	Private Rented Property	Living alone
P8	62	1 year	Statutory Homeless – Temporary Facility	Legally defined as homeless, accessing homelessness support. Potential offer underway
P9	50	3 months	Statutory Homeless – Temporary B&B	Legally defined as homeless, accessing homelessness support; attending viewings
P10	61	2 years	Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions	Own flat with private kitchen/bathroom/living
P11	32	1 year	PIPE	Currently transitioning into private rented property
P12	57	3 years 6 months	Local Authority Property	Living alone
P13	63	1 year	Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions	Own flat with private kitchen/bathroom/living
P14	53	Not disclosed	Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions	Own flat with private kitchen/bathroom/living
P15	66	2 years	Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions	Own flat with private kitchen/bathroom/living

for people with sexual convictions, therefore the original interview schedule was developed within the context of this broader aim. A full outline of the schedule is provided in the appendix of Lomas (2021). Where previous research has explored the experiences of individuals with sexual offence convictions living within specific facilities (Kras et al., 2016; Mills & Grimshaw, 2012; Reeves, 2013), this schedule included broader questions about a persons' overarching accommodation experiences. As such, the development of the questions did not rely on any single theory, instead, they were intended to address a gap in the literature by centring around a person's holistic accommodation experiences.

Guidance from Kallio et al. (2016) was followed when developing the schedule. This involved ensuring semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method of data collection; drawing on previous knowledge; devising a preliminary schedule; piloting the schedule; and finalising a clear and complete product. The schedule included prompts related to the persons preparatory experiences in prison; immediate release experiences after prison; their accommodation history since leaving prison; and their likes and dislikes in relation to where they have lived post-prison release. Prompts regarding what people felt they needed from accommodation were also included. Example questions include 'Can you talk around your accommodation experiences when you were released?' and 'What do you feel you need from accommodation?'. The schedule was deliberately broad to gain a holistic understanding of accommodation issues for people with sexual convictions.

At the end of the interview participants were given the opportunity to discuss additional topics they felt were important. They were also afforded the opportunity to ask questions before being debriefed. Interviews ranged from 55–95 minutes ($M = 72.86$, $SD = 12.62$). Interviews were recorded on a password protected dictaphone and transcribed verbatim.

Reflexivity statement

It is necessary to acknowledge the first authors position as a female PhD candidate, conducting interviews with older male participants who have been convicted of a sexual offence. Differences in social identities and personal backgrounds may have affected how participants chose to share their experiences. Some participants may have felt hesitant during the interviews, potentially leading to a selective disclosure of information. Conversely, the presence of an outsider to their experiences might have encouraged some participants to provide more detailed explanations, seeking to bridge the perceived gap in understanding. Throughout the data collection and analysis, the first author remained aware of the differing social dynamics. Regular debriefing sessions were ongoing with the wider research team to examine how such considerations might shape the research outcomes.

Ethics

The study was granted ethical approval from HMPPS National Research Committee (reference 2017-097) and Nottingham Trent University (reference 2017/65). British

Psychological Society (BPS) principles (2021a; 2021b) informed ethical decisions throughout the research process.

Analysis

The theoretical framework informing the analysis was that of phenomenological critical realism (Budd, 2012). Phenomenology enables researchers to explore individuals lived experiences (Cal & Tehmarn, 2016), important within the context of asking people with sexual offences about their own accommodation journeys. Critical realism captures the different levels (biological, social, psychological, and cultural) of realities (Wikgren, 2005), acknowledging that reality can only be accessed through human perception. The interplay of accommodation and sexual offending within this research, is best explored from the perspective that 'reality' is inevitably tied to the participants own perceptions and resettlement situations that they have experienced. Inductive thematic analysis was implemented; themes were derived directly from the data, with limited imposition of pre-existing theories (Nowell et al., 2017).

This paper adopts a *reflexive thematic analysis* approach (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The principles of reflexive thematic analysis embrace researcher and participant subjectivity, harnessing this subjectivity as a tool rather than a limitation. For this reason, common concepts associated with rigor in qualitative research, such as saturation and inter-rater reliability of coding were not employed (Braun & Clarke, 2021a). This was to avoid an *incompatible mashup* of thematic analysis approaches and reduce methodological incoherence (Braun & Clarke, 2023). To ensure credibility, Braun and Clarkes checklist for reviewer guidance was consulted to demonstrate the rigor that was still present throughout the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2021b, 2023).

Braun and Clarke's (2006, 2019) six phase process was implemented. Data familiarisation (Phase 1) occurred when collecting the data and conducting the interviews. Such familiarisation was enhanced throughout listening and re-listening to interview recordings and further developed during transcription. During the transcription phase, preliminary ideas about the data were noted.

