A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in

Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective.

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Abstract

School exclusion rates in England have risen consistently in recent years, and Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and other alternative provisions (APs) are often destinations for those excluded. Many of these young people have identified special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). Whilst there is a large body of research around school exclusion, and some specifically looking at 'good practice' in PRUs, very little research has looked at Educational Psychology (EP) practice in these provisions, and how Educational Psychologists (EPs) can be utilised most effectively. This is particularly relevant for Key Stage 4 (KS4), given the high levels of exclusion in this age group and consequently, the poor life outcomes associated with this cohort as they transition to adulthood. This study aimed to explore 'successful' EP practice in KS4 PRUs and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this.

Taking a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) from a social constructionist perspective, five joint interviews were conducted with EPs and commissioners of EPs working in KS4 PRU settings. 12 participants (six EPs and six commissioners) from five London boroughs were included. Findings frame the EP-commissioner relationship as 'parents' who play a 'parental' role and function, impacting all other aspects of the system or 'family'. Relationships across the 'family' were fundamental for facilitating change through joint working, reflection and learning. The importance of shared values, goals, approaches and language were highlighted, such as strengths-based approaches, prioritising young people's involvement and agency, flexibly supporting needs, going above and beyond, taking a systemic approach and planning for positive futures. Literature relating to 'containment' (Bion, 1962b) in APs and ideas related to systems psychodynamics (Neumann, 1999) are discussed in relation to EP practice in PRUs.

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the research

The Educational Psychologist's (EP's) role has long been subject to debate, with many in the profession seeking to clarify its purpose and impact (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). School exclusion is also increasingly subject to discussion and research (Timpson, 2019). There has been a gradual rise in school exclusion rates since 2012 (Department for Education (DfE), 2021), with significant overrepresentation of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in exclusion statistics (Graham et al., 2019).

Alternative Provisions (APs), such as Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and other alternative educational providers, play a key role in meeting the needs of those excluded or at risk of exclusion (Mills & Thompson, 2018). EPs are important link professionals to these settings, due to their role in SEND provision. Despite this and the growing body of research into APs, there has been very little research about EP practice in these settings. This thesis explores successful EP practice in PRUs and aims to identify and explain the factors and mechanisms that facilitate this.

This introductory chapter will define 'AP' and 'exclusion', before outlining the current national context and government priorities. It will examine the EP role and the researcher's local context in relation to the area of study and give a brief overview of the CYP attending APs. Subsequently, it will outline the researcher's position and the rationale and aims of the research.

1.2 Defining 'Alternative Provision' and 'Exclusion'

1.2.1 Alternative Provision

In this research 'AP' is defined as education outside school, arranged by local authorities (LAs) or schools. It refers to PRUs (run by LAs), AP Academies, AP Free Schools and independent APs, delivered by charities and other organisations (House of Commons Education Committee (HoCEC), 2018). Attendance may be for "school exclusion, behaviour issues, school refusal, or short- or long-term illness", although most often exclusion or behaviour issues are cited as reasons in the literature (ISOS Partnership, 2018; Mills & Thompson, 2018, p. 15).

1.2.2 School exclusion

Exclusion, a sanction used by schools, can be either fixed-term or permanent. Fixed-term exclusion is when a child is temporarily removed from school. This for a set period and can cover up to 45 days across an academic year (DfE, 2017). On the sixth consecutive day of a fixed-term exclusion, a school is required to organise AP for the student, until they return to school (DfE, 2017). Permanent exclusion is viewed as a last resort and means a pupil will not go back to that school (DfE, 2019a). In this case, the LA is responsible for organising the pupil's provision (DfE, 2017).

1.2.3 AP placement

Not all students attending AP have been excluded. Some may still be 'on roll' in their mainstream school but attending AP, with the aim of improving their behaviour or having their needs met more appropriately (Malcolm, 2018). This might be part time (on a shared placement with mainstream) or full time (with the school overseeing their education) (HoCEC, 2018). Even when excluded, students are often on short-term AP placements, with the aim of reintegrating into mainstream, but some can be on longer term or permanent placements (Mills & Thompson, 2018). This can be after several unsuccessful reintegration attempts (ISOS

Partnership, 2018). Consequently, students at APs display a range of needs and often require individualised planning and provision to support them to progress and achieve meaningful outcomes after leaving (DfE, 2018a).

1.3 Context and background

1.3.1 National exclusion statistics

Recent figures suggest there are 234 PRUs, 79 AP academies and 39 AP free schools in England, with around 48,033 pupils being educated in these and other independent APs (Mills & Thompson, 2018). 79% of pupils attending have identified SEND and 11.2% have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), much higher than the 14.9% and 2.9% in mainstream schools respectively (Mills & Thompson, 2018). Pupil numbers in PRUs (equivalent data for other APs is not available) increased by 29% between 2012 and 2018, compared to an overall population rise of 7% (DfE, 2018b; ISOS Partnership, 2018).

Permanent exclusion in state funded schools consistently rose between 2012/2013 and 2017/18 (DfE, 2019a), from a rate of 0.06 (6 pupils per 10,000) to 0.10 (10 pupils per 10,000). This was largely due to increased secondary school exclusions. In 2018/19, overall figures remained the same as 2017/8, with exclusion rates at 0.10 (DfE, 2021) (Figure 1). This was the first year where there had not been a reported increase in permanent exclusions, which may be due to a concerted effort to review and tackle rises in exclusions (e.g. Timpson, 2019). More recent data is not yet available.

Figure 1 *National statistics for permanent exclusion across school types (DfE, 2021)*

Permanent exclusion rates, by school type, National, 2006/07 to 2018/19

● Permanent exclusions (rate) (England)
■ Permanent exclusions (rate) (special, England)
▲ Permanent exclusions (rate) (state-funded primary, England)
✚ Permanent exclusions (rate) (state-funded secondary, England)
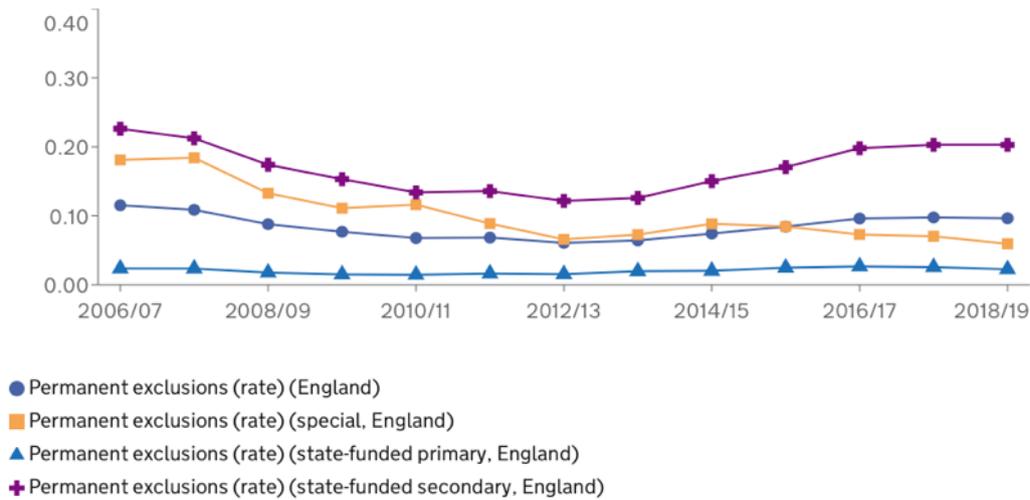
Source: School Census

Contrastingly, the number of fixed-term exclusions across all state-funded schools has increased by 7% from 2017/18 to 2018/19, with the rate increasing from 5.08 to 5.36 (DfE, 2021). This is in line with an increasing trend since 2013/14 and is largely due to rising fixed-term exclusion rates in secondary schools. There was a slight decrease in fixed-term exclusions in special schools and primary schools from 2017/18-2018/19.

Figure 2 *National statistics for fixed-term exclusions across school types (DfE, 2021)*

Fixed period exclusion rates, by school type, National, 2006/07 to 2018/19

● Fixed period exclusions (rate) (England)
■ Fixed period exclusions (rate) (special, England)
▲ Fixed period exclusions (rate) (state-funded primary, England)
✚ Fixed period exclusions (rate) (state-funded secondary, England)
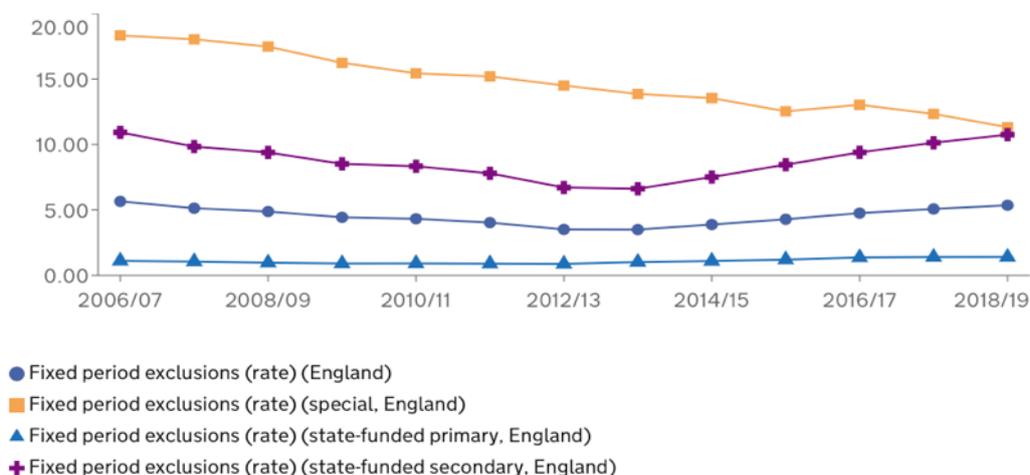
Source: School Census

Notably, while exclusion rates have increased since 2012/3, they have not reached the historically high rates reported in the 1990s, nor passed the heights of 2006/7 (Timpson, 2019). Reasons behind rises in exclusions since 2012/13 are complex, multi-faceted and systemic, and are often politicised. In some reviews, rises have been linked to a number of broad societal factors, such as rising poverty and increasing mental health diagnoses (Partridge et al., 2020), and educational factors such as, a more rigorous and 'narrowing' curriculum, and a shift in behaviour management strategies, towards a more zero-tolerance approach (Partridge et al., 2020; Perera, 2020; Timpson, 2019).

Linked to both societal and educational factors, there have been changes in funding for education and local authorities in the last decade (Graham et al., 2019). The Institute for Fiscal Studies (Britton et al., 2020) shows that when incorporating cuts to local authority spending, and the increased responsibility of schools to provide services, real time spending per pupil in England fell by 9% between 2009/10 and 2019/20. In particular, schools leaders report funding loss impacting the most vulnerable students, who are also those more likely to be excluded (Partridge et al., 2020).

Figure 3 *UK Education spending (2020-21 prices) (Britton et al., 2020)*
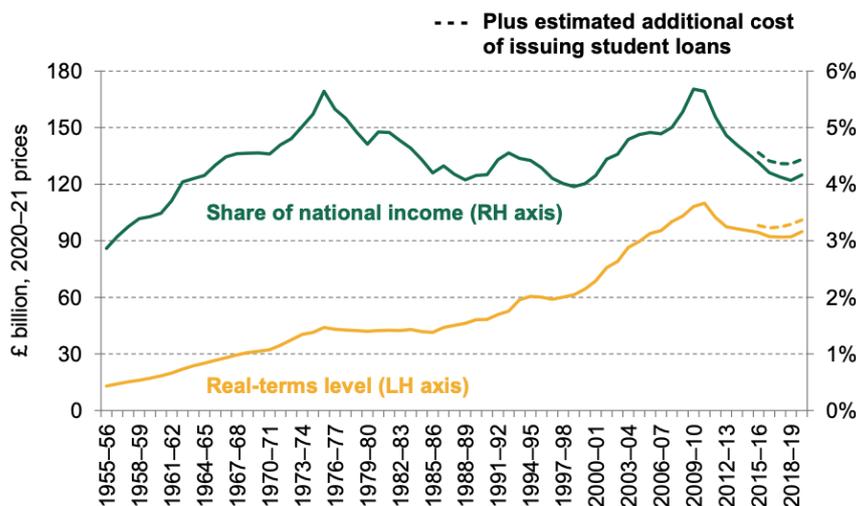
While Figure 3 presents a very generic picture of UK education spending and does not capture the nuances of spending in different areas of education, the graph suggests links between a fall in exclusions and an increase in spending from 2006, and the rise in exclusions from 2012/13 following a sharp decrease in spending in 2009/10. Provision of other preventative and supportive services, such as youth services, and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS), which have similarly faced funding cuts since 2010 (Harris et al., 2019; YMCA, 2020), have also been linked to rises in exclusions and other negative outcomes for CYP (Partridge et al., 2020; YMCA, 2020).

1.3.2 Exclusions in Pupil Referral Units

Data on exclusions in PRUs has been collected since 2013/14. The rate of exclusions has gradually increased across subsequent years, aside from a slight drop from 2015/16 – 2016/17. The rate increased from 0.16 in 2017/18 to 0.22 in 2018/19 (DfE, 2021).

Figure 4 *Permanent exclusion rates in PRUs, 2013/14 to 2018/19 (DfE, 2021)*

Permanent exclusion rates in pupil referral units, 13/14 to 18/19

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Permanent exclusions	13	17	21	21	27	36
Permanent exclusions (rate)	0.10	0.13	0.14	0.13	0.16	0.22

Source: School Census

Fixed term exclusions have also risen during this time. 2017/18-2018/19 saw the highest rate of increase since data was first collected, moving from 158.40 to 191.09.

Figure 5 *Fixed period exclusion rates in PRUs, 2013/14 to 2018/19 (DfE, 2021)*

Fixed period exclusion rates in pupil referral units, 13/14 to 18/19

	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
Fixed period exclusions	15,536	19,409	23,399	25,815	26,504	30,831
Fixed period exclusions (rate)	120.50	142.89	155.84	164.75	158.40	191.09

Source: School Census

Notably rates are calculated as a proportion of the headcount, potentially leading to higher rates in PRUs as there is higher pupil mobility between settings (DfE, 2021). This data shows that PRUs are not exempt from rises in exclusions, despite being designed to understand and manage these needs and support CYP to reintegrate into mainstream schools. This demonstrates the pertinence of this research topic for the EP profession and for the education system, to better understand how to meet these students' needs, and avoid further increases in exclusions from PRUs.

1.3.3 National government priorities

In research and the media, school exclusion is often linked to national concerns such as knife crime (Schraer, 2019, March 8), homelessness (Pirrie et al., 2011), and other negative life outcomes (Malcolm, 2018). The increasing levels of 'hidden', unlawful exclusions (BBC News, 2019, May 7; Timpson, 2019) and the impact of these on the most vulnerable (Briggs, 2010; The Guardian, 2019, September 2) are also reported. Consequently, Oxford University were recently given a £2.6m grant to investigate exclusions (Allen-Kinross, 2019, October 2) and the government commissioned the recent Timpson Review (2019) into exclusions, to help understand and tackle the issue. Additionally, the government launched a £4 million AP innovation fund in their paper 'Creating Opportunities for All' (DfE, 2018a), in an attempt to reform AP.

There has been examination by the HoCEC (2018) of the paths of "forgotten children", looking at "AP and the scandal of ever-increasing exclusions" (p. 1). The report found quality of AP varied, with some outstanding and some very poor, especially regarding teaching practice. Some AP staff lacked suitable training and development. It called for increased collaboration and transparency between mainstream and AP settings, to ensure best practice and suitable provision (HoCEC, 2018). This correlates with Ofsted's (2016) recommendation that schools work harder to ensure quality education and safeguarding in APs.

The DfE commissioned some investigative qualitative research involving 276 schools and 200 APs (Mills & Thompson, 2018). Findings advocated for a holistic, joined-up approach between APs and mainstream, and early identification of pupils' needs prior to AP referrals. Small class sizes and tailored support were strengths in APs, and parents/carers and CYP were positive about their experiences of AP compared to mainstream. Various external professionals were referred to, with EPs mentioned briefly in relation to multi-disciplinary working, ensuring CYP's needs are met, assessing for SEND and aiding transitions and reintegration (Mills & Thompson, 2018). Despite these brief recommendations, there is a lack of attention and clarity on the EP role in APs in this research and across other key government literature (DfE, 2018a; Timpson, 2019).

1.3.4 Other reviews and recommendations

Several other organisations have also commissioned reviews, including The Prince's Trust (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014), The Centre for Social Justice (CfSJ) (2018) and the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA) (Partridge et al., 2020). Findings from these reviews recommend the government supports the alternative education sector to develop a kite-mark quality system to ensure quality provision across AP services (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014). More transparency and accountability for how and

why schools use APs is suggested by the CfSJ (2018). It is also recommended that Ofsted's guidelines for APs should be revised to focus on the success of AP as an intervention for students' needs (CfSJ, 2018; Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014). Thomson and Pennacchia (2014) suggest that schools should look for evidence of core values and practices before selecting APs, should regularly examine exclusion practices and use of APs in their own settings, and work closely with their community partners.

Relatedly, Partridge et al. (2020) suggest that the "government should invest in multi-agency teams to support preventative work by head teachers", and "create a 'what works' fund to assess the impact of promising approaches to reducing exclusions" (p. 6-7). The RSA also noted the need to recognise the importance of pastoral work when designing progression routes for school staff and the need for inclusion, and for data on exclusions and managed moves to carry more weight in Ofsted inspections (Partridge et al., 2020). Recommendations to both government and school leaders also highlight the importance of investing in pastoral staff, paying attention to primary to secondary transfer support, and better engaging families as joint partners in education (Partridge et al., 2020). Perera (2020) from the Institute of Race Relations criticises the government focus on expanding APs, instead calling for more mainstream schooling reform to tackle the issue of exclusion, particularly the disproportionate and discriminatory exclusion of the black-working class.

Each report aims to address what is in essence a complex, systemic problem that requires major reform. Such systemic and complex challenges often benefit from a psychological perspective, however, only Partridge et al. (2020) specifically mentioned EPs, and this was in the context of delays in assessments, due to lack of EPs available - one EP reflected "we've become a reactive, rather than preventative service, which is incredibly frustrating" (p.61). With AP a government priority, rising exclusions and added pressure coming from such organisations and

charities, it is imperative the EP profession understands its role and potential impact in such provisions, to best contribute towards positive outcomes for the vulnerable students attending.

1.3.5 Role of the EP

Uncertainty around the EP role in APs is unsurprising, given the historical debate about the professions' distinctive contribution (Cameron, 2006). Fallon, Woods and Rooney (2010) define EPs as "scientist-practitioners" offering "consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group or individual levels in educational, community and care settings" (p. 4). These functions, originally identified in the Currie Report (Scottish Executive, 2002), are now commonplace in EP practice and training (British Psychological Society (BPS), 2019; Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC), 2015). The remaining question is "*how* these… operationalise within particular employment contexts" (Fallon et al., 2010, p. 4).

Recent research on the EP role in specific contexts has shown creativity and variation in the role, across age groups and types of provision (e.g. Jackson Taft et al., 2019; March & Moir, 2018; Morris & Atkinson, 2018; Winter & Bunn, 2019). However, it has also shown that the scope of the role is not always understood by schools (Bagley & Hallam, 2017; Winter & Bunn, 2019), and that funding constraints (Buser, 2013; Richardson, 2018, December 4), a move to traded services (Lee & Woods, 2017) and an increase in statutory assessment workloads (DfE, 2019b; Ofsted, 2018) affect the breadth of work EPs deliver (Bagley & Hallam, 2017; Lee & Woods, 2017). Thus, the role does not always operationalise in the way EPs would like (O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018).

1.3.6 CYP attending APs

Almost half (47%) of all CYP in APs are aged 15 or 16, and 70% of AP students are boys, compared to 51% in state-funded mainstream schools (DfE, 2018a). Compared with the

mainstream school population, children from "black Caribbean; mixed white and black Caribbean; mixed white and black African; gypsy/ Roma; Irish; and travellers of Irish heritage backgrounds are all over-represented in AP" (Mills & Thompson, 2018, p. 16). Children attending APs are also some of the most vulnerable in society, often living in complex systems; they are more likely to have SEND, qualify for free school meals and be known to the police and social services (Graham et al., 2019; Malcolm, 2018; Mills & Thompson, 2018; Taylor, 2012).

Many have had adverse childhood experiences or insecure attachment relationships (HoCEC, 2018; Malcolm, 2018; Timpson, 2019), affecting the way they manage their emotions and behaviour, develop and maintain relationships and relate to the world (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Music, 2018). Such concepts from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) suggest why positive relationships and having a 'secure base' at APs are important to CYP. These difficulties can impact a child's ability to engage in learning and achieve qualifications, affecting later life outcomes (DfE, 2016; Taylor, 2012). On average, pupils in APs achieve poorer academic outcomes compared to their peers and face an increased likelihood of being 'not in education, employment or training' (NEET) or ending up in the criminal justice system (DfE, 2018a; ISOS Partnership, 2018).

Given EPs' psychological skills and knowledge, and training as "complex problem-solvers" (Cameron, 2006), they are well placed to support a range of complex and challenging educational difficulties (Fallon et al., 2010; Woods, 2012), such as those faced by CYP in APs. Research considering how this work operationalises and what leads to its success, is therefore pertinent, to promote positive outcomes for this cohort.

1.3.7 Local context

The researcher's LA runs a traded service with a large team of EPs, who deliver a range of statutory and non-statutory work. One of the local priorities is 'Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) and Inclusion'. Considering the 'forgotten' nature of many AP children (BBC News, 2019, May 7; HoCEC 2018) and the high percentage of SEMH needs in APs (Malcolm, 2018), research exploring EP practice in these provisions is highly relevant to inclusion. More specifically, the service is focusing on 'belonging', especially for those with SEND and EHCPs; EPs are encouraged to work systemically to help schools foster a sense of belonging. However, EPs in the LA have spoken of the challenges of engaging in such work in APs. Therefore, this research complements local priorities and presents a useful opportunity to inform future practice in the service.

1.3.8 Covid-19

In March 2020, when seeking ethical approval for this research, the outbreak of Covid-19 in the UK worsened, and the nation was put into 'lockdown'. This involved social distancing guidelines, including school closures for 2 months, until June 2020. Along with children of 'key workers', the government kept schools open for vulnerable children - those with EHCPs, Looked After Children (LAC) or those known to social care - in an attempt to safeguard their education and welfare (DfE, 2020). Many children attending APs fall within these categories, or come from families with significant socioeconomic deprivation (Mills & Thompson, 2018). However, the up-take for school places among this cohort was variable.

In April 2020, up-take was described by the BBC as "worryingly low", with some areas of the country reporting numbers of vulnerable students attending as only 10% of those offered a place (Razzle, 2020, April 9). Media reports highlighted the stark decrease in child protection referrals during lockdown (Weale, 2020, April 8), suggesting an increased risk to such pupils

without the daily protection and consistency provided by schools. Fears about the impact on the most vulnerable were widely reported, including concerns about increased risk of abuse and exploitation, increased involvement in county lines and other criminal activities, and a lack of access to basic necessities (BBC News, 2020, March 31; Grierson & Walker, 2020, April 13; Malnick, 2020, April 11).

Throughout the pandemic, which has continued to impact life and schooling in 2021, CYP attending APs have faced increased risk of harm and economic deprivation (Cain, 2020, April 8). Research has suggested an impact on a range of CYP outcomes (The Scottish Government, 2020) and AP staff have faced a challenging task in safeguarding the education and welfare of their students during this time. EP work has been significantly affected, particularly during the summer term of 2020, with much of it completed remotely. For information on how this research accounted for the Covid-19 context, see chapter 3.

1.4 Researcher's Position

This study has been influenced by the researcher's national and local context and existing literature on AP - critically reviewed in chapter 2. Additionally, the researcher's own professional experiences and beliefs have impacted the study and will now be considered, with reflections in the first person. This style of writing will be adopted for the remainder of the thesis, in keeping with the methodology adopted.

1.4.1 Previous professional experience

My research position is significantly influenced by my previous experience working in an AP, before EP training. During this time, I witnessed the level of difficulty in the young people's lives, often due to a range of complex, systemic factors. I experienced the importance of systems working together to bring about change for the pupils, but also the difficulties in facilitating this 'successfully'. I also experienced a significant lack of psychological training

or support when working with the pupils – encountering only one EP across several years – and keenly desired more training and insight into how to meet their complex needs.

I was consistently struck by the negative 'narratives' that many of the CYP adopted, shaped by their past experiences and relationships. These were often reinforced and retold not just by the young people, but those around them. The focus was often on their negative experiences and incidents of 'failure', reinforcing a cyclical narrative over time. This experience influenced my decision to take a strengths-based and solution-focussed approach to this research (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007), drawing on ideas from positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), in an attempt to alter the narratives linked to such CYP. This is similar to approaches taken by other researchers in the field, with excluded CYP (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Lawrence, 2011).

1.4.2 EP Training

During my EP training, I have become aware of the potential difference between the espoused EP role and its reality in practice, especially for vulnerable CYP attending APs. Additionally, being on placement across several London boroughs, I have witnessed the prevalence of unidentified SEND in children arriving at APs and have learnt about the generational and systemic trauma experienced by some pupils who are either at risk of exclusion, or already attending APs. Consequently, I have developed an interest in how the systems around a child can influence their narrative, experiences and outcomes.

Figure 6 *Diagram of Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems Model*
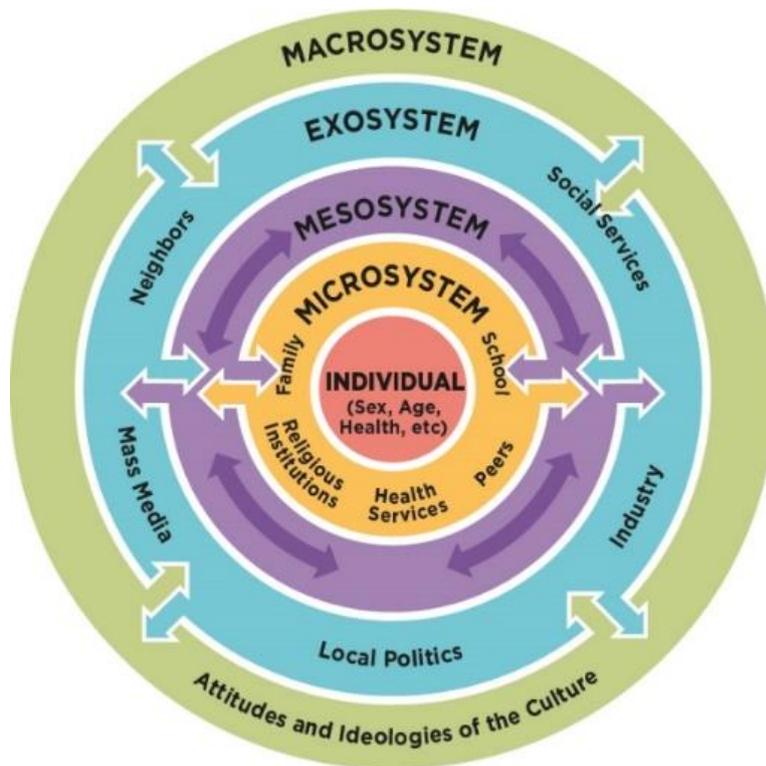
Many EP doctoral training courses draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model (figure 6), symbolising a shift in the profession from a within-child perspective, to more systemic and interactionist principles (Fox, 2009). Aligned with these principles, I recognise the importance of working with the systems around vulnerable children to affect change. Further, influenced by a person-centred approach (Kelly, 1955) and the growing body of research which has asked CYP 'what works' in these settings, I believe it is important to consider whether the adults around them – especially those of us who are trained to do so – are listening and responding to CYP's voices (Billington, 2006). My position as a Trainee EP (TEP) and a researcher has also been influenced by the systemic and psychodynamic perspectives privileged at the Tavistock.

Each of the factors have influenced the relativist, social constructionist stance that I took in this research. Acknowledging my investment in the subject area, I allowed my own interpretations and experiences to form part of the research process. Thus, my position influenced the way I conducted recruitment and interviews (joint and co-constructed), the structure, content and

stance of the interviews (strengths-based) and the choice of data analysis. Further information on these philosophical and methodological aspects is provided in chapter 3.

1.5 Research outline

1.5.1 Research aims

This research aims to explore 'successful' EP practice in KS4 PRUs and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this. This is from the perspective of EPs and commissioners of EPs in these settings (e.g. headteachers or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)). Joint interviews were conducted to ensure findings were co-constructed between EPs and commissioners, and to attend to the relational factors involved in commissioning and delivering successful EP work. This is in line with the systemic and social constructionist perspective I adopted as the researcher.

1.5.2 Research questions

In previous AP research, solution-focussed concepts (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007) have often been drawn upon, focussing on 'what works' from the perspective of CYP, teachers and parents. A similar perspective, with EPs and their commissioners, is adopted in this research using two research questions:

1. According to EPs and their commissioners what does successful EP practice look like in KS4 PRUs?

2. What are the factors and mechanisms that contribute to successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs?

1.5.3 Research focus: KS4 PRUs

While there are numerous types of AP, this research focussed on PRUs to ensure that provisions involved had a similar set up. PRUs make up the highest percentage of known APs, are maintained by a LA and exist to provide education to children who would not otherwise receive it, such as those excluded (Mills & Thompson, 2018). They are overseen by OFSTED and often have a LA EP linked to them. Other APs, such as academies, free-schools, or independent providers, are often less regulated and show vast disparity in practice (HoCEC, 2018; Ofsted, 2016).

KS4 was chosen due to high rates of exclusion in this age group – 47% of CYP in APs are in Year 11 (Mills & Thompson, 2018). There is also a reduced likelihood of reintegration into mainstream at this stage of education (HoCEC, 2018), meaning support provided through PRUs has a significant and direct impact on post-16 choices and future life outcomes for CYP. With the literature identifying difficulties in facilitating positive change for this cohort (DfE, 2018a; Mills & Thompson, 2018), and little focus on the EP role in these settings, it is pertinent to consider how EPs can successfully support these CYP. This is especially relevant given the recent extension of the EP role, to work with 16-25 year olds and support those with SEND in preparing for adulthood (DfE, 2015). Further information on choices related to participants and methodology is provided in chapter 3.

Chapter 2: Preliminary Literature Review

This chapter outlines a preliminary literature review which was conducted to explore current research in the field and inform the design of the study. In line with the constructivist grounded theory (CGT) method (Charmaz, 2014), a second literature review was conducted (chapter 5) after data collection and analysis, to inform the theory generating stage of the research.

2.1 Search strategy

The literature search aimed to identify empirical research on APs/CYP excluded and asked two questions:

1. What are the experiences of those who have been excluded AND/OR those attending/working in AP?
2. What does the literature say about practice in AP and 'what works?'

The search was carried out on 03.09.20 on EBSCOhost. The search strategy and inclusion and exclusion criteria used are shown in Figure 7 and Table 1. Several search terms were experimented with before the terms in Figure 7 were chosen. Adding 'alternative education' provided a much wider range of results, however when abstracts were reviewed many of these papers were not relevant to CYP, but rather focussed on educational programmes in health or prison settings. Based on the search strategy below, 23 studies (Table 2) were included in the literature review.

Figure 7 *Search strategy for preliminary literature review*

Search Terms

| TI 'alternative provision' | OR | TI 'pupil referral unit' | OR | TI 'school exclusion' |

APA PsycINFO, APA PsycARTICLES, APA PsycBOOKS, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection, PEP Archive, Education Source, ERIC, SocINDEX with Full Text, MEDLINE, eBook Collection (EBSCOhost), Library, Information Science & Technology Abstracts, CINAHL

410 Results

Search Limiters/Filters

1. Peer reviewed journals only
2. English language only
3. Papers published 2010 – 2020

155 Results

Duplicates removed

68 Results

Title/Abstract Screening

19 papers

Further relevant literature (Cajic-Seigneur and Hodgson, 2016; Jalali and Morgan, 2017; Pillay, Dunbar-Krige, & Mostert, 2013; Parker, Paget, Ford and Gwernan-Jones, 2016) was found using references from chosen papers and government reviews (snowballing).

Table 1 *Inclusion and exclusion criteria for preliminary literature review*

Study Feature	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Type of publication	Peer reviewed journal	Not available in a peer reviewed journal	Research published in peer-reviewed journals has been evaluated by expert reviewers and met quality standards.
Language of study	Full article published in English	Full/part of article not available in English	To allow the whole study to be evaluated (translation services not available).
Country of study	Studies conducted in England	Studies conducted outside England	The guidance and legislation for APs and school exclusion is specific to England. Practice in other countries would be affected by differing political contexts and legislation.
Date of study	Article published in 2010 - 2020	Article published before 2010	This was to ensure included studies of APs/school exclusion were based within the current political and funding context as discussed in chapter 1.
Type of study	Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods empirical research studies	Literature reviews	To gain an understanding of what the evidence says works in practice, based on primary and empirical data.
Subject/focus/participants	Exploring AP/school exclusion from perspective of CYP, families, AP/school staff and other professionals, relating to experiences or successful practice OR Studies that examine practice/intervention strategies for APs or for CYP who have experienced school exclusion.	Studies examining factors that lead to exclusion, exclusion rates for particular groups or preventative intervention strategies pre-exclusion. Studies examining particular political phenomena in APs, or other specific phenomena in an AP setting e.g. language.	This review is examining what the research says about practice in APs or for those who have already faced school exclusion, and how this relates to EP practice.

Table 2 *Studies included in the preliminary literature review*

Full reference	Participants, sample and method
Atkinson, G., & Rowley, J. (2019). Pupils' views on mainstream reintegration from alternative provision: A q methodological study. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 24*(19), 339-356.	9 primary and secondary students (10-16 years) post reintegration; interviews using q set methodology
Briggs D. (2010). "The world is out to get me, bruv": life after school "exclusion." *Safer Communities, 9*(2), 9–19.	20 excluded young people (aged 15-16) ethnographic research using interviews
Bruder, C., & Spensley, J. (2015). Developing psychological services at a Pupil Referral Unit. *Psychology of Education Review, 39*(2), 71–75.	1 year pilot - outcome measures and questionnaires from 9 participating pupils and 6 PRU staff. Focussed evaluative conversation with PRU management team.
Cockerill, T. (2019). Pupils attending a shared placement between a school and alternative provision: Is a sense of school belonging the key to success? *Educational and Child Psychology, 36*(2), 23–33.	Data from 3 LAs (both schools and AP). Interviews with 19 members of staff and 11 pupils on shared placement (aged 10-16)
Cullen, K., & Monroe, J. (2010). Using positive relationships to engage the disengaged: An educational psychologist-initiated project involving professional sports input to a pupil referral unit. *Educational and Child Psychology, 27*(1), 64–78.	6 week project – EP evaluation of 10 participating students (including attendance records and observations), 10 pupil interviews, focus groups with PRU staff, phone interviews with parents of participants and project staff (external to PRU)
Cajic-Seigneur, M., & Hodgson, A. (2016). Alternative educational provision in an area of deprivation in London. *London Review of Education, 14*(2), 25-37.	Case study of one AP. Range of data collection including analysis of programme records, student's files and progress reviews. Group discussions with staff and semi-structured interviews with programme managers. Student questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 10 students.
Embeita, C. (2019). Reintegration to secondary education following school exclusion: An exploration of the relationship between home and school from the perspective of parents. *Educational and Child Psychology, 36*(3), 18–32.	3 parents interviewed (2 post successful reintegration, 1 no successful reintegration yet)

Farouk, S. (2014). From mainstream school to pupil referral unit: A change in teachers' self-understanding. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 20*(1), 19–31.

Interviews with 3 AP teachers

Gazeley, L. (2012). The impact of social class on parent–professional interaction in school exclusion processes: deficit or disadvantage? *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 16*(3), 297–311.

Interviews with 13 school-based professionals, 4 mothers of excluded pupils and 14 non-school based professionals (e.g. AP staff, LA staff etc)

Hamilton, P., & Morgan, G. (2018). An exploration of the factors that lead to the successful progression of students in alternative provision. *Educational and Child Psychology, 35*(1), 80–95.

Interviews with 8 young people (aged 16-18) who had successfully progressed to college after AP

Hart, N. (2013). What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18*(2), 196–212.

Interviews with 6 children (aged 9-13 years), on a PRU placement, and 4 staff members

Jalali, R. & Morgan, G. (2018). "They won't let me back." Comparing student perceptions across primary and secondary Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 23*(1), 55–68.

13 interviews with students (aged 7–16) from 3 PRUs

Lawrence, N. (2011) What makes for a successful reintegration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project, *Educational Psychology in Practice, 27*(3), 213–226.

Focus groups with 11 PRU staff, six mainstream staff and a member of the Behaviour Support Service

Mainwaring, D., & Hallam, S. (2010). "Possible selves" of young people in a mainstream secondary school and a pupil referral unit: A comparison. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 15*(2), 153–169.

Possible-selves task with 25 students in Year 11 (across a mainstream school and PRU)

Malcolm, A. (2019). Turning points in a qualitatively different social space: Young adults' reflections of alternative provision. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties, 24*(1), 84-99.

Retrospective life history interviews with 18 young adults in early to mid-20s who had attended AP

Malcolm, A. (2020) Heads of alternative provision: committed to realising young peoples' potential in an unregulated market. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 24*(5), 513-526

3 interviews and 20 surveys with AP managers

Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, D. (2018). The emotional learning of educators working in alternative provision. *Educational Studies: Journal of the American Educational Studies Association, 54*(3), 303–318.

Interviews with 7 AP staff

Michael, S. & Frederickson, N. (2013). Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: pupil perspectives, *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18*(4), 407–422.

Interviews with 16 students (aged 12-16) from PRUs

Parker, C., Paget, A., Ford, T., & Gwernan-Jones, R. (2016). 'he was excluded for the kind of behaviour that we thought he needed support with…' A qualitative analysis of the experiences and perspectives of parents whose children have been excluded from school. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, *21*(1), 133-151.

Interviews with 35 parents of 37 excluded children (aged 5–12).

Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H., & Mostert, J. (2013). Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 18*(3), 310-326.

Written tasks with 13 learners (aged 11-14) who had reintegrated. Interviews with 4 learners. Questionnaires to 14 parents and 7 mainstream teachers. Interviews with 3 professionals.

Putwain, D. W., Nicholson, L. J., & Edwards, J. L. (2016). Hard to reach and hard to teach: Supporting the self-regulation of learning in an alternative provision secondary school. *Educational Studies, 42*(1), 1–18.

1 AP for a month-long study. 29 hours of lessons observed, interviews with 35 students (aged 14-16) and 37 staff

Trotman, D., Enow, L., & Tucker, S. (2019). Young people and alternative provision: Perspectives from participatory–collaborative evaluations in three UK local authorities. *British Educational Research Journal, 45*(2), 219–237.

Interviews with 200 participant CYP, 30 managers and stakeholders, 8 parents of non-attending pupils and LA officers and school governments.

Trotman, D., Tucker, S. & Martyn, M. (2015). Understanding problematic pupil behaviour: perceptions of pupils and behaviour coordinators on secondary school exclusion in an English city. *Educational Research, 57*(3), 237–253

Interviews with 49 pupils in Year 9 (aged 13-14), 8 behaviour coordinators from 7 secondary schools and 2 APs

2.2 Findings from the literature

Key findings have been synthesised into themes representing those involved in the system: pupil perspective, parental perspective, staff perspective and practice, psychological practice and provision, and implications for EPs.

2.2.1 Pupil perspective

16 of the included studies were emancipatory, directly considering pupil perspectives as part of their data collection. Resonant of the focus on pupil voice in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) and the Children and Families Act (2014), these studies allowed CYP who are often 'forgotten' to be heard.

2.2.1.1 What works in AP?

14 studies interviewed CYP to consider their experiences of exclusion/AP or to identify factors leading to successful progression in, or positive experiences of, AP. The most commonly identified success factor was positive relationships (with AP staff, peers, family and between home and school) (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Cullen & Monroe, 2010; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Another factor was a supportive and personalised learning environment, with an accessible and varied curriculum (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Consistent expectations, discipline and sanctions, while also being treated like adults, was appreciated, (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Cullen & Monroe, 2010; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013), as were smaller class sizes and a friendly, family-like environment (Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013).

CYP also noted the importance of self-motivation in AP success (Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Lastly, a holistic environment where staff understood SEMH needs and where students felt listened to and understood, was valued (Briggs, 2010; Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) explored how 25 YP in either mainstream or AP perceived their future possible selves. 100% of students in mainstream were able to create a positive future self when asked, compared with 68% of AP participants. This depicts AP attendees with a more fragile sense of positive self and more negative perceptions of their prospects. It suggests a need for the nurturing, relational, personalised environments which CYP advocated for in other studies.

Identified barriers to success in AP included disruptive behaviour, unfair treatment from teachers, and failure to individualise the learning environment (Briggs, 2010; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). CYP's negative AP experiences included poor quality education and sudden and unexpected transitions, either into or out of AP (Briggs, 2010; Malcolm, 2019). Trotman et al. (2015) and Trotman et al.'s (2019) larger scale studies, including 49 and 200 CYP respectively, also highlighted the negative impact of poorly handled transitions and the need to better support these. Aside from these two studies, many of the papers discussed had small sample sizes and therefore questionable generalisability due to the use of specific AP contexts. Despite these limitations, similar findings are echoed across the studies, suggesting commonality in CYP perspectives.

2.2.1.2 Reintegration to mainstream

For pupils attending shared placements between AP and mainstream, a sense of belonging to mainstream school was found to be a strong predictor of positive outcomes in reintegration (Cockerill, 2019). This links to Jalali and Morgan's (2018) findings – when both primary and

secondary pupils on a shared placement in PRUs were interviewed, secondary pupils showed less of a sense of belonging to their mainstream school and less desire to reintegrate. In Cockerill's (2019) mixed methods study, pupils found a nurturing approach across both AP and mainstream sites helpful, with adults promoting strong relationships and understanding their needs. Due to positive relationships, CYP described overwhelmingly positive experiences at AP compared to mainstream (Cockerill, 2019; Jalali & Morgan, 2018). Success in reintegration was most successful when there was a joined-up approach between the two, where mainstream staff visited the AP and implemented similar practice (Cockerill, 2019).

Pillay et al. (2013) conducted data collection with a range of parties involved in reintegration, including CYP who formed the largest group of participants. They also examined data such as student logs and minutes from professional meetings. The study found three key themes which defined learners' reintegration experiences: emotions, relationships and reintegration practices. These were split into promotive factors and risk factors for each. Similar to other studies already noted, an important promotive factor was continuous involvement of in-house support services from both mainstream and AP. A risk factor identified was the disparity in ethos across the two settings, difficulties adjusting back to a bigger and less supportive environment and students successfully managing behaviour in this (Pillay et al., 2013). The authors promote a resilience framework, and one which takes into account developing learners' emotional competence before reintegration, developing positive and promotive teacher-learner relationships and family-school relationships, opportunity for a gradual, structured reintegration and regular mentoring and touch-base meetings. A strength of this study was the involvement of numerous parties in the system, although only a small number of parents responded and were included.

Using a Q-set methodology, Atkinson and Rowley (2019) sought to understand the perspective of nine pupils who had recently reintegrated into mainstream. Results showed pupils differ in their experiences of 'what works'. The authors advocate for a person-centred and eco-systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) approach to reintegration, considering the role of the individual, the family, relationships and the school environment (Atkinson & Rowley, 2019). Strengths of Cockerill's (2019), Atkinson and Rowley's (2019) and Pillay et al.'s (2013) studies are that they use multiple data gathering techniques to triangulate findings.

2.2.2 Parental perspective

Six studies included a parental perspective, and two of these involved only a questionnaire (Pillay et al., 2013) or a brief phone interview (Cullen & Monroe, 2010), as part of a wider study. Such limited involvement of parents in AP studies may be because parents of excluded CYP can be hard to reach or do not always show active involvement in their child's education (Cullen & Monroe, 2010; Pillay et al., 2013). Trotman et al.'s (2019) study noted some challenges with communication between parents and schools, and one parent highlighted the impact of negative behaviour labels and their need to challenge some decisions made about their son. However, with parents only a small proportion (eight) of the overall sample (over 200 participants) little discussion was given to parental perspectives in the paper, arguably perpetuating lack of involvement and agency for parents.

Embeita's (2019) small scale study, which interviewed three parents, found three key themes affecting success in reintegration: commitment, collaboration and communication. The study highlighted the importance of parents feeling listened to, respected and being part of a joined-up process. This echoes findings from a larger scale study on parents' views of exclusion (Parker et al., 2016), and staff and student views on 'what works' in APs (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016) and reintegration (Cockerill, 2019; Lawrence, 2011).

Embeita's (2019) and Parker et al.'s (2016) studies also highlighted parents' frustrations with feeling left out or unheard. Gazeley (2012) argues there are potential difficulties in parent-professional interactions, especially for parents who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Interviewing 31 professionals and four mothers whose children had experienced exclusion, parents reported a lack of clarity about professionals' roles. A vast difference was also found in how professionals spoke about parents of excluded children, with some demonstrating more empathy and less 'blaming' language than others (Gazeley, 2012). These findings highlight the systemic and relational complexities often present for CYP in AP. However, the study lacks clarity on the methods used, and therefore, reliability and validity are questionable. Further, with a large discrepancy in sample size between professionals and parents, there is potential bias, especially relating to the theoretical conclusions drawn around the impact of social class.

