**BACKGROUND**

Risk, Need and Responsivity guides most offender rehabilitation. External responsivity is, arguably, the least well understood concept in this model. The relationship between prison officers and youth offenders (YOs) is a key ingredient of intervention. Understanding how attitudes inform relational frameworks is important for effective responsivity.

**RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- What are prison officers’ attitudes towards youth offenders?
- What is the nature of the prison officer-youth offender relationship?
- What factors impact the prison officer-youth offender relationship?

**METHOD**

- Development of semi-structured interview schedule
- Initial pilot interview to refine questions & interview style
- Individual interviews (45-60 minutes) by second author
- All interviews audio-recorded & transcribed
- Collection of demographic information

**ANALYSIS**

Thematic Analysis at semantic level
Braun & Clarke’s (2006) six-stage guidelines
Inductive approach with cut-and-sort technique
Development of thematic map

**CREDIBILITY CHECKS**

Multiple researchers & audit trail
Agreement at coding, identifying themes & defining themes stages
Grounding themes in data examples

**PARTICIPANTS**

- 13 male prison officers
- 8 married
- Aged 20 – 40+
- 6 educated to degree level
- 1 – 7+ years’ experience

**DISCUSSION**

- Prison context shaped officer attitudes towards young offenders
- Over time officers shifted preconception that they needed to be strict and regimental
- Different and distinct as YOs versus similar and connected as humans
- Paradoxes need to be identified and acknowledged
- Shared experience promoted empathy and hope
- Hopeful and positive attitudes towards change can be fostered
- Adolescence as a temporary and malleable life stage
- Consider YOs’ developmental characteristics
- Relational framework was fraternal, with concerns that trust would be misused
- Reconcile dual responsibilities of security and rehabilitation using para-kin model

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