The next step involved coding the data (Phase 2). With regards to the type of coding a mixture of semantic and latent codes were used. Semantic coding explicitly captures what the data says, whereas latent coding is concerned with underlying meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2020), yet the need to adopt an either/or approach is a common misconception (Braun et al., 2016; Robertson et al., 2013) as 'coding [can] evolve as you get more analytically engaged' (Braun et al., 2016, p. 10). This coding stage was conducted within NVivo, to enable greater management of the various codes being used and to avoid duplication that may have occurred manually. Codes were re-ordered and subsumed within other codes, which were then exported into a word document table which outlined the code, related extracts, and participant numbers.

Once all of the codes had been transferred into the electronic table, this was printed, and each code, with all participant numbers and extracts relating to the code, were cut out of the table, to be physically and manually grouped into themes (Phase 3). Themes were generated by identifying patterns between the codes and associated extracts, which then continued to be refined (Phase 4). Once initial themes were constructed, they were assigned names (Phase 5). During the write-up (Phase 6) of themes,

superordinate and subordinate themes were merged further, and the names of the themes were revisited to ensure that they best represented the data. Although themes were constructed inductively, relevant theoretical insights, particularly regarding concepts related to home and desistance, were later drawn on throughout the writeup. The proceeding findings section is therefore presented as an 'analytical write-up' (Byrne, 2022, p. 1407), whereby extracts are discussed and contextualised in relation to wider literature.

Findings

The findings reported here are drawn from a larger reflexive thematic analysis investigation. Within the original investigation, four themes, each with corresponding subthemes were constructed. A full account of these themes is available in Lomas (2021). They capture a sense of powerlessness and lack of choice people feel in relation to their accommodation outcomes; discussions related to transitions out of prison; and the need to consider accommodation issues within the broader remit of reintegration more widely.

The theme reported here is most aligned to the aims of this research paper in terms of further exploring individual's accommodation experiences whilst drawing theoretical links to desistance and what places mean to people (Hunter & Farrall, 2015). The theme *Psychosocial Home Needs* discussed here, incorporates three subthemes (i) My Home My Way (ii) A Safe Haven, and (iii) A Social Base.

Psychosocial home needs

This theme captures what places and living locations meant to participants. Participant narratives represented the need to consider the psychosocial aspects of living environments. Where government and academics have previously emphasised the importance of attaining accommodation as a structural dwelling (O'Leary, 2013; SEU, 2002), this theme highlights the importance of accommodation beyond bricks and mortar. Aligning with arguments from Hunter and Farrall (2015) who call for a greater understanding of what places mean to people to better understand processes of desistance, this theme captures deeper feelings and meanings attached to living environments, by people with sexual offence convictions. It alludes to the importance of *home* (Mallett, 2004). Home captures the emotive, affective, and psychosocial components of a living space (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Kearns et al., 2000; Mallett, 2004). The subthemes constructed from the current data particularly centred around ownership and freedom (subtheme 1); safety (subtheme 2); and socialising/relationships (subtheme 3).

To further unpack this theme, the vast interdisciplinary home literature was explored (Després, 1991; Mallett, 2004) and will be connected to the analytical interpretations that follow. The notion of home is a contested concept (Meers, 2023), though some literature aids understanding of the term. For example, Després (1991) identified 10 main ways in which home could semantically be defined, focusing on concepts such as security, self-identity, control, permanence, relationship development, a base for further activities, refuge, an indicator of status, material properties, and a place of freedom/ownership. It is generally agreed that home in its broadest sense is not about the physical structure

of the place, rather, the social, psychological, and emotive meaning of the environment (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Easthope, 2004). The following analysis focuses on the meaning underpinning participant's living environment, i.e. the home, whilst simultaneously highlighting the theoretical overlap between home and desistance.

My home my way

Participants explained their desire to feel a sense of ownership, control, and freedom within the place they live. Home represents a space whereby people can act freely, with independence and autonomy (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Haak et al., 2007). Accommodation environments can offer a sense of permanence and may instil feelings that relate to personal expression and freedom (Sigmon et al., 2002). Participants discussed these conceptualisations of home.

Extract 1

> It could be, a basic shack, but as long as, it's your own, and you've got it how you want, you're comfortable there, it's ideal. If that's - if you're comfortable, it's ideal. If you're not comfortable somewhere you need something else don't you. (P6, Private Rented Property)

Participant six reinforces the notion that physical properties of an environment are largely irrelevant; a person could live in a 'basic shack' yet still be content. Home reflects how the person feels within their living environment (Blunt & Dowling, 2006). Of note, participant six was living in a privately rented property. Although they did not financially 'own' the property, merely feeling a sense of ownership was enough, alongside the associated freedom to make the space how he personally wants. The extract represents how living environments are a place to exercise agency and freedom, in a space deemed ones 'own'. Agency is a key construct associated with desistance processes. Although multiple definitions exist (Healy, 2013), broadly, agency concerns a person's ability to exercise free will (Farrall & Bowling, 1999) and make choices (Bottoms et al., 2004) that are meaningful and purposive (Healy, 2013; Paternoster & Pogarsky, 2009). If a person's living space allows for such agentic action, then it is plausible that such feelings associated with home could underpin efforts to desist.