2.2.3 Staff perspective and practice

Nine studies compared staff and CYP perspectives on 'what works' and all found similar themes across the two groups (Bruder & Spensley, 2015; Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Cockerill, 2019; Cullen & Monroe, 2010; Hart, 2013; Pillay et al., 2013; Putwain et al., 2016; Trotman et al., 2019; Trotman et al., 2015). This suggests that staff in APs are generally attuned to CYP in these settings and understand what benefits them. Several studies also identified attributes and practices that either helped or motivated AP staff in their role: seeing the job as creative, engaging and fulfilling (Farouk, 2014), being emotionally attuned to and engaged with their pupils (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2018), using restorative approaches (Malcolm, 2020), recognising the importance of the close relationships with pupils for their development (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2018) and a belief in the potential of the young people attending their provision (Malcolm, 2020).

Putwain et al. (2016) examined instructional practices used in one AP over a month. Classroom observations and interviews with 35 students and 37 staff members were conducted. Areas of success were: "breaking down tasks and activities into smaller units, on-task prompts, encouragement of self-belief, stating worth and importance of education… lots of feedback and on-task scaffolding and providing help to students quickly" (Putwain et al., 2016, p. 13). These practices are congruent with success factors reported by CYP in other studies (Cajic-Seigneur & Hodgson, 2016; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). Staff in Cajic-Seigneur's (2016) AP case study also noted the importance of having a broad and engaging curriculum and championing pupil and parent voice and multi-agency collaboration; similar to Atkinson and Rowley (2019), the authors framed their findings within Bronfenbrenner's (1977) model, noting the importance of taking a systemic approach.

Lawrence (2011) interviewed 11 PRU staff, six mainstream staff and a member of the Behaviour Support Service regarding reintegration and found it most successful when timing and systemic factors were considered, with engagement from all systems. Working together in a joined-up way, especially around transitions, was consistently found to be a success factor in literature examining MDT perspectives (Cockerill, 2019; Pillay et al., 2013; Trotman et al., 2019; Trotman et al., 2015).

2.2.4 Psychological practice and provision

Only one paper specifically explored EP practice in APs. EPs Cullen and Monroe (2010) responded to an identified need (high levels of relational conflict) in the PRU they worked in. They facilitated and evaluated a 'Sport in the Community' programme run by a local premiership football club. They examined the impact of positive relationships through sport, drawing on personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1991), solution-focused brief therapy (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007) and eco-systemic theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to inform the

intervention. Interviews, observation and quantitative data analysis of attendance records showed positive outcomes for students including high levels of engagement and on task behaviour, good listening and following of instructions, positive interactions and relationships, high inclusion levels, tolerance of frustration and increased capacity to wait, take turns and be helpful (Cullen & Monroe, 2010).

Bruder and Spensley (2015) conducted an evaluation of clinical psychology services in a PRU. Questionnaire feedback from pupils accessing the service found most felt listened to (7/9) and that their views had been taken seriously (5/9). Staff reported benefits for the pupils such as increased self-awareness, feeling valued, increased ability to manage behaviour and emotions, and lack of stigma around seeking support (Bruder & Spensley, 2015). Consultation and supervision sessions helped staff feel emotionally supported and better able to understand pupil behaviour. These findings echo AP staff reports that student-staff relationships are of high emotional intensity and require careful management of role boundaries and emotional stress (Farouk, 2014; Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2018). While Cullen and Monroe (2010) and Bruder and Spensley's (2015) studies were small scale and context specific, they highlight the potential value of embedding psychological practice within an AP setting.

2.2.5 Implications for EPs

Findings present numerous implications for EPs. Michael and Frederickson (2013) propose EPs are well placed to promote positive staff-pupil relationships, increase pupil support through mechanisms such as learning mentors, provide coaching and training on behaviour management strategies and involve pupils in developing positive AP practice. Hamilton and Morgan (2018) suggest their findings could "inform the quality assurance and selection criteria that schools and LAs use when identifying suitable APs" (p.89) and that EPs can help schools

with this, given their skills in facilitation and research. Cullen and Monroe's (2010) study is an example of the impact an EP project, informed by psychological theory, can have in an AP.

Several papers highlight the importance of joined-up systems in APs. Embeita (2019) suggests EPs could use systemic tools such as semantic-polarities conversations (Grønbæk, 2013) to support schools and parents to find new ways of understanding each other's perspectives. Similarly, Atkinson and Rowley (2019) argue that EPs skills in facilitating joined-up systemic practice can help successful reintegration. Cockerill (2019) notes the importance of EPs promoting and helping schools foster a sense of belonging.

2.3 Summary

Overall, the research provides a variety of evidence on good practice in APs and perspectives from different systems involved. Nonetheless, the majority fails to explore or evaluate the role or perspectives of EPs in these settings, beyond giving brief practice recommendations. Recognising the gap in current research, the national and local context, the espoused role of the EP, and the importance of evidence-informed practice (Fox, 2003) it is pertinent to conduct research into current EP practice in APs.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Research purpose and aims

The purpose of this research is to create a theoretical model of successful educational psychology practice in KS4 PRUs. It aims to answer the following two research questions:

1. According to EPs and their commissioners what does successful EP practice look like in KS4 PRUs?

2. What are the factors and mechanisms that contribute to successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs?

The study is both exploratory and explanatory. It explores jointly constructed perspectives of successful educational psychology practice in KS4 PRUs, from those who commission and deliver this work. It also aims to explain this practice by identifying factors and mechanisms that contribute to and facilitate it being 'successful'. This is with the aim of creating a model that can be drawn on in future EP practice in similar settings.

With little literature focusing on the EP role in PRUs, and a growing body of research identifying what young people say about successful practice in these settings, I was intrigued to know how professionals work together to facilitate this and how EPs contribute to this in the unique environment of a PRU. Additionally, with much of the literature highlighting the importance of joined up working, I sought to provide participants with an opportunity to think and reflect together on successful practice, and for the process to be practice enhancing in itself.

3.2 Ontology and Epistemology

This research is framed in a relativist ontological position and a social constructionist epistemological position.

3.2.1 Relativism

The relativist position acknowledges that social reality and knowledge exists from multiple perspectives and realities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), is constructed, and is influenced by and exists in relation to cultural, social and historical context (Bryman, 2016). For some, relativism means that there are multiple realities and therefore, no 'one truth', as they are all a product of context (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Robson, 2011). For others it means that while there may be a 'truth', that we can only know and understand it through our own individual interpretation (Burr, 2003). This research sits more within Burr's (2003) interpretation of relativism, acknowledging that there may be broader 'truths' about PRU contexts, or factors that lead to 'successful' EP practice in them, but that these are constructed and impacted by individual interpretations, working relationships and settings.

As a researcher, I acknowledge that 'successful' practice is constructed by participants within their individual contexts. Nonetheless, some learning can be gleaned from these conversations when the contexts explored are similar - in this instance KS4 PRUs in London – to inform future practice in these settings. Charmaz (2014) draws on Clarke's (2005, 2006, 2007, 2012) writings on relativism, arguing that research reality occurs within a situation and context, including what participants and researchers bring. This is in line with Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT) (Charmaz, 2014), which positions the researcher as part of the construction of knowledge and theory.

3.2.2 Social constructionism

Charmaz (2008, 2014) uses the broad umbrella of CGT for studies which take a constructivist and constructionist perspective, suggesting that this model can be used within both epistemological perspectives. However, it is important to understand the distinction, and the choice to take a social constructionist perspective in this research. Andrews (2012) highlights

the challenges which can come with using the terms interchangeably as Charmaz (2014) does. While constructivism is aligned with the idea that every individual constructs and creates their own "world of experience" (Andrews, 2012, p. 39), social constructionism focusses on joint construction of knowledge and truth within a social context (Young & Collin, 2004). As highlighted above, I was particularly interested in the joint working between EPs and commissioners, and as a researcher, believed that this relationship would play a foundational part in shaping what 'successful practice' looked like. Thus, taking a social constructionist epistemological perspective was the natural fit for the study. In line with the relativist ontological perspective, and Charmaz's (2014) CGT, I also acknowledged myself to be part of the social group constructing the data.

It is pertinent to highlight that constructionists view knowledge as 'created', rather than 'discovered' by social groups (Schwandt, 2003). This perspective is particularly aligned with my research position, experience and findings from the preliminary literature review: that experiences and outcomes for CYP in PRUs are influenced by those within their social and educational context. Some criticisms of social constructionist research argue that the approach inherently suggests a lack of generalisability and therefore, usefulness of data (Craib, 1997). However, by adopting a social constructionist perspective in this research I am simply choosing to embrace the fact that this 'creation' of knowledge and experience is happening within every PRU context, and wider systemic context for individual CYP.

By exploring and understanding interactions and processes within examples of such complex systems, I aimed to further understand what approaches might facilitate positive outcomes for these CYP. Through learning from instances of these systems reflecting together, and analysing multiple examples of this work, I hoped to develop a wider social construction of 'successful practice'. This triangulation of multiple pieces of data mirrors much of the casework EPs might

engage in in their day-to-day work; I hoped to bring multiple perspectives together to act as a 'psychological formulation' which could enhance future EP practice. Indeed, it is the interaction between people within these social contexts (Berger & Luckmann, 1991) which have been found to be significant for CYP outcomes. Thus, it felt vital to acknowledge the role that language, social constructions and subsequent actions, especially between EP and commissioner, play in EP practice and consequently, on the outcomes of CYP. Further details about my choice of participants can be seen later in this chapter.

3.3 Research methodology: Constructivist Grounded Theory (CGT)

My choice of research methodology was Charmaz's (2014) CGT. As seen in Chapter 2, previous research has explored CYP and staff members experiences of 'successful' practice in PRUs. However, with little research on EP work in these settings I was keen to gather perspectives on and experiences of this, through interviews, and build on previous findings regarding successful practice. The existing data and knowledge base allowed me to consider a more explanatory perspective in this research, building on what is already known through the lens of the EP role. Given the importance of relationships and interactions for CYP outcomes in PRUs, I chose to take this route, over a quantitative methodology, as I felt I would be able to gain a richer picture of these social processes.

I considered both Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith et al., 2009) as methods of analysis. Both offered flexibility for me to gather and explore in-depth perspectives from participants. However, they did not help facilitate the explanatory approach I was aiming for, to consider the 'how' and 'why' behind successful EP practice. Further, as I was aiming to create a helpful framework or model which could be used in EP PRU practice in the future, I settled on GT, drawn to its theory building and practice influencing focus (Charmaz, 2014).

Based on my own experience, and what I had heard anecdotally from colleagues, I was aware of the unique environment of PRUs and the potential differences in the type of work required in them. Given this, and the lack of research about EP practice in PRUs, GT also felt particularly pertinent, as it looks to explore phenomena and subjects in an inductive, 'data led' way (Charmaz, 2014). However, as I was aware of some current research around practice in PRUs more generally, it felt important to consider and acknowledge this before beginning my own research. The preliminary literature review helped shape the direction of my research, especially key findings about the importance of relationships and the environment. Many papers understandably also drew on particular psychological theories in their discussions including, attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969), Bronfenbrenner's (1977) Ecological Systems theory, systemic family therapy principles (Dowling & Osborne, 2003; Grønbæk, 2013; Rendall & Stuart, 2005), and ideas linked to personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1991) and motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

It could have been useful to explore one of these in relation to EP practice in PRUs and take a more deductive approach. An example of this was seen in Monroe's (2010) paper, where they designed a relationship-based intervention based on specific psychological theory and evaluated the impact of this. Adopting such a deductive approach to explore or evaluate what works may have been useful and would have added to the evidence base on EP practice in PRUs. However, I was also keen to be led by experiences 'on the ground' across a range of settings and wanted to keep an open mind about what successful practice could look like. I was interested to know what helped facilitate this, beyond individual approaches, interventions and programmes. GT offered the perfect opportunity to explore these experiences of successful practice in an open-ended way, which considered a range of influencing factors. Conducting the preliminary literature review helped identify existing knowledge, practice and theory that EPs would inevitably be bringing into their work and the interviews. However, I was also

drawn to one of core elements of GT, which requires a literature search to be conducted after analysis, to develop further understanding of what has emerged from the data. This offered opportunity to build a rich picture of what facilitates successful practice.

3.3.1 Choosing which Grounded Theory (GT) approach

GT was first coined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) who created a set of systematic methodological strategies that researchers could adopt to develop theories from their data. The key part of this shift in sociological research was that the theories were grounded in the data collected and studied, rather than "deducting testable hypothesis" from already existing theories (Charmaz, 2014, p. 6). This was to challenge a predominantly positivist trend that was occurring at the time within scientific and sociological research. Researchers argued that GT offered a systematic approach which allowed researchers to "construct abstract theoretical explanations of social processes" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 7).

Since the initial birthing of GT, Glaser and Strauss went their separate ways, disagreeing on ontological and epistemological elements of the approach. Since, a common modern approach to GT has been Strauss and Corbin's (1998) version, which I considered using for this research. Both Strauss and Corbin (1998) and Charmaz's (2014) versions held very similar principles, broadly that the researcher:

- Begins with inductive logic
- Subjects data to rigorous comparative analysis
- Aims to develop theoretical analysis
- Values GT studies for informing policy and practice (Charmaz, 2014, p. 14)

However, key differences lie in the foundational philosophical standpoints of the two approaches. Charmaz (2014) introduced constructivist thinking to GT, acknowledging that

modern researchers conducting GT no longer needed to be wed to mid-century views of 'truth' and 'knowledge', which were prevalent when Glasser and Strauss (1967) first developed GT, or even the pragmatic approach later taken by Strauss. Indeed, Charmaz (2014) acknowledges the involvement of the researcher in the construction of knowledge and theory, and as part of the world being studied and the analysis produced. She is explicit about theories being a theoretical interpretation of the studied phenomena or world. This standpoint felt most fitting for my research position, and also gave me opportunity to acknowledge, pay attention to, and reflect on my own past experiences and their influence on the research process.

The GT approach I took involved several key steps, as outlined by Charmaz (2014):

- Initial coding or open coding – the initial stage of analysis which involves "naming each word, line or segment" to "define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means" (Charmaz, 2014, p.113).

- Focussed coding – "a focussed, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data" (Charmaz, 2014, p.113).

- Memo writing – "informal analytic notes" written throughout early coding and analysis which "chart, record and detail a major analytic phase of the research journey" and record a "path of theory construction" (Charmaz, 2014, p.162-4). This is a significant part of constructing theoretical categories and the eventual GT, as it allows opportunities to "stop and analyse your ideas about the codes in any – and every – way that occurs to you during the moment" (Charmaz, 2014, p.162). This supports making comparisons between the data, and forming analytic links early in the process, key to GT.

- Theoretical categories – using memos to transform and sort focussed codes into theoretical categories which begin to highlight the "conceptual elements[s] in a theory" (Glasser and Strauss, 1967, p. 37). This means assessing "which codes best represent what you see happening in [the] data" and through memo writing "rais[ing] them to conceptual categories for your developing analytic framework" (Charmaz, 2014, p.189). Theoretical categories form this framework which explains links between the data, and leads to the formation of the overarching GT.

- Grounded Theory – an overarching framework which answers the research questions posed, by providing an analytical, abstract, theoretical explanation of the social processes represented in the data. As outlined by Charmaz's (2014) GT approach, this is a representation of the researchers coding, interpretations, analysis and constructions of the data, formed through an iterative, rigorous, comparative process, which moves back and forward between codes, memos and categories.

Each of these stages, and how they were conducted in this particular research process, are described in more detail later in this chapter.

3.4 Research strategy and data collection

3.4.1 Sample decisions

For every PRU involved, one interview was conducted with the EP(s) working in that provision and a member(s) of PRU staff responsible for commissioning EP work. EPs involved had to be working with the PRU at the time of contact and interview, and the commissioner had to be directly involved in working with the EP(s) and commissioning their work in the setting. EPs had to be either qualified EPs with HCPC registration, or TEPs currently completing a doctoral qualification.

I considered involving more parties in the research, perhaps conducting a focus group with several professionals in one setting, or individual interviews with different parties involved in a successful 'case study'. Driven by my own professional values around person-centred practice, and the importance of keeping the child's voice central, I also considered how to include parents' and children's voices in relation to EP practice in PRUs. However, upon further reflection, I recognised the potential difficulties of recruiting participants from a whole system around a child in one of these settings. I was also keen to gather a range of examples of successful practice from different settings, rather than a case study from just one borough. Therefore, I decided to focus on EP and commissioner perspectives to achieve a broader reach.

Additionally, with the voice of the EP missing from much of the research, this felt like a pertinent initial angle to take. Given the research with CYP already done, for ethical reasons I did not want to gather further unnecessary data from them. Rather I wanted to take a 'so what' approach to the research already reviewed. If young people have told us what works, what are we doing as EPs and how can we make sure our work is impactful?

As already noted, I chose to focus on KS4 PRUs due to the high rates of exclusion in this age group and to ensure that all those involved in the research were working within a similar system and setting. Relatedly, I chose to focus on LA EPs to ensure similarity in work contexts across participants. This excluded private EPs in participating boroughs, who may have been working in these settings, but not operating under statutory guidelines or a LA model. I chose to focus on inner London boroughs to ensure that the PRU work being discussed was across similar cohorts of pupils, accounting for the unique demographics and experiences of young people growing up in an urban context.

I aimed to conduct a minimum of three joint interviews, although was aware that based on GT methodology, I would likely require more than three to reach theoretical saturation or

sufficiency. As a contingency plan, I aimed to extend my sample to include outer London boroughs, if during analysis I required further interview data.

3.4.2 Research recruitment

I used a staged convenience sampling approach within the 12 boroughs in inner London. This was to ensure that all who were contacted would have the opportunity to participate if they showed an interest. Initially, EPs within my placement LA who were working within the KS4 PRU were approached. An information sheet and consent form (appendices B & C) was emailed to them and the Principal EP (PEP). Based on their agreement, I requested that the EP contact their link PRU, inviting them to take part in a joint interview.

Concurrently, I also contacted EPs I knew in five other inner London boroughs via email, explaining the project and attaching the information sheet and consent form. Either the PEP was also copied into this email, or I asked the EP I had contacted to pass the information on to their PEP, to ensure informed consent at a service level. I also asked that the information was forwarded to the link EP for the KS4 PRU. Two weeks after sending this email, I contacted services again if I had not heard anything.

At this stage, EPs from five services contacted me showing interest, with all attempting contact with their link PRUs. Three of these boroughs went on to participate in joint interviews, with the other two struggling to recruit their link PRUs. Subsequently, three further boroughs were contacted, from which one interested EP responded to me. However, after further discussion, the EP felt that the KS4 PRU would be unable to commit to the project, due to workload. Following this, I contacted the final three inner London boroughs, but received no interest, despite two PEPs acknowledging my emails and passing on the information to their relevant team members.

After going through this process, I extended my recruitment to outer London boroughs, in an attempt to secure some more interviews. I used convenience sampling to contact four boroughs where I had EP links, following the same procedure as outlined above. An EP from one of these boroughs expressed interest but due to circumstances at the PRU they were unable to participate. Subsequently, I contacted a further four boroughs where I had links, and four EPs replied expressing interest in the project. After contacting their PRUs I secured two further interviews. In total I completed five interviews, each including either two or three participants, depending on the number of EPs or commissioning staff working in each setting, and available to participate.

3.4.3 Participants

In total the study included 12 participants: six EPs and six commissioners, from five boroughs. Participating EPs ranged from being in their first year of practice post qualification, to practising for 19 years. Most EPs had been working with the particular PRU setting for three years or less, with two only beginning work with the PRU in the last year. The longest an EP had worked with the participating PRU was four years.

Participating commissioners were all SENCOs aside from one headteacher. Commissioners ranged from being with the PRU setting for under two years to over 15 years. Two had been in the SENCO role for one year or less, although one had previously worked in a different role within the same setting.

Settings ranged from commissioning 56 to 192 hours of annual EP time. This was often spilt across multiple sites or key stages and in three cases, across two EPs. The two settings with the most EP hours, also had primary PRUs attached to them. The number of KS4 pupils in each setting ranged from 24-71.

Table 3 *Interview participants*

Interview	Participants[1]	Role
1	Laura	EP
	Natalie	SENCo
	Louise	SENCo
2	Luke	EP
	Hayley	EP
	Claire	SENCo
3	Caroline	EP
	Angela	SENCo
4	Steve	EP
	Amy	Headteacher
5	Lucy	EP
	Phoebe	SENCo

3.4.4 Joint intensive interviews

In line with social constructionism, and the importance of joined up working highlighted in previous research, I decided to conduct joint interviews between EPs and commissioners. While I considered conducting individual interviews, when I reflected on the importance of the interactionist approach within EP work, and the function of the EP role across systems, it felt pertinent to include commissioners in these discussions. This allowed me to focus on the relational and social interactions within such work and to corroborate EPs' perspectives of successful practice, with those commissioning and being impacted by the work. Interviews were also best aligned with my CGT methodology which aims to gather 'rich data' in which the researcher can be more involved in developing an "interactive space and time to enable… participants views and insights to emerge" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85).

As Charmaz (2014) recommends for CGT I conducted intensive interviews. These focus on exploring the in-depth stories and experiences of participants. To facilitate this approach, I produced an interview schedule with three main themes, and some possible prompts to use

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[1] All names used are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

(appendix D). However, I aimed to be led by the participants' stories and experiences in the interviews and to use prompts only when necessary. A component of intensive interviews is that they are contextual and negotiated, semi-structured and emergent in nature (Charmaz, 2014). This means that they "invite participants to explore the topic from the vantage point of their experiences" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 71). As Corbin and Morse (2003) note, intensive interviews allow the researcher to give the interview its initial direction but allow a shift in control to the participant as it progresses, a process which mirrors GT analysis (Charmaz, 2014).

In keeping with this premise, at the beginning of each interview, I encouraged participants to treat the interview as a discussion between them. Through this approach I aimed to elicit joint perspectives and 'expertise' on successful EP practice. Charmaz (2014) outlines several key characteristics of intensive interviewing:

- Selection of research participants who have first-hand experience that fits the research topic

- In-depth exploration of participants' experience and situations

- Reliance on open-ended questions

- Objective of obtaining detailed responses

- Emphasis on understanding participant's perspective, meanings, and experiences

- Practice of following up on unanticipated areas of inquiry, hints, and implicit views and accounts of actions (p.56)

She also highlights intensive interviewing as a flexible, emergent technique that:

- Combines flexibility and control

- Opens interactional space for ideas and issues to arise

- Allows possibilities for immediate follow-up on these ideas and issues

- Results from interviewers and interview participants' co-construction of the interview conversation (p.58-9)

Through using joint intensive interviews, I was able to allow plenty of space for the participants to explore the topic and facilitate a rich interactional space, both between participants and between myself and participants. I chose to use this semi-structured, more fluid type of interviewing to fit with the GT model, but also to recognise that I as the researcher would not know all of the pertinent questions to ask beforehand. I wanted to use a technique that allowed me to be flexible and responsive to what the participants brought, to explore their ideas further and gather a deeper understanding of the actions and mechanisms involved. Intensive interviewing also allows for the possibility that participants will not interpret questions in the way that the researcher intends, and therefore gives space for follow up probes, and to clarify and construct meaning together (Charmaz, 2014).

This process was however, sometimes challenging in joint interviews. At times it became difficult to ask follow-up probes and gather more information about certain actions or incidents, as I also wanted to allow participants to build on and clarify each other's ideas. As a result, my research diary included notes about where I could have asked for clarification or further follow up. It was difficult to balance allowing space for participants to construct data together, while also ensuring that my own research aims and questions were addressed in enough detail. This is where I found my broad themes in the interview schedule to be particularly helpful. After conducting the first two interviews, I ensured more explicitly that I weaved in each of the three themes, or points of discussion. This allowed me to cover key areas of enquiry, and to build on areas discussed in previous interviews. Furthermore, ensuring I asked a final reflection question

about the interview process and 'next steps' aided the enquiry process and helped me to reflect on the emergent ideas from the interview, from the participants' perspective.

3.4.5 Impact of Covid-19

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 at the time of gaining ethical approval and beginning recruitment, I decided to adjust my methodology and conduct all interviews online using the video conferencing platform Zoom. This was in-line with government guidance at the time to avoid all non-essential travel and observe social distancing. At the time, many EPSs (and other organisations) had moved to remote working where possible and were also using online platforms such as Zoom for meetings and consultations. I hoped therefore, that using Zoom would not seem too unfamiliar or uncomfortable for participants. Additionally, due to uncertainty over how long 'lockdown' and social distancing would be in place, this seemed the most feasible and safe option for completing my research.

3.4.6 Pilot interview

Before beginning data collection, I conducted a pilot interview with two trainee colleagues to practise using both my interview schedule and Zoom. In particular, I used this as an opportunity to try out my introduction to the interview and how it would work over Zoom. In my interview schedule, I included some caveats around video work such as the possibility of technological issues, others interrupting due to poor connection and not being able to read social cues in the same way. The full contents of this script can be seen in appendix D. I also practiced recording the interview over Zoom, to my device, as agreed through ethical approval (appendix A). After the pilot interview, participants reported that the interview worked well over Zoom.

Both participants had previous experience working in a PRU or similar setting, either as a TEP or in a previous role, and so could draw on their experience during the interview. I was able to practise using my schedule and learnt that the possible prompts and broader themes included

were helpful in guiding the conversation to answer my research questions. However, participants were both TEPs and did not have an EP-commissioner relationship within the same PRU. This element of the interview involved participants creating fictional examples of EP practice, and so it was difficult to see how the conversation would flow in the actual interviews, where participants would have real casework and a working relationship to reflect on. While it would have been ideal to pilot the interview with a SENCo and EP in a working relationship, it would have felt unethical to then exclude this from my analysis. Therefore, completing a pilot with some fellow trainees felt more appropriate and allowed some useful insight into the nature of video interviewing and the structure of my interview schedule.

3.4.7 Data transcription

I decided to transcribe all interviews myself, to familiarise myself with the data, and to help with my later analysis. This ensured I did not miss out on any developments in understanding the data, which can happen when outsourcing transcription (Tilley, 2003). I found this a particularly useful process, especially in observing interactions between participants, and when I came to analysing my data, I was familiar with the nuances of the conversations. This also helped ensure accuracy of the data transcription and that pertinent non-verbal communications were transcribed. Choosing to transcribe myself meant I was able to take this approach (Oliver et al., 2005).

I used verbatim transcription where appropriate, including laughter and other sounds which were relevant to the interactions. I used ellipsis to indicate significant pauses and I also transcribed some movements and gestures in parenthesis, which felt particularly pertinent to the conversation or relationship (e.g. nodding or certain facial expressions). I decided to use this form of transcription to ensure the non-verbal relational interactions between participants were not lost in analysis (Bailey, 2008). I also chose to transcribe particular sounds such, as

hmm, ah, ok, and umm, as they can capture important information such as moments of joint agreement and reflection in conversation (Gardener, 2001).

These aspects were important for my research topic, as I intended to consider the relationships between the EP and commissioner during my analysis. Transcribing some of these nuances was possible due to the video recording made on Zoom. This added an extra layer, which would not have been captured had I been conducting interviews in person using audio recording. Once I had transcribed my interviews and before beginning analysis, I checked my transcriptions once more in full on a separate occasion. I read them alongside the video recording to check for mistakes and ensure consistency in style. An extract of transcribed data is available in appendix E.

3.5 Ethics

3.5.1 Informed consent

To ensure participants knew the requirements of the research and the risks involved, I provided a detailed information sheet and consent form (appendices B & C) which participants had the opportunity to read and ask questions about before participating. Before interviews I received completed consent forms for all involved and I gave further opportunity to ask questions at the beginning and end of the interview. Specific areas of risk and ethical considerations will now be discussed, including how I addressed them through my research design.

3.5.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

All data was stored confidentially on an encrypted laptop device, in line with the Data Protection Act (2018) and the University's Data Protection Policy, and was anonymised upon transcription. This was to ensure participants were not identifiable in the research write up.

This also aimed to ensure participants did not feel concerned about their work being 'reviewed'. I alleviated these risks by:

- Ensuring all data was anonymised so that participants could not be identified.

- Keeping details of participating boroughs and participants confidential.

- Explaining to participants how information would be used, processed and stored and how anonymity would be ensured. This was done in the information sheet and consent form, and at the beginning of the interview.

- Giving participants opportunities to ask questions about this before consenting to participate and at the beginning of the interview, before the recording began.

3.5.3 Discussion of casework

Despite being reminded at the beginning of the interview to use initials of any specific casework involving CYP, participants did occasionally discuss first names of CYP during the interviews. Consent was not sought from CYP and families for their inclusion in the research. To account for this, and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity I ensured all names were changed to a pseudonym/initials during transcription. Data was also stored securely, as outlined above. Any specific details from these cases, which may have been identifiable to the CYP, family or participants, were not shared in the results write up and content that did not affect the findings was edited to preserve anonymity.

3.5.4 Difficult or distressing experiences

As I acknowledged in the information sheet (appendix B), and at the beginning of each interview, work in PRUs can be extremely complex and emotionally demanding. It was possible that specific case work/experiences that had been difficult or distressing for participants, would be raised in the interviews. To account for this I ensured that appropriate

debriefing measures were carried out, including the opportunity to speak to me individually, or as a group after the interview. I made myself available for the hour subsequent to the interview, via email, if they wanted to arrange a video call. I also turned off the recording at the end of the interview and gave opportunity to reflect on how they found the experience and to ask any questions.

I aimed to provide an emotionally containing interview space, using active listening and empathy, and drawing on my consultation skills developed as a TEP. I aimed to help participants identify where they could access further relevant support, reminding them to use their supervisors or line managers to discuss anything that came up. I was also prepared to signpost to relevant resources and services where necessary, such as their GP. I ensured the participants knew that they could stop the interview at any time or could decline to answer any questions that were too difficult. Throughout the interview I monitored the emotional state of participants closely to consider what other support or action might have been necessary afterwards. However, this sort of additional support and signposting was not necessary in any of the interviews.

3.5.5 Working relationships

When designing my research, I was aware that joint interviews had the potential to raise difficult issues within working relationships between EPs and commissioners. I took several precautionary measures to account for this. I provided a clear information sheet and consent form outlining the nature of the research and the fact it involved a joint interview (appendices B & C). This was to ensure participants were fully informed of the aims of the research and could consider whether this would be a helpful, reflective activity to do together.

Additionally, through using a strengths-based approach I offered the opportunity for the working relationship to be supported and strengthened. At the beginning of the interview (see

interview script in appendix D) I acknowledged the strengths-based approach and highlighted the fact that while there may be difficulties in the work, there was no obligation to talk about these, or indeed to answer any question they felt uncomfortable with. Towards the end of the interview, I provided the opportunity for the participants to reflect on and plan their next steps, to ensure the interview focussed on positively moving forward.

Throughout the interview I monitored the communication and interaction in the interviews closely and aimed to provide a containing and reflective space for any differing opinions to be aired. Joint and individual debriefing opportunities were offered at the end of the interview to ensure any difficulties could be processed. Participants were also reminded and encouraged to use their own supervision or line management meetings to consider any issues. I was also prepared to make recommendations for participants to follow their professional guidelines and protocols relating to more serious difficulties.

However, each of the interviews remained positive and no clear issues in working relationships arose. No participants took up the option for a joint or individual debrief after the interview finished. All participants reported the interview to be a rare and useful reflective space, feeling positive and encouraged by the process. Feedback from participants on the process will be discussed further in the findings and discussion chapters.

3.5.6 Safeguarding procedures

Due to the challenging nature of PRU work, and the cohort of CYP attending, it was possible that safeguarding concerns might be raised during the interview. To account for this, in the information sheet and at the beginning of the interview, I made it clear that any safeguarding or fitness to practice concerns raised during the interview would be passed on following appropriate procedures. I acknowledged participants' experience in dealing with such

situations, and in each interview, we agreed that if anything was raised, we would plan next steps together. No safeguarding concerns were raised in any of the interviews.

3.5.7 Benefit to participants: catalytic validity

An important ethical consideration of any piece of research is to consider the benefit and positive impact on the research participants. Catalytic validity "refers to the degree to which the research process re-orients, focusses, and energizes participants… [helping them] know reality in order to better transform it" (Lather, 1986, p. 67). I considered this when planning my research; I hoped to provide participants with the opportunity to reflect on successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs, thus encouraging what Freire (1973) termed 'conscientization' of their practice, in order to enhance it. In line with solution-focussed practice (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007), by taking a strengths-based approach I aimed to encourage participants to consider 'what's working' and thus, motivate them to do more of this. Relatedly, interviews gave the opportunity for working relationships to be enhanced, in turn benefiting the CYP attending the PRUs, and other staff working in them. On a wider scale, the research provided participants with a document and model to use when planning and evaluating future work in KS4 PRUs, which also drew on positive practice in other settings. Additionally, participants were given time to stop and reflect, evaluate practice collaboratively and learn from each other. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe experiences of successful practice and to consider the facilitating factors which lead to success. This offered opportunity for participants to consider how to harness these moving forward in their work, potentially leading to developing and changing future practice.

3.6 Issues of validity, reliability and trustworthiness

A key part of any research is ensuring that the data is valid and reliable. However, these concepts hold a different meaning in qualitative research, compared to their positivist origins

(Creswell & Creswell, 2017). There has been much debate over how to conceptualise and understand them in relation to qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994), with suggestions that validity and 'trustworthiness' are the most relevant to qualitative studies (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Robson, 2011). Robson (2011) conceptualises ideas of validity by looking at how three key threats to validity (description, interpretation and theory) are accounted for in any given study. To mitigate threats of providing invalid descriptions of the data, I video recorded all interviews, and followed a detailed transcription process for each of them, as discussed above. This ensured I was analysing accurate descriptions of the interview content. To ensure my interpretation of the data and the theory generated were valid and emerging from the data, I engaged in the following processes to ensure trustworthiness of the interpretation.

3.6.1 Representing participants well: testimonial validity

Due to the theory generating approach of GT, final interpretations of the data risked not directly or clearly representing the original meaning of individual participants. Data analysis was also subject to my own researcher bias and experience as discussed earlier. To account for these risks as far as possible I took several precautionary measures. In the information sheet, I made it clear that I would approach the data with my own perspective and would be generating a theory based on all the interviews I conducted. I also made it clear that several different participants would be involved and therefore, findings would be representative of a range of views and contexts. This information also aimed to address any concerns around feelings that individual settings or boroughs were being 'reviewed'.

I also approached the data openly and was mindful of my own biases. I recorded these in my research diary and in memos throughout the process and ensured I followed Charmaz's (2014) recommended model of GT data analysis, discussed in more detail below. I also paid careful

attention to all aspects of the data, transcribing and coding all sections in detail. I shared my processes, findings and interpretations in research supervision. This ensured I was supported to reflect on my researcher bias and helped my own reflexivity.

I analysed my theoretical conclusions against current literature. This involved carrying out a second literature search after I had completed data analysis and theory building. I provided a summary of my findings and the theoretical model (appendix U) to participants to gather their feedback and to ensure views had not been misrepresented. I will also provide them opportunity to read my full thesis if desired.

3.6.2 Bias and rigour

As noted in chapter 1, I came to the research with my own past experiences, pre-conceived ideas, and some understanding of what the literature already said. Additionally, by taking a CGT approach, I chose to accept myself as part of the data construction in the research. As a result, it was particularly important that I paid attention to any bias I might be bringing to the research process and reflected on this. This is where my research diary, memos and supervision were key in helping me reflect on the process behind my analysis and whether my own assumptions had played a role in my coding and theoretical ideas. By mapping thought processes in memos, I was able to return to these and triangulate ideas against the codes I had formed. Throughout this process I kept an audit trail, screen shotting stages of analysis and populating my research diary. This was to track how the "end product" was reached and thus prove trustworthiness and rigour (Mason, 1996, p. 150). More information about the rigour of some of these processes is discussed in the following section which outlines the data analysis process.

3.7 Data analysis

3.7.1 MaxQDA: computer assisted data analysis

I used MaxQDA, a programme for computer assisted data analysis. This provided me the tools to conduct a systematic approach to coding and organising my data, particularly useful when taking a GT approach. I chose this programme, as the one available through the university, and that colleagues, and previous trainees had recommended for GT analysis. I found the code organising system to be helpful in this process, particularly the search function. I also used the grid function in the analysis tab to later examine codes across the five interviews and to check prevalence of focussed codes and theoretical categories across interviews. This was particularly useful for quick access to data during the write up of my findings and to cross check steps of analysis and theory development when creating the final model.

3.7.2 Open coding

I started analysis by coding interviews line by line. However, I did this in a flexible way, sometimes coding short phrases and at other points coding longer, complex sentences or paragraphs. I did this for the first three interviews and began to organise these individual codes into slightly broader subheadings during coding of the second and third interviews. A screenshot of progress at the end of the open coding of the first three interviews can be seen in Figure 8.

Figure 8 *Screenshot of open coding progress at end of interview 3*
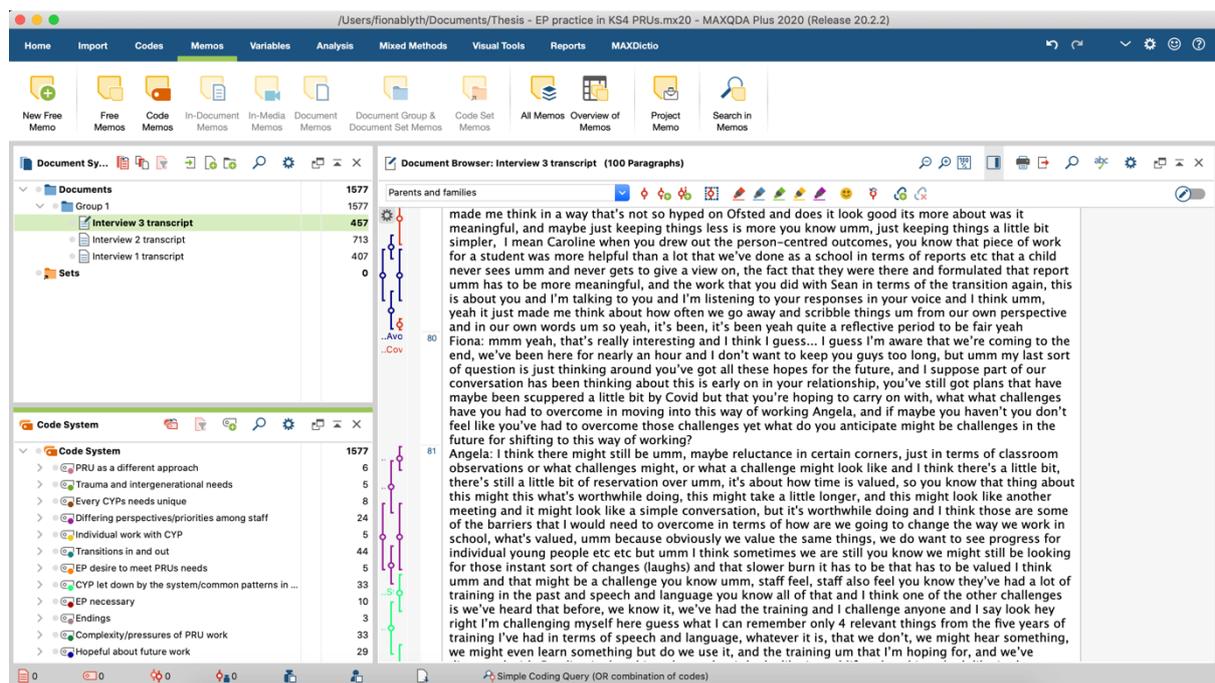
During this process, I took examples of my coding to supervision. We examined an extract of text, and my supervisor was in agreement with my coding of the section, particularly the level of detail. We added only one further code extract, as it was a section that could have been coded in a several ways. Throughout this initial open coding stage, I aimed to code actions of participants rather than simply themes, in line with a CGT approach (Charmaz, 2014). I also used language or wording of participants, taking an in vivo coding approach where appropriate. As part of the research was considering the relationship between participants, I ensured I was coding actions relating to relational dynamics between participants, as well as practice spoken about.

3.7.3 Focussed coding

As evident from Figure 8, this detailed approach resulted in a high number of codes, and so through this process, I examined similar codes within subheadings to see if some could be combined. This process also helped me step back into data I had coded days or weeks previously to check whether my coding still made sense. During this stage, I also moved codes

around if they seemed to fit better under different subheadings. When I analysed interview 4, I coded in slightly less detail, often coding bigger chunks of text, and looking to code areas which were either aligned with or opposed to the codes formed. After this initial open coding of interview 4, I organised my codes into broader categories to create focussed codes. At this point I brought my coding to supervision (see Figure 9) to discuss my findings so far.

Figure 9 *Screenshot of sharing focussed codes during supervision (after coding 4 interviews)*
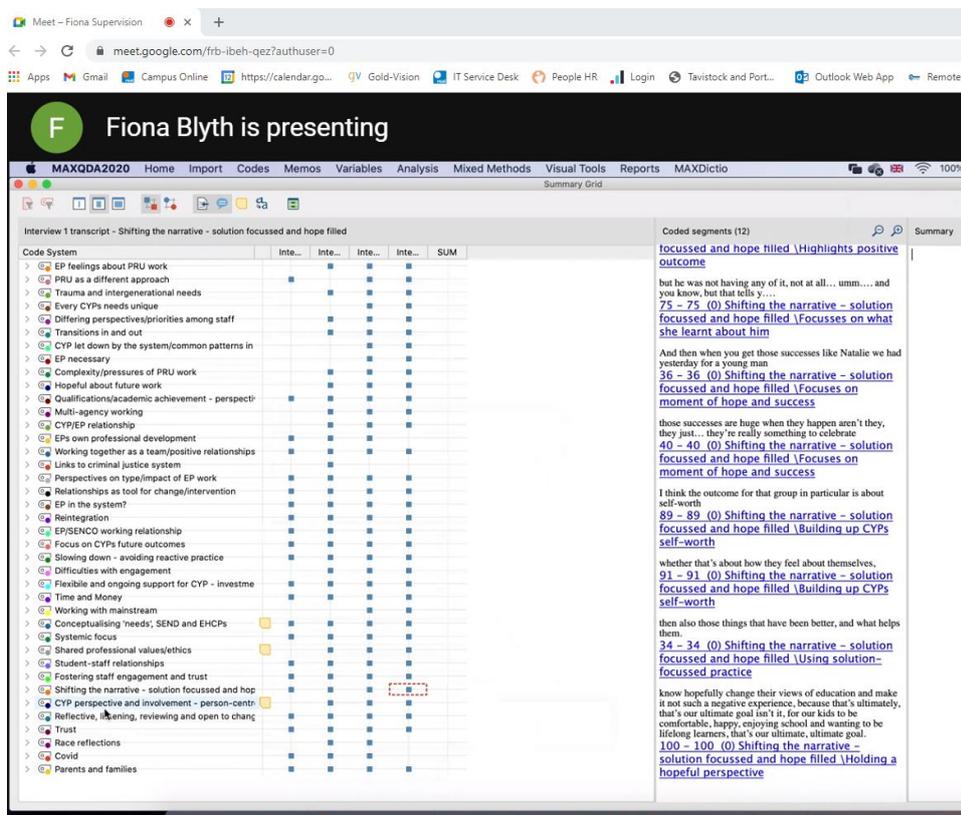
During supervision, we agreed the need to return to the open coding for interview 4, looking for areas where I could code in slightly more detail. This resulted in a move from 90 to 213 codes in interview 4.

3.7.4 Memos and research diary – aiding the iterative process

Throughout the coding and analysis process I engaged in memo writing, which I found useful for jotting down initial theoretical thoughts (see examples in appendix F). I used this function

on MaxQDA to begin to make links between what I had coded so far and areas for reflection and further exploration. I conducted interviews 4 and 5 during and after I had completed analysis of the first three. This allowed me to engage in the iterative process of GT, and to consider gaps in the data, where I wanted to gather further detail in the final two interviews. During this process I kept a research diary of my own thoughts and reflections after conducting and transcribing each interview. These reflections highlighted some areas where I felt I wanted to gather more detail and explore initial theoretical ideas.

During later interviews I was able to expand on and ask about areas which came up, such as EP involvement in statutory assessment and the EHCP process in PRUs, and the importance of shared values, vision and flexibility. When participants in these later interviews shared experiences which resonated with those shared in previous interviews, I was able to reflect back with participants links that I was beginning to make and ask more about these areas. For example, ideas around how EHCPs were thought about, and the impact of statutory work on the EP role came up across all three of the first interviews. This led me to explore this area when it was noticeably absent from interview 4, to explore why there was such a contrast in experience. This meant that participants were very actively engaging in the process of theory formation. In addition to written memos within MaxQDA, I used voice memos during the theoretical coding stage of the research, to help explore my own thoughts and make links between emerging ideas.

3.7.5 Theoretical categories, sampling and sorting

Early in the analysis process, using my research diary, I began to record initial thoughts of theoretical ideas linked to the data emerging. Throughout my coding processes, I considered my own previous professional experiences, and what was said in existing literature, attempting to recognise whether anything that I was coding was not coming from the data. Returning to

the codes, and, in particular using the code table function, helped me to crosscheck ideas with the data.