Extract 1 suggests that without feelings of ownership and comfort, different accommodation is needed. Such suggestion is not easy. People with sexual offence convictions have limited choice in where they can live, often required to access temporary facilities. Some participants did not perceive a sense of ownership, yet still desired it:

Extract 2

> [*Keyworker*] said this to me other week, she goes, "you've not bought anything for here have you", I goes "no", she goes - I says, "cus this is not my home", and it's not. It's not my home. But, when I move into somewhere else then I will, you know, it's uh like, what's point in cluttering that place up …
>
> *Interviewer*: Mm. Why doesn't it feel like your home then?
>
> *Participant*: Because I know I've got to move on, it's no good, you can't like sort of say - I mean hopefully I'll get a place and then I can stay there, uhm, and to all intents and purpose be alright, and then I can like, put roots down, you know, get bits and bobs. (P13, Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions)

Participant 13 felt unable to settle within a place he knew was temporally limited. He was unable and unwilling to form an attachment to the environment he currently lived in as a 'home', due to its non-permanence. Fowler and Lipscomb (2010) note how some people living within rented facilities may not construct their environment as a home if such place is viewed as transient and temporary, as echoed in Extract 2. Participant 13 did not see the need for personalisation, instead perceiving this as wasted efforts, and viewing extra belongings as meaningless artefacts, 'cluttering' a temporary space. When the participant refers to having his own home however, he seemingly views personal belongings – 'bits and bobs ' – in a more positive light. The desire to 'put roots down' indicates the participants need to feel a sense of permanence. These points once more reinforce the distinction between an accommodation environment, and a home. Després (1991) outlines the salience of permanency within their conceptualisation of the term home. Bowe (2012) has commented how such sense of rootedness instils feelings of continuity and belonging within places for people. Fox (2015) notes how a sense of belonging may be an important precursor for desistance. Ultimately, though short-term placements are essential for gradual transitions back into society, they may inhibit feelings associated with home (Bowe, 2012; Després, 1991), such as perceiving stability and belonging, which are also important psychological underpinnings for desistance (Fox, 2015).

Extract 3

When I actually move to my own place I'll have all my stuff, then I got my, I got my targets, that's to meet people, to do things, to go where, and I got my place to go back to. My place, nobody else's. (P3, Probation Approved Premises)

Extract 3 reiterates how feelings of independence and ownership were desired by the participant. Additionally, the extract highlights how accommodation acts as a foundation for other 'targets'. Participant three expressed future focused desires, intent on achieving personal objectives that would enable him to progress his resettlement efforts further, knowing he has a place to return to which he can call 'my own'. He communicated his plans with a language of agency (Maruna, 2001) expressing who he wants to become in the future, and how his accommodation will help him to achieve this. Extract 3 represents the home as a behavioural centre (Després, 1991). Once accommodation is secured, activities can be undertaken to enable additional resettlement needs. Theoretical conceptualisations of desistance, such as the ITDSO and GLM, emphasise the importance of such life goals (Göbbels et al., 2012; Ward, 2002). Should home act as a base to achieving such goals, it is clear to see the implications and importance of ensuring people feel able to establish a sense of home as means to encourage goal attainment and desistance efforts.

The notions of ownership represented within Extract 1, 2, and 3, were prevalent throughout participant narratives;

Extract 4

Interviewer: How does where you currently are now compare to where you've lived in the past, in terms of [*housing organisation*] and the approved premise?

Participant: Well its right on top of the pile. It's up there with the shiny fairy on top of the Christmas tree. It is, excellent.

Interviewer: What makes it excellent?

Participant: Well, it's mine! Its mine. Its urm, and I've got it decorated how I want it, I've got carpets down that I've paid for, and um, yeh its, generally, I've done it. (P4, Local Authority Sheltered Housing)

Once more, the emphasis on home is reiterated here. When participant four was asked what makes his current accommodation excellent, the answer did not allude to the physical aspects of the property, rather, the way in which the space felt, and the affective components tied to this. Feelings of ownership, control, and freedom are reiterated, aligning with dominant conceptualisations of home (Després, 1991; Mallett, 2004). In comparison to other living facilities the participant had resided in, their current social housing property was incomparable, it was 'the shiny fairy on top of the Christmas tree', deemed this way mainly because of the ownership it instilled. Participant four's reiteration of personal pronouns reinforces concepts of ownership even further, as well as demonstrating the self-accomplishment the participant feels about himself. The home is not only his own physical space, but also a symbol of his efforts and achievements occurring throughout his resettlement. He speaks with a sense of pride, seemingly having constructed a positive self-identity (Göbbels et al., 2012; Weaver, 2019) that is tied to the successful actions he has undertaken within his home.

Even for those who were not wholly satisfied with their living arrangements, the increased freedom and sense of ownership instilled some level of satisfaction:

Extract 5

I like the fact that I can just come and go as I've said. Urm that's about it to be honest (laughs) it's the fact that I guess, even though I don't like the place, it's still mine, you know it's my room, and you know I guess if I said to them can I decorate it they're quite happy to let me do it, you know which I wouldn't because its short term so yeh, that's the sort of thing, you know it's, it's still somewhere to live, it's still almost home. (P2, Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions)

Whilst participant two is dissatisfied with his accommodation as a place, he is still able feel some sense of ownership and freedom. The distinction between house and home is truly emphasised once more (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Mallett, 2004). His feelings of freedom override the need to like the accommodation building physically. The participant felt some element of autonomy, knowing that he could exercise some control over his space by decorating should he wish, regardless of whether he acts on this freedom. It is not the ability to be able to personalise the facility that instils feelings of home, it is knowing that he has the freedom of choice, regardless of how this choice is exercised. Indeed, it has previously been argued that the mere belief of control is more important than the actual exercising of such control (Langer, 1983). Participant two's accommodation needs are partially being met. The term 'almost home' suggests that there is still something absent. There is an unwillingness on behalf of participants to allow themselves to become attached to a place that they know is temporary.

This gradual reinstatement of ownership and autonomy is further captured by participant five's reflections on being an 'ex-prisoner';

Extract 6

> I can put a film on, I can do, you know I can go sit in the corner and rock back and forth if I want to … It's your own space, and I don't know whether that's just like an ex-prisoner kind of thing, but I think it might be one of the most valuable things going. (P5, Approved Premise)

Even within risk managed facilities, the freedom and choices people have because of their 'own space' is important. The comparison to the pre-living space of a prison emphasises this for participant five. What was once denied in prison is now attainable and regarded as 'one of the most valuable things going'.

Psychological feelings of ownership, control, freedom, and autonomy are just some of the key desires iterated by participants that were important within their accommodation. These concepts echo theoretical conceptualisations of the term home (Després, 1991). Ultimately, physical living environments can offer more than a structural dwelling (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016). Despite a person's material needs, non-tangible psychological needs were afforded much more weight to participant discussions. It is important to consider how such needs may be fulfilled within temporary spaces that people with sexual convictions are so often required to reside within, particularly due to the potential overlap of these constructs with important desistance considerations, such as feelings of agency, identity, and goal attainment (Weaver, 2019).

Safe haven

Another psychosocial need that dominated participant narratives was a need for safety. Vigilante concerns overlapped this discussion, potentially exacerbating safety needs for people with sexual convictions specifically. Participants needed to feel a sense of security and that they were living in a protective space.

Extract 7

> It's knowing you've got somewhere safe, uh, somewhere safe so you can lock yourself away from the outside world if you need to, if you want to, you know, not being scared of, well, I'm on a park bench tonight, am I gonna get stabbed up. You read these things, you hear it on tele, uhm, alright they get mugged for what little they've got, some people, but, it's difficult, I don't want to be not sleeping proper. Urm, I think, it's more a security thing, knowing I can lock myself away and being safe behind four walls. (P9, Classed as Statutory Homeless in Temporary B&B)

Safety is a key need within a person's physical accommodation (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Taormina & Gao, 2013). It is further reflected in theoretical conceptualisations of home, whereby a home can act as a space of refuge and security (Després, 1991). The extract above highlights how shelter acts as a physical barrier between the person and the 'outside world'. The 'outside world' is viewed as a source of threat and danger that the participant wants protection from. The walls of their accommodation offer such protection. Fuelled by media scares, the participant imagined severe alternative outcomes associated with homelessness. These imagined possibilities are contrasted against the stability of 'knowing' they have somewhere safe, and 'knowing' they can lock themselves away. The physical space offers security both physically, as a structural shield, and mentally, as a constant, stabilising recluse.