After my initial analysis of interview 4, I used a voice memo to reflect on theoretical ideas so far. I listened to this, typing up key reflections and cross-checking ideas against the data. This helped me begin to establish my theoretical idea around the EP and commissioner functioning in the way parents do within a family. I discussed this in supervision further and compared it against codes established in the data. After discussing interview 4 in supervision against existing focussed codes, and then completing further coding for this interview, I concentrated on developing my theoretical model. I formed 11 broader theoretical categories, organising focussed codes into these, to see if they fitted with the overarching theory. This process resulted in 11 theoretical categories (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 *Screenshot of 11 theoretical categories after analysing 4/5 interviews*
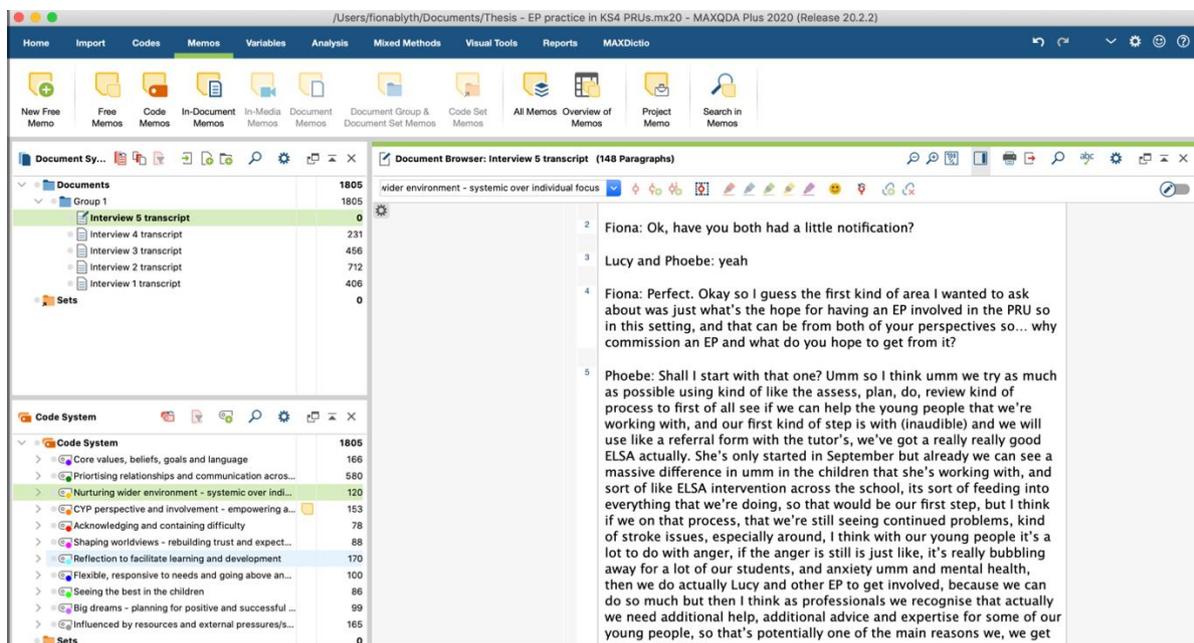
Once I had formed my theoretical categories, I engaged in what Charmaz (2014) terms theoretical sorting. I wrote the categories out on post-it notes and included the focussed code subheadings within them. Physically rearranging these, I began to think about explanatory links between the focussed codes and theoretical categories. This helped me to consider whether my

theoretical idea made sense for all the data. Once I had used post-it notes, I transferred colour coded categories and focussed codes onto a word document. Moving these around and using arrows to think about influencing factors between them, I continued to tweak this in an iterative way, going back and forth between the document and the data on MaxQDA. I then returned to the data, examining each focussed code again to check it fitted with ideas in the model.

At this point, I completed coding for the final interview. I coded against existing codes, as well as for anything new or different from the theoretical ideas emerging. At the end of this process, and when considering the sheer volume of codes in the second category on 'relationships', I separated out one focussed code from that, relating to qualities in the EP-commissioner relationship, resulting in 12 theoretical categories (Figure 11).

Figure 11 *Theoretical categories after analysis of all interviews*
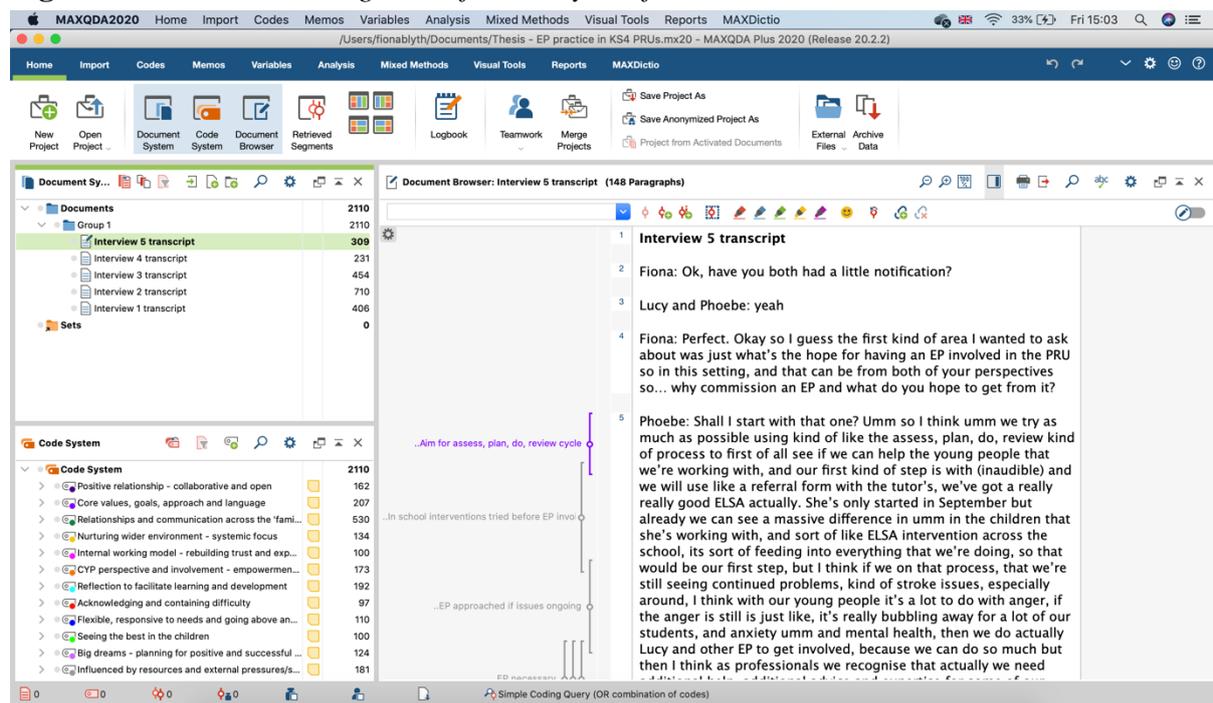
As part of this process, I engaged with the data and theory building in a reflective and reflexive way. In both my research diary and memos on MaxQDA, I wrote down any ideas related to theories I was already familiar with, noting my own preconceptions and prior knowledge. This helped when considering my final theory, as I was able to track the theoretical journey I had

also been on as a researcher. As part of some of these memos, I also included links from experiences in practice, or conversations I had recently engaged in, which had sparked ideas relating to the data (appendix F). This helped me to be as transparent as possible about what I was bringing to the construction of the theory. By noting down these thoughts, I was able to compare them against the codes and the data from interviews and recognise what was coming from the data and what I might be 'putting on' it. This ensured the model I created was emergent from the data, and a trustworthy reflection of participants constructions of successful EP practice.

As mentioned earlier, I engaged in the iterative process of GT, throughout analysis and when conducting interviews, checking in and following up on ideas gathered in previous interviews. However, there was one area where this process became explicitly part of my theoretical sampling. Ideas relating to the importance of shared values and language within the EP-commissioner relationship had been prevalent in all interviews and seemed to be a vital part of their successful relationships. In interview 5 I explicitly explored these areas, reflecting back what I had noticed in discussions between the two participants, and asking about how they had come to recognise and understand their shared approach. Taking an iterative approach in early interviews and analysis, and then later building on this to conduct explicit theoretical sampling in interview 5, greatly assisted in my development of a robust theoretical model.

3.7.6 Theoretical saturation

A key part of GT is working towards theoretical saturation during the analysis. As noted, I analysed interview 5 having already formed my theoretical categories and with an overarching theoretical idea in mind. This helped me test out these codes against the data from the final interview and recognise areas of similarity and discrepancy, while still being open to new ideas. Charmaz (2014) talks about theoretical sampling as "conceptual and theoretical development

of your analysis" (p.197), with the aim of fitting emerging theories with the data. Analysing interview 5 with a theory in mind, helped me to complete this theoretical sampling and ensure that ideas fitted with the newest pool of data. During this process, less than 50 new open codes arose, and these were all as a result of unique contextual circumstances. Areas of variation related to differing contexts, will be discussed in the findings chapter. However, while these variations were at an individual level, each of these new open codes were easily sorted into focused codes and theoretical categories, with no new theoretical categories created (see Figure 12 for finalised categories and appendix G for their prevalence across interviews). Comparisons I made between them and data from previous interviews helped explain their place within the theoretical category and their associations with the wider theoretical model. This process helped me acknowledge that I had reached a sufficient level of theoretical saturation relating to my theory. Indeed, Charmaz (2014) speaks about the importance of considering the following questions regarding theoretical saturation:

- Which comparisons do you make between data within and between categories?

- What sense do you make of these comparisons?

- Where do they lead you?

- How do your comparisons illuminate your theoretical categories?

- In what other directions, if any, do they take you?

- What new conceptual relationships, if any, might you see? (p.214)

I considered these questions during my analysis, especially when reaching the theory building stage, and engaging in theoretical sampling and sorting. Examples of the comparisons made, and how they formed the overarching GT will now be introduced in chapter 4 and discussed in more detail in chapter 6.

Chapter 4: Findings

I will now present the GT that emerged from the analysis, which presents the EP and commissioner as 'parents' who play a parental role and function in the system (Figure 13). This includes 12 theoretical categories, each represented by a coloured section on the diagram. Categories are coloured coded in line with colours assigned during analysis on MaxQDA (Figure 12).

Figure 12 *Screenshot of final theoretical categories on MaxQDA*

The GT diagram below shows how theoretical categories interact. They have also been numbered to ease navigation. The first three categories were found to have a strong influence and connection to all subsequent categories, hence being in capital letters at the top of the diagram. Plain black text, outside the colour coded sections, indicate some practical and explanatory examples of how the EP and commissioner took up their roles. Findings from each category will now be outlined individually in numerical order. Due to the nature of GT, elements of discussion will be brought into the summaries of the first three categories to introduce their key links to the theory. Further discussion relating to all categories, the GT and the wider literature will be made in chapter 6.

Figure 13 *Grounded theory diagram - EP and Commissioner as 'parents'*

THEORY: EP & COMMISSIONER AS 'PARENTS'

Blyth, F. (2021). *A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective.* (Unpublished thesis).

INFLUENCING

1. POSITIVE 'PARENTAL' RELATIONSHIP - COLLABORATIVE AND OPEN

INFLUENCING

3. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE 'FAMILY'

2. SHARED CORE VALUES, GOALS, APPROACH AND LANGUAGE

12. Impacted by resources, external pressures and 'parental' support network

Differing perspectives/ priorities among staff

Multi-agency working

Working together as a team/positive relationships

EP in the system?

Fostering staff engagement, trust and respect

Student-staff relationships

Relationships with families

CYP/EP relationship

Building shared understanding and approach

4. Nurturing wider environment - systemic focus

9. Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond

6. Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency

Relationships as a tool for change and intervention

Trust

Trauma and inter-generational needs

Shifting the narrative around CYP

Helping CYP identify strengths

Solution focussed practice

Person-centred planning
Pupil focus meetings
Pupil voice

7. Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development

5. Internal working model - rebuilding trust and expectations

Consultation approach – empowering staff

10. Seeing the best in children

11. Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures

8. Acknowledging and containing difficulty

Focus on transitions in and out – 'end from the beginning'

EP providing emotional containment for system. Supporting staff to further understand and contain student's needs.

Positive interactions with EP and staff - providing CYP & families with opportunities to experience people and the world differently.

4.1 Theoretical category 1: Positive 'parental' relationship – collaborative and open
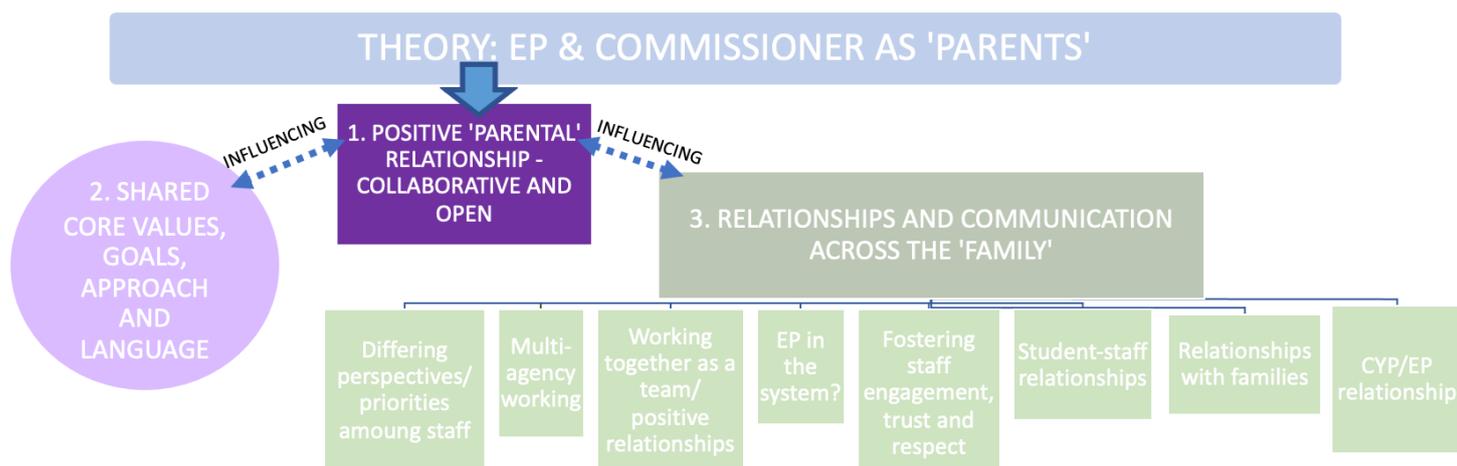
This first theoretical category frames the EP-commissioner relationship as positive, collaborative and open. Across all five interviews participants believed they were 'in tune' with each other and valued the relationship. They showed examples of working together, being honest, curious, learning from each other and communicating clearly about work. Participants also recognised each other's positive qualities and skills. In examples where the relationship was new, participants reflected on and compared their relationship to previous EP-commissioner relationships. There were six focussed codes within this category. Further data from each code can be found in appendix H.

Table 4 *Focussed codes from category 1 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Positive 'parental' relationship – collaborative and open	Working well together	49	All
	Recognising each other's positive qualities and skills	30	All
	Reflecting on previous relationships – learning from experience	28	All
	Close and valued relationships	15	All
	Honest, curious, open and reflective	29	All

74

Informal	16	All

4.1.1 Working well together

Participants explicitly reflected on instances of working well together (1, 62-3; 5, 108-9)[2], having a "good relationship" (4, 56), being "in tune" (3, 57) and bouncing off each other (1, 62; 5, 24). In interview 5 the SENCO reflected:

> I think because we do work so well together, it's a bit more of a conversation like this between the three of us, and you'll say 'oh no, why don't we do this' and then it'll get built on, so it is quite a fluid… approach to the plans for the term. (108-9)

This example shows participants as responsive, flexible and open to each other's ideas. Participants showed examples of working and reflecting together to reach a common goal, such as when EPs wondered "how we could be more helpful in that respect" (2, 83) or when SENCos reflected "they're good to us in terms of… making sure we've got what we need from them" (1, 44).

4.1.2 Recognising each other's positive qualities and skills

Across interviews I coded examples of participants recognising and praising each other's skills and qualities. When discussing a recent organisational change project, the EPs in interview 2 praised the SENCo: "there was you and a couple of key members of staff that really really drove the whole thing forward" (29), "every meeting, every action was completed… all documents were sent out" (27). Similarly, at the end of interview 5, the EP noted: "I think what's been nice actually is reflecting on how much Phoebe that you have achieved in the SEN department… compared to this time last year… a lot has changed" (125). Participants showed

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[2] Refers to interview number, paragraph number (from MaxQDA interview transcript). In some instances, where interview number has been stated in the text, only paragraph number is provided in parenthesis.

plenty of examples of building each other up, praising both their actions and their relational skills.

4.1.3 Reflecting on previous relationships – learning from experience

In all interviews, participants drew on examples of previous EP-commissioner relationships and compared these to their current working relationships. This was done in a reflective way, to learn from experience, and consider how they had shifted their practice. The SENCo in interview 3 reflected on the way they used to commission EP work from an outside agency in a one-off, assessment-based way. She recognised that they "weren't able to… embed that practice or to… cascade… practice to other teachers, to students and to really learn from it" (3). She reflected that:

> if we didn't change the way we actually communicated, or sourced the work from the EP, if we didn't have an EP that got to know us and the school, we would continue into the future just getting one off reports. (14)

Other EP participants reflected on their relationship with previous SENCos "who maybe had different expectations around the role of the EP" (2, 34) noting that "maybe we just didn't have those explicit conversations" (2, 81). In interview 5, a less collaborative past relationship was spoken about: "it was very separate", and the EP wasn't able to give recommendations "collaboratively, it was like, here's the report… I got nothing back, and there was no space for review" (42). Commissioners in interviews 1 and 4 spoke of very positive relationships with previous EPs but highlighted the need to have the right EP working in a PRU.

4.1.4 Close and valued relationship

All participants expressed how much they valued a close working relationship. The EP in interview 4 appreciated:

how good it is to work at the PRU… the staff are so warm and welcoming… they appreciate having an EP and… they value it… Amy, you've talked a lot about… how much you guys value me, but it works the other way as well, I really value you. (4, 57)

The headteacher also reflected on having an EP as a resource: "we recognise just how valuable that time is… it is… really important for us to have an EP that really understands our context" (4, 55). Similarly, in interview 2, the SENCo reflected: "I think it's incredibly valuable to have… such direct access and close working relationships with EPs here" (5). The close relationship was also framed as something "comfortable" and "relaxed" (1, 101) and something that's "kept me going a bit over the last term" (5, 24).

4.1.5 Honest, curious, open and reflective

All participants showed examples of honesty, curiosity, openness and reflection. For example, a SENCO asked, "is there anything that you think we could do our end Hayley about making that kind of thing easier?" (2, 80) when dilemmas around how the EP is positioned in the PRU came up. Participants recognised the importance of reflecting and learning together, aided by the close relationship. The SENCo in interview 3 showed her willingness to grow as a professional through the relationship: "as you build a relationship, I'm more aware of the practices that can be quite annoying to an external professional for instance, so it's… helped me to improve certain aspects of what I do" (3, 3). Participants also showed examples of valuing honesty with each other. The SENCO in interview 1 highlighted that she deliberately matches CYP with each EP: "it's about the fact that you and Emily are quite different people… I think that matching is really important… I love being able to tell you that as well… like feeling comfortable to say" (66).

4.1.6 Informal

I coded examples of humour in all interviews, demonstrating a sense of informality in the relationships. Participants seemed comfortable to laugh, joke and tease each other. Participants also spoke about feeling at ease with each other "I come into the PRU and… I feel completely comfortable, relaxed, I know I could just… chat to Natalie and Louise about whatever" (1, 101). This level of comfort was spoken about in reference to informal, but also more challenging conversations (3, 60). Prioritising informal relational times together was seen as important: "just that kind of informality… yes let's have a coffee, I think that's relationship building and makes you feel part of the school" (5, 28).

4.1.7 Summary and link to theory

All six focussed codes are aspects you might see in a positive parental relationship, where the parents are comfortable, open, honest and working together. A key part of these findings is the influencing role this positive 'parental' relationship plays on the rest of the work, and the EPs relationships with and involvement in the system or 'family'. Indeed: "I think relationship is key, that's the one key thing for us, the relationship we have with our EPs" (1, 61). This GT frames this relationship as something that cascades down through the system, to the students, much like the caregiver relationships in a family. Examples to show how this happens will now be presented in each category and explored further in the discussion chapter.

4.2 Theoretical category 2: Shared core values, goals, approach and language
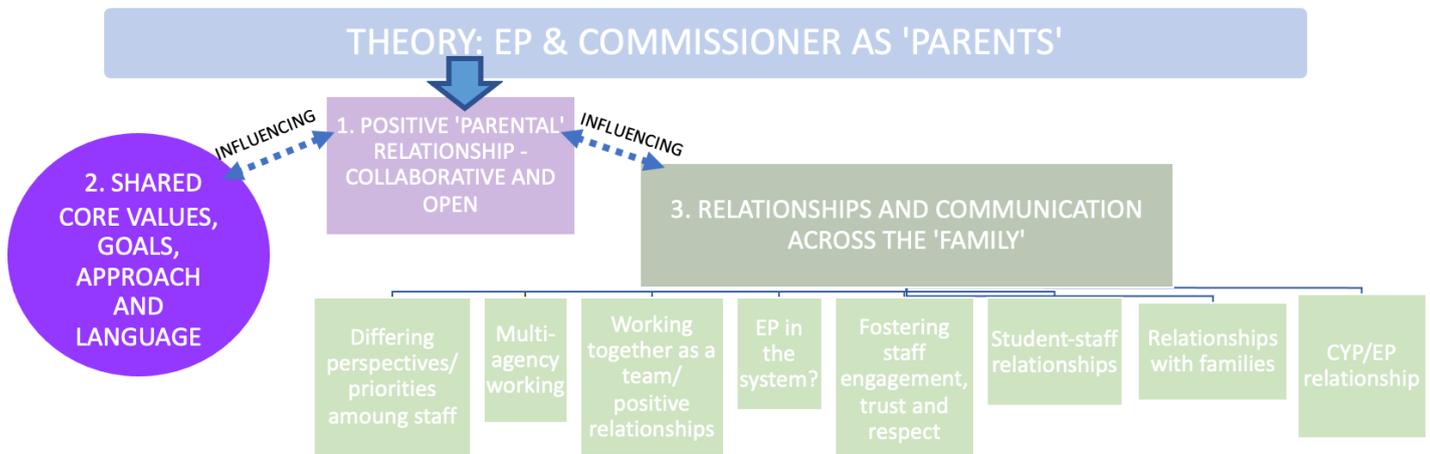
Shared values, goals, approaches and language were evident across interviews. Discussion and agreement over concepts such as 'needs', the function of the EHCP process, and what success and achievement looked like were prevalent, as well as some strong feelings about the education system and need for change. There were four focussed codes within this category. Further data from each can be found in appendix I.

Table 5 *Focussed codes from category 2 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Shared core values, goals, approach and language	Conceptualising 'needs', SEND and EHCPs	97	All
	Shared professional values/ethos	78	All
	Perspectives on academic assessment, 'ability' and 'success'	22	All
	PRU as a different approach	10	1, 2, 4, 5

4.2.1 Conceptualising 'needs', SEND and EHCPs

Data in this code covered different approaches to and conceptualisations of the EHCP process and the function of it, as well as broader discussions around 'needs' and SEND. These

discussions highlighted the value of a shared understanding over how the EP and commissioner approached these, and core goals about the purpose of this involvement and support for CYP. Some participants highlighted the important function of the EP and the PRU in securing EHCPs for CYP: "obviously Claire [SENCo] feels strongly, and rightly that a big part of her role is getting EHCPs for young people so that they can have the support that we're talking about when they move on" (2, 86).

Linked to this was the idea that CYP arrive with "undiagnosed SEND" (1, 7), with frustration expressed at how needs are often misunderstood at mainstream. Participants reported a backlog of referrals (2, 89) and still needing to apply for EHCPs at the end of KS4 for some pupils (1, 89). Some highlighted that all CYP at the PRU have additional needs "based on the fact they haven't coped in mainstream" (2, 86). EP involvement was viewed as important for all these CYP, and across interviews 'needs' were focussed on rather than 'behaviour', with a desire to normalise SEND and talk about it in a different way (3, 75).

However, the SENCo in interview 5 wanted to avoid the typical response of 'channelling' CYP into EHCPs and specialist provision, by ensuring all other avenues are explored first (20), involving EPs in more action planning and joint reflective consultations rather than one off assessments. In interview 4, the EP was not required to conduct any statutory assessment, so they spoke about being free to use their time in a more "strategic" way (5). No matter the focus and context within each provision, EPs and commissioners shared a vision about the focus of their work, led by how they conceptualised 'needs' and the type of support CYP needed based on this.

4.2.2 Shared professional values/ethos

Participants across interviews linked their positive working relationship to their shared values and ethos. The EP in interview 5, felt that shared goals and vision spurred on the positive

changes in their work (23). One SENCo reflected on "common values with people who are working with young people who've been excluded from school and [have] seen the negative impact of that" (2, 45), suggesting that this influenced the kind of work and approaches they take. Another EP reflected to the SENCo:

> when I listen to you talk, your values just absolutely shine through for me so strongly and I really gravitate towards your values, because I think I share a lot of them… I think those underpin our working relationship really strongly. (3, 92-94)

The headteacher in interview 4 highlighted the importance of the EP understanding "how we work and our ethos" noting that "we have worked together for so long that we know you understand us" (22). Participants also noted the importance of values being "shared amongst everyone" (5, 56) in the system for effective working. In interview 2, the SENCo was striving for this shared vision across the system, thinking about "what needs to change and how can we do it, how can we get everybody on board!" (33). In interview 1, the SENCo highlighted how foundational it was: "being able to really trust that everybody's… got that same shared vision… I would find it really difficult to work with anybody… who isn't child centred" (62).

4.2.3 Perspectives on academic assessment, 'ability' and 'success'

There was some discussion around sorting access arrangements for Year 11s (2, 5) and the difficulties involved in accurately assessing levels of attainment and ability when CYP arrive at the PRU (5, 70-71). However, participants also highlighted the importance of looking at a child's development and success holistically: "it's not just about the results we get, yes, we want them to achieve their GCSE's… but I think it's also about are they going to be able to actively partake in society" (5, 80). Success was understood as more than just GCSE outcomes, with the need to consider a child-centred perspective and check "who is this for… is it for us, you know Ofsted and it looks good… or is it about that child's life and what they do after us

(3, 79). Discussions around streaming and avoiding labelling ability as 'fixed' also occurred (2, 68-70).

The headteacher in interview 4 noted her focus on academic achievement, with GCSE outcomes a "key area of interest" (49). The EP had previously conducted some research around this and found that post-16 outcomes data from the PRU looked very different to the national trends: "95%... were going on to further education or training and the number of GCSE's that students were coming out with… was so many more… A-C's than any other PRU" (4, 50). Findings from the research suggest this was facilitated by offering a holistic, long-term, relational approach, and offering an individualised and flexible curriculum – including over 20 different GCSEs - which focussed on academic success and achievement in areas important to CYP.

4.2.4 PRU as a different approach

The PRU was seen to take a different approach compared to other educational establishments. Speaking of a more relational way of working, one SENCo reflected that "it's just so different to other school settings in that sense, and I think that's what I think makes PRUs special places… to work in" (1, 96). Commissioners noted the contrast with their experiences in mainstream schools, where they had experienced less direct EP contact, especially at a relational and organisation level. The value placed on this different, more connected approach to working was clear throughout interviews.

4.2.5 Summary and link to theory

Core family values and ethos are key drivers in parenting, impacting how parents choose to teach and bring up their children. Examples of some of the broader values, and perspectives within EP-commissioner relationships have been outlined. However, subsequent theoretical categories are all further examples of such values, approaches and priorities. In some ways,

many of the other codes in subsequent categories could also have gone in this category but instead have been categorised separately as they highlight additional detail and nuance in the findings. The broad examples outlined in this category, of language, values, approaches and goals influence all of the work between EP and commissioner, and across the system. This is impacted by whether people across the system also share these values, and thus, whether work is joined up and taking a shared approach. Examples of the influence of the 'parental' values and approaches across the wider 'family' or system will now be outlined in category 3.

4.3 Theoretical category 3: Relationships and communication across the 'family'
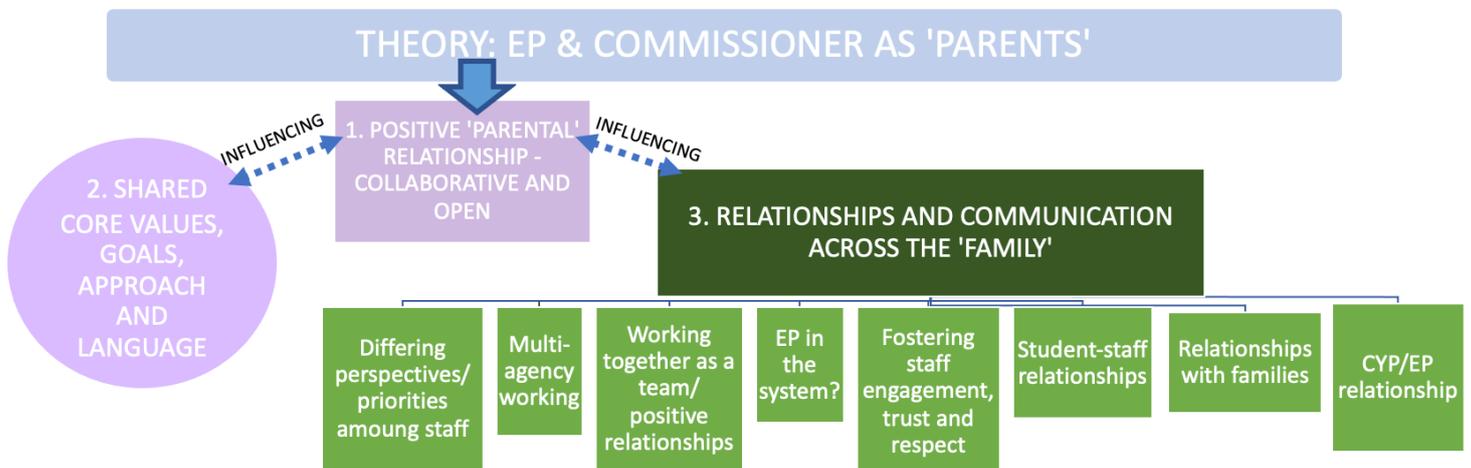
This category had the highest number of open codes at 530. These were categorised into 8 focussed codes which referred to relationships which intertwine and impact each other across the system. The prevalence of codes in this category strongly impacted the formation of the GT, which highlights 'parenting' within the context of the wider 'family'. For this reason, I chose to also include the 8 focussed codes within this category, in the theoretical model. Further examples from each of the focussed codes can be found in appendix J.

Table 6 *Focussed codes from category 3 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Relationships and communication across the 'family'	Fostering staff engagement, trust and respect	177	All

	Relationships with families	129	All
	Working together as a team/positive relationships	80	All
	EP in the system?	48	All
	Differing perspectives/priorities among staff	31	1, 2, 3, 5
	Student-staff relationships	24	All
	CYP/EP relationship	16	1, 2, 3
	Multi-agency working	23	All

4.3.1 Fostering staff engagement, trust and respect

Participants noted the importance of the EP building staff trust, respect and engagement:

> [We] need to think about our EPs really becoming part of the staff… I think Lucy and Jane are much more visible around the school now, and I think you've built up relationships with staff as well haven't you… so when they're called into, 'oh do you want to come to this meeting' I don't think they're quite as worried. (5, 18)

The importance of staff feedback and empowerment was also shared across interviews and the hope was to "shift… the narrative in the staff room… about how much views are being taken on board and being used to make changes" (2, 26). Expertise among staff was acknowledged, with a desire to harness this and build staff confidence. Consultations were used to move away from an expert model and help staff learn from each other (3, 87). Gaining staff respect and engagement was seen to happen through EPs being empathetic and humble, having credibility, acknowledging the challenge of working in a PRU, and working together to reflect and make the learning applicable and individualised to the setting.

4.3.2 Relationships with families

There was plenty of discussion across interviews about the importance of improving and promoting communication with families. In interview 1, specific examples of the EP and SENCo working together successfully with families were given. They noted that often parents recognise and respond well to genuine support for their child (49), especially as they have often felt let down by previous professionals or schools. A collaborative approach with families was valued across interviews, with a desire to be "honest and transparent with the young person and the parent" (3, 78), through having explicit conversations about the scope of the work, "giving them the chance to have their say" and "feeding back afterwards" (2, 5) in an accessible way (3, 79). There was a desire to empower parents with knowledge and understanding of their CYP, and to help them work through difficulties together (3, 27). EPs were seen as key agents in helping staff to understand the holistic circumstances of the CYP, including how their home life might be impacting them (2, 17). They were also seen to impact relationships between home and school, either directly, or indirectly through supporting staff (5, 54). Holding in mind the adverse experiences and "disrupted lives" (3, 27) often experienced by families, this engagement was thought to be vital because "unless you've got family support you can't actually really fully address what is going on for the students" (5, 53).

4.3.3 Working together as a team/positive relationships

The power of 'working together' was a clear theme across interviews and use of the word 'team' both within and outside the PRU system was frequently used as a determiner of success:

> one of the barriers and what we can do about it is relationships… as EPs we need to build relationships with people in the school who have… leadership roles and influence because I think… there's a feeling of an 'us' and 'them' between what they feel about

us as EPs, as outside agencies… but I think the only way we can overcome that is actually to try and work together with them. (5, 118)

When asked about the reasons behind a successful reintegration story in interview 1, the SENCo replied: "it's the team approach isn't it… he's got a really strong team around him, he's on a child protection plan so…. everybody's got their own part to play, and I think we've just got the balance right" (44).

Other examples showed that different parties had worked well together in person-centred reviews (3, 16) and different members of the system had been consulted on organisational change projects (2, 24). All data reflected the importance of a 'team around a child' and a "whole team effort" (1, 96) influencing success. One SENCo highlighted feedback from a parent, which showed the significance of this way of working for families: "the parent was just really glad to see the… adults working in that kind of integral way… it was real teamwork" (3, 23).

4.3.4 EP in the system?

Ideas around how much the EP was part of the PRU team or system were different across interviews. In interview 1, the SENCO highlighted "she's one of us, and that's how we introduce our EPs… one of us at our school" (48). The EP in interview 3 framed her role as "another pair of eyes, an ally but also… one who can maybe see things that aren't… so clear when you're in the middle of it" (3, 64). The SENCo in interview 2 reflected on the positive impact of this "distance" (10), but the EP also noted the challenges that come with it: "if you're an external professional just coming in sporadically… you know there can be some dynamics at play there where you feel like kind of an outsider but also want to be part of the team" (14). The balance "of how the EP might be positioned as part of the system or outside of the system, and how your own behaviour when you visit might contribute to that" was viewed as "a

challenge" (2, 79). Examples highlight this difficult dynamic of maintaining balance between being 'in' the system, and also taking an outside perspective, and ensuring there is some space to 'step back' and reflect. Participants in interviews 1 and 4 spoke about already being embedded in the PRU and feeling part of the team, with participants in interview 5 striving towards this.

4.3.5 Differing perspectives/priorities among staff

In four interviews, participants acknowledged difficulties or differing priorities and perspectives among wider staff and how this impacted their work. The SENCo in interview 3 noted difficulties engaging staff, especially when they did not see the value of previous EP involvement, or feel particularly empowered by it: "I think there might still be… reluctance in certain corners… in terms of classroom observations or… what a challenge might look like and I think…there's still a little bit of reservation… it's about how time is valued… what's worthwhile doing" alluding to the need to shift away from ideas of "instant change" to recognising the importance of that "slower burn" that comes with more reflective joint working (81). Frustration over a lack of senior leadership team (SLT) support and the difficulties of championing change 'alone' were also highlighted (5, 25). One SENCo reflected on areas to continue developing: "I don't think there's necessarily a shared understanding about what we're all here for" noting some staff "differences of opinion about what is right for each child" (2, 68).

4.3.6 Student-staff relationships

The importance of student-staff relationships was key across all interviews. Based on how well these had been built through outreach work during lockdown, the headteacher had set up a project to continue building these on return to school and involved the EP in supporting staff to develop this (4, 14). This PRU in particular expressed the importance of using adults that

the CYP already know well, to provide support and intervention. Similar attitudes towards harnessing already established staff-student relationships to facilitate change were echoed across other interviews and participants noted the use of their EPs to support staff in developing these relationships with CYP and families, through supervision, reflection and feedback. Aspects which helped foster these positive student-staff relationships were discussed; race was considered - "most of the staff here are black, and the majority are black men, and they are fantastic with the students" (3, 60) - and the importance of "the smaller setting, the different… wider range of opportunities [and the] more relaxed relationships with staff" (2, 66). Further reference to the impact of race and identity in relationships will be covered in the next theoretical category.

4.3.7 CYP-EP relationship

The CYP-EP relationship was only spoken about in interviews 1, 2, and 3 mainly due to the systemic work that EPs were carrying out in interviews 4 and 5. In interview 1, where EPs seemed to carry out more individual work, participants discussed the difficulties of engaging certain CYP, often linked to difficulties trusting a new person (75). Consequently, staff carefully considered and matched CYP with each of the EPs in the hope for a positive relationship (65). Participants across all three interviews also reported thinking carefully about how they introduced EPs to CYP, reflecting on the importance of trust, language, preparation and expectation in this process. EPs saw individual work as "both assessment [and a] form of positive intervention" (2, 58) and gave various examples of what they aimed to achieve through both direct and indirect feedback to CYP. The SENCo in interview 2 recognised how much all CYP could also benefit from this process. The CYP-EP relationship in interview 3 was largely spoken about in the context of meeting with the family and the school together. In this case, this also involved the adults in the PRU that knew the CYP well. This topic will be considered

further in category 5 which highlights the importance of trust in relationship with CYP and families.

4.3.8 Multi-agency working

Joining up different professionals and agencies was important across interviews. One SENCo reflected on her desire to "have more of a planned approach" earlier in the year for students who need EHCPs, and to work in a more "joined up" way with other professionals such as speech and language therapists (3, 67). Another highlighted the need to learn from and join up with other services, drawing on everyone's expertise to collaborate towards more positive outcomes (5, 43). EPs spoke about supporting TAC networks to think holistically about CYP and families, and the challenges of "communication between all the different services… how people are planning and co-ordinating their work and… how we might complement each other and work together" (2, 88). Participants in interview 2 spoke about the helpfulness of the PRU staff connecting with other PRUs to reflect on successful strategic practice (33). In interview 4, both the headteacher and the EP sat on the local safeguarding board within the local authority where they used their experience of "exclusions and what works and what doesn't work" (5), to bring challenge and discussion at a local policy level.

4.3.9 Summary and link to theory

Working together and fostering positive relationships across the system was vital throughout, similar to the idea of a well-functioning extended family. As Caroline, the EP in interview 3 highlights:

> relationships are absolutely key for me, in terms of building those relationships with families… young people… and also with the staff who do an enormous amount of work, and I'd just like to be there for… all of those different kind of roles and members of your setting… so that you can work on the outcomes and the goals that are really

important for you and we're there sort of facilitating that process, bringing our psychological perspective and supporting those relationships as best as we can, but really we're working alongside you and hopefully helping you… achieve what it is you feel is really important for your setting for your young people. (9)

The interacting nature of all these relationships, and also the cascading influence of the EP-commissioner 'parental' role and function on the staff-EP relationship, the staff-student(&family) relationship and the CYP(&family)-EP relationship is evident in the data discussed so far. The function of positive relationships was 'mirrored' (3, 85) across the system or 'family', highlighting the importance of the 'parents' and how they model and impact healthy interactions in the rest of the 'family'. Examples shared of positively 'working together' and fostering joint working and positive multi-agency practice also appeared to be a product of the shared values and goals. As Caroline so clearly articulated in the quote above, understanding these values, goals and priorities appears vital, especially when contracting the EP-commissioner working relationship. Her quote, and all the evidence outlined above, highlights the close interactions between the first three theoretical categories and their importance in the GT (Figure 14).

Figure 14 *First three overarching categories in the GT*
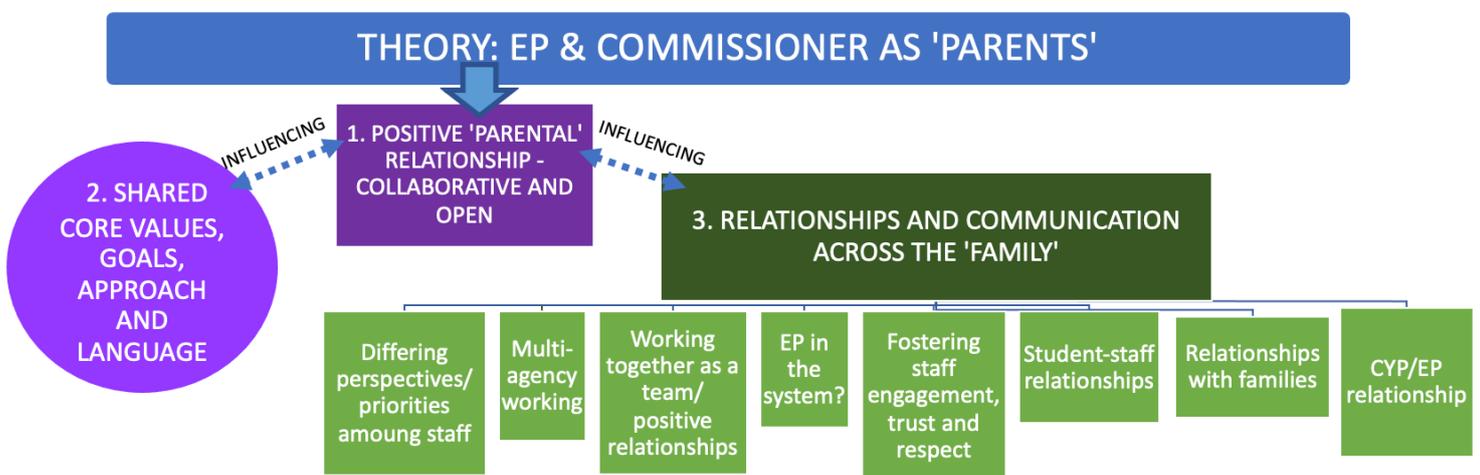
Data from each of the remaining categories in the model will now be presented, however exploration of how each of these link to the overarching 'parental function' theory, will be discussed in chapter 6, after the second literature search has also been presented.

4.4 Theoretical category 4: Nurturing the wider environment – systemic focus

4. Nurturing wider environment - systemic focus

Within this category, there were two focussed codes on the importance of having a systemic focus in the work. Summaries of each are given below, and further data can be found in appendix K.

Table 7 *Focussed codes from category 4 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Nurturing the wider environment	Systemic focus	123	All
	Race reflections	10	2, 3

4.4.1 Systemic focus

Decisions to work in a more 'systemic' and 'strategic' way were highlighted in each interview. The headteacher highlighted the importance of the EP in strategic work: "that's where an EP is invaluable because… the thinking that they bring, and the thinking that they get you to do is way more valuable than pretty much anything else you can do" (4, 5). Participants in interview 2 reflected on the decision they had made to work at an organisational level, noting the PRUs brave decision "to put casework… on hold, which often feels like the more burning kind of need… to think about a system that might actually benefit far more young people for the amount of time that's put into it" (14). Patience, perseverance (5, 115) and consultation across the system, to build a "shared understanding" (2, 68), were seen as key for successful organisational change.

A similar approach looking at "whole school provision" and "embedding good practice" through "advice, consultation [and] and communication" was discussed in interview 3 (3). They acknowledged that a consistent EP-commissioner relationship helped affect this change, by increasing accountability and opportunity for reflection. A shift away from individual work, was in part due to "dissatisfaction" over EP recommendations not being embedded (3, 14; 5, 42). Consultation, action planning, and reviewing were seen as more impactful for more students, particularly in interviews 3, 4 and 5. Participants also reflected on the need for multi-agency work to be more joined up and collaborative, "because we can't do it on our own" (1, 100). The idea of "setting up systems and structures that make us all work together more effectively" (3, 71) was evident across interviews.

4.4.2 Race reflections

Race reflections were categorised here as an acknowledgement of the systemic and institutional factors at play, and the impact this has on relationships in the system. Reflections on this topic occurred in interviews 2 and 3. Participants in interview 2 expressed an interest in exploring how to challenge racial inequality and unconscious bias in education, especially due to its "relevance to the PRU because of the demographic of young people that you get that are excluded" (46). Talking openly about anti-racist practice was valued and prioritised in interview 3, with the EP acknowledging previous conversations about "the fact that I'm a white female EP and a lot of the young people in the setting are black young men and… what that means for how they experience working with me" (31).

4.5 Theoretical category 5: Internal working model – rebuilding trust and expectations
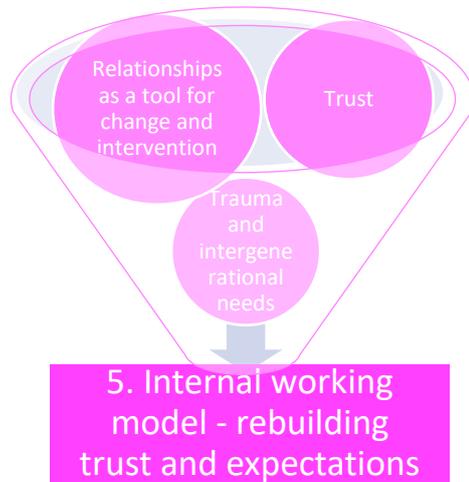
Throughout interviews relationships were understood as a powerful tool for rebuilding trust with CYP and families. Participants viewed each interaction with a staff member, EP or professional as an opportunity to reframe their views and expectations of the world, relationships, and of themselves. Past trauma, intergenerational needs and complexities within families were discussed and linked closely to the importance of building trust. Summaries of each code are provided below, and further examples can be found in appendix L.