However, safety needs were not always met, even from participants who did have shelter. This represents the need to clearly divorce the concept of *house* from *home*

(Mallett, 2004). In many circumstances, people with sexual offence convictions felt unsafe living within their accommodation facility. The presence of others and vigilante concerns influenced this:

Extract 8

> You're in prison, and it's all sex offenders, you feel a bit sort of you know, safe, in a way. Urm, going out into a hostel you know where, it you know, you hear sort of rumours that they're all full of youngsters and there's trouble and, all this lot, and if they find out you're a sex offender you could be in trouble and all this lot … I was urm, bit, bit nervous you know going to the hostel (P10, Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions)

Where Extract 7 demonstrated the importance of safety generally, Extract 8 emphasises the interplay between feelings of safety, sexual offending, and experiences within the criminal justice system. Participant 10 recalls experiences living in a prison where everybody shared the same offence type. They viewed prison as a place of protection for them, not merely as a punishment for their crime (Blagden et al., 2016). The feelings of safety that the participant had become accustomed to, were now no longer guaranteed upon release into an approved premise hostel. The extract also represents the interplay of identity considerations here. In surroundings where 'it's all sex offenders', and everyone is deemed alike, a sense of safety is easier to attain. Indeed, Mills and Grimshaw (2012) previously noted that living within a facility specifically for people with sexual offences may make people feel safer, and less pressured to conceal their offending identity. Participant 10 speaks of such concealment, hoping to avoid 'trouble' caused by 'youngsters' should 'they find out' he is 'a sex offender'.

Vigilante concerns are prominent amongst people with sexual offence convictions reentering the community (Cubellis et al., 2019; Woodall et al., 2013). Even if a person does have a place to live, considering the nature of the offence bears additional safety considerations for people with sexual offence convictions.

Extract 9

> If you're a sex offender, you're a sex offender for life. So, it's different. Totally different. And if an – say – say, where I'm moving to now, say they found out, then my life could be made a misery, they'd move me, they'd move me again, and if they found out again they'd move me again. So, you know, it's never secure, you've got to be really secretive about everything and you know it's like (sighs). (P8, Classed as Statutory Homeless in Temporary Facility)

Extract 9 reiterates the constant feeling of unknowing and instability resulting from vigilante fears and offence exposure. The participants repetitive phrasing demonstrates constant unease. They conveyed a sense of fatigue at the thought of this instability, accepting they may 'never' feel secure. On top of this tiring sense of instability, the participant has the added pressure of offence concealment. The extract represents a strong desire for security, at the same time outlining the potential limits to achieving this as someone who is 'a sex offender'. If having a home involves feeling a sense of permanence, stability, rootedness, and belonging (Bowe, 2012; Després, 1991), then the ability of people with sexual convictions to attain such home is likely compromised by the risk of upheaval caused by offence exposure.

Safety concerns due to the nature of the offence were prominently intertwined with participants living spaces and locations:

Extract 10

Participant: I decided to, not to go back to that place.

Interviewer: Ok. Can you tell me more on why you decided not to go back?

Participant: Safety reasons for my daughters, weren't bothered about me, if you know what I'm saying, uh, more about the backlash for my daughters. (P7, Private Rented Property)

Beyond the immediate living facility, the wider area also prompts safety considerations. For people with sexual offence convictions who had ties and connections to previous areas, fears of offence 'backlash' are present. Participant seven's safety concerns extended beyond himself to consider his family connections and the safety implications this may have for them.

Extract 11

My home to me is my castle, it's my - it might feel like a prison sometimes when it's all locked up, but, that's how I want to be, I don't want to be, feel as if I'm in a prison like I've been to prison so I don't want to feel that way, but I want to feel as if my home is protected and there's no way of entry for outsiders who could hurt me. (P14, Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions)

Participant 14 uses prison as a frame of reference to illustrate their post-release accommodation needs. This need for safety that was once valued within the prison setting then transcended across their community re-entry, manifesting as a post-release accommodation need. The participant reversed the intentional purpose of the prison, viewing it not only as a place where they were locked in but where others were locked out. The participant notes how he wants to 'feel', once more capturing the importance of home and the emotions attached to environments (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Mallett, 2004). Although the participant did not want to feel as if they were living in a prison, there were some feelings within the prison environment that the participant did want to recreate. As Blunt and Dowling (2006) have suggested, 'Home is a series of feelings and attachments, some of which, some of the time, and in some places, become connected to a physical structure that provides shelter' (p.10). Here, the feeling of safety was connected to the prison structure by the participant. Although institutional settings are often perceived as antithetical to the notion of home (Parsell, 2016), there may be some feelings associated with home that are more attainable to people with sexual convictions living within a secure prison setting, than what are attainable to them in a community environment.

The need for safety dominated participants' accounts of their current accommodation desires. The literature in relation to home often considers the need for feelings of safety within living spaces (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Mallett, 2004; Parsell, 2016). Here, the level of which these feelings of safety were met differed between participant accounts and living environments; yet the importance of considering such safety needs for a group of individuals who often feel threatened and fearful living within the wider community is emphasised.

A social base

Participants discussed the relationship between home, socialising, and the community. The home acts as a social space whereby friends and family visit, in addition to offering

a stable base to return to. Accommodation acts as a base for social interactions and relationships (Boccagni & Kusenbach, 2020).

Extract 12

> You [can] have a real run down rubbishy place but you can have some good people living there, or you can have a glorious mansion and have rotten people in there. Doesn't matter what the place is like, it's the people inside. (P3, Probation Approved Premise).

Extract 12 captures the distinction between house and home once again by noting that there are things beyond the physical setting that are important, such as social connections (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016). For participant three, who was living within a shared space, 'the people inside' contributed to their wider feelings towards their living environment.

However, the nature of a sexual offence conviction could hinder such feelings of home. This was emphasised particularly poignantly by participant five:

Extract 13

> It's where everybody finds you. You know as in, where in the people you give a shit about find you - and you know - and they go this is [*participant's names*] house, we go round here to see [*participant's name*]. And that's why I'll never particularly have one, because nobody will go to see [*participant's name*], they will go to see that sex offender who lives there, for any number of professional reasons. So, your home is the centre of your social life, not just your room, and you know roof over your head and your kitchen. It roots where you are. (P5, Probation Approved Premises)

Extract 13 portrays the importance of socialisation needs within accommodation contexts, but also reflects how home captures the person's own sense of identity. Participant five felt incapable of achieving a home, as to him, a home represents the *person* who lives there, and he does not perceive himself as this person. Reference to his name humanised him; only then to be contrasted with the fact that he would not be viewed in this personable way, instead just as 'that sex offender', whose only social interactions would be with risk management professionals. To the participant, a human has a home, whereas a 'sex offender' merely has a living space in which to be managed from. The participant dehumanised himself, stripping himself of human attributes (Viki et al., 2012), subsequently stripping his accommodation of positive homely qualities; de*home*inisation.

In linking this to desistance considerations, constructing a positive self-identity away from ones offending past is a central component of desistance theories (Weaver, 2019). People with sexual convictions, however, may be unable to construct a positive sense of self, reinforced by risk-based social interactions. When considering this in relation to the home literature, Bate (2018) notes that 'home is central to the human experience' (p. 3). For people with sexual convictions, who are dehumanised and denied such human experiences, the ability to achieve feelings of home is then brought into question. People's social lives are mediated by, and structured around the home (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016). Boccagni and Kusenbach (2020) add that research regarding home is particularly 'revealing when it involves social margins' (p. 602). Identification as a 'sex offender' represents such social margin and Extract 10 highlights a weakened sense of home as a result. Even more revealing, is the nature in which identity, social connections, and

living environments overlap; all of which are considered within both theories of home (Després, 1991) and theories of desistance (Weaver, 2019).

The narrative of participant five is meta; he explained his perceptions of other peoples' perceptions. The dominating 'sex offender' status seemingly nullified his feelings of home, as his internalised feeling of dehumanisation transcended across the living space. Without social ties, feelings of home are difficult to attain. This may be exacerbated by the inability to form social ties in the context of a person's sexual conviction. Participant eight indicated more optimism about his social relationships and what they represented to him:

Extract 14

Participant: This could be my forever home, or you know, fingers crossed.

Interviewer: Yeh. You said that word home then, and your "forever home", what does that word home mean to you?

Participant: A place where I can be relaxed, and I can invite my friends and my family you know. Its being hard with my family and myself as well, cus I didn't see them for thirty years. You know, and uh, and because it was a sexual offence as well some of them don't want to know me anyway, and a couple of have stuck by me, so it's like you know, be nice for them to come and see me settled, and for my mum to know I'm settled (P8, Classed as Statutory Homeless in Temporary Facility)

Participant eight was classed as statutory homeless at the time of interview, though he had undertaken some viewings and hoped to be settled in a property soon. Extract 14 reiterates numerous concepts previously highlighted regarding the importance of permanence, comfort, and socialisation needs. It again represents the interplay between home, self-perceptions, and personal identity. Although having accommodation provides a space to invite others, for participant eight, it is seemingly about what inviting these others represented. As a result of his offence, many social connections were severed, a known consequence for people with sexual convictions (Tewksbury & Connor, 2012). For those who 'stuck by', his permanent home would be symbolic of a settled lifestyle, acting as a form of repayment to those who supported him. The extract conveys a sense of personal pride and achievement. The participant was eager to share his home with others as an indicator of his success. Participant eight spoke in a manner that distanced himself from his offending status, a notion referenced within theories of desistance (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Weaver, 2019). He acknowledged that some relationships were lost because of his sexual offence, accepted this, and then spoke in a way that was future focused.