Table 8 *Focussed codes from category 5 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Internal working model – rebuilding trust and expectations	Relationships as a tool for change/intervention	43	All
	Trust	43	All
	Trauma and intergenerational needs	14	All

4.5.1 Relationships as a tool for change/intervention

Across interviews relationships were seen as a tool for change for CYP, families and staff, where participants prioritised building positive relationships to improve trust, engagement and ultimately, future outcomes for the CYP. In interview 4, the EP's research into what helped the PRUs high levels of success in post-16 destinations and outcomes showed:

relational stuff… the rapport building… the members of staff who knew the local area, and understood the needs of the children, and who were able to actually go with the young people to interviews or… to their work placements at the beginning, and you know keep in touch. (50)

Relational, social and emotional skills were also seen as areas that CYP needed support to develop: "let's be a safe place where they can make mistakes and find out how to manage consequences, and what support they need to do that… to manage and regulate themselves independently, in the community, in society, in jobs" (5, 81). The need to support CYP to transfer their relational skills and interactions outside the PRU was highlighted: "we have such good relationships [with CYP but are they] able to take that relationship and learn from [it], you know how to be civil… how to cope in new situations and resilience and coping with people you don't like" (3, 14). Activities such as person-centred reviews were discussed as a helpful opportunity to expose CYP to new and unfamiliar circumstances, and to help them learn to interact and reflect with new and unfamiliar people, such as the EP.

4.5.2 Trust

Participants often spoke about rebuilding trust with families and CYP especially relating to their experiences of services and education: "a lot of our work is rebuilding trust from families feeling let down" (1, 81). Considering these families, the EP in interview 3 reflected: "how does well, a complete stranger like me coming into their lives... how does that become possible for them to engage with that and take up my offer" (27). As a result, using already established relationships to encourage trust and engagement with new services and individuals was important across interviews, even when introducing a new EP to staff at a PRU (2, 11).

4.5.3 Trauma and intergenerational needs

Lack of trust was often linked to intergenerational needs and experiences, with "repeat… generations coming through the PRU" (1, 81). Such needs were often linked to complex family circumstances, and trauma. Participants highlighted the need to be sensitive to these difficulties and give them a space to be heard and understood (3, 23). In interview 5, the experience of school exclusion and moving to a PRU was also spoken about as "a traumatic experience for any person" (67) and the SENCo highlighted the importance of CYP having someone they can talk to at the PRU, to process this, and have their voice heard. Participants in interview 2 spoke about wanting their practice to be "trauma-informed" (19) and highlighted the EP as fundamental in helping them learn more about home circumstances and past experiences, to best support CYP. Trust tied in as a core element of this process:

> if you don't get that initial trust [with the family] you don't get the back story that gives you so much information… you know the history of what has happened and where they've been, and… the traumatic events that have happened throughout this young person's entire life on and off. (1, 48)

4.6 Theoretical category 6: Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency

6. Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency
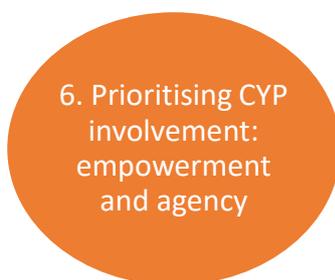
This category highlights the importance of prioritising CYP's involvement in their education, support and future planning. Participants were keen to provide space to listen to CYP, to engage in practice that was holistic and person-centred and to empower CYP. This category was a fundamental value and approach shared by all participants, linking it back to category 2. Further examples of each code can be found in appendix M.

Table 9 *Focussed codes from category 6 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency	Listening to CYP's perspectives and understanding lived experience	72	All
	Holistic and person-centred practice	47	All
	Agency and parity – including CYP	34	All
	Empowering new skills, self-reflection and understanding	24	1, 2, 3, 5

4.6.1 Listening to CYP's perspectives and understanding lived experience

Participants all valued listening and responding to CYP's perspectives. They showed examples of listening to CYP's aspirations and thinking together with the young people about "what's been difficult for them [and] those things that have been better, and what helps them" (1, 34). Examples of listening to CYP's perspectives were shown in the organisational change project around PRU inductions which included "activities… looking at young people's values… being led by them and their interests and what they tell us so then we can have more understanding of what is important for them" (2, 74). Participants in interview 5 aimed for a similar approach in their induction through Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (ELSA) involvement. They believed that a student having the opportunity "to develop a relationship with someone, having a space to give their views, to find strategies that work, that could then be fed back… would inform so much" (68).

Person-centred planning and pupil focus meetings were seen as helpful ways to be led by CYP's perspectives:

> We… really listened to that young person didn't we, and we talked about what was
>
> important to them a lot, and some of what was important to them, was quite challenging

to the setting… in terms of the communication and how decisions are made, and how involved the young person is in that, and how unhappy they were about that, and it wasn't easy things to hear was it, but he got that space to articulate that and explain that. (3, 20)

As Caroline reflected: "a lot of these young people don't always have a sense of feeling heard" (3, 20), and participants were keen to change this.

4.6.2 Holistic and person-centred practice

Participants across interviews referred to holistic and person-centred practice. Examples given were person-centred planning tools such as Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope (PATH) (O'Brien et al., 2010), and pupil focus meetings, where professionals came together to understand the child's experience. These meetings brought a perspective which staff "really valued" (2, 17). The SENCo in interview 1 encapsulated the ethos behind such work: "everything should come back to the child… even when we're thinking about the parent, and how their trauma impacts things… ultimately it's about skilfully bringing it back to what does that mean for the young person at the centre" (62). To do this, participants aimed to foster a holistic "shared understanding of a young person's needs" (1, 15). One EP highlighted her role as:

bringing together life outside of the setting, life inside of the setting, what those experiences together mean for that young person… if we've got that clearer, we're all on the same page, then we'll be much clearer about what we do for that young person, what we offer, what we're working towards as a little team around that young person… it's just trying to hold in mind that whole person. (3, 64)

4.6.3 Agency and parity – including CYP

Empowering a sense of agency and giving CYP 'parity' in relationships, were ideas discussed across interviews, including in decisions about reintegration and future education (4, 47). The EP in interview 5 highlighted the importance of supporting CYP with "identifying their aspirations… activating… their self-determination [so] they're… actively part of achieving those aspirations" (83). In interview 3, the EP reflected that the person-centred planning case discussed "worked brilliantly because the young man… was really… up for it, really wanted parity actually, really wanted the meeting to be centred around him" (16). Due to his desire to be heard, the CYP was "really able to take up his authority in that meeting and… address the adults with that kind of parity" (3, 16). Indeed, participants discussed the importance of CYP motivation in this work (1, 44) and highlighted that such pupil-centred work can give staff a sense of agency (3, 19) through valuing their voice and perspective and harnessing their relationships with CYP.

4.6.4 Empowering new skills, self-reflection and understanding

Through the type of work discussed, participants felt they were empowering CYP with new skills, facilitating self-reflection and developing their self-understanding. In interview 2, seeing the EP assessment and feedback process as "a form of intervention in itself" (56), participants aimed to help CYP see themselves differently and understand their strengths (51). Participants in interview 3 highlighted the importance of the EP role in considering "the narrative the young person has for understanding what's happened to them… why it's happened… and how it can be different in the future" (76). The SENCo wanted to give CYP the opportunity to learn "how to look at themselves, how to reflect, how to engage with others, how to question and challenge themselves and others in a safe space" (14).

In interview 5, the importance of encouraging self-reflection was discussed within the curriculum:

> any kind of planning our students aren't very good at because they're not used to it… for some of them it's very chaotic in their lives so actually they get to a point where they think well actually there's no point in planning… they have to do a module on… personal development and planning, and… they find it really quite hard, but then when you go back and start reviewing 'oh right, you've achieved that, look at your report, we can pull out all of the things that you've achieved' and they actually get a sense of 'oh ok, I have done something, and I have achieved something' (98)

During this discussion, the EP highlighted common difficulties in reflection and executive function skills for this cohort and thus, the importance of explicitly facilitating these planning and reflection opportunities (5, 99).

4.7 Theoretical category 7: Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development

7. Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development

Reflection was talked about as a key factor in the success of EP work in PRUs. The importance of participants and staff jointly listening, reflecting, reviewing practice, and being open to change was noted. There were also examples of EPs benefiting from and engaging in these processes in their own practice and development. Slowing down, and avoiding reactive practice was an important part of successful practice and consultation was helpful for facilitating reflection and learning. Each of the focussed codes within this category will now be discussed. Further data from each can be found in appendix N.

Table 10 *Focussed codes from category 7 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Reflection to facilitate learning and development	Reflective, listening, reviewing and open to change	117	All
	EPs' own professional development/reflections	50	All
	Slowing down – avoiding reactive practice	17	All
	Consultation facilitates change	8	3, 4, 5

4.7.1 Reflective, listening, reviewing and open to change

All interviews showed examples of participants reflecting with each other, reviewing practice, and being open to change and development. Regarding their organisational change project around the induction process in the PRU, one SENCo reflected that "going through a well-structured… thoughtful process [facilitated by the EPs]… was helpful" (2, 10). Similarly, the headteacher reflected on her supervision with the EP: "you just asked the right questions for me to find my own answers, and I think that's just how you work so it matches our style I suppose in how we like to work" (4, 55).

The EP in interview 3 praised the SENCos openness and willingness to reflect and work in different ways, and the SENCo named the EP-commissioner relationship as a key driver in supporting that (3). The SENCo wanted to encourage all PRU staff to take a similar approach: "softening the edges… and being… more vulnerable and admitting that we don't know everything and even when we know it, we don't always do it" (81).

Interview 4 highlighted a large part of the success of the EP role being down to staff willingness to engage, reflect and develop practice:

the staff are so willing and so they just want to absorb the information… when it's literally just looking at psychodynamic theories, I have never done that with a school, but at the PRU it was possible because the staff were so open to it, and I think that supports them systemically, just being able to, really being able to take a step back and reflect and kind of take that meta perspective. (23)

4.7.2 EPs' own professional development/reflections

Throughout the interviews, EPs reflected on their own practice and showed willingness to develop their approaches. In settings where there were two EPs (3/5) participants articulated the benefits of working alongside another EP colleague: "I think it's important because you know… not all EPs are the same, you know we have slightly different approaches" (1, 69). This was viewed as helpful especially when considering which EP might work with a CYP or family. In interview 2, the EPs valued the opportunity to reflect on practice together, describing this "space" as "helpful" and "empowering" (37). Some EPs also noted the relative lack of experience they had working in PRUs as trainees, and the importance of having time to learn about the setting with another EP colleague (2, 37), or through research and relationship building (4, 54). One EP in interview 2 was keen to learn more about how they could support CYP post-16, highlighting this as a new area of practice, which they needed to consider and research further (84). These are examples of EPs being willing to learn more and develop practice alongside the PRU. It was also clear that EPs appreciated the reflective experience of the interview, with all highlighting how helpful it had been.

4.7.3 Slowing down – avoiding reactive practice

One of the reflections at the end of interview 1 was about the helpfulness of stopping and reflecting: "just having that space to really think about it, because quite often… you just get on and do it don't you, you don't really stop and think about the complexities of it" (101). The

interview process seemed to mirror a process that EPs were providing to commissioners and their PRUs. Participants reflected on the helpfulness of taking "a slow measured approach… slowing down to think about those systems" (2, 24-26) when engaging in the organisational change project. They also felt the need to avoid "knee jerk" reactions to difficulties because "we need to take this kind of thoughtful measured approach for the changes to work" (2, 30). Participants highlighted how easy it is to take a reactive "scattergun" (4, 5) and "firefighting" (2, 27) approach in a PRU, and advocated the need to avoid this. The SENCo in interview 3 advocated for moving away from "panic" assessment of different children, towards "a more planned approach starting from the beginning of the year" (67). This links to the idea of EPs "becoming part of the staff" team rather than someone just "parachute[ed] in because we're struggling" (5, 18).

4.7.4 Consultation facilitates change

Participants gave examples of joint consultations helping to facilitate change in how CYP were supported. An example of using consultation to impact a CYP was discussed by the headteacher:

> we discussed his needs with Steve over I think several occasions… and actually that boy now is doing absolutely brilliantly, he is thriving and… I think how close we were to saying… 'we don't know what to do he'll have to go somewhere else' but actually you know with Steve's support, the staff have just helped that boy to make such phenomenal progress. (4, 41)

Other examples of the benefit of joint consultations were discussed, especially their impact in developing a more shared understanding and approach.

4.8 Theoretical category 8: Acknowledging and containing difficulty

8. Acknowledging and containing difficulty

A key role of the EP-commissioner relationship was acknowledging and containing difficulty within the system. Within this category was an acknowledgment of the complexities and pressures of PRU work, difficulties with engagement, especially with families, and the importance of the EP as a container. Each of the focussed codes within this category will now be discussed. Further examples from each code can be found in appendix O.

Table 11 *Focussed codes from category 8 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Acknowledging and containing difficulty	Complexities/pressures of PRU work	48	All
	Difficulties with engagement	29	1, 2, 3, 5
	Relational skills/EP as emotional container	17	1, 2, 4, 5
	Links to criminal justice system	3	3

4.8.1 Complexity/pressures of PRU work

Participants across interviews highlighted the pressures and complexities of work in PRUs. The PRU setting was described as a 'last resort' for students who had moved between multiple settings and been permanently excluded. Complexities of both CYP and families were noted, as well as the fast-paced changes within PRUs:

you can't plan your EP time at a PRU because you can't just kind of race ahead and use it all in the first two terms, because then in the summer term, you might have kids who

come to you that have been perm-exd or for whatever reason they're with you and desperately need EP time. (1, 21)

Frustration around things feeling 'stuck' and challenges within wider systems (2, 11) were noted, including lack of communication, and things not being prioritised. Some of these challenges are presented in more detail in category 12. High workload and pressures within the system, including a backlog of EHC requests, were also highlighted by some EPs and participants. Staff absence and stress levels were discussed in some interviews, with some consideration around leaving the job as a result. In this case, the EP-commissioner relationship was a supportive, protective factor in stopping this happening.

4.8.2 Difficulties with engagement

Difficulties with parental engagement were referred to in most interviews, including not being able to reach parents or parental reluctance to involve a professional. Despite persistent effort, EPs also spoke about difficulties engaging with CYP in individual work (1, 73). As highlighted by the SENCO in interview 2, "it is really challenging with a young person [who] doesn't want to engage and obviously you don't want to force anything… finding ways around that is challenging" (78), especially when there are complex "barriers for some of our young people in also being able to accept this kind of support" (51). The EP role was seen as important in trying to overcome these barriers, though offering a psychological perspective that would help staff better support the CYP and families.

4.8.3 Relational skills/EP as emotional container

In 4/5 interviews, there were explicit examples of the positive impact of the EPs relational skills in these complex circumstances. Qualities such as being "warm", "welcoming", a "good listener", "empathetic", "not patronising", and helping staff and parents feel "relaxed", "comfortable" and able to "share a lot" were referenced (1, 48; 4, 55). Indeed, the EP role was

seen to provide emotional support and containment for both staff and families (1, 55; 2, 9). The headteacher in interview 4 reflected on the EP supporting and containing her, and thus the wider organisation, through providing supervision (22). Supervision was also used to ensure staff wellbeing and support:

> last week our other EP actually did a supervision session for the primary staff because there had been… quite a significant incident at the primary unit and social care were involved and actually when you have staff who have got 20 years' experience saying 'I walked through my front door and I burst into tears', I think you actually need to make sure that your staff are supported… they needed to have room and space to actually… talk about how they were feeling. (5, 45)

EPs were a core part of ensuring this support was in place and helping to contain staff during such complexity.

4.8.4 Links to criminal justice system

In interview 3, links to the criminal justice system were discussed, with an awareness of the overrepresentation of "students that have come from PRUs and have ended up in prison" (14). These links were not referred to explicitly in other interviews but concerns around future outcomes post-16 were raised.

4.9 Theoretical category 9: Flexible, responsive to needs and going above and beyond

9. Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond

This category highlights an ethos and approach taken by both EPs and commissioners. It links closely to category 2 and is an example of a key value permeating all of the work discussed. Expanded examples from each focussed code can be found in appendix P.

Table 12 *Focussed codes from category 9 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Flexible, responsive to needs and going above and beyond	Flexible support and approach	61	All
	Ongoing support – not giving up	36	All
	Responding to individual CYP's needs	13	1, 2, 5

4.9.1 Flexible support and approach

Offering a flexible approach was a core factor in successful EP practice. The need to be flexible, re-prioritise work depending on what comes up, and take a fluid approach to planning was highlighted as a fundamental quality of an EP in a PRU (1, 60; 4, 10; 5, 108). This was necessary due to the "dynamic" nature of PRUs and because things "change so quickly" (4, 11). Commissioners also gave examples of taking this flexible approach in their work with parents and CYP. Indeed, across interviews it was clear that "flexibility", "creativity" and "thinking outside the box of how we can make this work is really key in a PRU" (1, 60).

4.9.2 Ongoing support – not giving up

Participants offered ongoing support to CYP and spoke of adults involved not 'giving up'. One SENCO reflected on what helped success in a particular case:

> I think the fact that nobody gave up… because one of the things that he said was you know 'I was starting to think I wasn't worth it that nobody thought I was worth making an effort for'… but nobody gave up on him… [and] he's actually feeling it now and he feels like he's got a team. (1, 44)

There were examples of staff going 'above and beyond' their jobs roles, and of providing ongoing support after CYP had left the PRU (4, 50, 1, 81). Despite significant challenges for

the SENCo in interview 5, commitment to the role and a desire to not give up was evident. She noted that the interview, and the EPs validation, had helped her reflect that she needed to "keep ploughing on" because what she was doing was "coming from the right place" (124).

The 'ongoing' nature of the work was also clear in the way EPs worked in PRUs, involved with CYP and families in a way which encouraged review and a "natural follow through" of action, depending on needs (3, 23). In all interviews the EP was a key part of this support for CYP and families, whether directly, or indirectly, through supporting staff. In interviews 4 and 5, PRU staff visited CYP and families at home during lockdown to provide food parcels and other assistance, and the EPs were drawn on to support staff managing this different way of working.

4.9.3 Responding to individual CYP's needs

There were explicit examples in interviews 1, 2 and 5 of staff recognising that CYP's needs and the type of support appropriate is "so different for each student" (2, 64). Staff recognised that what success looked like was unique for each CYP and that the PRU wasn't the right provision for them all. The SENCO in interview 5 noted: "that mainstream they've come from may not have been right for them, it's like us working in a job isn't it, well that job wasn't right for me, but another job is, and I think it's the same with schools" (5, 20).

4.10 Theoretical category 10: Seeing the best in children

10. Seeing the best in children

This category focusses on the positive light in which participants saw the CYP they were working with. This involved taking a strengths-based and solution-focussed approach, planning future work through a hopeful lens, and shifting the narrative around CYP, to a more positive one. Further examples of data from each code can be found in appendix Q.

Table 13 *Focussed codes from category 10 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Seeing the best in children	Strengths-based and solution-focussed thinking	49	All
	Hope filled planning	32	1, 2, 3, 5
	Shifting the narrative	24	All

4.10.1 Strengths-based and solution-focussed thinking

Strengths-based and solution-focussed thinking about CYP was adopted across interviews. They viewed CYP's success as "really something to celebrate" (1, 40) and were keen to make sure CYP are "individually understood" so they can "think about success for them" (2, 72). There was discussion around taking a more positive and holistic approach to thinking about 'needs', to "encompass that broad spectrum of what needs look" (3, 75). Linked to developing more positive self-understanding, the EP desired to help CYP think in a more empowered, solution-focussed way. She wanted CYP to understand: "this is me and this is what's going on for me, and this is what's important to me, and this is what I need from you and this is how I can help myself" (3, 78). This type of solution-focussed practice and thinking, also extended to how EPs were commissioned to work with staff: "he could meet with each of them, he could talk with them about what had worked, and what had been successful when they'd worked in that different way and… what could they take from that" (4, 14).

Participants articulated that they wanted to change CYP's "views of education… that's our ultimate goal isn't it, for our kids to be comfortable, happy, enjoying school and wanting to be lifelong learners" (1, 100). They also recognised the strengths of their own provisions and showed vision for creating more positive solutions and practice: "this school's doing amazing things, but actually if we did change some of these things… it could be amazing, it really could be good, and actually we could have more success in it, than we're currently having" (5, 41).

4.10.2 Hope filled planning

There were numerous examples of participants using the words 'hope' and 'hopefully' in reference to individual CYP and future work plans and outcomes. Looking forward, participants were keen to do "more of what we've done" and look at "how to move on and to really do the things we talked about in our initial conversations" (3, 67). Big ideas for change were discussed, showing vision and excitement for future work:

> one of my grand plans… is that all assessment whenever anyone comes into the PRU is done through the SEN department [to] pick up all the things that actually they may need additional support with, and they'd obviously pick up if they'd need your intervention and do we need to do some action planning for them. (5, 69)

Participants described future work as "exciting and interesting" (2, 95) and discussed ideas around developing future interventions together, such as a "vision" for "every student [to have] ELSA sessions when they very first come to school" (5, 67). Hope played a key role in this planning, and in how the participants viewed the CYP.

4.10.3 Shifting the narrative

Participants saw an important part of their work as "shifting the narrative away from the problem and more towards solution and reflective thinking about possible alternate ways of seeing things" (2, 44). Participants in interview 1 highlighted that "often you read files and you know they'll often refer to this young person being very naughty, or you know they're defiant and they've done this, and they've done that" (8). There was a shared desire to shift the narrative away from the problem and "not blame the child" (2, 45). The SENCo in interview 2 spoke about the "big sense of relief" that parents feel at the PRU when the EP becomes involved because "finally people are trying to get to the bottom of their young person's needs and not just see them as a problem" (5).

Similarly, in interview 3, the SENCo spoke about their work to shift the narrative and focus. In the past their focus was on "whether their behaviour was hitting the threshold of dangerous or not, and it wasn't sufficiently about them, their lives and their perspective" (79). She highlighted the need to shift the whole narrative around SEND, and how they speak to parents and CYP about the fact that their "need led to these types of outcomes" rather than their "behaviour" (75).

4.11 Theoretical category 11: Big dreams – planning for positive and successful futures

11. Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures

Participants showed passionate vision to equip CYP for successful futures, where they could thrive. Much of the discussion around what 'success' looks like for this cohort was around helping them to prepare for transitions out of the PRU, whether that be reintegration to mainstream or to prepare for life post-16. Further data from each code is in appendix R.

Table 14 *Focussed codes from category 11 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Big dreams – planning for positive and successful futures	Transitions in and out	60	All
	Focus on CYP's future outcomes	36	All
	Reintegration	28	All

4.11.1 Transitions in and out

Participants spoke about the importance of transitions in and out, with a couple of participants explicitly looking to improve their induction processes for CYP. In interview 2 the EP spoke about the new induction process as an opportunity to think about "the end from the beginning" (72), to facilitate thinking about future outcomes as soon as CYP arrived. Staff in these cases felt that listening to CYP, involving them in their support and giving them a voice to "talk to

adults on that equal level about their future" (3, 16), would support them with engagement and give them agency in future decisions. Increasing this agency, as spoken about in category 6, was an important part of preparing them for transition out of the PRU.

The SENCo in interview 3 highlighted that "one of the main and most important things we do is we do build really positive relationships with young people and one of my passions is how that's translated post-16" (14). Participants in interview 5 highlighted the difficulties that CYP from their PRU would face in the post-16 transition and the need for transition coaching and support, to develop realistic aspirations (84). In interview 4, the success of transitions was linked to consistent, relational and practical support from PRU staff, especially in visiting destinations and supporting CYP after they had left. This links to suggestions in interview 1:

> it's about making sure they are set up, and whether that's about how they feel about themselves, or whether they've got the paperwork, or the support, or the network, it's about saying you know you've done really well, these are the things you are really good at, these are the things you need to keep working on, and this is how you can do it… making sure they've got that transition support, either from us directly, or through their keyworker. (91)

4.11.2 Focus on CYP's future outcomes

All interview participants had a significant focus on ensuring positive future outcomes for the CYP, both short-term involving their time at the PRU, and long-term after they had left (1, 81). In interview 4 the headteacher highlighted that these positive outcomes were facilitated by giving the CYP a more positive and successful experience of education (47) and supporting them with transition afterwards. The SENCo in interview 5 saw the PRUs work as "find[ing] the strategies that are going to work for these children, so we can get them back into a provision that's suitable for them but is not limiting what they could potentially do in the future" (20).

No matter the approach, or perceived success factors, all participants were passionate about and focussed on how to develop positive future outcomes for CYP during their time at the PRU.

4.11.3 Reintegration

Reintegration was spoken about in all interviews as a main aim for many of the students. However, participants also recognised the challenges of this, especially in KS4, relating to exam boards and missed curriculum (5, 80). They also noted the difficulties around failed reintegration and the impact this has on all CYP in the PRU who think: "if he can't manage then what chance do we have" (2, 66).

4.12 Theoretical category 12: Impacted by resources, external pressure and 'parental' support network

Finances, and external pressure and support, impacted how the EP-commissioner relationship functioned and affected change for CYP. Findings from each focussed code will now be presented. Further data from each code is in appendix S.

Table 15 *Focussed codes from category 12 and prevalence across interviews*

Theoretical category	Focussed code	Number of open codes	Interviews
Influenced by resources, external pressure and 'parental' support network	Time and money	46	All
	Work valued by system/SLT?	42	All
	CYP let down by the system & common patterns in educational journey	34	1, 2, 4
	Working with mainstream	34	1, 2, 5

| | Covid | 26 | 2, 3, 4, 5 |

4.12.1 Time and money

Time and money were key factors impacting EP work in PRUs. The EP in interview 3 reflected "there's just so much potential for a lot of work to be done, it's just how you prioritise it and fit it all into a really short amount of time really" (27). EPs and commissioners tried to use their time more efficiently, through consultation, to reach more pupils (5, 46). In interview 1, lack of funding in mainstream was noted, impacting the lack of support for children arriving at the PRU, as were the ethics of time dictating this support (23).

4.12.2 Work valued by system/SLT?

Across all but one interview, EP work was described as well valued by the SLT. EPs were seen as "vital" (1, 8; 2, 5), a "quality assurer" and "invaluable" (4, 5). This was not the case in interview 5, where participants spoke of being met with 'resistance' (25). Having this support from the 'top' was viewed as key to success.

4.12.3 CYP let down by the system and common patterns in educational journeys

In all interviews, the idea of CYP being 'let down' by the system and having "fallen through the gaps" (2, 17) was expressed, with frustration at the lack of previous support (1, 27; 2, 5). Common educational patterns of 'misunderstood needs' and things having "broken down at their school" (4, 44) were noted, as well as family patterns being repeated in CYP attending the PRU, and the challenges of breaking these cycles. There was a frustration at a lack of earlier intervention: "you just think argh, something really could, something helpful could have happened much earlier" (1, 20). With such difficulties, participants saw the role of the PRU as having to "build them up again… when they've been broken by the system" (1, 35).

4.12.4 Working with mainstream

Relatedly, in interviews 1, 2 and 5, participants spoke of their frustrations towards mainstream schools, especially around their misunderstanding of SEND and of the function of the EP role, with the SENCO reflecting "I just don't get why a young person wouldn't have access to an EP within a school" (1, 27). The SENCo highlighted the negative, damaging impact that she thought exclusion and approaches in mainstream had on CYP (42), highlighting how much injustice these CYP often face (45). The SENCo in interview 5 reflected on a frustrating example of mainstream schools having a very different approach, where a CYP who was reintegrating was "excluded within two days, without him setting foot in the school" (57). Most conversations about mainstream schools recognised these significant differences in approach and ethos, and the challenges that come with working together as a result.

4.12.5 Covid

Covid-19 lockdown provided participants with a very different way of working, where teachers completed more outreach work (4, 14; 5, 11), EPs offered more online training and supervision (4, 38; 5, 11) and there was a shift away from cognitive assessment (2, 60-62; 3, 3). The SENCo in interview 3 highlighted it as a "reflective period", with her perspective shifting away from the importance of Ofsted (79). Without being able to work in the typical way, participants moved to more creative, consultative ways of working which offered success, and which had been continued since (5, 23). However, there was also an acknowledgement of the challenges of Covid, the ongoing uncertainty and the impact of this on CYP (5, 103).

4.13 Summary

This chapter has outlined each theoretical category within the GT. The first three key categories were also explicitly linked to the overarching theory of the EP and commissioner as 'parents'. Further discussion around this concept will be provided in the discussion chapter, in relation to

all categories. However, first, the literature review which was carried out after analysis will be presented, to further inform the discussion of the GT.

Chapter 5: Literature Review

Based on the findings discussed, and the theory of the EP-commissioner as 'parents', who hold a parental role and function in the system, a literature search was conducted around the idea of containment within APs. Linked to the theoretical categories outlined, there were several psychological frameworks relating to parenting that could have been explored. I considered examining the broader research on factors contributing to 'healthy' or 'successful' parenting but acknowledged that the research field was far too broad, and not specific enough to pertinent elements of the theory. Subsequently, I considered reviewing one or some well-known theories and research linked to parenting and family life and relevant to my GT. Options included attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) and attunement, family values and ethos, child-centred or person-centred practice, solution-focussed and positive psychology and some systemic family therapy principles. However, while these would all have been relevant to aspects of the GT, Bion's (1962b) theory of containment was the most relevant across the categories developed. This chapter will now define containment and outline its pertinence to the GT. Subsequently, it will present the search strategy and the literature selected for review, before synthesising literature findings and concepts under key themes.

5.1 Containment

Bion's (1962a) theory of thinking, highlights links between emotional development, thinking and learning. It draws on Klein's (1946) idea of projective identification as key to helping infants develop capacity for thought. This happens by the caregiver "actively holding the baby's mental state" (Waddell, 2002, p. 67). With a caregiver attuning to and being able to hold the projections of their infant, they are then able to 'contain' these and return them in a way that is tolerable for the baby. This highlights thinking as a dynamic process which develops the emotional connection between mother and baby and facilitates growth of the baby's

thinking and learning (Richards, 2021). Bion (1962b) frames the mother, or caregiver, as a 'container' for the baby's intolerable projections, and gradually "the baby learns to internalise… his or her experience being engaged with and develops a capacity for managing frustration" (Richards, 2021, p. 52).

In the findings presented in chapter 4, the EP and commissioner held a 'parental' role and function in the system. Similar to the role of the containing parent described above, the EP and commissioner offered containment for the system and the CYP through their open and reflective relationship (category 1), the consistency of their shared values and approaches (category 2), and their consideration and 'holding' of relationships across system (category 3). They also offered containment for each other in what were deemed challenging roles, and the EP was used to offer supervision and reflective groups as containing spaces for staff (category 4, 7 and 8). Building trust and engagement across relationships was key, which links to the idea of a containing parental figure within a family (category 3 and 5). Adults in PRUs were seen as figures who could help contain CYP through consistent relationships, and help them tolerate and process challenges, leading to learning and development (category 5 and 7) – indeed these containing relationships were seen as a key tool for change.

It could be argued that containment, and the 'parenting' metaphor more broadly, are less directly linked to other categories such as category 6, which focusses on empowering CYP voice, autonomy, and agency. However, importantly, categories 6, 10 and 11 all focus on developing and nurturing CYPs future outcomes and successful transition to adulthood. Similarly, parents often focus on these outcomes, especially as their children reach adolescence. CYP's future outcomes can be impacted by parenting style and approach, and in particular the type of containment experienced. For example, category 9 highlights the importance of a flexible response to CYP in PRUs. Parents are also required to take this

flexible, responsive style to their children's needs, to help make sense of their experience and emotions and thus best contain them (Waddell, 2002).

In typical development, as children reach adolescence, they experience increased desire for independence and autonomy. Facilitating and encouraging this positively and safely is an important role for parents, who usually aim to raise children into independent adults. The consistency of the containment offered in the early years, and thus the attachment relationship built (Bowlby, 1969), arguably can offer a framework for how parents and young people manage these changes and navigate the challenges in their relationships that may come as a result.

In summary, it was clear through the development of my GT that the concept of containment offered an important explanatory link between all the theoretical categories – whether directly or indirectly - and the overarching GT. This was far more applicable than any other individual parenting theme or concept that I could have explored in the literature. Therefore, with containment a key psychodynamic idea in relation to the research findings and to parenting functions in general, it was chosen as the subject of the second literature search. Further links between each GT category and the idea of containment will be discussed in chapter 6, after the literature in this area has been reviewed.

5.2 Search strategy

The search aimed to identify papers which considered psychodynamic ideas of containment in relation to education for CYP in PRUs/APs or who were not attending mainstream school. The question posed to the literature was: 'what does the literature show about psychodynamic ideas of containment in relation to educating those who have been excluded from mainstream education?'. The literature search was carried out on 13.03.21. EBSCOhost was used to search the databases included in figure 15. A broader range of search terms were used in relation to

APs, compared to the first literature review, to account for the specificity of the topic of 'containment', and thus, the smaller number of papers available. By including 'alternative education' I aimed to consider papers where containment was discussed in relation to hospital or prison education settings for CYP. While these are not akin to PRU or AP settings, they offer alternative environments where CYP are excluded from or not attending mainstream education, often for traumatic reasons, and thus, may also require containment in a similar way. Decisions around other inclusion and exclusion criteria can be found in Table 16.

Figure 15 *Search strategy for second literature review*

Search Terms

AB pupil referral unit		AB PRU		AB alternative provision
AB alternative education	OR	AB exclusion	OR	AB excluded

AND

AB containment	OR	AB psychodynamic	OR	AB Bion

APA PsycINFO, APA PsycARTICLES, APA PsycBOOKS, APA Psychextra, Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection

268 Results

Search Limiters/Filters

1. Peer reviewed journals only
2. English language only

151

Duplicates removed

135 Results

Title/Abstract Screening

5 papers

Table 16 *Inclusion and exclusion criteria for second literature review*

Study Feature	Inclusion	Exclusion	Rationale
Type of publication	Peer reviewed journal	Not available in a peer reviewed journal	Research published in peer-reviewed journals has been evaluated by expert reviewers and met quality standards.
Language of study	Full article published in English	Full/part of article not available in English	To allow the whole study to be evaluated (translation services not available).
Country of study	Studies conducted in England	Studies conducted outside England	The guidance and legislation for APs and school exclusion is specific to England. Practice in other countries would be affected by differing political contexts and legislation.
Type of study	Qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods empirical research studies, or reflective pieces by practitioners working in relevant settings, in line with psychodynamic ways of working.	Literature reviews	To gain an understanding of psychodynamic ideas of containment in relation to AP practice, based on primary data, and experiences of relevant practitioners.
Subject/focus/participants	Papers exploring psychodynamic ideas of containment in relation to practice in PRUs or APs, or in the education of children who have been excluded/are missing school for SEMH/behaviour or other additional needs.	Papers exploring ideas of containment within more general therapeutic practice or mainstream education.

Papers exploring ideas of containment within prisons, hospitals or mental health settings, but not relating to CYP's education.

Papers exploring containment in relation to parenting/family life. | This review aimed to explore ideas of containment specifically within the context of PRUs/APs or education of those excluded/missing school, rather than wider therapeutic or helping professions, or within parental or family relationships. |

Table 17 *Studies included in the second literature review*

Full reference	Key contextual factors and summary
Kalu, D. (2002). Containers and containment. *Psychodynamic Practice: Individuals, Groups and Organisations*, 8(3), 359–373.	A teacher/art therapist's reflections on work with "troubled children" in a mainstream primary school, offsite unit for excluded young people, a PRU and a social services centre for education. Work discussed spans 15 years and describes 'therapeutic' work which grew out of Art and English lessons. It discusses psychodynamic ideas of projection and containment and teachers' central role in containing CYP.
Malberg, N. T. (2008). Refusing to be excluded: Finding ways of integrating psychotherapeutic modalities to the emerging needs of a Pupil Referral Unit. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 34(1), 101–110.	A psychotherapist's reflections on the application of psychotherapy, in theory and practice in a PRU. Highlights the importance of a flexible approach and discusses implementation of a psychodynamic group with PRU students. It considers the importance of mentalisation and psychodynamic models of working with staff and parents, through supervision and reflective groups. It suggests the need to hold in mind both the internal and external worlds of these CYP.
McLoughlin, C. (2010). Concentric circles of containment: A psychodynamic contribution to working in pupil referral units. *Journal of Child Psychotherapy*, 36(3), 225–239.	A psychotherapist's reflections on using a psychodynamic approach to onsite therapy in four PRUs in Inner London (6-16 year olds). Containment was seen as a core foundation for emotional growth and learning for CYP. The author presents a model of 'concentric circles' of containment, highlighting the importance of psychodynamic ideas and support across the system, from individual CYP, parents, staff and the wider network. Work discussion groups (WDG) are highlighted as a core element of this model.
Moore, M. (2018). Work discussion as a method for supporting peripatetic teachers of vulnerable children. *Infant Observation*, 21(1), 88–97.	A teacher's reflections on setting up a WDG for one-to-one peripatetic teachers of vulnerable children, who are not attending school due to reasons such as permanent exclusion or serious illness. It discusses psychodynamic ideas of projection, transference, and containment and the importance of helping staff have a 'thinking space' through the WDG so they are 'contained' enough to continue with the primary task of working with such CYP.
Solomon, M., & Thomas, G. (2013). Supporting behaviour support: Developing a model for leading and managing a unit for teenagers excluded from mainstream school. *Emotional & Behavioural Difficulties*, 18(1), 44–59.	A clinical psychologist & headteacher's reflections on developing an approach to leading and managing a PRU for students aged 11-14. The approach draws on psychodynamic ideas of containment, holding and attachment and some neurodevelopmental research. It discusses how students' needs can be met through meeting the professional needs of the staff. The impact on a range of practice and systems in the PRU is discussed, including multi-agency work.

5.3 Key themes from the literature

Brief details and key contextual factors of papers included in the literature review are summarised above, in table 17. Papers are written by a clinical psychologist and a headteacher, (Solomon & Thomas, 2013), two psychotherapists (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010), one teacher/art therapist (Kalu, 2002) and one peripatetic teacher (Moore, 2018). Author's different training modalities should be held in mind. All papers are case study reflections, with no examples of empirical research being conducted. Further evidence of the success of the work described could have been presented through more formalised feedback from parties involved. The lack of this evidence leaves questions about the rigour and trustworthiness of the included studies. However, given the subject being explored, and the ontological and epistemological stances of the studies, these reflective narratives and 'practice-based evidence' approaches seem in many ways the most appropriate format for reviewing psychodynamic models of working; they capture the authors' internal experience of the work and therefore give space to consider the unconscious processes at play. The challenges of PRU work are significant, as demonstrated so far in this thesis, and thus paying attention to accounts of those working in them, and their reflective experiences and 'truths' is pertinent and necessary.

5.3.1 Conceptualising containment within an AP setting

Across all papers, containment (Bion, 1962b) was seen as foundational to the work, with particular thought given to the relationship between emotional development, thinking and learning. Drawing on Waddell's (1998) work, which summarises psychotherapeutic thinking around containment, McLoughlin (2010) highlighted that "an individual's ability to take things in genuinely and use them in the service of personal growth and development depends on their earliest experiences of secure emotional containment" (p.233). AP settings and staff were framed as facilitators of a similar containment for these CYP (Kalu, 2002; Malberg, 2008;

McLoughlin, 2010; Moore, 2018; Solomon & Thomas, 2013). Across papers, containment was linked closely to earlier psychodynamic theorists, which Bion (1962b) also drew on his writings on containment. These included projection and projective identification (Klein, 1946) and Winnicott's ideas around 'good enough' parenting (1973), adults creating a physical and emotional 'holding' environment (1987), and needing thinking space to avoid the unconscious being 'acted out' towards students (1947).

Solomon and Thomas (2013) wrote about containment in two different ways: the emotional and nurturing aspects and containment offered through systems and structures. They linked this to the idea of reciprocity (Douglas, 2007) and Bowlby's attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969; Bowlby, 1988), with a school providing a 'secure base' much like that provided by the containing and consistent response of a parent. Solomon and Thomas (2013) noted the need for:

> sufficient structures to ensure enough consistency across a staff team and between individuals, so that students can really 'know for sure' how adults are going to interact and respond to them. It is this combination of emotional and structural containment that gives students an experience of consistent caregiving. For children with disrupted or, in Bowlby's words, insecure attachment patterns and experiences, places of education have the potential to be the first to offer them the opportunity to have a repeated experience of a 'secure base'. (p. 50)

Linked to Bowlby's attachment research, Solomon and Thompson (2013) also highlighted the impact of a child's 'internal working model', a blueprint formed through early relationships which shapes our expectations of ourselves and future relationships with others. They linked this to neurological research on the impact of early relationships on brain development but also

highlighted adolescence as a key time to reshape neural pathways and connections through offering emotional and structural containment.

McLoughlin's (2010) paper, which explored using psychodynamic approaches and therapies within KS3 and 4 PRUs, outlined a model of working which provided 'concentric circles of containment':

> One way of conceptualising this situation is that multiple and overlapping concentric rings of emotional containment needed to be put in place by managers and supervisors in the Service. This then made it possible for the PRU psychotherapists to keep steady in carrying out their primary clinical task in this chronically unstable setting. (p. 226)

These circles included containing the CYP, the staff, parents/carers and families, and the wider network of professionals. Each of these were seen to have an impact on the 'holding' of the CYP, and thus their learning and development.

Solomon and Thomas' (2013) conceptualised similar ideas within a framework (Figure 16) which considered a range of psychological theories, as already alluded to. CYP were placed at the centre of the model with others presented in a circular pattern surrounding them, mirroring the circular nature of McLoughlin's (2010) model. Figure 16 presents families, staff, multi-agency networks, and systems and processes as important factors in containment. Focussed discussion, and specific casework examples, in relation to these different factors are also presented by Kalu (2002), Malberg (2008), McLoughlin (2010) and Moore (2018).

Figure 16 *Solomon and Thomas' (2013, p. 54) conceptual framework for managing a PRU*
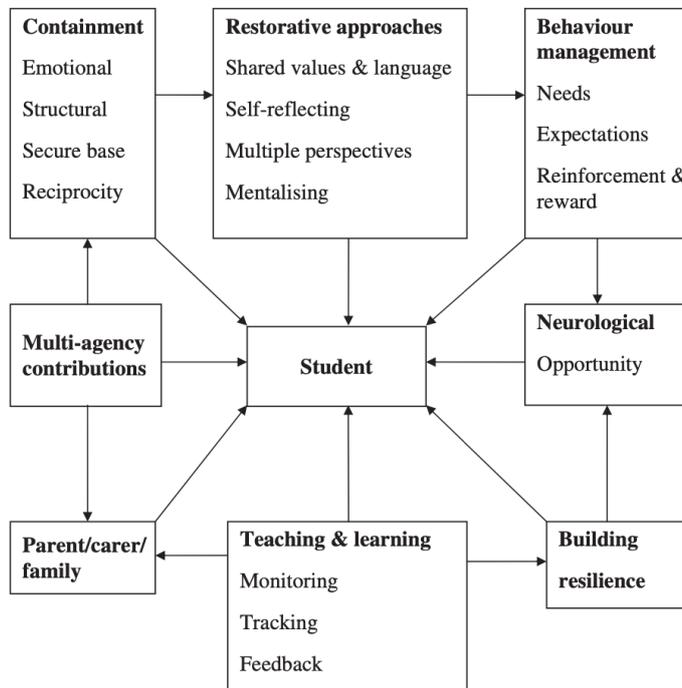
5.3.2 Containment for staff – space for listening and thinking

All five papers highlighted the need for staff to experience appropriate containment, so that CYP could also experience feeling contained. This was offered through various formats including staff WDGs (McLoughlin, 2010; Moore, 2018), individual and group supervision (Malberg, 2008) and weekly consultation groups (Solomon & Thomas, 2013). Shared spaces helped otherwise isolated staff to feel part of a 'team' (Moore, 2018), and feel valued, understood and validated (Solomon & Thomas, 2013). Taking a shared, collaborative approach (McLoughlin, 2010), driven by shared values (Solomon & Thomas, 2013) and accounting for individual needs, perspectives and feedback from staff (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010), was also seen as important to these spaces. These were seen to mirror and parallel what staff aimed to provide for students, helping them feel heard, recognised and supported (McLoughlin, 2010).

Moore (2018) highlighted the lack of containment that staff can experience within a "fragmented system", and the role of projective identification in causing teachers to "become strongly identified with the children they are teaching. As they lose sight of boundaries and become de-professionalised, the child as a separate individual evaporates in their mind and there is no containment" (p. 106). Similarly, Malberg (2008) reflected on staff members' "strong tendency towards acting out, disguised behind the facade of a behavioural strategy" suggesting this was a reflection of the "experiences of helplessness and lack of agency on the part of teachers, parents and the young people involved" (p 102). However, in Moore's (2018) paper, through coming together for a staff WDG, teachers reported feeling more held and able to manage the projections being experienced and respond more helpfully. As Kalu (2002) noted in her reflections on teaching in such settings across 15 years: "it is the adult taking in the projections and reflecting on them that makes the difference… not reacting with undue anger or anxiety from our own emotions but… finding a modified response in keeping with what the child has communicated" (p. 372).

Staff WDGs, based on psychodynamic models of thinking, are where participants consider the unconscious processes at play in their interactions and experiences. This was described as a "powerful intervention" that could bring "the complex dynamics between staff and children into consciousness" (McLoughlin, 2010, p. 231). McLoughlin (2010) noticed through her work in PRUs and "recognition of the links between the young people's home backgrounds and their reactive behaviours at the PRU, staff often begin to feel more empathetic and creative in their responses to the troubled young people in their charge" (p. 231). WDGs and other similar group reflective models were seen as a "a point of stability in the chaos" surrounding the staff, and an opportunity to offload frustrations, gain support, and improve practice through reflection (Moore, 2018, p. 106).