Though socialisation needs were important within a person's accommodation, participants highlighted the potential practical challenges associated with this need. Participant five (Extract 10) explained the socialisation limits within the bounds of his own internalised stigma. Socialisation limits were also externally imposed:

Extract 15

My only niggle, is like, I've got a guy that side of me, and a guy that side of me, but, like, we're all in the same boat, we're all sex offenders, and yet you can't talk to them. You know. You're there, but, you've got neighbours that you can't talk too. Apart from like, good morning, good night, hello. Which, it's - I don't know, plays on your mind a bit, and your - they're there, but

> you're still lonely if you like. You know what I mean. (P15, Third-Sector Facility for People with Convictions)

Participant 15 discussed the externally imposed restrictions that inhibited his socialisation. He identified shared commonalities between himself and his neighbours, though this is the very commonality that dictated their separation. His neighbours were an absent presence. Though the potential for social interaction may be possible in terms of physical proximity, it is often not possible for people with sexual convictions due to license restrictions. These paradoxical experiences impacted the emotional state of the participant, increasing his feelings of isolation and loneliness. Once shelter and safety needs were met (Maslow, 1943; Taormina & Gao, 2013), the participant then desired social connections. These desires were restricted in the context of dictated living scenarios and necessary risk management considerations.

Accommodation environments have the potential to offer a social base in which people display and represent their self to others. Yet, there are instances in which either internally imposed barriers (internalised stigma), or externally imposed barriers (risk management), restrict a person with a sexual conviction in their ability to fulfil such socialisation needs. The interplay between accommodation, home, identity, and social connections, is iterated throughout this subtheme. For a person with a sexual conviction, having a *home* may mediate such negative, internalised stigma associated with being a 'sex offender', or, conversely, being a 'sex offender' could mean that a person with such conviction feels unable to ever achieve such sense of home.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to explore the accommodation experiences of people with sexual offence convictions, further uncovering what living environments mean to people with sexual convictions. In doing so, the analysis emphasised the importance of the psychosocial feelings associated with accommodation environments. That is, constructs central to feeling a sense of home were apparent. The importance of attaining accommodation to reduce reoffending is commonly iterated by government and scholars (HMPPS, 2018; Makarios et al., 2010; O'Leary, 2013; Social Exclusion Unit, 2002). What is less well documented, is the nature and meaning attached to such physical spaces. This research addressed this specifically in relation to people with sexual convictions, whilst simultaneously highlighting the overlap with desistance constructs.

Participant narratives captured what they felt they needed from their accommodation. Their accounts focused on the importance of the psychosocial feelings instilled from their environment, as opposed to material or tangible needs. Thus, such emphasis on the immaterial highlighted the importance of *home* (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016). The interdisciplinary literature pertaining to home was consulted (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016; Mallett, 2004) and Després' (1991) semantic categorisations of the term were apparent throughout the data.

Though there were various psychosocial aspects drawn upon by participants within the current study, some key needs related to freedom, ownership, control, goal attainment, safety, and socialising. Having a place to call their own to undertake actions with a sense of freedom and agency was valued. Safety, security, and stability were key

concerns. Participants wanted their environment to reflect a positive, non-offending identity, whereby social connections could be fostered. Although these psychosocial aspects were desired by participants, the ease with which these needs could be met varied greatly between participants. For example, people living within short-term facilities may feel greater challenges in establishing a sense of belonging and ownership. Safety and security needs are intertwined with the complexities of offence concealment and potential vigilante action/upheaval. The way in which people identify (or not) as a stigmatised 'sex offender' may impact the social connections they can foster within the home environment. This qualitative investigation allowed these varied and nuanced perspectives to be sought.

In highlighting these psychosocial home needs that were deemed important by participants, the analysis further sought to unpack the intertwined nature of theoretical constructs associated with home and the theoretical constructs associated with desistance. Desistance researchers have considered the importance of accommodation, but these arguments mainly stress the importance of attaining housing as an event that is external to the individual; for example, the ITDSO considers housing as a barrier to re-entry for people with sexual offence convictions (Göbbels et al., 2012). There is often a lack of definitional clarity regarding what it is about accommodation that is important for desistance. It is important to consider what physical structures and places mean to people to better understand desistance (Hunter & Farrall, 2015). This research has emphasised this. The psychological and social aspects tied to where a person lives dominate experiences, arguably much more so than the physical spaces themselves.

Indeed, there are some known exceptions that do appear to indicate some links between home and desistance for people with general convictions (Bowman & Ely, 2020; Hunter & Farrall, 2015; Pleggenkuhle et al., 2016). However, these tend not to draw explicit links between home and desistance, rather, it is more implicitly implied throughout the researchers' analytical discourses of qualitative extracts. For example, Bowman and Ely (2020) interviewed people with convictions within a supported housing scheme; participants displayed identity transformations, acted with a sense of agency, expressed feelings of hope, independence, and self-worth; all of which were tied to their experiences within the supported facility. Similarly, Pleggenkuhle et al. (2016) found that residents within another supported housing programme displayed *cognitive shifts* in their ability to exercise agency and change. They acknowledge that further research is required, suggesting that 'the theoretical mechanisms that link housing to desistance are less understood' (Pleggenkuhle et al., 2016, p. 381). Perhaps the mechanisms that Pleggenkuhle et al. (2016) are seeking, are the mechanisms aligned with feeling a sense of *home*.