Kalu (2002) highlighted a psychodynamic approach, "looking at the underlying meaning of their behaviour" (p. 367), as helpful but also noted the difficulties prioritising this 'thinking space' for teachers:

> We have to find enough space in our minds to go on thinking about them. The teachers' dilemma is often the instructive, directive, offering-clues-and-strategies space in our minds versus the reflective observation that would tell us so much if we would only relax a bit and wait and see. (p.367)

Kalu (2002) reflected on her experience of missing out on a joint thinking space in relation to a particular child: "in the absence… of others to discuss her with, I communed with myself. I began to write reams of notes about her to exorcise myself of painful feelings of confusion and anger" (p.364). She recognised the importance of allowing this thinking, so she was able "to receive the projection of overwhelming feelings, to hold them in [her] mind and then convey to the child the sense that the anxieties are bearable and meaningful" (p. 364).

5.3.3 Parent work

Although not discussing direct work with families, Moore (2008) highlighted the importance of considering parental influence on teacher's work:

> Family dynamics can be obstructive whereby parents who want to 'hold on to their baby' are in collusion with the child who does not want to be taught. They have more power over the teacher when lessons are conducted in the debilitating anti-task environment of the home. (p. 106)

In this case, the staff WDG was an opportunity to reflect on this influence and make changes accordingly, by shifting the teaching space to a library instead. Moore (2008) highlighted the WDG as a chance for teachers "to understand the reality of being subjected to the forces at

work in the systems in which they were operating", including interactions with parents, empowering them to consider how they "take up their teaching role" as a result (p. 93-4).

More direct work with parents was discussed in three papers (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010; Solomon & Thomas, 2013). McLoughlin (2010) presented a case discussion of a CYP named 'Tyrone' throughout her paper. She offered weekly individual psychotherapy with Tyrone, monthly parental work and supported the system through WDGs and network meetings. Through engaging in the parent work and attending the network meetings Tyrone's mother remarked on not feeling "patronised or blamed for her son's difficulties" but rather that clinicians had "listened and responded to her point of view" (p. 229), and that PRU staff were taking her seriously. As a result of being contained in this way "she gradually realised that the head and teaching staff of the PRU were doing their best for Tyrone in the circumstances" (p. 230). This joined up, systemic approach, which prioritised Mum's involvement, reportedly lead to more co-operation from her, which impacted Tyrone's attitude to being in the PRU, his outbursts, and ultimately his academic progress.

Solomon and Thompson (2013) highlighted parents and family life as the "biggest influence on young people's lives, even in early adolescence" (p. 57). They noted the "strain" experienced by CYP and families during this period, due to "puberty and hormonal changes" and "different perspectives on dependence and independence, responsibilities and boundaries" (p.57). Consequently, they provided daily communication with families, to offer containment and support through this time. In Malberg's (2008) work in PRUs, a "psychodynamically oriented family therapist offered a mentalisation-based group for parents" (p. 102) for them to explore the thoughts and experiences of their young people, and their own responses to and interactions with them as a result. Similar to work with staff, supporting parents to reflect and think differently about their CYP was seen a key part of containing and supporting them.

5.3.4 Direct work with CYP

Alongside parental and systemic work McLoughlin (2010) outlined the important process of weekly individual psychotherapy with Tyrone. Over the period of a year, they explored the impact of a car accident he was in aged 1: Tyrone had suffered severe facial injuries, temporarily lost his speech, ability to eat and sight in one eye, but the rest of his family escaped unharmed. McLoughlin (2010) framed this incident as an "unconscious metaphor for what must have felt like a catastrophic family breakdown… as the accident coincided with the parents' separation…the secure container of their family had been attacked and broken, threatening survival" (p.228). She hypothesised that the potential post-traumatic stress of the accident had impacted Tyrone's subsequent severe behavioural difficulties and position in the family. As explored in therapy, Tyrone had:

> always felt he had been singled out in his family to bear the brunt of things, and that neither of his parents cared whether he lived or died. He was able to modify this view over time and… once he felt more confident that he was cared about… he began to make more collaborative relationships [and] became more able to identify potential triggers that were likely to get him into a rage. For instance, when people were 'in his face', he blanked out, lost control and then didn't know what he was doing any more. Making explicit the possible link with his early trauma was very helpful to him. (p. 229)

This is an example of the potential usefulness of therapeutic spaces for CYP to help them make sense of their unconscious feelings, experiences and responses. However, McLoughlin (2010) also noted the difficulties of engaging in such work with this cohort, and the need to concurrently facilitate reflective work across the system.

Malberg (2008) detailed her experience running a mentalisation based group with some CYP from a PRU. She discussed the challenges and outcomes of this group, noting her own feelings

of anxiety and lack of containment, as well as difficulties maintaining a reflective stance: "feelings of humiliation and helplessness felt pervasive, and I would often find myself finding excuses not to return the week after" (p. 107). To manage some behaviour which felt "dangerous and uncontained" she used vignettes of interpersonal difficulties to displace and contain some of the "instinctual material" arising from CYP in sessions (p.107). Malberg (2008) wondered whether:

> some of this behaviour was instigated partly by the unconscious fantasies of many of the young people regarding me and my co-therapist as a parental couple. If so, we offered a different type of developmental object as a couple, as we managed to survive the constant attacks and attempts to split us up over issues such as race and culture. As the group culture evolved, we managed to create a safer environment in which creativity as well as the exploration of otherwise forbidden topics such as fears… were discussed. (p. 107)

Such reflections highlight the projections, as discussed across other papers, which staff experience in their work, and the power of staff 'surviving' and tolerating these attacks to offer containment to students.

Kalu (2002) gave several examples of these experiences in her work as a teacher. In each, she discussed an object or activity being used as a 'container' to help CYP begin to process these difficulties. One CYP, 'Alex', built himself a 'house' out of cardboard and masking tape:

> For about six weeks, the 'kennel', as he called it, became the focus of his individual lessons. Inside, he would read to me. He painted it full of sea scenes and dolphins and began to talk to me from the safety of the inside about the bullying he received at home from his brother, his worries about mum and his fears for himself. Over the weeks, I think that small boy began to find a world within him that was brighter than the ogres

and big waves that he talked of so fearfully. He repaired the roof once but, as the 'kennel' slowly fell apart, it became less important. It had done its job. He had internalized something good. He became more able to look at some of his worries instead of constantly being prey to an anxious chaos. (Kalu, 2002, pp. 361-362)

After such individual work, which provided containment and thus, thinking space, Alex slowly began to be able to learn (Kalu, 2002). Similarly, CYP in the mentalisation group began to tolerate and discuss more difficult emotions, with two even able to go on to access individual psychotherapy (Malberg, 2008). More indirectly, Moore (2018), gave examples of the WDG positively impacting teachers' ability to engage with CYP, through gaining deeper insight into the unconscious processes occurring during lessons.

All papers also advocated the need for patience and persistence with these CYP – to provide a consistent containing space, to "allow the process" within children (Kalu, 2002) and to "value each constructive and meaningful clinical encounter as important in its own right" (McLoughlin, 2010, p. 237). McLoughlin (2010) recognised "a moment of emotionally containing contact with the child or family or indeed with the staff group [as] noteworthy, however fleeting. Such moments could be remembered as something positive that was possible between people" (p.237). This section has paid significant attention to individual casework examples and it must be acknowledged that authors will have chosen specific 'successful' cases which highlight their conceptual points. However, I have chosen to discuss these in depth in this review, to highlight the emotional complexities of the CYP working in PRUs, and the emotional experiences of staff working with them.

5.3.5 Holding the network and multi-agency collaboration

Joining up systems and encouraging multi-agency collaboration was discussed in several papers (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010; Solomon & Thomas, 2013). Solomon and

Thompson (2013) described a regular network of different agencies from social care, health and education coming together to discuss work and co-ordinate their approach with CYP and families. The network received positive feedback from participants and external observers such as Ofsted. Both McLoughlin (2010) and Solomon and Thomas (2013) advocated for transparent communication and authentic joint working with families, through a multi-agency network model.

Despite being commissioned to deliver staff supervision, Malberg (2008) soon recognised "the level of interpersonal distress caused by difficult relationships amongst the [PRU] staff" and the "despair" and "anger" of parents over the PRUs failure to reintegrate their CYP (p.103). Consequently, the team worked psychodynamically with teachers and parents "as agents of possible change and influence… adapting and translating… psychoanalytic language… to develop a common framework" across systems (p.102). They offered opportunities for feedback across parent and teacher groups to link common themes and open a joint channel of communication and thinking about CYP. Shared language across systems was thought to be key by Malberg (2008) and Solomon and Thomas (2013).

Moore (2018) highlighted the impact of staff stress on the system. The WDG was set up in response to the service manager feeling overwhelmed by teacher concerns. He reported a noticeable difference after the WDG began: "I don't feel nearly as overwhelmed with problems… teachers know they can park the problem until the next meeting with you" (p.95). This example highlights the impact a containing and reflective space had on the wellbeing of the wider staff team, and the importance of 'holding' the system.

Contrastingly, McLoughlin (2010) described her PRU environment as an "unparented", "shape-shifting", chaotic system, where relationships (students frequently moving on, and high staff turnover) and resources (uncertainty around funding and policy) often changed. Drawing on open-systems theory (Zagier-Roberts, 1994), McLoughlin (2010) highlighted that unlike

the "classic psychoanalytic image of a baby securely held by its mother, both supported by the father", a PRU had permeable boundaries where "new, open and interlinking networks no longer function like a bigger version of a nuclear family" (p.237). McLoughlin (2010) recognised the stress experienced when working in an "unparented" system, where regular questions were ones of survival ('how will we get through the day?'), and futility ('what can we really achieve?'). Containing processes and support networks for practitioners were therefore seen as key.

5.3.6 Containing systems and processes

Solomon and Thomas (2013) outlined some of the practical systems and processes that they saw as key to successful containment. These included using consistent restorative approaches with staff and students in response to 'behaviour', led by a shared ethos on the central importance of relationships; 'misbehaviour' was understood as a breakdown of relationships rather than a breaking of the 'school rules'. Consequently, "all parties [were] held accountable and given opportunity to reflect and repair" (p. 52). Structured questions and processes were used in these meetings, and in other contexts, such as the drawing up of class agreements and weekly staff consultation sessions. Clear and organised processes for procedural aspects such as teaching and monitoring, staff recruitment and development, and risk assessments were also highly valued and seen as key to creating a containing environment for the whole system.

In contrast, Malberg (2008) highlighted the lack of consistency in ethos in her PRU settings, where the headteacher wanted to focus on remedial and therapeutic matters but also held a philosophy "characterised by rigid behavioural standards, clear boundaries and safety precautions" (p.103-4). The PRU had its own exclusion policy and teachers reportedly carried walkie-talkies to "keep each other safe", which Malberg (2008) considered a reflection of "the teachers' fantasies of the young people as dangerous" (p.104). This confused ethos within the

PRU was argued to add to the chaos experienced. Furthermore, previous staff supervision groups had failed on their aims and goals, leading to increased aggression, and splits in the system (Malberg, 2008). To counteract this 'chaos', she highlighted the importance of clear structures and processes within staff groups to provide some containment: setting goals together, an agreed time and place to meet, and having clear boundaries and structure in the session. Similarly, Moore (2018) discussed the need for a containing and "task-appropriate" place to work. This was a key issue for peripatetic teachers who were often working in the uncontaining and unboundaried environment of the child's home. This added to the importance of the consistent WDG as "a point of stability in the chaos" (p. 106).

5.3.7 Importance of flexibility

All five papers highlighted the need for flexibility and creativity in this type of work. This was seen to be different to the traditional psychotherapeutic model of working, which is very time, place and relationship boundaried (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010). Both Malberg (2008) and McLoughlin (2010) noted the need to work differently within the PRU system, and to join up with the system more flexibly. Malberg (2008) highlighted the importance of 'refusing to be excluded' from the system and from young people's minds:

> our consistent responses to late arrivals and our curiosity about the replies of 'I don't know'… keep many young people engaged, perhaps because they are curious about the possibility of someone trying to understand what they are going through or simply being interested in their minds as separate and unique. As a result, adolescence, a developmental period of inner turmoil in which relationships are central, challenges clinicians constantly to revise their beliefs and therapeutic stance as well as to develop new ways to support young people. (p. 101-2)

She likened this approach to "standing at the door… in the rain" noting the clinicians need to "be a true surviving, thinking object, providing… a new developmental experience for the system and those in it" (p.110). When "the door opens" she highlighted the need to be "informed and influenced by the culture" and to be flexible and responsive to its needs (p. 110).

This chimes closely with McLoughlin's (2010) reflections on the permeable and interactive system of the PRU. To address this, McLoughlin (2010) highlights the importance of a "positive working relationship between therapists and educational staff" and suggests a "containing framework in such settings [is] the therapist's clear, calm and receptive attitude, rather than a reliance on a stable and consistent external setting" (p.235). While these two papers were written by psychotherapists, similar ideas around flexibility were considered across all other papers, alongside the need for consistency: "to meet the needs of students, our practice needs to combine the implementation of standardised, consistent approaches with the sensitivity and flexibility to respond to different individual needs. Achieving this balance requires constant monitoring, feedback and discussion" (Solomon & Thomas, 2013, p. 53).

5.4 Summary: links between emotions, thinking, reflection and learning

Both Moore (2018) and Kalu's (2002) papers, written from teachers' perspectives, show the scope for psychotherapeutic frameworks to be implemented by a range of practitioners in APs. Examples shared show the potential for positive change, thinking and containment, when teaching staff are trained to think and reflect in this way. Kalu (2002) reflected on teachers' under preparation for the "raw emotions of troubled children" (p. 359) in the classroom and highlighted the emotional vulnerability of learning:

> taking risks involves the possibility of failure, humiliation and emotional pain. Learning in any true sense can arise only out of doubt, uncertainty and the frustration of not

knowing – unsafe territory for our young people who need to defend themselves at all costs against any repetition of their pain. (p. 360)

Indeed, the adult's capacity to contain such emotions is key. To do so, Malberg (2008) discussed the need for space in the mind, and within settings, to reflect on feelings and thoughts which arise from the "non-thinking behaviour" (p. 103) which teachers and parents are confronted with daily. As shown by Solomon and Thompson's (2013) prioritisation of restorative practices, class meetings, and all the other examples of 'thinking spaces', attending to thoughts and emotions was understood as vital to promoting positive outcomes for CYP. Mentalising was highlighted as a conceptual framework for this approach, as shown in this example from Solomon and Thomas (2013):

> For children and young people with difficult attachment experiences, their capacity to mentalise may be inhibited because their primary caregiver may have lacked mentalising abilities themselves… the chance to experience being thought about obviously, and to have structures in which they can experience seeing, hearing and understanding multiple perspectives, can be extremely important in developing their theory of mind and abilities to see others' points of view. (p. 52)

As demonstrated throughout this review, mentalisation was advocated for in all papers, with parents, staff and CYP. Capacity to reflect was understood as a vital part of the development of a containing system, where CYP could feel held and 'thought about' and thus begin to tolerate and process their own emotions and those of others. This was crucial to unlocking their ability to engage more productively in the risky venture of relationships and learning (Kalu, 2002; Malberg, 2008).

Chapter 6: Discussion

Building on data presented in chapter 4, and literature presented throughout this thesis, I will now discuss each category in turn and link it to the overarching GT formed. Following this, I will summarise the theory and re-address the research questions. I will also consider research limitations, implications for practice and directions for future research.

6.1 Updated literature search for recent papers

To aid discussion, and account for any recent updates to the original preliminary literature search, the same search terms (Figure 7) were run again on 08.04.21 to identify any new papers relevant to the discussion of successful PRU practice. 6 additional relevant papers were identified, published after the original search date (Boyd, 2021; Caslin, 2021; Demie, 2021; Facey et al., 2020; Greenhalgh et al., 2020; Page, 2020). Brief contextual details of each study are in appendix T. Original inclusion criteria (Table 1) were adjusted slightly, to include papers on specific experiences of black students who had been excluded, due to some of the findings from the GT. Further, the original criteria only included papers from England, to account for specific policy contexts for English PRUs. However, in this search a paper from Wales was identified which evaluated attachment and trauma-informed training in PRUs. Given this topic's feature in the GT and the universality of the topic, beyond specific country's policy contexts, it was also included. These articles will not be separately critiqued but instead used to inform the thinking developed through this research.

6.2 Discussion of theoretical categories – links to GT and research

6.2.1 Category 1: Positive 'parental' relationship – collaborative and open

As highlighted in the preliminary literature review, and in much of the wider international literature on work with vulnerable students in education, relationships are key (e.g. Holen et al., 2018; Pallini et al., 2019; Rucinski et al., 2018; Rushton et al., 2019; Tew, 2010; Tipton-

Fisler et al., 2020). It is, therefore, understandable that the relational dynamics between EP and commissioner were found to be important. As highlighted in chapter 4, the collaborative, positive, and informal nature of this relationship was important, as was their capacity to be open, honest and reflect together, to improve practice. This is resonant of the open communication channels needed in a healthy parenting relationship and all subsequent findings are linked to this idea of the relationship serving a 'parental' function in the system and the work.

This links to Mcloughlin's (2010) reflections on her experience of a PRU as an 'unparented' system, and one which – due to open, permeable boundaries (Zagier-Roberts, 1994), and the ever changing and shifting nature of the network – can often feel in 'chaos'. When functioning positively, openly, honestly, and reflectively, the EP and commissioner provided an element of parental containment (Bion, 1962b) and 'holding' (Solomon & Thomas, 2013; Winnicott, 1960) for each other and the rest of the PRU system, supporting the network to meet the needs of students in a challenging context.

Systems-psychodynamics (Neumann, 1999) integrates ideas from "psychoanalysis, theories of Group Relations and Open Systems perspectives" (Fraher, 2004, p. 1). This is a helpful lens to consider the "unconscious, 'below the surface', aspects of individuals as members of organisations, groups and teams" (Eloquin, 2016, p. 164) and their "collective psychological behaviour" (Neumann, 1999, p. 57) across and between these systems. The impact of psychological defences, such as transference and countertransference, in AP settings is pertinent, especially when staff are managing the complexities of the CYP's emotions and experiences (Menendez Alvarez-Hevia, 2018; Moore, 2018). The unconscious anxiety expressed through CYP's behaviour, is often felt and experienced strongly in the system (Kalu, 2002; Malberg, 2008). The role of social defences (Armstrong & Rustin, 2015) can mean that

a system may respond rigidly, reactively, or chaotically to such behaviour, to alleviate the anxiety and uncomfortable emotions stirred up. The need for this 'parental containment' at a systems level is therefore vital, given the lack of containment and levels of anxiety experienced by many of the CYP, and the need for staff to manage such emotions.

6.2.2 Category 2: Shared core values, goals, approach and language

Participants showed shared values, goals, approaches and language in their work. Examples of these are evident in all other categories presented in the GT such as: taking a relational approach, being flexible and going above and beyond, prioritising CYP perspectives and involvement, seeing the best in children, and championing joint reflection. All participants talked about the importance of these shared values and approaches on the success of their work, and some discussed the difficulties faced when these priorities are not shared by other staff and professionals in the system. A shared approach by the 'parents' impacted others in the system, and the success of the work carried out.

This links to recommendations made in Thomson and Pennacchia's (2014) report: "alternative education providers should set an expectation that their provision will demonstrate core values and quality practices, and use recruitment, professional development and performance processes to ensure that they are understood and practised by staff" (p.08). Similarly, Solomon and Thomas (2013) highlight the need for all staff to take a consistent approach, and to be 'bought in' to the language and processes used in the setting. Consistent processes and systems were seen to provide containment for the system (Solomon & Thomas, 2013), much like the EP and commissioner's shared 'parental' approaches in this GT.

Language played a key part in approaches, such as through how strengths and needs, and SEND, were conceptualised and spoken about. This links to the 'narratives' CYP at PRUs may carry about themselves, and thus, to identity and self-esteem (Mainwaring & Hallam, 2010).

To help shape more positive identities for CYP, participants focused on person-centred practice and strengths-based and solution-focussed approaches, which will be discussed further in categories 6 and 10. This is similar to themes in the literature, where AP staff desired to change how CYP were viewed (Malcolm, 2020) and recognised the importance of the different approaches they took, in comparison to mainstream (Farouk, 2014). In her recent paper, Caslin (2021) argued that negative and 'behavioural' language, used about students in mainstream, had a significant impact on the self-esteem of CYP excluded and perpetuated their poor educational engagement and negative outcomes.

This category links to systemic concepts such as 'family scripts' (Byng-Hall, 1985), and how these impact a family's experiences and identity, and a tool called the 'family shield' (Pereira, 2014) which helps a family identify, understand and represent their shared values, goals and resources. As suggested by Embeita (2019), such systemic family therapy tools could prove a useful framework for EPs to promote shared values, goals and approaches across the PRU 'family system'.

6.2.3 Category 3: Relationships and communication across the 'family'

Relationships between members in the system, including with the 'parents', influenced the success of the work, particularly when there was trust, and a shared perspective. The preliminary literature review demonstrated the importance of collaborative and positive relationships between staff and students, with families and across multi-agency systems (e.g. Cockerill, 2019; Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013; Pillay et al., 2013). Similar recommendations were made across reviews of exclusion and APs, with Partridge et al. (2020) recommending the use of multi-agency support teams to support preventative work with these CYP.

The successful multi-agency network in Solomon and Thomson's (2010) paper was argued to provide a sense of containment and collaboration for all staff in the PRU. This in turn, provided containment for the CYP attending, as they were experiencing a shared and consistent approach from all adults. This category links closely to McLoughlin's (2010) idea of concentric circles of containment across the system, and to Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory. Both draw on the concept of concentric circles in the system which interact and impact CYP. Drawing on ideas from open-systems theory (Rice, 1953; Zagier-Roberts, 1994), and systems psychodynamics (Neumann, 1999), it is pertinent to consider the permeable boundaries between these circles, and thus the influence of containment, or lack-of, across them. The exploration and containment of emotions in these spaces, and the shift in thinking that can happen as a result (McLoughlin, 2010; Moore, 2018), was particularly important in the interviews conducted in this study. The 'parental' function of the EP and commissioner provided and encouraged this containment across other relationships.

Interactions with parents and families played a key role in this category, and examples discussed were all about building trust and engagement with families, after their previous experiences of feeling 'let down', 'not listened to' and lost in a system. This was similar to Tyrone's mother's experience (McLoughlin, 2010) and reports from parents in several studies in the initial literature review (Embeita, 2019; Gazeley, 2012; Parker et al., 2016). Recently, Page (2020) examined parental engagement in an AP and highlighted the importance of providing parental support and engagement across six different domains – behavioural, emotional, safeguarding, functional, pedagogic and capacity building. He argues that this ensures a "holistic approach that provides deep support" to families to "maximise successful re-engagement" (p.65). Support offered to parents included daily phone calls and family learning days which helped reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness for families "who often feel as excluded as their child" (p.65). This sort of approach was reported to increase a cyclical

process of joint practice and information sharing between home and school, meaning they were able to create more personalised strategies to meet the needs of CYP. Participants in this GT study described similar experiences where they helped parents feel heard, understood and involved in the complicated systems surrounding their CYP.

In examples shared in interviews, collaboration in the EP-commissioner relationship, and shared thinking and approaches in how to engage families, often provided the containment families needed to begin managing their own frustrations and emotions. This is similar to what Malberg (2008) hoped to achieve through her mentalisation-based group for parents: providing them with a reflective space, to help begin to contain and process the emotions and projections they experienced from their CYP. In all these examples the importance of engaging with parents was a vital part of improving outcomes for CYP. This links back to the 'unparented' system McLoughlin (2010) highlighted, and shows the important role that EP and commissioner can play in providing this 'parental' containment to different aspects of the system.

This joint work between EP and commissioner was influenced by how much the EP was part of the 'system' at the PRU. The importance of the EP having good relationships in the setting was captured by the SENCo in interview 3, where she linked it to building relational skills and capacity in the young people: "I didn't think we [could] do that with having an EP… who doesn't know our school, wasn't getting to know the staff or the students" (14). This highlights the idea of the EP-commissioner relationship impacting on all other relationships in the system, similar to the role of parents in a family. However, data from the focussed code 'EP in the system?' also raises questions around how to 'co-parent', when the EP is not always fully embedded in the system, and where other influences and 'parental figures' also have an impact.

The question for EPs is therefore, how to maintain a sense of presence and connection in whatever 'family' dynamic and set up they're working in, and however they're positioned. This can be extremely difficult when other members of the PRU do not see the EP as fully aware of or involved in the complexity of the PRU work, and therefore have difficulty engaging with or fully trusting the EP. This links to the need to foster staff engagement and trust through working together. Examples in this category further highlight the permeable boundaries, and non-hierarchical structure of these systems (Eloquin, 2016; Rice, 1953), and the impact of transference and projective identification, with staff perhaps 'acting out' the mistrust which CYP and families feel and project onto them (Klein, 1946; Winnicott, 1947). Therefore, containment across relationships is vital and something which an EP is well positioned to facilitate, when they have a good knowledge of and relationship with the system. Evident in these findings, a positive working relationship with the commissioner was a key first step in building this.

Figure 17 *First three overarching categories in the GT*
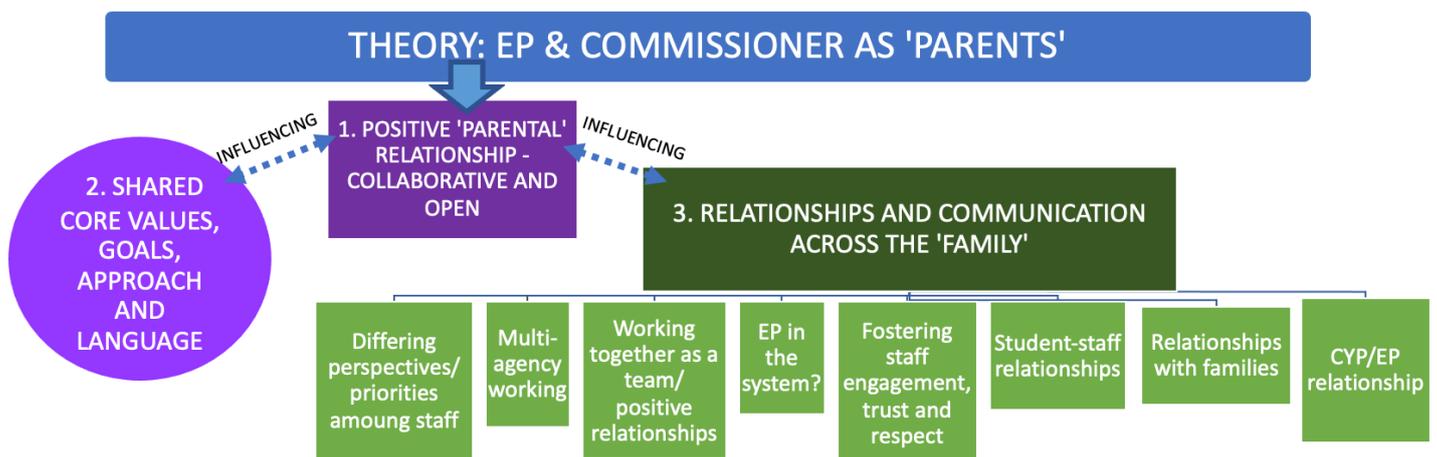
Both in chapter 4 and here, these first three categories, and their links to the GT and literature have been discussed in detail. Each remaining category will now be discussed, including how they fit with the literature and the 'parental function' GT. Screenshots of pertinent sections of the GT diagram (Figure 13) will be embedded at appropriate points, to aid discussion.

6.2.4 Category 4: Nurturing the wider environment – systemic focus

Linked to the relationships across the family, this category shows the importance of considering the system and environment in which a child 'grows up' when trying to help them reach their full potential. Participants were actively engaged in considering how to improve this environment through enhancing systems and processes and challenging potential barriers, such as racism. Considerations about how people relate to each other within and across systems, and whether staff are 'bought in' to the 'parents' approach, and the wider 'family goals', were key.
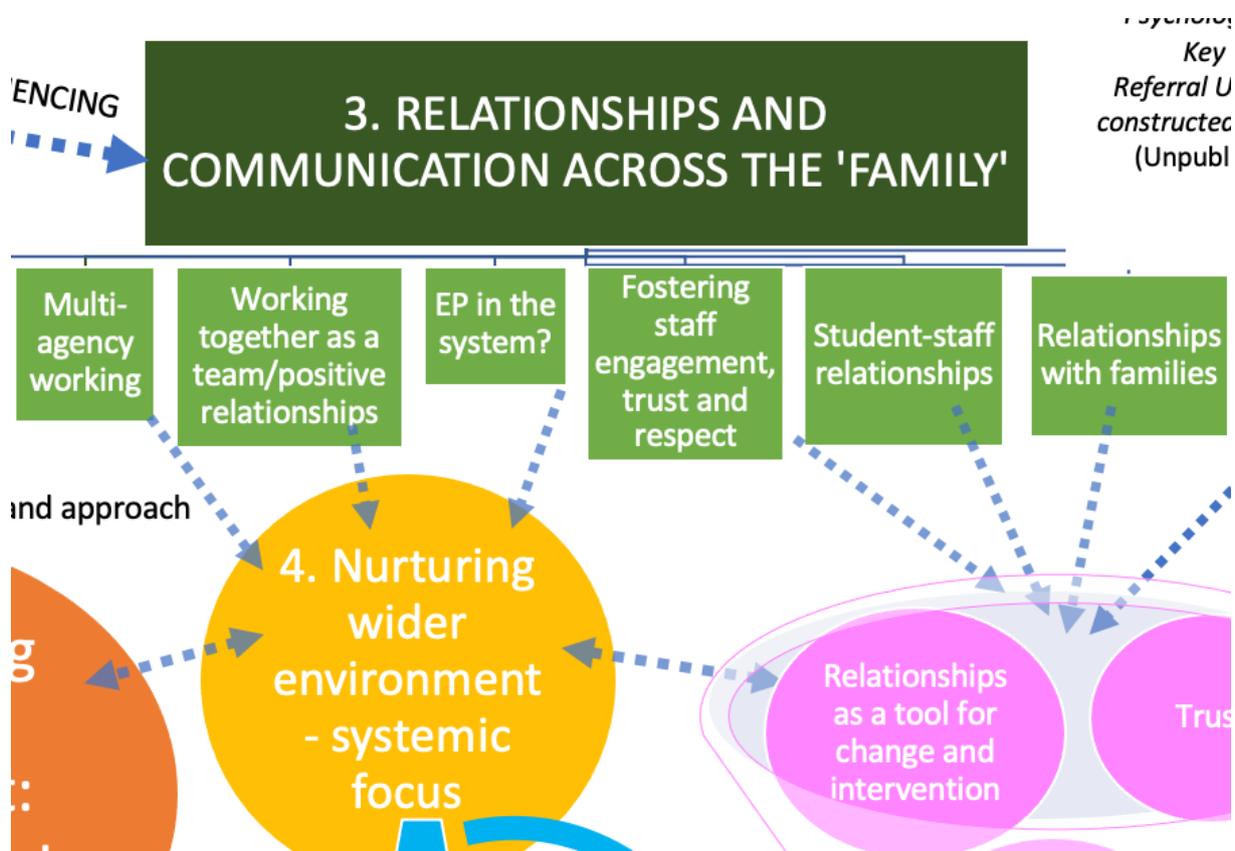
Not only was joined up multi-agency work an important component of this, but also the EP supporting the development of more containing processes and spaces in the PRU. This was seen in many ways as more important than engaging in individual casework, as it was felt to have a longer-term preventative impact, and wider reach to all CYP in the PRU. Through developing robust induction systems, pupil focus meetings, and joint staff reflection processes, participants were helping the system to become more 'containing' for all involved, and thus,

better able to provide the parental 'holding' (Winnicott, 1960) that CYP, families and staff need.

This category included reflections on race and discrimination, particularly in relation to the over-representation of Black Caribbean and White/Black Caribbean students in exclusion statistics and AP settings (Graham et al., 2019; Mills & Thompson, 2018). In two interviews participants reflected on further work they could do to tackle this injustice within the context of PRU work. This included paying more attention to aspects of racial identity and difference and the impact of this on relationships across the setting. This was highlighted in particular in relation to a majority black staff team in interview 3 who CYP were seen to have positive relationships with. This links to ideas of a shared identity and understanding, and perhaps a sense of belonging, a key success factor in APs and reintegration to mainstream (Cockerill, 2019) and wider educational outcomes (e.g. Dimitrellou & Hurry, 2019; Midgen et al., 2019; Raufelder et al., 2015).

Demie's (2021) paper looked at the experiences of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusion in England and explored reasons for overrepresentation. Findings linked disproportionate exclusion rates to several factors, including:

> challenging what constitutes racism in school settings, teachers' low expectations and institutional racism, lack of diversity in the school workforce, and lack of effective training programmes for teachers, educational psychologists, SENCos and school staff on multi-cultural education, diversity and race issues. (p.68)

These findings suggest the need for EPs and other professionals to consider how they relate to and understand topics of race and diversity within an AP context, and in particular the importance of further reflection, training and CPD opportunities around this topic.

Similar recommendations for more action over tackling systemic racism in schools were made in Boyd's (2021) study where she interviewed six black boys who had been excluded and then reintegrated. EPs are well placed to be able to provide and take part in reflective work on this topic, to encourage schools to listen to and consider the experiences and relational needs of black pupils, enable changes to policies and processes, and help create targeted initiatives to tackle overrepresentation (Boyd, 2021; Demie, 2021). Given the majority of participants in this study were white, including all the EP participants – a somewhat typical representation of demographics in the EP profession[3] - this is a particularly pertinent topic of reflection and action for EPs working in PRUs, for EPS' and for national training providers.

6.2.5 Category 5: Internal working model – rebuilding trust and expectations

The name for this theoretical category highlights the idea of a child's 'internal working model', drawn from Bowlby's (1969) work on attachment. This refers to a blueprint formed in early childhood through relationships with caregivers. This relationship impacts what a person expects from other people and the world around them. Here the EP and commissioner represent a 'parental' approach in a system which focusses on shifting or developing the 'internal working models' of CYP, families and staff, who are perhaps mistrusting of outside perspective and involvement.

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[3] It should be noted that with a lack of formal data on ethnicity in the EP workforce, this is an anecdotal claim, based on mine and my colleagues' experiences of the profession.

Relationships were seen as a fundamental part of this process, just as parental relationships are seen as foundational to shaping a child's understanding of the world and forming secure attachments and trust in their early years. This category highlights the role that relationships play in rebuilding CYP's trust and expectations, to help them engage in society in a more productive way – hence the direct links to category 3 in the theoretical model. The EP-commissioner relationship was found to be both a direct and indirect facilitator of this rebuilding,

Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective. (Unpublished thesis).
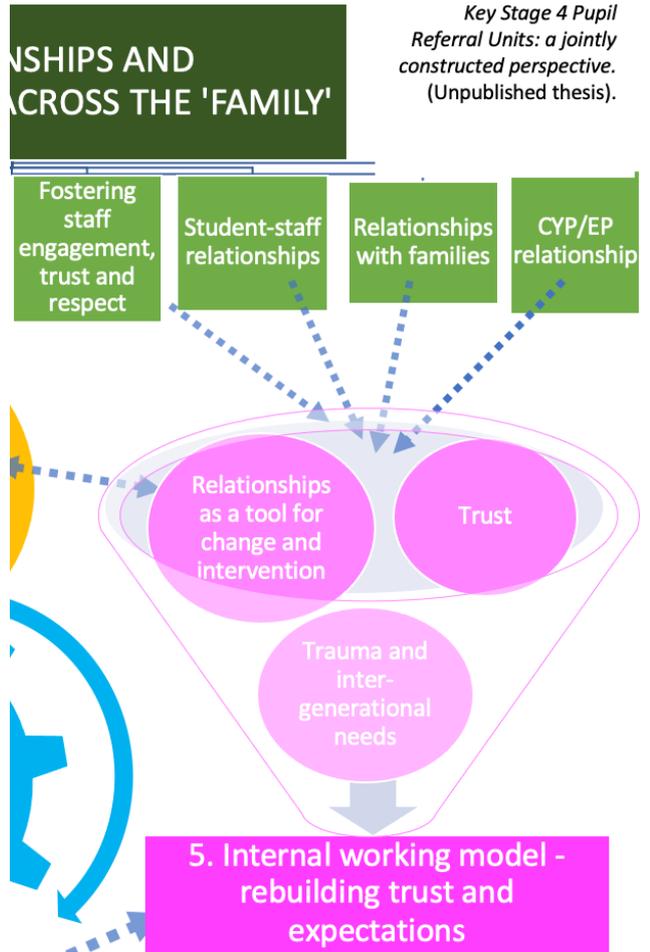
and as a result is framed as having a 'parental' role and function in the system. The focussed codes from this category were included in the GT diagram, due to their significant link to relationships across the family, and their role in the overarching GT.

Solomon and Thomas (2013) linked CYP's attachment experiences, and their formation of their internal working model, closely to the need for them to experience containing relationships with staff, where their specific attachment needs and 'styles' are taken into consideration (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Geddes, 2006). This was important in Solomon and Thomas' (2013) conceptual model of containment at the PRU, and they advocated that staff were trained in and aware of attachment needs.

In Wales, Greenhalgh et al. (2020) recently evaluated the impact of attachment and trauma training for PRU staff. Staff received 2 days of training and attended six skills development sessions, to help embed concepts into their work. Findings showed that staff knowledge and confidence increased post training. The authors advocated for a "whole systems approach" to this type of intervention, suggesting that "a supportive and consistent system around a child, that takes into account their attachment needs, leads to better outcomes" (p. 75). A similar type of training approach for whole "systems" was discussed in interviews in this GT study. Commissioners highlighted EPs as helpful in identifying and explaining the impact of past trauma and attachment relationships on CYP and families, so staff could understand their relational needs, and meet these accordingly.

6.2.6 Category 6: Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency

This category highlights the power of person-centred planning, pupil focus meetings, and drawing young people further into the centre of decisions about them. This was fuelled by participants who often felt CYP had not been empowered or given any agency in previous settings. This links to the shift that parents must make as their children reach their teenage years, and seek out more independence, autonomy and agency (Solomon & Thomas, 2013). EPs and commissioners placed central importance on allowing this space for CYP, to champion pupil voice and facilitate positive engagement and change. This links to the key neurobiological changes occurring in adolescence, especially as a result of learning through relationships (Music, 2018; Olson, 2014). It also aligns with Deci and Ryan's (1985) theory of self-determination and motivation, which notes the importance of adolescents experiencing autonomy, competence and relatedness, to achieve their potential.

Interestingly, this need for empowerment and agency was reflected in relationships across the system, particularly for parents who often report lack of agency and empowerment within exclusion processes (Embeita, 2019; Gazeley, 2012; Parker et al., 2016). Further, to facilitate such person-centred practice, staff needed to feel considered and listened to, as outlined in category 3. This links to the idea that practice with staff is "mirroring the process with the young person, in terms of restoring agency" (3, 85) and explains the visual link to category 4 on the model and why 'empowering staff' is placed nearby. This can be understood through the framework of systems psychodynamics (Neumann, 1999) and the idea of needs transferring and interacting across relationships in the system – hence the need for 'parental' containment.

Examples presented in the findings in chapter 4 show the EP as a key part of facilitating and developing positive relationships, and building agency and empowerment, with CYP and across the system. This was seen even in the EP-commissioner relationship, where EPs allowed space for commissioners to also feel 'heard' and understood, just as those in a parenting

partnership might offer to each other. The centrality of child-centred practice across all interviews, and the importance of 'empowerment' across the system, meant this category was placed at the centre of the model, highlighting it as the core element which required containment and nurture in the system. This is similar to other circular models discussed, where the CYP are presented at the centre (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; McLoughlin, 2010; Solomon & Thomas, 2013).

6.2.7 Category 7: Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development

As discussed in category 5, our experiences and relationships can shape our perspectives on the world around us but can also be seen as an opportunity for learning and development. This philosophy was particularly evident through this category, hence the close interaction between the two on the right-hand side of the model. With containment vital for both processes to happen, category 8 sits as a link between the two.

Codes within this category showed examples of different parties reflecting together to develop practice and coping strategies. While examples of CYP engaging in joint reflection were not

presented in this category in chapter 4, they were coded in this category, as well as in category 6, hence the close link on the diagram. Such reflective practice and joint consultation and thinking, modelled by the EP and commissioner, was helpful in relationships 'across the family' to contain challenging emotions and provide space for productive thinking and learning, just like staff groups discussed in chapter 5 (e.g. McLoughlin, 2010; Moore, 2018).

Developing mentalisation skills in staff, families and students (e.g. Malberg, 2008; Solomon & Thomas, 2013) and using restorative approaches (Solomon & Thomas, 2013), mirror methods advocated for in this study; participants hoped to build staff and CYP's reflection skills, and engagement with other points of view, through joint reflection groups and meetings which brought multiple participants together. A key part of a child's development is providing them opportunity to learn from their experiences, through emotional containment, teaching and reflection (Bion, 1962a; Waddell, 2002). A parent is a key player in helping to facilitate such learning experiences, much like the EP and commissioner aimed to do for staff and students in this study.

Interestingly, in 3/5 interviews, there were two EPs in the PRU, and in 2/5 interviews, there were two commissioners who worked closely with the EP(s). This highlights the unique nature of each 'parenting' setup, and 'family' dynamic. Where it was the case that the commissioning relationship was a triad rather than a dyad, participants commented on the usefulness of having another person to reflect with, and to support them. This links to ideas around co-parenting, step-parenting, and other forms of caregiving, and highlights that each PRU 'family' make up is different. EPs must hold this in mind when considering their own 'parenting' role and function in the setting.

It also links to the idea of parents having wider 'support networks' which is discussed further in category 12. Despite differences within 'family' set-ups, it was clear that the same

underlying relational factors, including collaboration, openness, shared values and willingness to engage in joint reflection, were what helped these relationships thrive. Evidently, EPs in these settings must be willing to work with whatever family set-up exists and be willing to 'co-parent' in whichever way feels appropriate and manageable for the setting. This should be informed and influenced by the culture of the setting (Malberg, 2008), while also not compromising on the importance of building a positive 'parental' relationship, and prioritising containment, to build a reflective culture.

6.2.8 Category 8: Acknowledging and containing difficulty
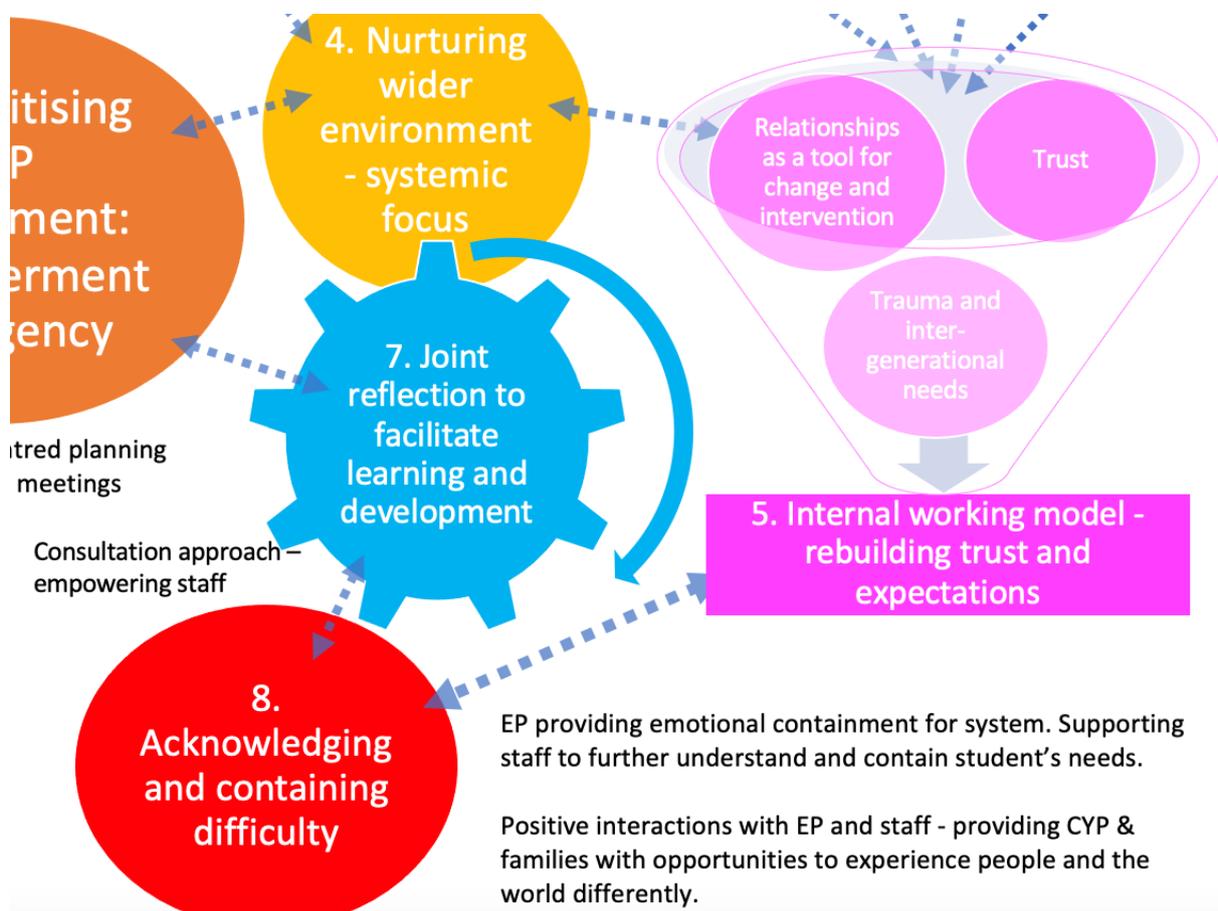
The EP and commissioner across these interviews discussed examples of containing the difficulty within the system. In particular, the EPs relational skills within these situations were noted as helpful, as well as their offer of supervision to staff and the commissioner. This was particularly important given the possibility of CYP being involved in complex systems, such

as the criminal justice system and social care, and the pressure and high workload for staff at PRUs.

When the emotions surrounding these pressures are held, staff are more easily able to hold and contain the needs and complexities of CYP (Kalu, 2002; Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010; Moore, 2018; Solomon & Thomas, 2013). As already argued, this EP-commissioner relationship closely mirrors the role of parents in a child's life, offering containment for the system to manage these complex emotions, experiences and challenges. However, with this comes the need for 'parents' to contain each other and where appropriate to access external support to do this, from others in the system or 'family'.

6.2.9 Category 9: Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond

Flexibility was a key idea across the interviews. EPs and commissioners were required to be responsive to the everchanging needs of the PRU and CYP. There were examples of staff going 'above and beyond' and not giving up, and the EP needed to be supportive of, and aligned with, this approach. This attitude was closely connected to participants values, hence the direct link to category 2 on the model. This is resonant of how attuned parents

respond to children's needs and the lengths that parents will go to do this, responding flexibly to ensure they are happy and healthy.

Similar arguments over the importance of flexibility and not giving up were seen in all five papers on containment in chapter 5. This was particularly evident in Malberg's (2008) paper where she highlighted the need to prove to both the system and CYP that she would stand at the door until she was let in, "refusing to be excluded" (p.101). This mentality was shared by participants in this GT study, who clearly understood the importance of not giving up, and thus, helping CYP have a new and different experience of relationships, and how they are 'thought about'. While not positioned this way on the diagram, this category also links to category 5, and the vision that containing relationships can bring about positive change for CYP: by slowly shifting their internal working models and improving their tolerance of engaging with and thinking about their own experiences and emotions. This can happen when experiencing an adult who is able to tolerate these emotions and experiences (Kalu, 2002), just as a parent is required to do. Hence, the need for staff to 'not give up', and for the EP and commissioner to be able to support staff to 'keep going', through the work they commission together.

6.2.10 Category 10: Seeing the best in children

Changing the narrative about CYP arriving at PRUs was clear throughout the interviews. Participants took a hope-filled and strengths-based approach. They focussed on identifying and monopolising CYP's strengths to help them achieve their potential, through hopeful and person-centred tools and approaches such as PATH (O'Brien et al., 2010). This is linked to the shared values which underpin this 'parental' relationship, especially the 'language' they choose to use with and about their 'children'. It is also resonant of how parents often 'see the best' in their children and desire to bring out their full potential.

It should be noted that this category was likely partially influenced by the strengths-based nature of the interview. Nonetheless, it was clear that participants were already practicing in this strengths-based way, and the interview simply highlighted this. For example, in interview 5 the EP likened their joint staff consultations to the style of the research interview - "strengths-focussed" and "positive" (5, 12). The staff naturally grew into this approach when provided with a joint consultation space facilitated by the EP. This highlights the influence of the 'parents', and their values and approaches, on the rest of the system.
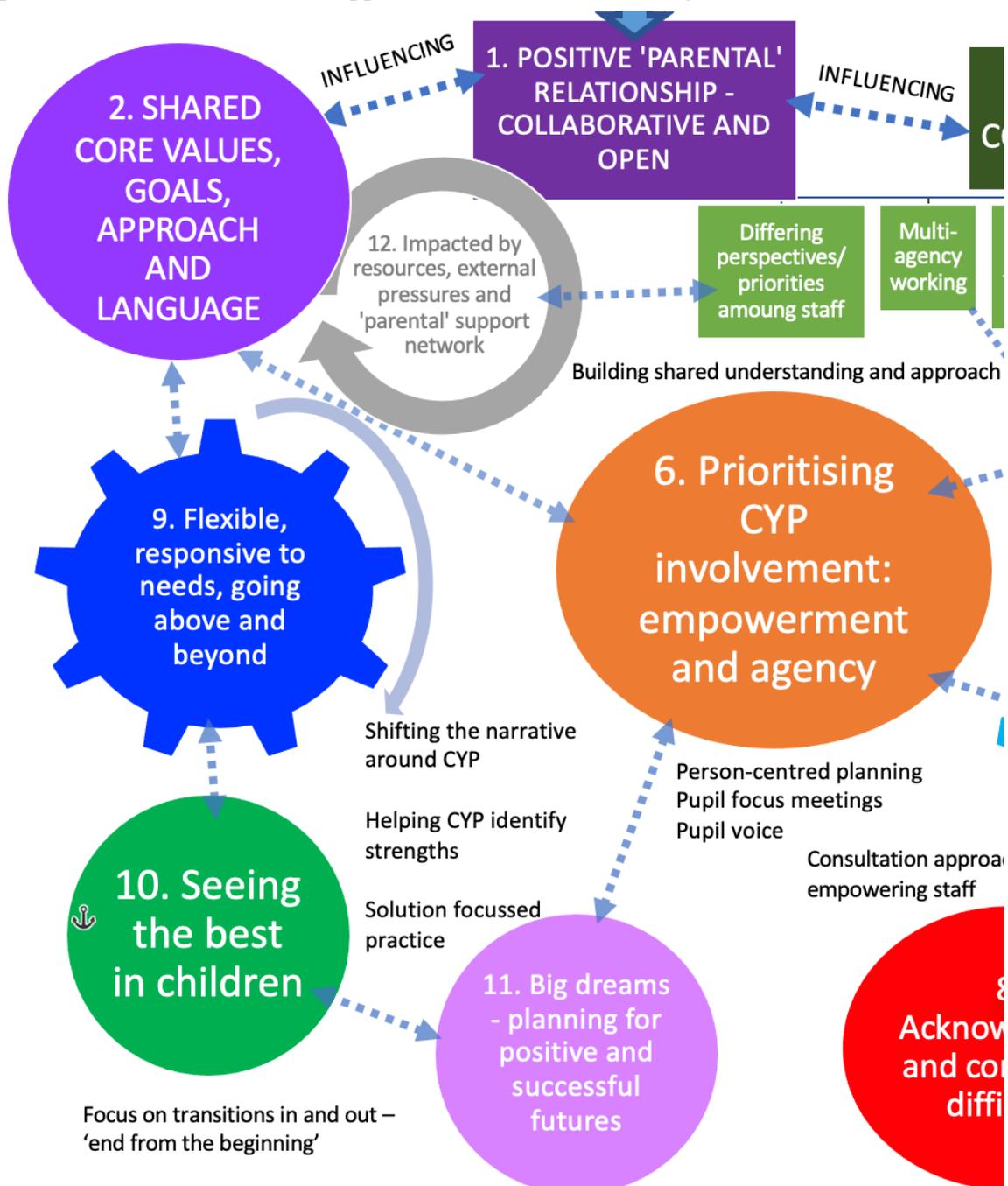
It was clear in interviews that participants wanted to empower CYP to recognise their own strengths, to best prepare them for their futures. This links to categories 6 and 11, as shown in the diagram and is also resonant of ideas highlighted in Malcolm's (2020) research. Heads of APs identified motivators and drivers in their work: their hope to improve outcomes for CYP, their focus on potential future success, and their perspectives on each 'unique' individual student's needs. Similar messages of individualised, hopeful and positive provision were shown across the literature, including supportive and personalised learning and a friendly, family-like environment (Hamilton & Morgan, 2018; Hart, 2013; Jalali & Morgan, 2018; Malcolm, 2019; Michael & Frederickson, 2013). These findings link back to research discussed in category 2 on the importance of language and narrative for these CYP (Caslin, 2021) and advocate for solution-focussed approaches (de Shazer & Dolan, 2007) and positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) in EP practice in these settings.

6.2.11 Category 11: Big dreams – planning for positive and successful futures

When discussing 'success', participants were keen to help CYP achieve positive futures, and to ensure they had a successful transition out of the PRU, whether through reintegration or a positive post-16 destination. This connects to parents' common hopes and dreams for their children to become happy, positive and successful adults. However, there was also focus on transitions into the PRU and the potential 'traumatic nature' of these, which links to findings in previous literature (Briggs, 2010; Malcolm, 2019; Trotman et al., 2019; Trotman et al., 2015). In Facey et al.'s (2020) recent study, which explored the mainstream experiences of CYP in APs, participants highlighted the significant impact of transitions from primary to secondary, and then transitions throughout secondary. Isolation and desperation were themes highlighted, as well as SEMH pupils' maladaptive coping strategies during these periods of change and instability. With these findings in mind, and the high level of exclusions in KS4, it seems vital that PRUs think differently about transitions. They should hold in mind how

challenging these may be for CYP who have previously struggled in this area, or who have attachment or trauma needs. Supporting CYP through these challenging transitions in a containing way, is resonant of 'parental' support throughout big developmental milestones and transitions. This should be a key area of focus for EPs in PRU work to alleviate the potential trauma of future transitions.

6.2.12 Category 12: Impacted by resources, external pressures and 'parental' support network

This category highlighted the impact of resources, external pressures and a 'parental support network', such as SLT buy-in. Examples included participants who felt unsupported by their SLT, or those who noted frustrations with mainstream schools. There was a sense of support being offered 'too late' and CYP and families being 'let down', similar to messages in earlier literature (e.g. Embeita, 2019; Malcolm, 2020; Parker et al., 2016). To counteract these difficulties, EPs and commissioners highlighted the need to intervene more strategically, such as join up with the SLT in the PRU, work with parents, facilitate multi-agency interventions with mainstream schools to ensure a joined-up approach, and attend exclusion panels within the local authority. These examples are similar to those suggested across the literature (e.g. Cockerill, 2019; McLoughlin, 2010; Pillay et al., 2013; Solomon & Thomas, 2013).

Caslin (2021) explored 13 case studies of those with SEMH who had experienced exclusion and found similar themes. CYP and families expressed feeling "let down" and rejected by the education system and felt they were viewed as "a culprit rather than a victim" (p. 123). The impact of language and labelling was highlighted, linking back to the need to 'shift the narrative' around CYP outlined in category 10 of this GT. A range of other pressures including finances and Covid-19 were also discussed by participants in category 12, highlighting the need

for EPs to be creative and responsive to everchanging and uncertain contextual needs (Malberg, 2008; McLoughlin, 2010).

The pressures highlighted in category 12, are resonant of the pressure parents might feel under if grandparents, step-parents, co-parents or wider family members are not in agreement with their parenting decisions, and if arguments occur within the family system. Additionally, if family income is stretched, or there are difficulties with organisations which support children, this understandably puts limitations on what parents can provide for their children and puts pressure on them to meet their needs alone. The GT interview process was viewed positively by all participants. Feedback showed that EPs and commissioners also appreciated being listened to, understood and contained. The interview facilitated them stopping and reflecting on their shared perspectives and practices, which all reported to be a helpful and encouraging process. This resonates with the idea of parental support networks, and parents valuing the opportunity to talk with others, especially when things feel challenging.
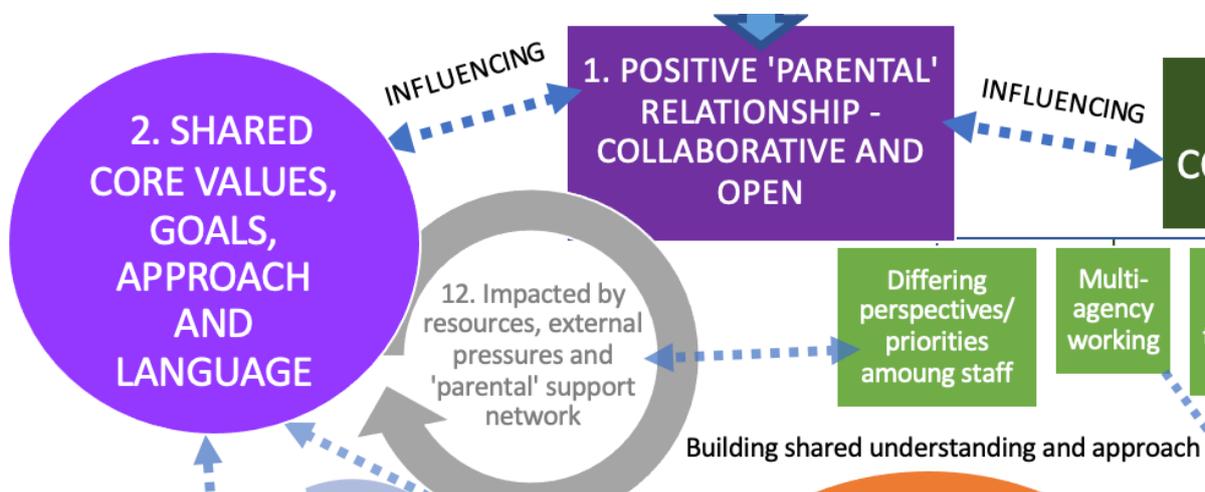
This final category links back to the significance of the EP-commissioner relationship in successful EP practice in PRUs. For this reason, category 12 was placed at the top of the diagram to demonstrate the ongoing impact of these external factors on the EP-commissioner relationship and their 'parental' role and function in the system.

6.3 Summary and conclusions

I asked two research questions at the beginning of this thesis:

1. According to EPs and their commissioners what does successful EP practice look like in KS4 PRUs?

2. What are the factors and mechanisms that contribute to successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs?

I have presented a model which answers these questions, rooted in findings from interviews conducted, and literature on containment within AP settings. Findings frame the EP and commissioner as having a 'parental' role and function, providing containment to and thinking space for and about the system, and ultimately the CYP. Positive, collaborative and trusting relationships were found to be a vital mechanism contributing to successful EP practice, as was the importance of joint thinking and reflective spaces for everyone in the system or 'family' - hence the focus on 'relationships across the family' and these acting as a tool for intervention.

Shared core values, goals, approaches and language were vital to the EP-commissioner 'parental' relationship and included: ensuring work was person-centred and championed CYP's involvement and agency; flexibility from participants and wider staff teams and commitment to going above and beyond; and taking a systemic, strengths-based and hopeful approach, which looked towards shifting the narrative around these CYP. This systemic, joint reflective approach, rooted in relationships, was facilitated by the 'parental relationship' of EP and commissioner and influenced by other 'parental' figures and 'family' dynamics within the system. Both systemic (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) and psychodynamic (McLoughlin, 2010) models of concentric circles are helpful frameworks to consider the interactions occurring in PRU systems, and ideas from systems psychodynamics (Eloquin, 2016; Neumann, 1999) should be considered by EPs when working in these settings.

This study has highlighted the need for containment and reflective spaces to be provided across these concentric circles. This is to help understand and manage the mechanisms, interactions and unconscious processes at play, and thus work towards positive outcomes for CYP who have been excluded. A summary document and reflective guide for EPs and commissioners has been created based on findings and is presented in appendix V for EPs to use. As evident in this discussion, this is an ongoing area of research and development. Thus, having a framework for EPs, which synthesises recent research and ideas, with those being used by colleagues in practice, is a powerful tool.

Given the lack of research on EP work in PRUs and APs, this study builds on the literature available, and provides EPs with a broad theoretical framework and some specific practice guidance to be considered in their work. This is particularly pertinent due to the current government focus on exclusions and APs, the wider research surrounding exclusions and the poor life outcomes for these CYP. The relational findings of this thesis add to a broad spectrum of previous findings which advocate for a relational approach with vulnerable CYP. The GT highlights the importance of taking this relational and reflective approach across the wider system too. Limitations of the research will now be discussed, alongside implications for practice and future research. Subsequently, I will conclude the thesis with my reflections as a researcher, highlighting the impact this has had on my own practice, and the potential impact for other EPs, if they engage with the reflective practice tool provided.

6.4 Limitations

There were several limitations to this study, including the small number of participating boroughs. These were all within London, and thus differences in context must be accounted for when applying these findings nationally. Nonetheless, it is clear that findings are in keeping with wider themes in the literature, and therefore suggest applicability to the wider AP context.

While findings suggest what is useful for working with CYP and families, the study lacks their perspectives and future research would benefit from this inclusion, particularly given the centrality of CYP engagement within the GT model. While previous research has considered CYP and parental perspectives, this has not been specifically around EP practice. While the research is missing these voices, the choice to include only EPs and commissioners meant I was able to gather a wider cross section of boroughs, as recruiting parents and CYP within each would have been more difficult. Further, while some individual casework examples were discussed, gathering a more detailed understanding of successful individual case studies would have been useful. However, taking this focus would have meant less scope for exploring other aspects of the work in the way that participants chose to, which added richly to the systemic picture.

Due to the strengths-based nature of the interviews, the data may not have represented the level of challenge involved in the work for EPs and commissioners. Nonetheless, participants fed back that they welcomed the chance to think more positively, as it avoided them dwelling on the negatives, which some expressed is often easy to do. Further, through using opt-in and convenience sampling, it is likely that those who chose to participate felt their work was going well and were willing to reflect on it. The data doesn't therefore capture the more profound challenges or sense of 'stuckness' that other EPs and commissioners might experience in their work together in KS4 PRUs. Additionally, there were several EPs who were keen to participate in the research, but their commissioners were not in a place to participate, due to contextual factors or workload. As a result, the voices of these EPs and their experiences of working with a PRU under pressure were not captured in this research.

Due to the joint nature of the interviews, some challenges that individuals might have experienced in the work and in the working relationship may not have been expressed.

However, it allowed space for me to analyse how participants did interact together and provided data on relational factors that would have been missed if I had conducted individual interviews. While the research, for validity and reliability purposes, focussed on a specific context - state maintained KS4 PRUs - this meant it did not consider broader contexts of APs, which can show a wide variety of practice and offer very different experiences for CYP (Thomson & Pennacchia, 2014). Although in many ways the results may still be relevant for these settings, and other similar alternative education providers, they should be considered and applied with the differing contextual factors in mind.

6.5 Implications for practice

6.5.1 Implications for practice in PRUs and APs

Based on findings around the importance of containment for everyone involved in PRUs, EPs should consider a move away from solely individual work and help PRUs build containing systems, processes and approaches. These should be informed by psychological theory and look to impact a broad group of CYP, staff and families. EPs should consider how they can support adults to reflect on and process the relational dynamics in their work, including their emotional and unconscious reactions to CYP. This should involve consideration on how to help staff feel comfortable, supported and 'part of a team', to manage the discomfort often experienced when working with these CYP. EPs could support this through collaborative processes such as supervision, work discussion groups (Jackson, 2008), consultation, and training opportunities. These spaces should always look to empower staff with a sense of agency and confidence in their own expertise. Organisational change and organisational consultation approaches, drawing on systems psychodynamics (Eloquin, 2016), should also be considered in broader strategic and organisational work.

Trust and respect were seen as a key part of the EP developing positive relationships with staff and being seen as 'part of the system'. To do this, EPs should facilitate spaces where they demonstrate their own willingness to learn and reflect alongside staff and recognise the expertise staff are already bringing. Important relational skills such as active listening and pure enquiry (Schein, 1999), congruence, authenticity, empathy and unconditional positive regard (Rogers, 1965), and reflective and reflexive practice to consider their *self-in-role* and *identity-in-role* (Booker, 2005), should be considered some of the most important skills EPs can bring to these settings.

EPs should focus on building open, honest and containing relationships with the PRU commissioner and SLT and draw on their knowledge of psychological theory and practice to facilitate reflection in these relationships. EPs may want to consider the use of activities which help the EP and commissioner reflect on shared values, ethos and language to help build reflective practice in their work, and to ensure their work is driven by shared perspectives and goals. Systemic family therapy tools such as the 'family shield' (Pereira, 2014) could be adjusted to support this.

Indeed, EPs should consider using systemic models of working, drawing on concepts such as family scripts (Byng-Hall, 1985) to inform their thinking and reflection. Using tools such as circular questioning (Penn, 1982) and semantic polarities conversations (Grønbǽk, 2013) could help families, CYP and staff reflect together, listen to each other's perspectives, and become more joined up in their support of CYP. EPs are well positioned to support families to engage with and trust other aspects of the system. They could also facilitate and encourage reflection and more joined up practice across multi-agency networks, perhaps introducing a 'reflecting teams' model (Andersen, 1987). A key part of this joined up practice should include EPs

linking with, or supporting PRUs to link with, their partner mainstream providers, to ensure a shared vision and approach is being taken to support CYP (Cockerill, 2019).

EPs and PRU staff should focus on championing pupil voice and involvement in reflective processes, and consider the use of person-centred planning tools such as PATH (O'Brien et al., 2010). EPs should also support PRUs to focus on transitions into and out of the PRU, ensuring these processes are attachment-aware and trauma-informed. Young people's involvement in setting future goals and making decisions should also be prioritised as soon as they enter the PRU.

Strengths-based, and solution-focused approaches should be adopted to help shift the narratives CYP carry about themselves. Where EPs are involved in assessment work, feedback should be thought about carefully to ensure there is opportunity for CYP to learn more about their strengths and skills. All relationships should be treated as an opportunity for change and intervention, and where possible people with already established, trusting relationships should provide or be involved in support and intervention work with CYP.

EPs and PRU staff should consider how they are actively engaging in discussion and reflection on anti-racist practices within their work, and the role of aspects of identity, such as race and culture, in their relationships with each other, staff and CYP and families. Ongoing development of anti-discriminatory policies and initiatives, and engagement with training and CPD in culturally responsive practice should be prioritised.

6.5.2 Implications for work with wider professional networks

Participants from this research desired access to supportive professional networks. In interview 5, the SENCo highlighted how helpful it would be to have a SENCo network for those working in PRUs. This is similar to recommendations from the CfSJ (2018) which highlights the need for national professional networks for AP providers to be able to share good practice. These do

already exist in parts of the country, and participants in interview 2 reported on the usefulness of such a network for their SLT. In interview 1, the SENCo noted the need for social workers, and other professionals working within PRU networks, to listen to and join in conversations such as those had during interviews. She highlighted the need for professionals to be on the same page, especially when working with complex cases. EPs are well placed to facilitate these multi-agency reflective sessions and encourage a more joined-up approach, similar to the multi-agency network discussed in Solomon and Thomas' (2013) paper.

EPs could support strengthening of relationships and joint working between mainstream and PRU settings, and with LA level boards and working groups on exclusions. Findings from this study could also be considered in relation to EP work in mainstream secondary schools, to build on focussed attempts to prevent school exclusion. Use of similar containing, relational and reflective approaches could also benefit staff in mainstream settings; Evrydiki Zafeiriou and Gulliford's (2020) GT of EPs mental health casework in schools highlighted the importance of a secure base, and containment for staff, before EPs could help them reconstruct ideas about pupils needs.

Considering McLoughlin's (2010) 'concentric circles of containment' and how useful participants found the reflective interview space, EPs should consider their own supervision for their work in these settings. This could also involve creating spaces for joint reflection with commissioners, facilitated by another EP in the service. Relatedly, creation of a wider network of EPs supporting PRUs may prove useful. Similarly, EPs should look to support SLT in PRUs as best they can to make sure the containers are being contained.

6.5.3 Implications for policy makers

Based on frustrations and limitations around funding and resources, and lack of earlier intervention for many of these CYP, government and policy makers should continue to invest

in earlier support networks for CYP to prevent exclusion. They should support the formation of multi-disciplinary networks which can act as a containing 'parental' support network for the schools and APs managing these CYP's needs. They should also encourage a move away from behaviourist and 'zero-tolerance' approaches in mainstream schools and instead encourage relational and restorative approaches to managing SEMH needs.

The government should ensure multi-agency support for PRUs and APs, with priority given to psychological support, to aid them in containing and working successfully with these CYP. Further training for all teaching staff, but particularly those working in PRUs and APs should be considered. Topics may include managing and understanding SEMH and other areas of SEND; adopting relational, attachment aware and trauma-informed approaches (Greenhalgh et al., 2020; Olson, 2014); and understanding the psychodynamic aspects and unconscious emotional processes involved in teaching and learning (Bibby, 2010). The implementation of reflective and supervision spaces for all teaching staff, and particularly those working with pupils with SEMH and other complex needs, should be prioritised.

6.6 Feedback to participants and dissemination

After completing analysis, I provided a draft document to participants (appendix U). This outlined the GT, key themes from each category and some reflective questions for EPs and commissioners to use in their work together. It also outlined examples of practice and some key references. Based on their positive feedback of the interview process, and the importance of joint reflection in the GT, I decided to focus on providing a reflective tool for practitioners. Participants fed back that it was an interesting, useful and insightful document. They felt it reflected what they had shared in interviews, as well as some new practice ideas to try. Participants were keen to use it either individually or together to reflect on their practice. They liked the parental/family analogy and the practice examples and references included. One EP

highlighted that with so much to consider in the document, they would focus on one or two areas first. They suggested that it might be helpful to include some brief guidance on how to use the document in this way. I have edited the document based on this suggestion (appendix V) and have also made some edits based on ideas I developed when writing the discussion chapter. I aim to disseminate the document for EPs and commissioners to use in their work with PRUs and similar settings. It is the hope that use of this document can be ongoing, in whichever way feels relevant and helpful to practitioners.

6.7 Future research

To build on the data collected, future research could consider perspectives from CYP, families, and wider staff groups, to further determine how EPs can work best in these settings. Research may also look to evaluate staff supervision groups and work discussion groups, run by EPs in PRUs, or some of the other practice examples suggested in the implications section above. Individual casework examples of successful EP practice could be explored in individual settings, drawing on a range of perspectives and data collection methods to evaluate impact. Similarly, EPs working on systemic and organisational change projects in PRUs and APs could look to research and evaluate the process of setting these up, and their impact, to build on examples of practice-based-evidence. Future research may also look to evaluate EP practice on a wider scale, through surveys and potential focus groups, and compare this against data from PRUs on reintegration and post-16 outcomes for CYP.

6.8 Concluding thoughts: self-reflection and reflexivity

I thoroughly enjoyed this research process and have learnt a lot about my own practice as a TEP. I have reflected on my own professional values and ethos, and on my past experience working in a KS4 AP. In particular it has brought up some emotional experiences that I went through as a new graduate, with little training, suddenly working with CYP with fairly complex

histories and emotional needs. I have found myself wondering how different my experience may have been in that setting, if I had been provided some of the reflective space and emotional containment that I needed in that challenging environment. In particular, I wonder how differently I may have viewed the students, if I had had more psychological support and insight, and how much I may have benefitted from more EP support.

Participating in the interviews, I found myself identifying with the SENCos, who often shared strong passion for achieving positive outcomes for the CYP, but who also acknowledged the challenges of achieving this. As a TEP, I considered the important role we can play in helping others reflect, through the training we are provided, and how easy is to take reflective opportunities for granted as an EP. With both EP and commissioner participants noting the usefulness of the reflective space, it encouraged me to keep prioritising this in my practice with schools. Furthermore, with many participants reflecting on the differences in ethos between mainstream schools and PRUs, I found myself considering my current practice in mainstream secondary schools. This process has helped me further consider how I can help these settings think more systemically about the processes and ethos of their behaviour management systems, and how they can adopt a more relational, restorative approach to prevent exclusions.

Throughout the process, I often wondered what I was bringing to the research interviews, and how much my constructions, ideas and experiences were influencing codes during the analysis. With an awareness of what the preliminary literature review had shown, and my own position as a researcher, I tried to remain reflective about these existing influences and highlight them where appropriate in my research diary, memos, and supervision. I found this useful material to consider during my coding and theory forming, leading me to a more robust theory, grounded in the data. Furthermore, it has helped me recognise the value of reflecting on what we bring to and take from every interaction and piece of work, just like the approaches advocated for

with staff in PRUs. As part of this, I reflected on my own experience of being parented and considered how this impacted my conceptualisation of 'containment', and the parenting analogy drawn on throughout this thesis. It should be acknowledged that this model and reflective guide could bring up a range of emotions and interpretations for practitioners, based on their own personal experiences. Where appropriate, space should be given to acknowledge these, given the importance of reflection and reflexivity in PRU work.

During interviews, I enjoyed facilitating a reflective space for colleagues, and felt privileged to listen to their examples of successful practice and hear the passion they put into their work. This was infectious and I wondered about the importance of ongoing spaces for EPs and commissioners in PRUs to spur each other on, and thus, better manage the stress of the job - by reminding each other of the importance of their work, and the reasons for doing it. Throughout this project, it has become increasingly clear that the data collection method - joint, strengths-based interviews - embodies the essence of successful EP practice in PRUs; namely, the importance of hope, containment, relationships and joint reflective practice. The EP and commissioner may sit in the outer layers of the concentric circles surrounding CYP, but their 'parental' role influences and permeates every layer, just like all the other interacting relationships in the 'family'. Thus, awareness of and reflection on these processes is key, in order to best contain them.

Word Count: 40,740

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Appendices

Appendix A: Form submitted for ethical approval to Tavistock Research and Ethics Committee (TREC)

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC)

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW OF RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN PARTICIPANTS

This application should be submitted alongside copies of any supporting documentation which will be handed to participants, including a participant information sheet, consent form, self-completion survey or questionnaire.

Where a form is submitted and sections are incomplete, the form will not be considered by TREC and will be returned to the applicant for completion.

For further guidance please contact Paru Jeram (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

SECTION A: PROJECT DETAILS

Project title	A grounded theory study of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a social constructionist perspective.		
Proposed project start date	April 2020	**Anticipated project end date**	May 2021

SECTION B: APPLICANT DETAILS

Name of Researcher	Fiona Blyth
Email address	fblyth@tavi-port.nhs.uk
Contact telephone number	

SECTION C: CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

Will any of the researchers or their institutions receive any other benefits or incentives for taking part in this research over and above their normal salary package or the costs of undertaking the research?   **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒   If **YES**, please detail below:
Is there any further possibility for conflict of interest? YES ☐ **NO** ☒   If **YES**, please detail below:

FOR ALL APPLICANTS

'Is your research being commissioned by and or carried out on behalf of a body external to the trust? (for example; commissioned by a local authority, school, care home, other NHS Trust or other organisation). *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation which is external to the Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust (Trust)	YES ☐ NO ☒ NA ☐
If **YES**, please supply details below:	

Has external* ethics approval been sought for this research? **(i.e. submission via Integrated Research Application System (IRAS) to the Health Research Authority (HRA) or other external research ethics committee)** *Please note that 'external' is defined as an organisation/body which is external to the Tavistock and Portman Trust Research Ethics Committee (TREC) If **YES**, please supply details of the ethical approval bodies below **AND** include any letters of approval from the ethical approval bodies:	YES ☐ NO ☒
If your research is being undertaken externally to the Trust, please provide details of the sponsor of your research?	
Do you have local approval (this includes R&D approval)?	YES ☒ NO ☐ NA ☐

SECTION D: SIGNATURES AND DECLARATIONS

APPLICANT DECLARATION I confirm that: • The information contained in this application is, to the best of my knowledge, correct and up to date. • I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research. • I acknowledge my obligations and commitment to upholding our University's Code of Practice for ethical research and observing the rights of the participants. • I am aware that cases of proven misconduct, in line with our University's policies, may result in formal disciplinary proceedings and/or the cancellation of the proposed research.	
Applicant (print name)	Fiona Blyth
Signed	*F.Blyth*
Date	23.03.20

FOR RESEARCH DEGREE STUDENT APPLICANTS ONLY

Name of Supervisor	Richard Lewis
Qualification for which research is being undertaken	Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology (M4)

Supervisor –
• Does the student have the necessary skills to carry out the research? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐ ▪ Is the participant information sheet, consent form and any other documentation appropriate? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐ ▪ Are the procedures for recruitment of participants and obtaining informed consent suitable and sufficient? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐ ▪ Where required, does the researcher have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

Signed	*M, S, Lewis*
Date	23.03.20

COURSE LEAD/RESEARCH LEAD
• Does the proposed research as detailed herein have your support to proceed? **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐

Signed	*A Styles*
Date	03.04.2020

SECTION E: DETAILS OF THE PROPOSED RESEARCH

1. Provide a brief description of the proposed research, including the requirements of participants. This must be in lay terms and free from technical or discipline specific terminology or jargon. If such terms are required, please ensure they are adequately explained (Do not exceed 500 words)
The purpose of this research is to explore 'successful' Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 (KS4) Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this. This will be from the perspective of Educational Psychologists (EPS) and commissioners of EPs in these settings (e.g. headteachers or Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs)). I intend to use joint interviews with EPs and commissioners (one interview for each provision included) and aim to conduct a *minimum* of 2-3 interviews (number of interviews will depend on when the data is considered to reach theoretical saturation point). Interviews will occur across several Inner London Boroughs (with outer London boroughs as a contingency plan). Due to the current outbreak of Covid-19 (and government guidance to avoid all non-essential travel and observe social distancing), joint interviews will take place online on the video conferencing platform Zoom. In the current context many Educational Psychology Services (and other organisations), have moved to remote working where possible and are using online platforms such as Zoom for meetings and consultations. It is hoped therefore, that using such a platform in this research will not seem too unfamiliar to participants. Before taking part in interviews, participants will be asked to read an information sheet, sign a consent form and complete a short proforma (appendices) involving a few key contextual questions relating to the PRU they work in and their role there. Interviews will last approximately 1 hour, and participants will be asked open ended questions about their understanding and experiences of 'successful' EP practice. These interviews will be co-constructed and aim to gather a shared perspective on successful EP work and how it is commissioned in these settings. At the end of the joint interview, participants will be encouraged to consider their own next steps in their practice, based on their joint discussion. After the interview is finished, there will be opportunity for a joint debrief. I will also offer to carry out individual debriefs, if participants feel it would be helpful or necessary. Participants will be given the opportunity to see results of the study through a document

disseminated at the end of the analysis and will be given the chance to give their feedback on the document created.

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2. Provide a statement on the aims and significance of the proposed research, including potential impact to knowledge and understanding in the field (where appropriate, indicate the associated hypothesis which will be tested). This should be a clear justification of the proposed research, why it should proceed and a statement on any anticipated benefits to the community. (Do not exceed 700 words)

In recent years, school exclusion in the UK has been subject to much research and government review (e.g. Timpson, 2019). **This is due to the** gradual rise in school exclusion rates since 2012 - especially in secondary schools - (DfE, 2019), with a significant overrepresentation of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in exclusion statistics (**Graham et al., 2019).** Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and other alternative provisions (APs) play a key role in meeting the needs of those excluded or at risk of exclusion (Mills and Thompson, 2018). Recent figures suggest there are 234 PRUs, 79 AP academies and 39 AP free schools in England, with around 48,033 pupils being educated in these and other independent APs (Mills and Thompson, 2018). 79% have identified Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) and 11.2% have Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), much higher than the 14.9% and 2.9% in mainstream schools respectively (Mills and Thompson, 2018). EPs are therefore important link professionals to PRUs, due to their role in SEND provision as outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (DfE, 2015).

Current research within PRUs, and with students who have been excluded, provides some evidence of good practice; young people, teachers and staff have consistently highlighted the importance of small classes, consistent but flexible approaches to curriculum and behaviour management, a relational approach, a safe, familial space, and joined up working between home and school (e.g. Hamilton and Morgan, 2018; Jalali and Morgan, 2017; Lawrence, 2011; Malcolm, 2019; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). The government has also commissioned numerous reviews identifying good practice and areas for improvement in AP (e.g. HoCEC, 2018) and has pledged a £4 million fund to improve APs (DfE, 2018). Nonetheless, much of this research fails to explore or evaluate the role of EPs in these settings, with only one paper evaluating a specific project run by EPs in a PRU (Cullen and Monroe, 2010).

Children who are attending PRUs are some of the most vulnerable in society, often in complex systems: they are more likely to qualify for free school meals and be known to the police and social services (Malcolm, 2018; Taylor, 2012). Many have experienced adverse childhood experiences or insecure attachment relationships (Malcolm, 2018), affecting the way they manage their emotions and behaviour, develop and maintain relationships and relate to the world (Ainsworth et al., 1978; Music, 2019). This impacts their ability to engage in learning, affecting later life outcomes (DfE, 2016). Such concepts from attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969) highlight why positive relationships and having a 'secure base' at AP are important to CYP.

Using psychological knowledge and skills, and their training as 'complex problem-solvers' (Cameron, 2006) who can support a range of complex and challenging educational difficulties (Farrell et al. 2006; Woods, 2012), EPs have the potential to positively impact these children by working with the systems surrounding them (Atkinson and Rowley, 2019; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It is interesting therefore, to consider whether such work is happening, and what 'successful' EP practice for CYP in PRUs looks like.

In previous PRU research, solution-focussed concepts (de Shazer and Dolan, 2007) have often been drawn upon, focussing on 'what works' from the perspective of CYP, teachers and parents. A similar perspective will be adopted in this research, focussing on successful practice and 'what works' from the perspective of EPs and their commissioners. There are two key questions which this research will ask:

1. According to EPs and their commissioners what does successful EP practice look like in KS4 PRUs?
2. What are the factors and mechanisms that contribute to successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs?

This research project is in keeping with current national priorities and will provide information not gathered in previous research. It aims to help participants reflect on how EPs can be used best in KS4 PRUs. It also aims to identify factors which contribute to best practice and therefore, inform the EP profession on how to implement this and affect change in the systems around CYP in PRUs. As a result, the research intends to positively impact the life outcomes of vulnerable CYP attending PRUs.

3.	Provide an outline of the methodology for the proposed research, including proposed method of data collection, *tasks* assigned to participants of the research and the proposed method and duration of data analysis. If the proposed research makes use of pre-established and generally accepted techniques, please make this clear. (Do not exceed 500 words)

This will be a constructivist grounded theory (CGT) study, with a relativist ontological stance and a social-constructionist epistemological stance (Charmaz, 2008; Charmaz, 2014). It will acknowledge the role and involvement of the researcher in the data analysis and the construction of knowledge and theory relating to successful EP practice in PRUs. It will use semi-structured joint interviews as a tool to elicit EP and commissioner perspectives on successful EP practice. For every PRU involved, one interview will be conducted online via Zoom and will include the EP(s) working in that provision and one member of PRU staff responsible for commissioning EP work. This may be the SENCo or another member of the Senior Leadership Team of the PRU. Questions asked will be open-ended and based on the themes and prompts provided in Appendices.

Interviews will be audio and video recorded, stored on an encrypted laptop and anonymised upon transcription. Data analysis will be conducted and recorded using MAX QDA software. Data will be analysed using Charmaz's (2014) CGT model. This involves analysing each interview as it is completed and comparing coding and initial ideas to interviews already conducted. As a result, interview questions/prompts may be subject to change. CGT analysis involves several stages including:

- initial coding
- focussed coding and categorising
- theory building

Memo-writing will also occur throughout this process, where I will record my own thoughts and interpretations as the researcher, to aid theory building and links between codes. This will be an iterative, flexible process, which facilitates a constant comparative method and eventually leads to theoretical sampling and development of theoretical categories (Charmaz, 2014). This in turn will lead to theory building, and the creation of a theoretical model used to explain successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs. During this stage a second literature search will be conducted to support theory building and explain links between factors and mechanisms. This is to ensure the theory is rooted in the primary data, as well as current theory and literature where appropriate.

SECTION F: PARTICIPANT DETAILS

4.	Provide an explanation detailing how you will identify, approach and recruit the participants for the proposed research, including clarification on sample size and location. Please provide justification for the exclusion/inclusion criteria for this study (i.e. who will be allowed to / not allowed to participate) and explain briefly, in lay terms, why this criteria is in place. (Do not exceed 500 words)

While there are numerous types of AP, I have chosen to focus on PRUs to ensure that provisions involved have a similar set up. PRUs are maintained by a Local Authority (LA) and follow the national curriculum. They are overseen by OFSTED and often have a LA EP linked to them, with referrals made through similar channels. Other APs, such as academies, free-schools, or charity-run provisions, are sometimes less regulated and show vast disparity in practice (Mills and Thompson, 2018). Relatedly, LA EPs will be focussed on to ensure a similarity in work contexts across participants. This excludes private EPs who may also be working in these settings, but not operating under statutory guidelines or a LA model.

KS4 has been chosen due to high rates of exclusion in this age group – 47% of CYP in PRUs are in Year 11 (aged 15-16) (Mills and Thompson, 2018). There is also a reduced likelihood of reintegration into mainstream at this stage of education, meaning support provided through PRUs has a significant and direct impact on post-16 choices and future life outcomes for CYP. With previous research identifying difficulties in facilitating positive change for this cohort (DfE, 2018), and little focus on the EP role in these settings, it seems pertinent to consider how EPs can successfully support these CYP. This is especially relevant given the recent extension of the EP role to work with 16–25-year-olds and support CYP with SEND in preparing for adulthood (DfE, 2015).

Initially, EPs within the LA where I am on placement (an inner London borough) working within a KS4 PRU will be approached. An information sheet and consent form (Appendices) will be provided to them (and the Principal EP of the service), and the link PRU, inviting them to take part in a joint interview. Subsequently, through convenience sampling I will contact 5 further Inner London LAs (there are 12 in total). Inner London boroughs have been chosen to ensure PRUs included are operating within similar contexts. My own links to EPs in these services will be contacted via email, with the Principal EPs copied in. All EPs and commissioners who agree to be interviewed will be included. If necessary, I will approach 3 additional LAs, and afterwards, if required, the last 3, to meet the desired number of participants. As a contingency plan, if I still require more participants after approaching the 12 inner London boroughs, I will begin approaching outer London boroughs through the same staged convenience sampling approach.

EPs involved will have to be working with the PRU at the time of contact and interview, and the commissioner will have to be directly involved in working with the EP(s) and commissioning their work in the setting. EPs may be either qualified EPs with HCPC registration, or Trainee EPs currently completing a doctoral qualification.

I will conduct a *minimum* of 2-3 joint interviews (these may include 2 or 3 participants each depending on the number of EPs working in each setting). Based on the CGT model, the number of interviews included will depend on uptake, or when the data reaches theoretical saturation point (producing no new codes/themes) (Charmaz, 2014).

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5. Will the participants be from any of the following groups? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☒ Students or staff of the Trust or the University.
☒   Adults (over the age of 18 years with mental capacity to give consent to participate in the research).
☐ Children or legal minors (anyone under the age of 16 years)[1]
☐ Adults who are unconscious, severely ill or have a terminal illness.
☐ Adults who may lose mental capacity to consent during the course of the research.
☐ Adults in emergency situations.
☐   Adults[2] with mental illness - particularly those detained under the Mental Health Act (1983 & 2007).
☐ Participants who may lack capacity to consent to participate in the research under the research requirements of the Mental Capacity Act (2005).
☐ Prisoners, where ethical approval may be required from the **National Offender Management Service (NOMS).**
☐   Young Offenders, where ethical approval may be required from the National Offender Management Service (NOMS).
☐ Healthy volunteers (in high-risk intervention studies).
☐   Participants who may be considered to have a pre-existing and potentially dependent[3] relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, colleagues, service-users, patients).
☐ Other vulnerable groups (see Question 6).
☐ Adults who are in custody, custodial care, or for whom a court has assumed responsibility.
☐ Participants who are members of the Armed Forces.

[1]*If the proposed research involves children or adults who meet the Police Act (1997) definition of vulnerability[3], any researchers who will have contact with participants must have current Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) clearance.*

³ Proposed research involving participants with whom the investigator or researcher(s) shares a dependent or unequal relationships (e.g. teacher/student, clinical therapist/service-user) may compromise the ability to give informed consent which is free from any form of pressure (real or implied) arising from this relationship. TREC recommends that, wherever practicable, investigators choose participants with whom they have no dependent relationship. Following due scrutiny, if the investigator is confident that the research involving participants in dependent relationships is vital and defensible, TREC will require additional information setting out the case and detailing how risks inherent in the dependent relationship will be managed. TREC will also need to be reassured that refusal to participate will not result in any discrimination or penalty.

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6.   Will the study involve participants who are vulnerable? YES ☐   NO ☒

For the purposes of research, 'vulnerable' participants may be adults whose ability to protect their own interests are impaired or reduced in comparison to that of the broader population. Vulnerability may arise from the participant's personal characteristics (e.g. mental or physical impairment) or from their social environment, context and/or disadvantage (e.g. socio-economic mobility, educational attainment, resources, substance dependence, displacement or homelessness). Where prospective participants are at high risk of consenting under duress, or as a result of manipulation or coercion, they must also be considered as vulnerable.

Adults lacking mental capacity to consent to participate in research and children are automatically presumed to be vulnerable. Studies involving adults (over the age of 16) who lack mental capacity to consent in research must be submitted to a REC approved for that purpose. Please consult Health Research Authority (HRA) for guidance: https://www.hra.nhs.uk/

6.1. If YES, what special arrangements are in place to protect vulnerable participants' interests?

If **YES**, the research activity proposed will require a DBS check. *(NOTE: information concerning activities which require DBS checks can be found via https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dbs-check-eligible-positions-guidance)*

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7.   Do you propose to make any form of payment or incentive available to participants of the research? YES ☐   NO ☒

If **YES**, please provide details taking into account that any payment or incentive should be representative of reasonable remuneration for participation and may not be of a value that could be coercive or exerting undue influence on potential participants' decision to take part in the research. Wherever possible, remuneration in a monetary form should be avoided and substituted with vouchers, coupons or equivalent. Any payment made to research participants may have benefit or HMRC implications and participants should be alerted to this in the participant information sheet as they may wish to choose to decline payment.