Limitations, future directions, and implications

It is important to recognise the context in which this research was conducted. Applying a phenomenological critical realist lens meant that individual experiences were attended to, and any claims made about the findings must be done so within such a framework. As such, whilst rich data were obtained, there is inherent subjectivity in the interpretation of the results. The concept of home itself is highly individualised and operationalised in various ways (Coolen & Meesters, 2012; Mallett, 2004; Rapoport, 2000). What one

person perceives as home may be different for another individual. Similarly, what one person needs within accommodation may be different from another. Though in itself this is not a direct limitation of the findings, particularly as the investigation is situated within a critical realist paradigm, it is important that the subjective nature of the analysis is interpreted in this context.

Boccagni and Kusenbach (2020) have called for more comparative investigations regarding home. This research did not compare between living facilities, to do so would not have been appropriate for the phenomenological critical realist paradigm that underpinned the investigation. It was identifiable from the data, however, that certain living environments may be experienced and interpreted differently by individuals. One example of this is the level of control and freedom felt within a private, long-term space, compared to the level of control and freedom felt within a short-term stepping-stone facility. Further research that examines such differences may develop a better understanding of desistance promoting (or desistance inhibiting) places.

This research has important policy implications. Her Majesty's Prison and Probation Service business priorities stress the need for 'getting the basic rights' (HMPPS, 2018, p. 3) when considering prisoner resettlement. Accessing accommodation is one such basic need and is key to reducing reoffending (SEU, 2002). However, this paper has sought to emphasise that it is necessary to go beyond these basics, to consider more complex nuances surrounding the psychosocial needs instilled from living environments. This could enhance understanding of factors that are key to desistance (Hunter & Farrall, 2015).

Governments and practitioners do recognise the importance of accommodation for individuals leaving prison (SEU, 2002; HMPPS, 2018), and this is further emphasised throughout this research. Formal agents, such as probation staff, play an important role in the desistance process for people with convictions (Villeneuve et al., 2021). They can offer practical help and support that may facilitate pro-social identity changes. Staff working with individuals released from prison could identify what it is individuals need from accommodation, beyond just the attainment of the structural dwelling itself. One recommendation may be for probation staff to discuss these needs in more depth with individuals as they re-enter the community. It is however necessary to contextualise this recommendation considering the challenges accessing accommodation for prison leavers, such as accommodation availability, risk management considerations, and societal stigma (Clark, 2007; Clinks, 2017; Cooper, 2016). Nevertheless, considering the nature and role of environments, in terms of people's ability to reintegrate into society as hopeful, and active members of society, could explain why people with sexual convictions refrain from reoffending. Identifying ways in which to foster positive psychosocial feelings within living environments, could contribute to more prosocial outcomes for people with sexual convictions, ultimately contributing to safer, more inclusive societies for everyone.

Conclusion

The importance of accommodation is understudied within the sexual offending desistance literature. The value of having accommodation is recognised (Göbbels et al., 2012; McAlinden et al., 2017), though largely considered as an external situational circumstance. Some research insights have gone beyond this, considering what places mean to

people and the potential overlaps relating to desistance considerations (Hunter & Farrall, 2015; Reeves, 2016). This paper adds to this discourse further, going beyond the importance of accommodation as an external structural dwelling, unpacking the internal feelings and emotive aspects tied to such living spaces. In doing so, it has emphasised the relevance of *home* (Atkinson & Jacobs, 2016) for people with sexual convictions.

To consider home is to consider the presence of certain psychosocial concepts (e.g. control, ownership, identity, freedom, safety, goal-attainment, status, and relationships, to highlight just a few). People with sexual offence convictions may experience additional barriers relating to some of these concepts because of their offence type, meaning the extent to which these psychosocial aspects are felt within a living space, is variable. These concepts are apparent when interrogating the meaning of home, and present similarities to theoretical concepts associated with desistance (Weaver, 2019). The findings in this paper demonstrate the complex nuances surrounding what home means to people with sexual convictions. The varied accommodation environments in which people with sexual convictions live, are intertwined with emotions, feelings, and cognitions. Understanding this is important to better establish the links between house, home, and desistance.

Note

1. Approved Premises are facilities for people with convictions who are under probation requirements after being released from prison. They are not an accommodation provider; their main purpose is for the risk management and supervision of people deemed high risk.

Open Scholarship

This article has earned the Center for Open Science badge for Open Materials. The materials are openly accessible at .

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Data availability statement

Due to the nature of this research, and the ethical sensitivity of the qualitative interview transcripts, a full supporting data set is not available. Further anonymised findings are available in in Nottingham Trent University's Institutional Repository at https://irep.ntu.ac.uk/id/eprint/43366/

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