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8.   What special arrangements are in place for eliciting informed consent from participants who may not adequately understand verbal explanations or written information provided in English; where participants have special communication needs; where participants have limited literacy; or where children are involved in the research? (Do not exceed 200 words)

Professionals involved in the research (either PRU senior leadership staff or EPs) are expected to have the literacy and language skills needed to access the information sheet, consent form and interview. However, during an initial conversation, participants will be asked if they have any additional needs to be considered or adjusted for in the research process. Written information will be provided according to these needs if necessary, for example in larger print, on different coloured paper etc, and any interview procedures will be adjusted accordingly.

SECTION F: RISK ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

9. Does the proposed research involve any of the following? *(Tick as appropriate)*

☐ use of a questionnaire, self-completion survey or data-collection instrument (attach copy)
☐ use of emails or the internet as a means of data collection
☐ use of written or computerised tests
☒ interviews (attach interview questions)
☐ diaries (attach diary record form)
☐ participant observation
☐ participant observation (in a non-public place) without their knowledge / covert research
☒ audio-recording interviewees or events
☒ video-recording interviewees or events
☐ access to personal and/or sensitive data (i.e. student, patient, client or service-user data) without the participant's informed consent for use of these data for research purposes
☐ administration of any questions, tasks, investigations, procedures or stimuli which may be experienced by participants as physically or mentally painful, stressful or unpleasant during or after the research process
☐ performance of any acts which might diminish the self-esteem of participants or cause them to experience discomfiture, regret or any other adverse emotional or psychological reaction
☐ investigation of participants involved in illegal or illicit activities (e.g. use of illegal drugs)
☐ procedures that involve the deception of participants
☐ administration of any substance or agent
☐ use of non-treatment of placebo control conditions
☐ participation in a clinical trial
☐ research undertaken at an off-campus location (<u>risk assessment attached</u>)
☐ research overseas (<u>copy of VCG overseas travel approval attached</u>)

10. Does the proposed research involve any specific or anticipated risks (e.g. physical, psychological, social, legal or economic) to participants that are greater than those encountered in everyday life? YES ☒   NO ☐
If **YES**, please describe below including details of precautionary measures.

The joint interviews in this research have the potential to raise difficult issues within working relationships between EPs and commissioners. Precautionary measures will include:

- Clear information sheet outlining the nature of the research and the fact it involves a joint interview. This will ensure participants are fully informed of the aims of the research and can consider whether this would be a helpful activity to do together
- A strengths-based approach to the interviews to offer opportunity for the working relationship to be supported
- Opportunity to plan next steps at the end of the interview, to ensure the interview focusses on positively moving forward

- Joint and individual debriefing opportunities will be offered at the end of the interview (see 13 &14)
- Participants will be reminded and encouraged to use their own supervision or line management meetings to consider any issues that arise

Participants may be concerned about their work 'being reviewed' and perhaps about being identifiable in the research write up. Precautionary measures will include:
- Ensuring all data is anonymised so that participants cannot be identified
- Keeping details of participating boroughs and participants confidential
- Explaining to participants how information will be used and processed and how anonymity will be ensured.

Due to the theory generating approach of grounded theory, final interpretations of the data risk not directly/clearly representing the original meaning of individual participants. Data analysis will also be subject to my own researcher bias and experience. To mitigate against this as far as possible I will take a number of precautionary measures:
- In the information sheet, I will make it clear that I will approach the data with my own perspective and will be generating a theory based on all the interviews I conduct. I will also make it clear that a number of different participants will be involved and therefore findings will be representative of a range of views/contexts.
- I will approach the data openly and be mindful of my own biases. I will record these in memos throughout the process and ensure I follow Charmaz's (2014) recommended model of grounded theory data analysis. I will also ensure that I pay careful attention to all aspects of the data, transcribing and coding all aspects.
- I will share my processes, findings and interpretations in my research supervision. This will ensure I am supported to reflect on my researcher bias and help my own reflexivity.
- I will ensure I am analysing my theoretical conclusions against current literature. This will involve carrying out a second literature search after I have completed data analysis and as I begin theory building.
- Ensuring my presentation of findings to the participants is clear and avoids any misrepresentations of participants. Offering opportunity for participants to feedback on the model presented to them.

Participants may end up discussing specific cases and use names of specific CYP despite encouragement to use initials only. Consent will not have been sought from CYP and families for their inclusion in the research. Therefore, to account for this, and to ensure confidentiality and anonymity I will:
- Ensure all names are changed to a pseudonym during transcription. Data will be stored securely in line with Data Protection Act (2018) and the University Data Protection Policy (see 24-26)
- Specifics of these cases, which may be identifiable to the CYP, family or participants, will not be shared in results write up and content that does not affect the findings may be edited to preserve anonymity.

Specific case work/experiences that have been difficult or distressing, for either the EP or the commissioner involved, may well be raised in these interviews. To account for this, precautionary measures taken will include:
- Ensuring that appropriate debriefing measures are carried out (13 & 14)
- Providing an emotionally containing interview space, using active listening and empathy
- Ensuring I help participants identify where they can access further relevant support e.g. counselling service/supervision
- Ensuring participants know that they can stop the interview at any time, or can decline to answer any questions that are too difficult.

11. Where the procedures involve potential hazards and/or discomfort or distress for participants, please state what previous experience the investigator or researcher(s) have had in conducting this type of research.

I have previously worked in a PRU (2013-2015), as a member of teaching staff. Therefore, I am familiar with the emotional nature of the work that may be discussed during the interviews and am used to containing what can be emotionally heightened encounters in a calm and consistent manner. I also have experience conducting interviews for academic research for my Psychology Masters (UCL IoE, 2015-2016) with school staff, where we discussed support offered to students with social and emotional difficulties. Furthermore, when I worked as a Children's Wellbeing Practitioner within a CAMHS setting (2017-2018), I regularly worked therapeutically with children and parents who were emotionally distressed and needed containment in a therapeutic space. This role often involved managing safeguarding risks - including self-harm and suicidal ideation - and creating and following risk management plans. Currently, I am working as a Trainee EP and conduct regular joint consultations with staff, parents and CYP. These can involve emotionally distressed participants, or disagreements between group members, and require me to conduct extensive and thorough information gathering on sensitive and complex topics. With my skills in assessment and consultation, developed as part of my training, I am well prepared to conduct the type of joint interviews proposed in this research.

12. Provide an explanation of any potential benefits to participants. Please ensure this is framed within the overall contribution of the proposed research to knowledge or practice. (Do not exceed 400 words)
NOTE: Where the proposed research involves students of our University, they should be assured that accepting the offer to participate or choosing to decline will have no impact on their assessments or learning experience. Similarly, it should be made clear to participants who are patients, service-users and/or receiving any form of treatment or medication that they are not invited to participate in the belief that participation in the research will result in some relief or improvement in their condition.

Engaging in this research offers opportunity for participants to reflect on and enhance successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs. Participants will be given time which is often not set aside – due to resource constraints - to stop and reflect, evaluate practice collaboratively and learn from each other. During the interviews, participants will be asked to describe experiences of successful practice and to consider the facilitating factors which lead to success. This will offer opportunity for participants to consider how to harness these moving forward in their work. Additionally, participants will have access to what is potentially a very different perspective on their work by reflecting with their colleague, which may lead to developing and changing future practice. By taking a strengths-based approach to the interviews, participants will hopefully be encouraged by 'what's working' and motivated to do more of this. As a result, working relationships may be enhanced, in turn benefiting the CYP attending the PRUs, and other staff working in them. The research will also provide participants with a document and model to use when planning and evaluating future work in KS4 PRUs.

13. Provide an outline of any measures you have in place in the event of adverse or unexpected outcomes and the potential impact this may have on participants involved in the proposed research. (Do not exceed 300 words)

As outlined in 10, it is possible that difficulties in the participants' working relationship may be identified or discussed. To account for this, I will monitor the communication and interaction in the interviews as closely as possible and attempt to provide a containing and reflective space for any differing opinions to be aired. I will also ask participants to consider 'next steps' at the end of the interview to ensure a plan is considered for how to move forward. A joint debrief will also be offered after the interview, to consider how both parties found the process. Participants will also be offered individual debriefs with me if necessary, for participants to consider if they need any further support. I will make recommendations for participants to follow their professional guidelines and protocols relating to difficulties, including being reminded to access their own professional supervision.

In the information sheet and at the beginning of the interview, I will make it clear that any safeguarding or fitness to practice concerns raised during the interview will be passed on following appropriate procedures.

14. Provide an outline of your debriefing, support and feedback protocol for participants involved in the proposed research. This should include, for example, where participants may feel the need to discuss thoughts or feelings brought about following their participation in the research. This may involve referral to an external support or counseling service, where participation in the research has caused specific issues for participants. Where medical aftercare may be necessary, this should include details of the treatment available to participants. Debriefing may involve the disclosure of further information on the aims of the research, the participant's performance and/or the results of the research. (Do not exceed 500 words)

As noted above, a joint debrief will be offered after the interview, to consider how both parties found the process. I will also be monitoring the emotional state of participants closely to consider what other support/action may be necessary. Participants will also be offered individual debriefs with me, if they need any further support or an opportunity to discuss feelings that have arisen during the process. I will recommend that participants follow their professional guidelines and protocols relating to any difficulties which arise and remind them to access their own professional supervision where necessary. Signposting to relevant resources/services will be provided if necessary.

Where necessary, if I am concerned about the wellbeing of a participant or someone mentioned, I will follow procedures to ensure this information is passed on to the relevant party. This will be discussed with the participant beforehand.

FOR RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN AWAY FROM THE TRUST OR OUTSIDE THE UK

15. Does any part of your research take place in premises outside the Trust?

☒ **YES,** and I have included evidence of permissions from the managers or others legally responsible for the premises. This permission also clearly states the extent to which the participating institution will indemnify the researchers against the consequences of any untoward event

16. Does the proposed research involve travel outside of the UK?

☐ **YES,** I have consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office website for guidance/travel advice? http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/

☐ **YES,** I am a non-UK national and I have sought travel advice/guidance from the Foreign Office (or equivalent body) of my country of origin

☐ **YES,** I have completed the overseas travel approval process and enclosed a copy of the document with this application

For details on university study abroad policies, please contact academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk

IF YES:

17. Is the research covered by the Trust's insurance and indemnity provision?

☒ **YES** ☐ **NO**

18. Please evidence how compliance with all local research ethics and research governance requirements have been assessed for the country(ies) in which the research is taking place.

NOTE:
For students conducting research where the Trust is the sponsor, the Dean of the Department of Education and Training (DET) has overall responsibility for risk assessment regarding their health and safety. If you are proposing to undertake research outside the UK, please ensure that

permission from the Dean has been granted before the research commences (please attach written confirmation)

SECTION G: PARTICIPANT CONSENT AND WITHDRAWAL

18. Have you attached a copy of your participant information sheet (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials. YES ☒   NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

19. Have you attached a copy of your participant consent form (this should be in *plain English*)? Where the research involves non-English speaking participants, please include translated materials.
YES ☒   NO ☐

If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

20. The following is a <u>participant information sheet</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ Clear identification of the Trust as the sponsor for the research, the project title, the Researcher or Principal Investigator and other researchers along with relevant contact details.
☒ Details of what involvement in the proposed research will require (e.g., participation in interviews, completion of questionnaire, audio/video-recording of events), estimated time commitment and any risks involved.
☒ A statement confirming that the research has received formal approval from TREC.
☒ If the sample size is small, advice to participants that this may have implications for confidentiality / anonymity.
☒ A clear statement that where participants are in a dependent relationship with any of the researchers that participation in the research will have no impact on assessment / treatment / service-use or support.
☒ Assurance that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw consent at any time, and to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☒ Advice as to arrangements to be made to protect confidentiality of data, including that confidentiality of information provided is subject to legal limitations.
☒ A statement that the data generated in the course of the research will be retained in accordance with the University's Data Protection Policy.
☒ Advice that if participants have any concerns about the conduct of the investigator, researcher(s) or any other aspect of this research project, they should contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)
☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

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21. The following is a <u>consent form</u> checklist covering the various points that should be included in this document.

☒ Trust letterhead or logo.
☒ Title of the project (with research degree projects this need not necessarily be the title of the thesis) and names of investigators.
☒ Confirmation that the project is research.
☒ Confirmation that involvement in the project is voluntary and that participants are free to withdraw at any time, or to withdraw any unprocessed data previously supplied.
☒ Confirmation of particular requirements of participants, including for example whether interviews are to be audio-/video-recorded, whether anonymised quotes will be used in publications advice of legal limitations to data confidentiality.
☒ If the sample size is small, confirmation that this may have implications for anonymity any other relevant information.
☒ The proposed method of publication or dissemination of the research findings.
☐ Details of any external contractors or partner institutions involved in the research.
☐ Details of any funding bodies or research councils supporting the research.
☒ Confirmation on any limitations in confidentiality where disclosure of imminent harm to self and/or others may occur.

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SECTION H: CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY

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22. Below is a checklist covering key points relating to the confidentiality and anonymity of participants. Please indicate where relevant to the proposed research.

☐ Participants will be completely anonymised and their identity will not be known by the investigator or researcher(s) (i.e. the participants are part of an anonymous randomised sample and return responses with no form of personal identification)?
☐ The responses are anonymised or are an anonymised sample (i.e. a permanent process of coding has been carried out whereby direct and indirect identifiers have been removed from data and replaced by a code, with <u>no</u> record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers).
☒ The samples and data are de-identified (i.e. direct and indirect identifiers have been removed and replaced by a code. The investigator or researchers <u>are</u> able to link the code to the original identifiers and isolate the participant to whom the sample or data relates).
☐ Participants have the option of being identified in a publication that will arise from the research.
☒ Participants will be pseudo-anonymised in a publication that will arise from the research. (I.e. the researcher will endeavour to remove or alter details that would identify the participant.)
☐ The proposed research will make use of personal sensitive data.
☐ Participants consent to be identified in the study and subsequent dissemination of research findings and/or publication.

</div>

23. Participants must be made aware that the confidentiality of the information they provide is subject to legal limitations in data confidentiality (i.e. the data may be subject to a subpoena, a freedom of information request or mandated reporting by some professions). This only applies to named or de-identified data. If your participants are named or de-identified, please confirm that you will specifically state these limitations.

YES ☒   **NO** ☐

If **NO**, please indicate why this is the case below:

NOTE: WHERE THE PROPOSED RESEARCH INVOLVES A SMALL SAMPLE OR FOCUS GROUP, PARTICIPANTS SHOULD BE ADVISED THAT THERE WILL BE DISTINCT LIMITATIONS IN THE LEVEL OF ANONYMITY THEY CAN BE AFFORDED.

SECTION I: DATA ACCESS, SECURITY AND MANAGEMENT

24. Will the Researcher/Principal Investigator be responsible for the security of all data collected in connection with the proposed research? YES ☒   **NO** ☐
If **NO**, please indicate what alternative arrangements are in place below:

25. In line with the 5th principle of the Data Protection Act (1998), which states that personal data shall not be kept for longer than is necessary for that purpose or those purposes for which it was collected; please state how long data will be retained for.

☐ 1-2 years ☒ 3-5 years ☐ 6-10 years ☐ 10> years

NOTE: Research Councils UK (RCUK) guidance currently states that data should normally be preserved and accessible for 10 years, but for projects of clinical or major social, environmental or heritage importance, for 20 years or longer. (http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/documents/reviews/grc/grcpoldraft.pdf)

26. Below is a checklist which relates to the management, storage and secure destruction of data for the purposes of the proposed research. Please indicate where relevant to your proposed arrangements.

☐ Research data, codes and all identifying information to be kept in separate locked filing cabinets.
☒ Access to computer files to be available to research team by password only.
☐ Access to computer files to be available to individuals outside the research team by password only (See **23.1**).
☒ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically within the European Economic Area (EEA).
☐ Research data will be encrypted and transferred electronically outside of the European Economic Area (EEA). (See **28**).
NOTE: Transfer of research data via third party commercial file sharing services, such as Google Docs and YouSendIt are not necessarily secure or permanent. These systems may also be located overseas and not covered by UK law. If the system is located outside the European Economic Area (EEA) or territories deemed to have sufficient standards of data protection, transfer may also breach the Data Protection Act (1998).
☐ Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, e-mails or telephone numbers.
☒ Use of personal data in the form of audio or video recordings.
☒ Primary data gathered on encrypted mobile devices (i.e. laptops). **NOTE:** This should be transferred to secure UEL servers at the first opportunity.
☒ All electronic data will undergo secure disposal.
NOTE: For hard drives and magnetic storage devices (HDD or SSD), deleting files does not permanently erase the data on most systems, but only deletes the reference to the file. Files can be restored when deleted in this way. Research files must be overwritten to ensure they are completely irretrievable. Software is available for the secure erasing of files from hard drives which meet recognised standards to securely scramble sensitive data. Examples of this software are BC Wipe, Wipe File, DeleteOnClick and Eraser for Windows platforms. Mac users can use the standard 'secure empty trash' option; an alternative is Permanent eraser software.
☒ All hardcopy data will undergo secure disposal.
NOTE: For shredding research data stored in hardcopy (i.e. paper), adopting DIN 3 ensures files are cut into 2mm strips or confetti like cross-cut particles of 4x40mm. The UK government requires a minimum standard of DIN 4 for its material, which ensures cross cut particles of at least 2x15mm.

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27. Please provide details of individuals outside the research team who will be given password protected access to encrypted data for the proposed research.

N/A

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28. Please provide details on the regions and territories where research data will be electronically transferred that are external to the European Economic Area (EEA).

N/A

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29.   Will this research be financially supported by the United States Department of Health and Human   Services or any of its divisions, agencies or programs? YES ☐   NO ☒

If **YES** please provide details:

SECTION J: PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

30. How will the results of the research be reported and disseminated? *(Select all that apply)*
☒ Peer reviewed journal ☐ Non-peer reviewed journal ☐ Peer reviewed books ☐ Publication in media, social media or website (including Podcasts and online videos) ☒ Conference presentation ☐ Internal report ☐ Promotional report and materials ☐ Reports compiled for or on behalf of external organisations ☒ Dissertation/Thesis ☐ Other publication ☒ Written feedback to research participants ☐ Presentation to participants or relevant community groups ☐ Other (Please specify below)

SECTION K: OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES

31. Are there any other ethical issues that have not been addressed which you would wish to bring to the attention of Tavistock Research Ethics Committee (TREC)?
N/A

SECTION L: CHECKLIST FOR ATTACHED DOCUMENTS

32. Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.
☐ Letters of approval from any external ethical approval bodies (where relevant) ☐ Recruitment advertisement ☒ Participant information sheets (including easy-read where relevant) ☒ Consent forms (including easy-read where relevant) ☐ Assent form for children (where relevant) ☒ Evidence of any external approvals needed ☐ Questionnaire ☒ Interview Schedule or topic guide ☐ Risk Assessment (where applicable) ☐ Overseas travel approval (where applicable)

Appendix B: Participant information sheet

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Research Information Sheet

Title: A grounded theory study of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a social constructionist perspective.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Fiona Blyth. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist (EP) in my second year of studying for a Doctorate in Child, Community and Educational Psychology. I am carrying out this research as part of my training.

What is the aim of the research?

This research aims to explore 'successful' Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 (KS4) Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this. This will be from the perspective of EPs and commissioners of EP work in these settings (e.g. Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs) or senior leadership team members).

Who has given permission for this research?

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust has given ethical approval to carry out this research.

Who can take part in this research?

I am looking for Local Authority EPs who are currently working within a Key Stage Four (KS4) PRU and KS4 PRU staff who are involved in commissioning EP work. To participate, an EP and a commissioner working in the same setting must be willing to take part in a joint interview to discuss successful EP practice. All participants who volunteer jointly after reading this sheet and completing a consent form, will be given the opportunity to take part.

What does participation involve?

If you agree to take part, both you and the relevant EP/commissioner will be invited to take part in a joint interview online via video conferencing platform Zoom. This is to account for the recent outbreak of Covid-19, ensuring we are avoiding all non-essential travel and contact and observing social distancing measures. The interview will last approximately one hour and will involve open ended questions to explore your perspectives on successful EP practice in KS4 PRUs. Before your interview you will be asked to complete a brief form with a few questions relating to the context you work in and your role.

I will make video and audio recordings of the interview which will be stored securely and transcribed for analysis. Videos will be deleted once the research is completed and written up. During data analysis I will be coding and comparing data from several interviews and settings, as well as writing memos with my own reflections. This will inform the theory building process of the research. After I have completed my analysis, I will offer the opportunity for you to see a written summary of the theory/model created and seek your comments. This will be a chance for you to feedback on the model and reflect on its possible use in practice.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Whilst there is a large body of research looking at what can help school exclusion, and some research specifically looking at 'good practice' in PRUs - especially from the perspective of young people and staff - very little research has looked at EP practice in these provisions, and how EPs can be used most successfully. This is particularly relevant for KS4, given the high levels of school exclusion in this age group and the poor life outcomes associated with this cohort as they transition to adulthood.

Therefore, there is a benefit to both PRU staff and EPs in exploring successful practice and creating a framework which can be used to facilitate this. There may also be personal benefits in having time to reflect on your own practice, and your joint working relationship, which may enhance future working.

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**

NHS Foundation Trust

What are the possible risks of taking part?

Work in PRUs can be highly emotive and complex. This interview may therefore lead you to think and talk about experiences that are distressing or frustrating. However, by taking a strengths-based approach this research aims to help you focus on what is working and gives you freedom over how much of the difficulties you choose to share. Additionally, as it is a joint interview, there is a possibility that any challenges present in your working relationship may arise. However, again taking a strengths-based approach, it is hoped the interview will allow opportunity to reflect on and reframe these challenges and consider 'next steps'. There will also be options to access a joint debrief and/or an individual debrief if this is required. Signposting to further relevant support will also be offered if necessary.

This research will take place within provisions across several London Boroughs. The work is not commissioned by any one borough or EP service and will not be used to evaluate the success of your individual service or provision. However, things shared by participants in the joint interview may be used by either participant to reflect on and impact future working practices, after the interview is finished. This is at the discretion of participants and not within my control as the researcher.

What will happen to the findings from the research?

The findings will be typed up as part of my thesis which will be read by examiners and be available at the Tavistock and Portman library. I may also publish the research at a later date, in a peer reviewed journal and/or present it at a conference. You will have the option to read a summary of my findings or the full thesis once the analysis has been completed.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with this research?

Participation in this research is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time before analysis, without giving a reason. Analysis point is typically a couple of weeks after interview – data at this point might not be possible to remove as it has been anonymised.

Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. All records related to your participation in this research study will be handled and stored securely on an encrypted drive using password protection. Your identity on these records will be indicated by a pseudonym rather than by your name. The data will be kept for a minimum of 3-5 years. Data collected during the study will be stored and used in compliance with the UK Data Protection Act (2018), General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's Data Protection Policy. A confidentiality agreement will also be made between participants at the beginning of the interview.

Are there times when my data cannot be kept confidential?

Confidentiality is subject to legal limitations or if a disclosure is made that suggests that imminent harm to self and/or others may occur. The small sample size (minimum 6-8 participants) may also mean that you recognise some examples and experiences you have shared in interviews. However, to protect your identity, pseudonyms will be used and any identifiable details changed.

Further information and contact details

If you have any questions about any aspect of the research, please contact me:
Fiona Blyth
Email: fblyth@tavi-port.nhs.uk

If you have any concerns about the research then you can contact Simon Carrington, Head of Academic Governance and Quality Assurance who works for the Tavistock and Portman research department. His contact details are: Email: (academicquality@tavi-port.nhs.uk)

Appendix C: Participant consent form (anonymised example completed electronically)

The Tavistock and Portman **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Research Title: A grounded theory study of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a social constructionist perspective.

Please initial the statements below if you agree with them:	Initial here:
I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the chance to ask questions.	
I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and I am free at any time to withdraw consent or any unprocessed data without giving a reason.	
I agree for my interviews to be audio and video recorded.	
I understand that my data will be anonymised so that I cannot be linked to the data. I understand that the sample size is small.	
I understand that by taking part in a joint interview both participants are jointly responsible for upholding the confidentiality wishes of the other. I understand that this will be agreed during the interview.	
I understand that there are limitations to confidentiality relating to legal duties and threat of harm to self or others.	
I understand that by sharing my contributions with my colleague in a joint interview, that future practice may be impacted. I understand that this is beyond the control of the researcher.	
I understand that my interviews will be used for this research and cannot be accessed for any other purposes.	
I understand that the findings from this research will be published in a thesis and potentially in a presentation or peer reviewed journal.	
I am willing to participate in this research.	

Your name:

Signed   Date 30/06/2020

Researcher name: Fiona Blyth

Thank you for your help.

Appendix D: Interview introductory script and schedule

I stuck to the initial introductory script as closely as possible in each interview. Prompts under each theme were used as more of a guide as appropriate.

Interview Script and Schedule

Research Title: A grounded theory study of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a social constructionist perspective.

Introductory Script:

Test audio and video quality with all participants

My name is Fiona. I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist with an interest in working with children at risk of or already excluded. As you know I am particularly interested in the EP role in Pupil Referral Units and am very grateful that you've taken the time to talk to me about this today. I am just going to run through a few key points before we begin recording the interview.

Covid/video recording

Due to the unusual context that we find ourselves in – the recent outbreak of Covid-19 – we're speaking via video call. This is due to government guidance to avoid all non-essential travel and contact. I am aware that this might feel a little different to a normal interview, depending on how much you are used to using these platforms, but I hope you can feel at ease and are able to treat it as a normal chat.

I ask you to bear in mind that, as with all technology, there might be some teething problems such as sound or video not working properly, or connection issues. As a result, it can be easy to interpret someone as 'interrupting' or speaking loudly or 'rudely'. I ask that you bear in mind that communication can look a little different on these platforms and give everyone the benefit of the doubt if it seems this is happening.

I am also aware that the current context of Covid-19 is likely impacting the type of work you are currently doing together. While I am keen to hear about this, I am also interested in previous successful EP work in your PRU and what work looked like before the outbreak.

Consent for recording

You have all read the information sheet and signed the consent form. Before we begin, can I check again then that you are happy for me to begin recording? You will receive a notification in a moment on Zoom which you need to accept. This video will be recorded and stored on my encrypted laptop and will not be accessible to anyone else.

Support post-interview

This interview will likely last between 60-90 mins. After the interview is finished and we have stopped recording, I will facilitate a debrief conversation, for either both/all of you or separately if necessary.

If anything does come up that is difficult, there are a number of places you can go to for support:

- Your own line manager or supervisor
- Debrief with me: I will also stay online for an hour after the interview and if you like, you can email me and arrange to have a further conversation about any issues that arise.
- Other services which we can discuss as necessary.

Confidentiality agreement

As outlined in the consent form, this a confidential space, however, that also means that you must rely on each other to keep what is shared confidential. I ask that if you talk about any specific cases that you don't use a child's name, but rather their initials. I will ensure any identifiable data is anonymised upon transcription.

There are limits to confidentiality, if a safeguarding issue arises, or if something is raised that means there is risk of harm to yourself or others, we will agree next steps together depending on the circumstance in question.

Challenges in the interview

While this interview is strengths based, some challenges/difficult topics might arise and be discussed. You have both acknowledged that this might be the case by completing the consent form. I will aim to facilitate a space at the end of the interview to think about reflections and next steps, and there will still be the debrief option as well.

If you have any further questions, please do ask.

Before we begin, do you have any questions?'

start recording

Theme 1: What is the hope for the EP role in this provision?

Possible prompts:

- Why commission an EP? Unique contribution?
- What does success look like for this cohort in this setting?
- Common aims of involving an EP and what you hope to achieve?
- Common work delivered/commissioned.

Theme 2: Experiences of 'successful' EP practice in a KS4 PRU setting

Possible prompts:

- Why was the EP involved? What did you want to see change?
- What happened? What sort of work was done?
- What helped/was most impactful?
- How did you know it was successful? What change did you see?
- Who else was involved?

Theme 3: What challenges did you have to overcome to lead to success? How did you do this?

Prompts:

- What got in the way of the success?
- What helped in overcoming the barriers?
- Who else was involved?

Closing prompts:

- Summarising key points
- How have you found today? Any reflections on the process? What are you taking away from today?
- What will your next steps be? Anything new to consider, changes you will make, actions etc.
- Any final comments

Thank you so much for taking part – I really appreciate it. I will now turn off the recording, and we will have a chance to debrief together, or individually depending on what you would prefer. I will be available on email for the next hour, if you would like to email me to arrange an individual chat.

Appendix E: Excerpt from Interview 1 transcript, with paragraph numbers and open codes[4]

Open codes (left margin):

- ..Reframing 'smart'
- ..Attempts to see positives in mainstream p
- ..Frustration at mainstream
- ..Sense of schools 'washing their han
- ..Shifting the narrative
- ..Misunderstanding challenging behaviour
- ..Mainstream misunderstanding EP role
- ..Acknowledging complexity of CYP at PRUs
- ..CYP attended multiple settings previously
- ..Person-centred practice
- ..Gathering CYP voice
- ..Unrecognised need
- ..Using solution-focussed practice
- ..CYP disheartened and disengaged
- ..Challenging experience for CYP
- ..Focus on re-engagement in learning
- ..Meeting emotional needs - building up CYP
- ..Frustrated by the system
- ..Feels system is damaging CYP
- ..Focuses on moment of hope and succ
- ..Supporting reintegration
- ..Focuses on moment of hope and succ
- ..Team approach leads to success
- ..Working together as a team
- ..Acknowledging complexity of CYP at P
- ..Social care involvement
- ..Balancing team roles
- ..CYP decision and motivation to change importan
- ..CYP invested in/reflecting on future outcomes
- ..CYP readiness to engage with support
- ..Never giving up on a CYP
- ..CYP learning to trust team around then
- ..EP seen as part of team
- ..More than an assessment and report
- ..EP investment in CYPs success
- ..EP work not time bound - ongoing
- ..Importance of EP/SENCo relationship
- ..Importance of trust
- ..EP seen as part of team
- ..Positive adult relationships impact CYP
- ..Importance of EP/SENCo relationship
- ..Importance of EP/SENCo relationship
- ..EP not driven by commissioned time/tasks
- ..Working well together
- ..Humour in relationship
- ..EP holistic team involvement - beyond individual
- ..Starting with parent involvement
- ..Including CYP at start of EP work
- ..Importance of building parental trust
- ..Importance of understanding family history

most of us… there are some areas of like where she's probably needs a little more support, and in terms of like her learning skills… like all of us… and other areas of real strength um…but the behaviour was what was being seen. Umm although I have to say that this school did also want to unpick whether there was any learning needs… and they did prioritise … well they didn't prioritise her… they got me involved just before she was about to be kicked out but yeah… I think schools just see the behaviour, and they see the EP as role as being narrower than what I think it is…umm so yeah, I think with these young people, they are often quite complex… they are complex young people usually… and I think there is a lot to unpick with… especially when they've been in multiple different schools and thinking with the young people themselves about you know… what's what's gone wrong, or what's been difficult for them, that maybe hasn't been recognised and then also those things that have been better, and what helps them. And sometimes by the point they get to the PRU, they're quite often so… disheartened I guess and disengaged from education, because its been a really difficult experience for them, so then trying to then think about that engagement and reengagement…

35 Natalie: you have to build them up again don't you… when they've been broken by the system

36 Laura: yeah… exactly. And then when you get those successes like Natalie we had yesterday for a young man… who's… Fiona he's been

37 Natalie: yeah I was just telling her about it before you came

38 Laura: yeah, he's been given a chance for reintegration into a mainstream school which you know having been out of a mainstream school for…

39 Natalie: over two years

40 Laura: yeah, and us thinking that even a few months ago that this probably wasn't possible… it's… those successes are huge when they happen aren't they, they just… they're really something to celebrate

41 Fiona: what do you think has helped that success and him getting to this point… what do you think… yeah…

42 Natalie: what could have helped, or what did help?

43 Fiona: what has helped… what do you think has impacted him being able to reintegrate

44 Natalie: I think it's the team approach isn't it, like he's got a really strong team around him, he's on a child protection plan so you know there's a significant number of people involved but everybody's got their own part to play, and I think we've just got the balance right… he had an experience umm kind of at the start of this year that gave him a bit of a fright, so I think that probably helped him be able to say, ok do I really want to go this way, or do I got the other way and he was able to then start hearing some of the people who had been trying to support him. But I think the fact that nobody gave up… because one of the things that he said was you know 'I was starting to think I wasn't worth it that nobody thought I was worth making an effort for'… but nobody gave up on him, and I think he's kind of felt that rather than seen it, he's actually feeling it now and he feels like he's got a team, and the EP plays such a huge part in that. Umm you know, its not about getting Laura in to do the assessment, write a report and then saying ok thanks see you later this is the next child. You know, she was the second person that I rang yesterday apart from his keyworker to tell her that we had a successful meeting, I didn't wait til the email, I rang her from my car do you know what I mean, because I just knew that she was as invested as any of the rest of us, even if she doesn't come to all the core group meetings or anything like that. Um… you know just because that piece of work has been done, doesn't mean that work stops, and I think that's where we're really lucky umm with our particular EPs, because you know a lot of that is dependent on the person as well, and the relationship that we're able to have with them. I think our relationship with our EPs then helps our kids, because this young person I've known for a very long time, and if I introduce people to him and almost give my approval, then that takes him less time to trust people so you know… if I sort of say you know… look Laura's really good I think you'll really like her, that sort of takes away a barrier already because he doesn't have to work that out for himself he can say well actually Natalie said she's alright, so yeah, I'll meet her, that's cool. And you don't have that battle to even get him through the door… I think those relationships are the most important thing, between schools and you know the link person, which is usually the SENCOs you know, and the EP. I think that's probably what sets it on the right track because if you didn't have a good relationship with your EP, your EP was a tick box EP that just sort of came in, did the work and then was like well that's my commissioned time or that's my you know you've paid for thirty seven and a half minutes and actually that's thirty seven and a half minutes see you later… we never get that sense from our EPs and in fact they're good to us in terms of you know making sure we've got what we need from them I'm not sure… it's not a very two way street I don't think (Laughs, Laura laughs)… we get a lot more out of it than they do…

45 Fiona: I'm sure Laura might disagree with that maybe, I don't know (laughs). Yeah… I guess I'm interested… because I mean, that's a really amazing case to hear about and I suppose thinking about Laura's involvement you've talked about how it wasn't just doing some individual casework with him, it's maybe her holistic involvement in the team maybe… I don't know… so Laura, or Natalie or Louise what did Laura's involvement look like in that case in particular, what did she do as the EP, um for this young person?

46 Natalie: Um… initially it was having a meeting with Mum… did we meet with Mum by herself (to Laura) or was it Mum and him? I think it was all of them wasn't it…

47 Laura: He came in at the end I think for a little bit, but it was mainly with Mum.

48 Natalie: So initially… its kind of having that trust with the parent as well, because obviously they need to be very involved in this and if you don't get that initial trust you don't get the back story that gives you so much information before you've even met the

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[4] All initials/names used in interviews to represent CYP have been changed to protect anonymity

young person, you know the history of what has happened and where they've been, and you know in this particular case the traumatic events that have happened throughout this young person's entire life on and off umm… it helps give an overview and understanding and I think um… you know Laura's particular way with people is really warm and welcoming so parents are very quickly umm able to feel comfortable, and they share a lot. You know, she's one of us, and that's how we introduce our EPs as you know they're kind of one of us at our school so um I think that's always our first thing is to meet with the parent and make sure that trust is there, and then depending on the young person and their situation and how they're feeling, and kind of what's happened so far, they might join us from the very start of that meeting or they might just come in and kind of say hi. And obviously get their permission to do some work which you know very rarely do we have them say no to that, and then Laura will usually do an observation first, sometimes, depending on what what we want the result, what we need out of it, we might meet with the parent and not tell the young person so that we can do an observation where they can't kind of skew the results, umm but mostly I think at the PRU, we kind of… the kids are aware and they know umm… then we kind of get back together and decide whether there needs to be some 1-1 work, you know assessments, what those might look like, what is it that we want help and support with, what do we know already, then that 1-1 work happens umm, then Laura will put together her report, and then its shared in various ways, some parents want to come in and have another meeting, and we all sit down and talk about it together, some parents umm don't really care and we spend 6 months trying to get them to agree that the report is accurate and we can finalise it, some parents just want it, you know I've dropped them off personally through the door, we've emailed them, so we're really kind of, we're lead by the families aren't we, would you both agree with that (both nod)? Its nearly always true that you're kind of checking in and saying this is what's happening, this is what might happen next, would you prefer this way, or this way, would you like Laura to contact you directly, I'm happy you know you can come in and sit down and go over the report with me, we could do it… you don't have to come and talk about it, you can just let us know if you're happy with it. So yeah, I think it's just checking in, and then once we've got the report that's when the real kind of decisions need to be made about the outcome, you know the reports are really thorough, and really useful for me as a SENCo because then the next step might be to apply for an EHCP or it might be to you know sharing that with staff as the kind of an outcome, we're saying you know these are the recommendations, we don't feel that there's an EHCP needed but these are the recommendations so we need to share that with staff, which might lead to some staff training um around um various aspects of support. Sometimes its getting that report so we can then approach a school for reintegration which at a PRU is our main, that's our main goal is to get kids back into mainstream, or if not mainstream the right provision umm… yeah… and then it's just kind of (inaudible) and it doesn't like we said about the young person yesterday… it doesn't end there because that process with him ended months and months ago didn't it Laura and you still kind of checking in, when Laura comes in to work with someone else she'll check in with that child or ask me about him, and he's not the only one, that's for all of the young people so its just of like a rolling check in process I think once that stage yeah… have I missed anything?

49 Laura: I think what you said about parents… yeah… is really… yeah I was sort of just reflecting on that thinking um yeah that trust is so important because quite often parents, well and young people are quite wary I think of umm… they might have had lots of professionals involved before and might have had some negative experiences so I think the position… that initial meeting and how my work is positioned is really important and I think Natalie and Louise do a really good job of kind of always introducing me umm and kind of that basically we're here to try and support their child and I think parents quite quickly… quite often will see that um… it's not always necessarily straight forward but I think I mean Louise I'm thinking particularly of CD and his Mum who is you know, Louise has known the family for years and Mum's always been really tricky to kind of engage at points and has a lot of you know her own stuff going on umm which I think important to recognise. I think she is quite often will… is doing the best that she can at that time umm yeah… they're a very complex family. But working with them, I think I was probably involved for about 18 months and I think she did trust me umm sort of over that time, which was you know a big thing I think… and my involvement was that kind of being that support for Mum as well I think um… and kind of her knowing that she had other professionals who necessarily just against her, so the PRU, and the team were really trying to work to get the best outcome for her child, and even though she couldn't always see that at the time, because it felt quite threatening for her, I do think that we got to a good place with her… umm and…

50 Louise: I… I agree Laura, I think if you look at that one case in particular when we initially started working with that family, it was difficult to know whether Mum would actually initially show up to those meetings and also you know how she would engage during those meetings because often they were quite emotional and didn't always go to plan umm but I think we did get to that stage over time where that trust was built and eventually she had that trust, and that helped immensely because it meant we were able to progress and actually move that young person on to a provision that he needed to be in…

51 Laura: and I think she felt… (interrupting)
52 Lousie: and I think Mum did feel supported, I think she had managed to get to that stage
53 Laura: yeah, I think we'd listened to her, and I think she'd felt… and Fiona I was also involved with her other child at a different school as well at the same time…
54 Fiona: okay… oh wow (smiles)
55 Laura: so two of her children I was working with both of them, and with the other school

4/10

Appendix F: Examples of memos in MaxQDA

Note the inclusion of my own reflections, highlighting where they were influenced by other situations/conversations outside the interviews themselves. This was for transparency, to aid the analysis process and support checks for validity and reliability, by acknowledging my own constructions and experiences. Examples of all memos can be found in the link in Appendix E.

Appendix G: Screenshots of finalised categories and prevalence across interviews

Code System		2131
Positive 'parental' relationship – collaborative and open		167
Shared core values, goals, approach and language		209
Relationships and communication across the 'family'		530
Nurturing the wider environment - systemic focus		133
Internal working model - rebuilding trust and expectations		102
Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency		177
Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development		192
Acknowledging and containing difficulty		100
Flexible, responsive to needs and going above and byond		110
Seeing the best in the children		105
Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures		124
Impacted by resources, external pressures & 'parental' support		182
Sets		0

Appendix H: Category 1 - additional evidence

Working well together

In interview 1, the SENCos reflected on the quality of their working relationship with the 2 EPs:

> Natalie: I think that between the four of us, and I'm including Emily in this even though she's not here, I do think we kind of bounce off each other really well and work really well together, and we don't need to… I've just realised that we never sit down before a meeting and plan an attack do we… attacks probably the wrong word (laughter), but you know what I mean. We don't kind of… as I'm talking that's just dawned on me... I never feel like we need to have a pre meeting. You might kind of have a chat at our planning meetings about young people we've got coming through, but I don't… I think we kind of bounce off each other so well in meetings that we don't really need to prepare who's going to say what or how we're going to approach it because we all just seem to gel… and its… you know… I think really what's just coming out of this whole conversation today is just how important your relationships with everybody in the process are and about getting the right person… just being able to really trust that everybody's kind of got that same shared vision, and we don't ever really talk about that do we as a group, I don't think not specifically but our planning meetings are probably quite key as well aren't they…

> Louise: and those end of year meetings that we do as well. And I mean something that I always struggle with, and I'm more than happy to say, is when we get to that stage where it's you know, what could we do to improve… I often struggle with that, because I think we all work so well together and actually we accomplish everything that we've attempted to do for the young people that we work with. So, I often struggle to think,

how could we better you know use Laura and Emily because I think they're absolutely

outstanding with the work that they do with us… so, that's the reason that I often don't

have much to say it's because I'm unable to think of what we could do to improve…

(1, 62-63)

Recognising each other's positive qualities and skills

In Interview 3, the EP noted the SENCos positive involvement in some person-centred planning: "Angela was really skilful in… picking a brilliant young man to be our first … trial" (16) and also commented on her "sensitive" listening skills (20). Participants often praised each other's positive relational skills, such as when the SENCO in interview 1 complimented the EP: "you know Laura's particular way with people is really warm and welcoming, so parents are very quickly… able to feel comfortable, and they share a lot" (1, 48). She later described the EPs as "marvellous" (68).

Reflecting on previous relationships – learning from experience

The importance of the 'right' EP-commissioner relationship was clear in one SENCos reflection where she had had a positive relationship with her previous EP: "I was really nervous when I came to the PRU having worked with my previous EP for nine years, I was really nervous about new EPs" (1, 60).

Close and valued relationship

The SENCo in interview 3 highlighted the important process of relationship building between EP and commissioner: "Caroline is getting to know us, she's getting to know our students, the provision, we are getting to know each other" (3, 3).

Honest, curious, open and reflective

Highlighting the importance of receiving feedback from each other and improving practice, participants in interview 3 felt that in a consistent relationship "there's more possibility of looking at those things and thinking it through" (3, 3).

Informal

Participants often joked about their work together:

> Luke: I really liked your idea of writing some of the key messages and strengths on postcards and sending them to him
>
> Claire: he's going to get about 10!! (laughing)
>
> Luke: Yeah, great – he's going to be like wow all my friends have been on holiday, oh no wait (laughing). (2, 56-58)

Appendix I: Category 2 - additional evidence

Conceptualising 'needs', SEND and EHCPs

Participants expressed frustration at how needs are often misunderstood at mainstream: 'I contacted the school and said, "has this young person seen your EP?' and they said, 'well no because he doesn't have any needs" (1, 27). Such examples highlighted previous lack of action towards securing an EHCP for these CYP and the importance of using their EP time to do this: "you know the reports are really thorough, and really useful for me as a SENCo because then the next step might be to apply for an EHCP" (1, 48). This need still appeared to be there as late as KS4:

> you might think that it's not the same in terms of EP involvement, but you know what's one of, or two of my jobs before the end of next week Laura, it's to get in two EHCNAs for year 11s who are leaving us. (1, 89)

In interview 2, participants discussed the difficulties balancing important statutory work, with other more organisational work (86), and the SENCo also referenced the backlog of EHCP referrals (15) due to the high level of need, and previous difficulties in the system.

Participants also discussed how needs are conceptualised at the PRU, highlighting the fact that all CYP attending have additional needs: "they might not have specific needs, but they absolutely have needs that are higher up the scale than mainstream otherwise they wouldn't be here in the first place (3, 67). The SENCo in interview 2 highlighted the importance of an EP involvement for all CYP to better understand their strengths and needs: "that kind of gave me the idea that there are a couple of young people who we don't plan to do EHCP referrals for but still think they could benefit from that kind of process" (59). In interview 3, where the working relationship was fairly new, the SENCo was keen to move towards being a "SEND friendly school" (3) and to normalise needs (75).

However, for some participants, thinking about CYP and their needs differently meant taking a very different stance towards EHCPs and how they used their EPs:

> my big thing at the moment is that do we need to be sending children down the route of an EHCP because I think for children within PRUs they end up being channelled into a route that they can't always then get out of, and then therefore are we limiting their kind of life chances… I think we really have to think about, has everything really been exhausted before we go down… is there additional support contracts that we could use to actually get them the support, and get them back into a suitable provision, I think especially in PRUs... when children come into a PRU, I think it's almost like, right well they can't go back to mainstream, they need to go to specialist, but that mainstream they've come from may not have been right for them. (5, 20)

This SENCo reflected on how to involve EPs in a different way, rather than conducting full assessments, instead using 'SENCo surgeries' and joined-up approaches with staff (5, 49). They had moved to this model of working in the last year, and the EP and SENCo agreed this was more impactful in understanding and supporting students' needs.

The EP in interview 4, did not engaged in much statutory assessment work at the PRU - with most CYP at the PRU dual registered with the mainstream schools, the EPs from these settings were responsible for conducting statutory assessments. This occurred mainly "when we get students referred to us, who are undergoing statutory assessment, and things have kind of broken down at their school" (4, 44). Very few EHCP assessments begun once CYP have started at the PRU, and particularly by KS4, "they've either got an EHCP because we do… have some named placements, or… that's not appropriate' (4, 44). How 'needs' and EHCPs were conceptualised was different at each setting, depending on contexts and processes in each borough. With a number of named EHCP placements the headteacher reported "huge demand" for these from schools (4, 47), perhaps accounting for EHCP processes being kick started earlier for these children compared to other boroughs.

Shared professional values/ethos

The EP in interview 5, told the SENCO that "you had your vision, your goals aligned with mine and the other EPs" (23). During interview 2, the SENCo asked what EPs felt about practice in mainstream around exclusions. Asking these questions was a clear example of exploring shared values early on in a relationship. She reflected:

> I feel like there's common values with people who are working with young people
>
> who've been excluded from school and see the negative impact of that, and how much
>
> injustice they've faced in their lives, in school and wider society… I feel like it matches

very well with then the kind of work that you're doing which is highlighting that and looking at solutions and not blaming the child. (2, 45)

Ensuring EPs are aligned with PRU values was also evident in how the headteacher in interview 4 reflected on her more established working relationship with the EP:

it's also about the needs of the organisation to have somebody who… really understands the context, because I'm sure you know there's great EPs in your team, who… have you know great levels of skill and knowledge and understanding, but actually it would take quite a long time for them to really get to know and understand how we work and our ethos, so for us it just works very well that… we have worked together for so long that we know you understand us. (22)

Similarly, when asked to reflect on what they had taken away from the conversation, participants in interview 3 explicitly noted the importance of shared values and that because of them: "I think we can probably work together really well, and I think we can build on what we've done so far" (92-94).

Such approaches in interviews were evidently linked to a passion for justice, and better lives and outcomes for CYP. In interview 1, one of the SENCos, highlighted how foundational a shared passion and ethos was:

I would find it really difficult to work with anybody you know, another SENCo, an EP, who isn't child centred… if I felt that our EPs weren't giving us what we needed, so that we could give the children what they needed, I would have no hesitation in going to the psychology service and saying… I'd like to talk about perhaps you know mixing it up a little bit, that's how important I think it is that just being able to really trust that everybody's kind of got that same shared vision. (1, 62)

Upon reflection at the end of the interview this SENCo also reflected on how vital it was for social workers to listen to the conversation they had just had because, "I don't think they get it, not all of them… I mean we've got some brilliant social workers who… would be saying exactly the same things and that's the cases that work you know" (1, 100).

The SENCo in interview 5 also highlighted the power and impact of stopping and thinking about the reasons behind the work, its purpose and its vision, in order to maintain motivation:

> on a personal note, this has probably come at the right time… I think a lot of frustration… had really really built up… doing this [interview] has allowed me to reflect that actually I am trying, I am doing the right things, we're working together umm this is what I actually really want to achieve… it's probably actually helped sort of bring my term to an end because it has been very very very challenging. (5, 122).

Perspectives on academic attainment, ability and success

Success was seen as more than just GCSE outcomes:

> I think the focus was very much on… outcomes, the GCSE outcomes, whether they're hitting 4 and above… whether their behaviour was hitting the threshold of dangerous or not, and it wasn't sufficiently about them, their lives and their perspective, and I think that needs to change… it's going back to that child-centred person-centred, who is this for umm is it for us, you know Ofsted and it looks good and we've got the map and the outcomes, and the grades… or is it about that child's life and what they do after us. (3, 79).

Participants also highlighted the need to move away from seeing ability as fixed or set. The EP in interview 1, showed an example of reframing the word 'smart' or 'able' based on some cognitive assessment results: "like with probably most of us… there are some areas… where

she's probably needs a little more support, and in terms of like her learning skills… like all of us… and other areas of real strength" (1, 34). This idea links closely to attitudes discussed in interview 3, where the SENCO highlighted that all children and adults have strengths and areas of need, and that we all need support to know and understand these more, and to normalise this process.

Similarly, in interview 2, the EP and SENCO engaged in a discussion about the limiting role of standardised assessments, and the potential for a broader, more holistic understanding that can be gained from dynamic assessment. It was clear in this discussion that the SENCo and EPs shared a joint perspective on how they understood and viewed ideas of 'ability' and 'success'. These values were articulated by the SENCo when discussing the idea of streaming:

> I have difficulty… around the issue of streaming and class allocations and the kind of I guess labelling of some children as 'oh this child is bright they need to do this!' and I feel like either everyone is bright or no one is bright, let's just call everyone bright (laughs) because it's really, because there's then quite fixed mindsets about… some young people are seen as 'oh you should be doing this, so this is your focus' and other people 'oh you don't have a hope of getting your GCSE's so this is what you…' whereas I feel like we need to be looking at all the children holistically and not labelling them, or putting them into classes… through the previous induction system you'd have someone doing their tests, and then they're labelled as 'low attaining' in English and Maths so they're put in the class that has a big alternative curriculum, and they're experience of that is 'this is completely different from what I was doing at school… this isn't a school… am I going to achieve anything here, what am I doing here, what's the point'… whereas other people come and they do their testing and they're told 'oh this person is bright, this person is going to… needs to go into the academic class' but actually that's the reason why they were struggling… they don't want to do that, they

want to do other things, so I feel like it should be based on student interest, like these are the things we can offer you, what would you like to work on while you're here with us. (2, 68-70)

Discussions in interview 4 also highlighted the importance of giving CYP a more positive experience of education, and participants highlighted the positive outcomes for Year 11 that they see in their setting: "in Key stage 4… in about 99% of cases, once they come to us, they settle and then they decide that they actually you know are having more success and experiencing education in a more positive way" (4, 47). However, while this holistic approach was discussed, the headteacher also noted her focus on academic achievement: "we have a really broad curriculum here, we've got about 20 GCSE subjects… being able to offer a really flexible curriculum is really key to what we do" (4, 49).

This focus on GCSE outcomes, came out more strongly than in other interviews, where there was an acknowledgement that positive outcomes in this area was difficult. The EP in this interview 4 had previously conducted some research around post-16 outcomes in this provision and found:

> 95% or something… were going onto further education or training so that's one of the reasons I wanted to find out what is it that the PRU are doing that is so different to other PRU's in terms of supporting them to think about post-16 options… a lot of the stuff that came out of that was what Amy's already said in terms of the relational stuff, it was kind of the rapport building and all that kind of stuff, and the members of staff who knew the local area, and understood the needs of the children, and who were able to actually go with the young people to interviews or to you know to their work placements at the beginning, and you know keep in touch… it felt very different, and looked very different on paper as well, to your average PRU, and I think that actually links as well to… the number of GCSE's that students were coming out with and are coming out

with… there was so many more sort of A-C's than any other PRU that… that seemed to be in research. (4, 50)

In each interview I asked what participants thought 'success looked like' for these young people, and answers and conversations showed the importance of having a shared holistic perspective on such 'success', beyond simply academic achievement. All participants were at different stages in their relationship, but each showed the importance of the EP understanding and being bought into the PRUs vision and perspective on this.

PRU as a different approach

The SENCO in interview 2 noted the difference in access to an EP: "having been relatively recently moved from working in mainstream schools to working at the PRU, … I always think about the big contrast because I don't think I'd met an educational psychologist before working at the PRU although they would have been involved somehow in the background with our very stripped bare SEN department" (5). The EP in interview 4 reflected on the difference in the type of work delivered: "we do do a lot of training… lots of kind of reflective spaces… which is very different to work I might do in a mainstream school" (6).

Appendix J: Category 3 - additional evidence

Fostering staff engagement, trust and respect

Participants across interviews seemed keen to work collaboratively and in a joint, consultative way with staff:

> thinking about what do we know about this young person, what can work, how we can apply it and how can we evaluate it as well to see what's working and what's not. You know I really want to work alongside collaboratively and support agency as much as I can, not talk at them, but talk with them. (3, 87)

after a consultation or an assessment is done, what do we do with that information, so thinking about how those systems fit into any work that the EP or any professionals might do, making sure that's not just kind of just lost… but actually trying to be conveyed in a meaningful way to staff while acknowledging that it's hard to take a piece of work and share it with everyone meaningfully… at least that system of pupil focus meetings means that those with the perhaps highest level of need, for staff to know about those issues can explore them and hear about some of that work that's been done in the background. (2, 21)

There were also discussions in interview 2 about surveying staff (26), and feeding back changes made as a result, to try and build trust and engagement:

then fed back the changes that we were going to make to the system and said that was based on the feedback that staff had given so I think that was quite an empowering thing and perhaps shifted… the narrative in the staff room… about how much views are being taken on board and being used to kind of make changes of how the systems work. (2, 26).

Participants in interviews 3 and 4 also spoke about the importance of gaining feedback from staff and trying new ways of working with the EP: "I would hope to see more of what we've started and then to see what the staff say about that" (3, 75). Examples showed a desire to empower staff, help them feel heard and included. Participants also showed awareness of the expertise within the staff in PRU settings, and desire to harness this:

I think with the EP, the way we used to use you, you were coming in and you were doing an assessments and you were like, and… you were sort of yeah the experts, so we've exhausted everything now let's get the experts in kind of approach, and actually there is loads of expertise within our staff team… and actually now I'm doing the

SENCO role I'm actually seeing that more and more and more and I'm like, well where have you been hiding because you know you've got so many ideas that we could actually take forward and use. (5, 20)

The EP in this setting described the shift towards more collaborative consultations "what came out from the sessions is actually is them recognising that they had the skills, and feeling a bit more confident in them, and learning from each other in that" (5, 44).

Participants recognised and validated the pressurised environment for staff "where often people are in kind of firefighting mode, dealing with behaviour, dealing with challenging situations" (2, 27) and praised staff for "responding brilliantly" to new ways of working with the EP (3, 16). The EP in interview 3 expressed a key desire to "build relationships with the staff and facilitate working together and understanding the young people's needs" (3, 73) describing such work as "a bit like mirroring the process with the young person, in terms of restoring agency to the staff" (3, 85). Joint staff consultations were consistently reviewed positively as "a really kind of shared space… for them to connect with each other, but also for them to share… it's quite strengths focussed, but the sessions were quite positive weren't they (5, 12-13). Part of the success of these sessions, was around changing staff perceptions, which took time:

initially there was a little bit of resistance from some staff because essentially we were asking people to talk about their feelings and experiences and not everyone's comfortable with that, let alone on zoom, with people that they might not necessarily have day to day interaction with on more a personal level… so for some staff, they did find it difficult, but actually we've continued doing similar kind of sessions, but now face to face and actually the staff that were more reticent at the beginning are actually quite vocal now in those meetings. (5, 12-13)

With a move to this more collaborative working, participants also reported that staff were more engaged, and spoke about the work afterwards in more of a meaningful way (3, 14).

The SENCO reflected, "it also gave them that sense of that they have something to say which naturally they do… I think it made a difference that they were part of it, it was like 'ok I'm here too'… it gave that sense of inclusion, to the family and to the staff as well which is often missing" (3, 19). Participants in interview 4 reflected on the importance of engaging staff in this collaborative way, which acknowledges the value and knowledge that staff bring:

> I think it's absolutely crucial for this role to be effective, that people… really respect the person, because as Steve said the teachers are really experienced, have been doing it a long time so somebody coming in to 'give them advice', though we don't phrase it like that, that person has to have credibility, and Steve definitely does have that, and it's also something about the person's manner and being empathetic, I think is really really important. (4, 22)

Ensuring humility in the role, by harnessing such staff expertise was also felt to be vital for ensuring successful work:

> it's really humbling to be brought in, in that sort of way, and acknowledged that there might be some skills that I have that might support that, but also acknowledging that the staff are so incredibly knowledgeable and helpful in that way as well, they're going to be bringing so much to the table as well, so it's nice that's it's a joint effort, it's really collaborative. (4, 20).

There was some acknowledgement about how important this approach was in delivering training, ensuring it is relevant, applicable and reflective, with a 'so what' approach (4, 25). The SENCo in interview 3 acknowledged that staff can be difficult to train:

I think sometimes we can all be a little bit blaze here because day to day it can be very tough and challenging so we get a little bit blaze it's like you know you know 'we're soldiers we deal with... you know who can tell us anything about this work!' and it's that again that softening the edges a little bit and being a bit more vulnerable and admitting that we don't know everything and even when we know it, we don't always do it, so those are some of the things that we need to overcome because sometimes we're a bit of a tough group umm and I see it in training. (3, 81)

This idea of fostering staff engagement was less of a theme in interview 1, but this appeared to be because the EPs were already seen as very much part of the system, and as trusted members of the team.

Relationships with families

The SENCo in interview 1 spoke about success engaging parents: "basically we're here to try and support their child and I think parents quite quickly… quite often will see that" (1, 49). Family involvement in pupil focus meetings was discussed in interview 2:

where it's worked the best has been when there's been an explicit conversation with that young person and their parent carer before the meeting, so they're involved in it and know it's happening, and have their chance to have their say, and then feedback to them afterwards and in some of the cases that's worked really well. (51)

This collaborative approach with families was valued across interviews. The EP in interview 3 wanted to be "honest and transparent with the young person and the parent about… what we were thinking, what's in our mind when we you know were working with your son, daughter, you know" (78). Part of this process involved ensuring feedback was given to families in an accessible way:

I struggle sometimes you know with EP reports and the WISC outcomes and things like that and then I think, I just sent that to a parent that's crazy, you know 'here's the EPs report have a good read'... as opposed to 'the EP has written up a report, we need to meet, we need to you know let's go through it, let's break it down and let's use language that makes sense to us'. (3, 79)

Reflections on Covid and how this had increased opportunities for PRUs to engage more closely with families were also evident:

during lockdown we worked in a really different way, and our teachers worked in a more outreach way, going to students, doorstep visits, meeting in parks, meeting with families, you know going to the home and garden, you know teach them in a garden, we used lots of things that we'd never done before so it was a huge opportunity and that was amazing, the... the kind of quality of the relationships that developed between the teachers and the families and the students was amazing. (4, 14)

The power of such positive relationships between home and schools was evident across interviews, as well as the positive impact an EP can have in helping staff understand the holistic circumstances of the CYP, including how their home life might be impacting on a CYP:

I think Caroline will know the last consultation she did with myself, a year 11 boy and his Mum, I found that what I learnt from the family in that particular forum was just as helpful as getting a report with all the data and the recommendations. (3, 3)

it is by its nature much more holistic picture than staff on their own ever get because of the work you'll have done with families, with the young person themselves, with staff, potentially across both settings as well, in some cases it's their mainstream schools as well as here umm... yeah so that's really always... when we do the reflection at the end

of a pupil focus meeting, if we've had EP input then that's always something that people say 'oh it was really good to hear this'. (2, 17)

EPs supported these relationships differently in each setting, whether directly or indirectly through supporting staff:

I think actually the work that you guys did in lockdown going to homes, broke down that like barrier and built relationships, which was then useful for us then… to work with, because staff then had an understanding of where parents were coming from and how hard it was for them in some aspect… I think parents got the view that 'oh the school are there to help, they do care, they kept coming, they kept calling, you know they kept us in mind' umm I think that really really helped and… I think that you know the fact that we're discussing strategies in the meetings that we have, in the consultations and they're being put in place and parents are aware of those and can see them happening and young people can see them happening I think that helps as well to keep everyone on board. (5, 54)

with the PRU… and with that team I think she felt a lot more heard and there was a lot of time, frustration on her part that she… that she hadn't… that people were dismissing her… so I think just that kind of being there and kind of, listening… there were times where she could be very emotional, her reactions were very emotional and… I think being calm with her was really… rather than reacting back… whereas at the other school she was banned from the school site and things like that because her reactions were so big. But around us I felt like she was she was a lot more contained as well. Sometimes it's that… as I felt quite often, even though… my role was unpicking the child's needs and kind of us working towards getting him in the right provision, but actually for him, and for his brother I felt like I was almost working with the family and Mum um… whereas I don't always necessarily feel that in other cases, you are quite

child focussed and obviously you meet with the parents, but with that family I did feel like I was involved with the family as my kind of case rather than um just the young person. (1, 55)

Participants spoke about the challenging and complex nature of some families: "I mean parents who are shouting and screaming at us and we have to calm them down and take them to another room" (3, 62) and the need for the EP and the PRU to help contain these families. Participants also highlighted the difficulties involved in engaging some families and thus, the SENCO in interview 1 spoke about matching the families with the EP to "how we feel those relationships might be better you know knitted together in order for that work to be successful" (68). The EP in interview 3 highlighted some of the challenges in engaging these families due to their adverse experiences:

it is a setting where some families have you know quite you know quite disrupted lives and things that can be difficult at times for some families so it's like how does... how does well a complete stranger like me coming into their lives... how does that you know... how does that become possible for them to engage with that and take up my offer so umm... it would be really helpful to think about how we can do more of that because it's so early in our working relationship as, but when it has worked, it's been really helpful and yeah and it's just even doing some of that those kind of work with a parent and a student together, talking about their understanding of each other, umm there's just so much potential for a lot of work to be done. (27)

However, as difficult as this engagement and work might be, reported feedback from a family outreach worker involved in one of the PRUs seemed to capture the importance of the EP and the commissioner working together in this way, with other professionals:

he's a very experienced, very longstanding member of the team, he's been there sort of 15 years and he was like, this, I've never done anything like this, to actually sit down and think about how we're really actually properly going to support the student and the family, and I think that's something as well that in this last term that both of you actually have been in contact more with the families, and supporting the family and actually for students within AP and PRUs I think, unless you've got family support you can't actually really fully address what is going on for the students. (5, 53)

Work with families, in an ongoing, long term way to prevent future cycles of difficulty was discussed. The level of care in preventing further cycles was clear across participants, but particularly in interview 1, especially the idea of supporting a family with another sibling who was not yet at a PRU:

quite a cheeky young chappy but you know he left a while ago and rang because he wanted some support for his younger sibling who was having difficulties in school and you know was asking what I felt, what they could do to support the sibling which resulted in a conversation with the parent and also the student as well and that's you know, I think its roughly two years after he left us. (1, 92)

Similarly, by the EP linking up the systems to think more holistically and preventatively about a younger sibling of a CYP at the PRU:

hopefully we've almost like prevented that cycle umm by getting by Laura helping to get him that support, so that he doesn't then come through to the PRU like the other four. (1, 84)

The SENCO in interview 1 reflected "I feel… privileged to work with the families, and the children we work with" (1, 100).

Working together as a team/positive relationships

In interview 3, when reflecting on the success of a person-centred review, the EP reflected on how all participants worked together: "they went along with it brilliantly and everyone played their role and played their part, so I think it was a team effort" (3, 16). When reflecting on future organisational change projects in interview 2, participants were keen to expand out consultations and feedback too, to ensure change was collaborative, and including the whole PRU system "in a really collaborative way where we're maybe consulting with staff and families and taking on a range of views" (2, 24). This way of working was seen as fundamental to success.

Linked to this was the idea of jointly planning and commissioning work. Teamwork between the headteacher, SENCo and EP, and involvement of feedback from wider staff groups was seen as vital to the success of EP work in interview 4:

> it's also nice to remember how we have got a good relationship… there's something there for me about how involved Amy is as the headteacher and how it's not just the SENCo that I liaise with, it's actually I'd say, it's mainly Amy and then the SENCo, sort of in equal measures actually. (4, 57)

This idea of moving more towards this joined up way of working was reflected on in interview 5:

> we're beginning to get all the different factions within the school joining up, whereas before it was a bit like 'well you're family outreach so you do this and we're SEN so you do that, and you're teaching staff so you do that' but I think now it's coming together much more and I'm having meetings with our head of family outreach and in case management I'm discussing much more, 'ok so we're working on this, we're doing

that, they're having ELSA, they're having speech and language, the EPs been in, oh they're on the SENCo surgery in a couple of weeks' time'. (5, 55)

This reflects the idea of a 'team around a child' and a 'whole team effort' (1, 96), which was resonate across interviews. This was also felt to impact what was communicated to the child, with the hope that they understood that "this is where you belong and we are your team" (1, 89).

EP in the system?

In interview 1, the SENCO when reflecting on a success story for a CYP said "he feels like he's got a team, and the EP plays such a huge part in that" (44). She later highlighted that "EPs that work in PRUs need to be carefully chosen, I don't think you could just put any old EP into a setting like ours and have the success that we have" (60). Participants in interview 2 discussed how involved the EP should be in supporting rules and boundaries in the PRU, when in the setting "we want to support the school… but at the same time we don't want to be positioned by young people as being… the people that are enforcing the rules and boundaries because our relationship is different" (79).

As already outlined in category 1, the EP in interview 1 seemed to feel particularly at home at the PRU: ''and like we were talking yesterday Natalie… as soon as umm you're allowed back in schools and I was like "I'm going to be down there! (laughing) try and stop me!... let me in" (101). The EP in interview 4, had a similar close affinity to the PRU, and expressed the sadness he would feel if he was no longer to work there. He reflected on how he became part of the team:

> I became embedded as part of me doing the research as well and I got more of an understanding of the PRU than I think your average EP might about your average PRU, because of doing the thesis there and because of spending quite a lot of time there and

interviewing the children… the young people there and the staff as well, so that sort of helped I suppose in thinking about well maybe there is some use and how can we capitalise on that and make it as effective as possible. (54)

This importance of the EP having good relationships with everyone in the setting was captured by the SENCo in interview 3, where she highlighted the importance of building relational skills and capacity in the young people:

how do we build sustained… build the capacity then… increase the capacity to form relationships and I didn't think we can do that with having an EP that who doesn't know our school, wasn't getting to know the staff or the students, so I think there is more… there's more possibility of looking at those things and thinking it through. (14)

Differing perspectives/priorities among staff

Some participants acknowledged difficulties or differing priorities with previous staff members and how this impacted on their work:

there were some frustrations around… the setting up the casework from the previous SENCo and I think… not to place it within them at all, but I think some of the systems, like things would get set up but then you'd come in and either the member of staff didn't know about it or the young person wasn't in that day or the parent hadn't got the message, and you could sometimes feel like a little bit lost, and like you're not really making a valid contribution. (2, 14)

I think before there was some alignment… in our views with the previous SENCo but not… the actions didn't align… what came out… because of probably the system. (5, 23)

In both these examples, the EP mentioned wider systemic difficulties, but also alluded to differing priorities and actions with previous commissioners, in comparison to the current SENCos they were working with.

The SENCo in interview 3 noted difficulties with engaging staff, especially when they did not see the value of previous EP involvement, or feel particularly empowered by it:

> I think there might still be… reluctance in certain corners, just in terms of classroom observations or what challenges might, or what a challenge might look like and I think there's a little bit, there's still a little bit of reservation… it's about how time is valued… what's worthwhile doing, this might take a little longer, and this might look like another meeting and it might look like a simple conversation, but it's worthwhile doing and I think those are some of the barriers that I would need to overcome in terms of how are we going to change the way we work in school, what's valued, umm because obviously we value the same things, we do want to see progress for individual young people… but I think sometimes… we might still be looking for those instant sort of changes (laughs) and that slower burn… has to be valued… and that might be a challenge… staff also feel you know they've had a lot of training in the past… I see it in training and it's like I'm looking around the room and I'm thinking you know that look on people's faces when they're going (head in hands) 'oh my GOD, YES I THINK WE'VE HAD THIS BEFORE' and it's like 'yeah but are we doing it?' (81)

In interview 1, while participants did not suggest difficulties in previous EP-SENCo relationships, or with general staff buy-in to EP work, they did highlight the need to shift the thinking of SLT to have more of a long term, relational approach:

> So even when they've left us as year 11s, again our involvement doesn't always end, and I know that sometimes that's required a shift in thinking from some of our umm

heads team, because it's very much once they're in year 11 they're out the door then you know we've got our new year 11s and we need to focus on them. But sometimes making those little deals and offering the parent a kind of, I don't know something to reassure them that you're not just closing the door and saying 'they're not my problem anymore' that needs to be the outcome. (89)

Commissioners across interviews highlighted a desire to encourage a more shared perspective among staff members and noted frustration that comes when being met with resistance: "I think the resistance that you've been met with in some ways, is quite hard, and if you felt alone it would be very easy to give up, but I think you know I've been working at that school for two years, and I felt frustrated on many occasions" (5, 25). Participants also noted the importance of contracting to ensure shared expectations, and using systems and processes to ensure this:

we thought about this recently didn't we in relation to TAS meetings so sometimes we kind of do the job… but don't actually have that really base conversation about 'what do you want from us in this situation?' 'how do you feel we should react?' 'what are the kind of the clear rules and boundaries that we should or shouldn't be enforcing' or like with the TAS meeting, 'what is helpful for us to contribute in that meeting and what is the purpose of it', and so sometimes it's just I think stripping back and maybe in planning meetings or at those points when we're talking, having those conversations so we're both really clear on what the expectations are. (2, 81)

Student-staff relationships

The importance of student-staff relationships was key across all interviews. The headteacher set up a project to continue building these on return to school after lockdown, and involved the EP in supporting this:

I thought, oh it would be great to capitalise on that because we didn't want to lose that and obviously everyone's back in the classroom now, but it was like how can we keep that? So, I spoke to the staff about it, and some of them immediately said oh so could we like meet them out of school to do that, and I was like yeah you know we can work in lots of different ways so I then said to Steve if he could meet with each of them. (4, 14)

The EP in interview 2 reflected on the difficulties CYP can have engaging with new people, and the importance of harnessing positive relationships:

perhaps that's a theme across the PRU, where sometimes they might feel unsure about engaging with people that they're not that familiar with and building a new relationship, you know relationships are really really key at the PRU, and we see that so I think sometimes thinking about how those who know the young person really well can provide that intervention. (58)

Working in this way to support staff to support students and families was also valued by the EPs in interview 3 and 5:

really, it's kind of like they have lots of resources in terms of experienced staff members and relationships with the students already that actually it's been quite nice to work at like a distance… yeah through the staff. (5, 10)

so the fit between you both got a bit better, in terms of him understanding where you were coming and you understanding where he was coming from, so I think all that relational stuff got worked through a little bit as well umm... but I think it works because Angela is incredibly, and the staff, are incredibly respectful to the young person as well and they gave him the opportunity to give the setting some quite challenging feedback

as well and heard it and didn't react defensively to it but tried to understand it and tried to work through it, and I think that was really important as well. (3, 20)

The CYP-EP relationship

Participants in interview 2, spoke together about how they could communicate more effectively with CYP about the role of the EP, and the importance of language, preparation and expectation in this process:

> Claire: Is there anything that you think we could do our end Hayley about making that kind of thing easier, like in terms of making sure all young people know who you are?
>
> Hayley: Yeah, I suppose its maybe having really explicit conversations about it (80-81).

Multi-agency working

Participants highlighted the need for a more planned and joined up approach across services:

> more of a planned approach starting from the beginning of the year… I worry because we're a PRU and the majority of our students come to us unassessed, so they have unassessed needs, it's to have a kind of more of a, again a holistic approach, but also joined up with other umm professionals, speech and language and SPLD. (3, 67).
>
> I think that's really important actually for SENCOs, is that we're not experts on everything, actually we are the co-ordinators, and we need to be using the classroom teachers, the expertise from SLT, the expertise from EPs and other external agencies… but I think sometimes in schools SENCOs are seen as the expert, and it's all down to them to do everything, and I think actually if you're not like that so much more collaboration comes out of it. (5, 43)

The EP in interview 5 also spoke about the importance of the EP helping to think holistically about the CYP, when there are often so many services involved. Similarly, in interview 2, the EP reflected on the challenges of working with CYP with so many services involved:

> for a multitude of reasons in terms of their experiences with services, and also sometimes just the sheer number of services that are involved with these young people… at times I've just said, I don't think I should get involved here with this boy because you've got so many… and then I suppose the communication between all the different services is also a challenge in terms of you know TAC meetings and how people are planning and co-ordinating their work and I then suppose another challenge is kind of our role and the CAMHS role and how we might complement each other and work together as well… making sure we're not kind of doubling up, or overlapping. (2, 88)

The need to join up services, and help them think and plan collaboratively, was touched upon in interview 1, where the EP had worked across the PRU and mainstream settings to help prevent exclusion: "I truly feel that it helped, with the work that Laura was doing with that young person's primary school, hopefully we've almost like prevented that cycle" (84).

Appendix K: Category 4 - additional evidence

Systemic focus

In interview 4 the EP was "very rarely" involved in individual assessment, instead "supporting the SENCO or… specialist teacher" (4, 44). The EP reflected that "it frees me up to do a lot of the kind of more of the systemic, organisational… supportive stuff that is actually for me, more enjoyable anyway" (4, 6). This approach was also advocated for by the headteacher:

> sometimes people might take a kind of scattergun approach… let's get a TA, let's get a mentor, and there's… loads of different interventions going on but my view really is

that you need to have the right support at a strategic level, and I think that's where an EP is invaluable because what they bring, the thinking that they bring, and the thinking that they get you to do is way more valuable than pretty much anything else you can do. (4, 5)

Similarly, in interview 2, through engaging in reflection with other PRUs, members of SLT raised the question: "why are you guys coming in and doing loads of individual work when we've got all these kind of bigger things going on" (2, 29).

A similar approach and desire to "move away from… one off referrals and recommendations for individual students" and instead look "whole school provision" was discussed in interview 3 (3). Through their new working relationship and discussion about how they wanted to use an EP differently the SENCo highlighted that they wanted to access "advice, consultation, communications which really help embed good practice in the school as well as for individual students" (3, 3). Within this desire was a focus on building a consistent relationship to affect systemic change:

it's… helped me to improve certain aspects of what I do, and to think a little bit deeper as well because I know there is follow through with the same person, there's that consistency, and maybe that persistence in terms of what the practice looks like now, where we're hoping to go and how that individual family and student really fits into everything else. (3, 3)

However, with this shift towards systemic work, there was an acknowledgment that systemic change is slow: 'I think it's, you know I use that expression, drip feed and I think it is going to take a long time to make really big changes, but we've started, and we've got key staff on board (5, 115). Within this slow process and the need for accountability and joined up thinking across services, participants also noted the difficulties involved and the need for patience "the cultures

changing in the borough but in the process of change becomes young people who fall through the cracks in that change and that's the sad thing I think, the hard thing" (5, 58). Similarly, participants recognised the importance of having a range of parties 'bought in' to create successful organisational change: "it's hard to keep fighting the good fight, if you feel like you're a lone ranger" (5, 129). Discussing the use of surveys to gather a range of views at the beginning of their project to change the induction system, the EP reflected:

> in a really collaborative way where we're maybe consulting with staff and families and taking on a range of views whereas maybe historically, this is not a criticism of the PRU at all, but in lots of organisations there might be one person that has to lead on this kind of thing and essentially make… try and make changes in isolation and obviously that's really really difficult. (2, 24)

Part of developing this more joined up and 'bought in' approach in this setting was creating "a new personal development framework, [to] make sure there's more of a shared understanding of what we're here for" (2, 68).

A shift to less individual work, was due to a dissatisfaction over its impact:

> I didn't feel that we were embedding or changing anything we did in terms of staff, school, all of us SLT. (3, 14).

> I felt that recommendations that I gave…I wasn't able to do it collaboratively… there was no space for review and things. (5, 42)

While the participants in interview 1 seemed happy with the systems and processes they were working in in the PRU, they did reflect on the need for work to be more joined up and collaborative across wider systems. Regarding some complex young people one of the SENCo noted:

there are some that we just… are not making the progress that we could because we can't do it on our own. So, I think… I don't know… some other people out there in the borough needing to hear this kind of very real conversation about what we do. (100)

Despite the passion for and success of it, the complexity of delivering successful systemic work was also highlighted:

I think some schools can feel unsure about exploring the systems because they feel so, such big projects to tackle and it can be hard to know where to start so umm being able to kind of negotiate that with the school was I think a real really satisfying, really positive thing… so we kind of got an idea about what that system was looking like, or how it can, or how the progress of that system is moving forward… so being able to have the EP role… be seen as looking at systems as well is I think a real positive and it seems… there's more desire for this kind of work to take place so that's something to be looking forward to in the future as well. (2, 11)

Race reflections

Race was a new topic raised between participants in interview 2, and one which both EPs and the SENCo expressed an interest in exploring further:

Hayley: recently there's been so much more dialogue about kind of racial inequality and black lives matter and what all of that means in education and we've been thinking a lot about… and I feel this is relevant to the PRU because of the demographic of young people that you get that are excluded… but how we can try and be helpfully kind of challenging or having those discussions about kind of some of the unconscious bias or racial inequalities that might be going on within schools, so and we definitely don't have all the solutions but it's something that we need to think about a lot.

Claire: I'd be really interested to hear what kind of conversations you've had because we're also, that's something that we're thinking about here as well. (46-47)

Participants in interview 3 highlighted the open nature of their relationship and the fact that they had engaged in those conversations together:

> we've been able to talk about difficult and really tricky things which I really appreciate and value with Angela as well… I've talked about the fact that I'm a white female EP and a lot of the young people in the setting are black young men and um and what that means for how they experience working with me and we've talked to Angela as well about the kind of anti-racist stance and how we can you know, how that's part of our work as well, so... I've just found it incredibly helpful to be able to sort of bring lots of things to talk to Angela about and she always is really you know open to thinking about things and thinking about how we can work in different ways. (3, 31)

Appendix L: Category 5 - additional evidence

Relationships as a tool for change/intervention

Participants in interview 1 discussed an example showing the power of relationships for one family:

> Mum was very frustrated, very angry, umm very vocal, but never at us, because she could see (coughs) excuse me, that we agreed that it wasn't the right place for him… there was some really difficult times, but it was Mum being angry at the system, so we worked with her… we had to get her to trust us, and you know he's actually been gone from the PRU… And I just rang Mum the other day just because I thought… I bet you he struggled with lockdown and you know just ringing to check in and say you know

'how are you?'. And I think she really appreciated that… and to let her know that the placement had been agreed and had been finalised on his EHCP… you know I've spoken to her regularly since he left us and umm I think that's helped her… in my mind I feel like I'm helping her to trust the SENCo in his new school and to not to go in thinking that just about our school, that she can only trust the people with us. (81)

In interview 5 the SENCO highlighted the success of their new ELSA intervention: "when you have children saying, 'my favourite lesson is ELSA' and they're 13/14 I think she's doing a good job, really good job" (5, 65).

It wasn't just relationships with children and families that was seen as a key tool for change. The EP in Interview 5 spoke about the transformative power of these among staff and SLT within the PRU system too:

I think the, one of the barriers and what we can do about it is relationships and I think, as EPs we need to build relationships with people in the school who have… leadership roles and influence because I think… there's a feeling of an 'us' and 'them' between what they feel about us as EP, as outside agencies but actually that's not the message that we give, or get off other people but I think the only way we can overcome that is actually to try and work together with them and I think that's going be a drip feed I think Phoebe, I think that's going to have to be a slowly slowly you know having a coffee having a chat, catching up here and there. (5, 118)

The power of relationships was key for the CYP discussed: "one of the main and most important things we do is we do build really positive relationships with young people" (3, 14). The SENCo in interview 3 wondered about how to transfer these relational skills and interactions outside of the PRU:

I think a significant number of young people umm they are able to build positive relationships over time, but in reality they don't have the umm the luxury of building relationships over time and so umm I always equate it with you know a young person if I said look just pull up your trousers, come and eat your lunch and sit down and get on with it, and they're like 'ahh miss ok' but if that was a stranger, they might smack the stranger in the face and those were you know the, and maybe even more seriously… is it just for us, you know…. ohh they got on with us, isn't it good, we have such good relationships, that is fantastic but those transferable skills, I don't think they were attached or embedded in terms of how that young person is able to take that relationship and learn from those relationships, you know how to be civil, simple things, how to cope in new situations and resilience, and coping with people you don't like umm those are the some of things that are coming up again and again with our students. (14)

Trust

Trust underpinned many examples in the last code and previous categories. Participants often spoke about rebuilding trust with families and CYP, especially relating to their experiences of services and education:

the outcome isn't necessarily time limited is it, the outcome wasn't we needed an EHCP… it's about so much more than that, it's about that trust… and if he needs to see an EP for his annual review for example, I don't think Mum will have an issue with that, and I don't think it would need to be the same person… I think she'll think 'oh ok, well the EP at the PRU was supportive, helpful, lovely, you know I got on with her well, so you know, hopefully it kind of rebuilds a lot of that… you know that's a lot of our work is rebuilding trust from families feeling let down. (1, 81)

The EP in interview 3 showed a desire to think about more how to build that trust with families and facilitate reflective work with them, "because… when it has worked, it's been really helpful… even doing some of that… work with a parent and a student together, talking about their understanding of each other" (3, 27).

Trusted relationships within the PRU were often used to facilitate other work, such as interventions or to introduce EPs to CYP:

> I think our relationship with our EPs then helps our kids, because this young person I've known for a very long time, and if I introduce people to him and almost give my approval, then that takes him less time to trust people so you know… if I sort of say you know… look Laura's really good I think you'll really like her, that sort of takes away a barrier already because he doesn't have to work that out for himself he can say well actually Natalie said she's alright, so yeah, I'll meet her, that's cool. (1, 44)

A similar approach was taken to building trust with staff. For example, when introduced as a new EP in the PRU, Luke highlighted how helpful it was that the staff had already learnt to trust Hayley and respected her: "being able to… learn from her and being introduced to members of staff through her was really helpful for me (2, 11).

Trauma and intergenerational needs

Participants also highlighted the need to be sensitive to these complex family circumstances: "that family… they've been through quite a lot, so for them I felt like it was a forum where they were able to confidently talk about what… they wanted to talk about and some of the challenges that we had in the conversation as well" (3, 23).

Appendix M: Category 6 - additional evidence

Listening to CYP's perspectives and understanding lived experience

Participants showed examples of wanting to know what CYP wanted for their futures (4, 47): "what it is you want to do when you do leave here?" (1, 89) and to think "with the young people themselves about what's gone wrong, or what's been difficult for them, that maybe hasn't been recognised and then also those things that have been better, and what helps them" (1, 34). The organisational change project around inductions, discussed in interview 2, focussed on:

> the young people's voice and them being able to share what's important for them in a way that's going to be meaningful so we thought some activities around, looking at young people's values from the very first day, so that they get a chance to say what's important for them… and the first few weeks when we meet when we get to know them at the PRU, so… being led by them and their interests and what they tell us so then we can have more understanding of what is important for them, so we can then understand more about what is success for them. (74)

Participants across interviews didn't just speak about listening to CYP, but also responding realistically to their views and feeding back what was being changed as a result (3, 20; 2, 51).

Holistic and person-centred practice

The SENCO in interview 1 encapsulated her passion behind this approach and ethos:

> being child-centred is really important to me, and I would find it really difficult to work with anybody you know, another SENCo, an EP, who isn't child centred. People at school probably get sick of me banging on about it because everything should come back to the child, everything has the child at the centre… All of it needs to come back to but what does that mean for the young person, even when we're thinking about the parent, and how their trauma impacts things, their own experiences of school can impact

how they perceive our setting, umm but ultimately, we understand that, and we work with them, but it's about skilfully bringing it back to what does that mean for the young person at the centre of this… process. (62)

The SENCo in this interview 3 also reflected on external pressures that can take away from this person-centred approach, and the need to be aware of this: "it's going back to that child-centred person-centred, who is this for… is it for us, you know Ofsted and it looks good and we've got the map and the outcomes, and the grades… or is it about that child's life and what they do after us" (79). She also reflected on the success of the person-centred culture and focus that the EP had brought: "I mean Caroline when you drew out the person-centred outcomes, you know that piece of work for a student was more helpful than a lot that we've done as a school in terms of reports" (79). As highlighted by the headteacher in interview 4, "part of what an EPs input it about" is ensuring that "we're acting with integrity… always in the best interests of the child" (5). Across all five interview the EPs role was seen as a key part of facilitating and encouraging this holistic and person-centred practice.

Agency and parity – including CYP

The headteacher in interview 4 reflected on their practice regarding reintegration to mainstream, showing agency given to CYP over decisions about their futures:

in Key stage 4, almost all students once they arrive, stay til the end, not because they have to, and if they want to return to the mainstream school they've come from or want to go to a new mainstream school if they've been permanently excluded, then we will support them to do that, but in about 99% of cases, once they come to us, they settle and then they decide that they actually you know are having more success and experiencing education in a more positive way, then actually they don't want to go anywhere else. (47)

The EP in interview 5 noted the importance of empowering CYP with agency given that often "their whole life they've kind of been passive, you know everyone tells them what to do" (83).

Participants noted the need for the CYP to be ready to engage in this work. The participants in interview 1 referred to a CYP who was motivated for such change and engagement: "he had an experience… at the start of this year that gave him a bit of a fright, so I think that probably helped him be able to say, ok do I really want to go this way, or do I go the other way" (44). Participants in interview 3 reflected on the need to build "parity in relationships" (3, 14) through work which encourages CYP involvement, "giving the young people the chance to you know talk to adults on that equal level about their future and have that agency" (3, 16).

Empowering new skills, self-reflection and understanding

During the discussion around planning and self-reflection the EP in interview 5 reflected:

> those young people with their kind of executive functioning umm skills, it's really… they're so reactive to everything they go along their day to day life, just going about things, and reacting and whatever happens happens… and they often don't think of consequences which is usually why (laughs) they find it difficult usually outside a school… but actually the reflecting bit I can imagine would be helpful for them to, look ahead as well, looking back helps you to think, to look ahead as well (99).

Appendix N: Category 7 - additional evidence

Reflective, listening, reviewing and open to change

Participants in interview 2 spoke about reflection being a culture within the SLT of the provision, with one member of SLT engaged in such reflective practice with other PRUs: "they meet with other people working in PRUs and think about what it means to run a provision well

so she's having opportunity to go out and reflect with other people hear about practice in other PRUs" (2, 33). This process had led to initial thoughts about an organisational change project around the induction process in the PRU. There were also examples of participants wanting to continue improving practice: "I think probably something we could think about moving forwards would be what our role is in that key stage four to five transition and how we could be more helpful in that respect" (2, 83).

Noting the importance of the EP-commissioner relationship, the SENCo in interview 3 reflected that "having that relationship allows me to reflect on my practice as well and get better at that" (3, 3). This idea of openness within the EP-commissioner relationship, as already highlighted in category 1, was seen as "really helpful… for the psychologist trying to develop a relationship with a setting" (3, 31).

Reflection on application to practice and real-life situations was viewed as a key component of any training that the EP delivered in the interview 4. The headteacher also commented on the EPs way of working, particularly his use of questions which helped facilitate reflection, learning and development. She reported saying to the EP:

> 'ohh you've helped me so much' and you said 'no you've just answered my questions', because actually you just made… you just asked the right questions for me to find my own answers, and I think that's just how you work so it matches our style I suppose in how we like to work. (4, 55)

This reflective culture was highlighted by the EP: "when we have planning meetings, that certainly comes through, Amy you're very keen for staff… to have that space to reflect and to think about things slightly differently" (4, 6).

Participants spoke about 'reflective consultations' (4, 23) as a key part of the EP offer, and these being a space for reflective and joint problem solving and planning. In interview 5, these

were a new addition this year and the EP reflected that "it was a really kind of shared space wasn't it, kind of, for… feeding back, you know catching up with the week, for them to connect with each other, but also for them to share like ohh I've had that, oh I've noticed that" (5, 12). This culture shift mirrored the reflective nature of the new SENCo, who showed willingness to reflect, and openness to change, throughout the interview.

EPs' own professional development/reflections

In interview 2, the EPs valued the opportunity to reflect on practice together:

> two EPs at the same site has been really helpful to have some kind of reflective space, to do some work and then take our thinking back and have a bit of a space to discuss that, I think I felt more… empowering, I think if I was, as a newly qualified EP, if I was stepping into that role just by myself I would have been, I would have found that a lot more difficult, so I think, yeah being able to have those discussions is really helpful. (2, 37).

During discussions it was clear EPs enjoyed taking creative approaches to new problems or areas of need:

> remember the transition stuff that we did, thinking about coming back to school, and school avoidance things, like in half a day, we problem solved for like five students with staff dropping into each thing, and you know, I did the groundwork before which was a few hours, but yeah… it was quite nice to use that time so well, for so many students, but a consistent… issue and a consistent area that we were focussing on. (5, 52)

In Interview 2, the EPs were keen to learn more about how they could support CYP post-16, highlighting this as a new area of practice.

it's still a key area in the profession as a whole, to be thinking about 'what is our role' and 'what are we doing so far'… I think there has been more resources being published there so maybe it's about having more knowledge and… reading into some of that knowledge and therefore, feeling confident based on that to kind of step into a bit more of the unknown. (2, 84)

It was also clear that EPs appreciated the reflective experience of the interview for thinking about practice and "hearing what other people think about… the EP role" (4, 6).

Slowing down – avoiding reactive practice

Discussions around how to contract work to ensure success also involved "stripping back and… having those conversations so we're both really clear on what the expectations are" (2, 81). The EPs in this context highlighted how easy it was to fall into reactive practice in a setting such as a PRU, and commented on how important it was for the success of the project that the SENCO managed to avoid this:

despite the busyness of your role Claire, and teaching and all the stuff that you're doing on a day-to-day basis, every meeting, every action was completed, everything was… all documents were sent out and it was amazing I think, in an environment where often people are in kind of firefighting mode, dealing with behaviour, dealing with challenging situations I thought that just was kind of a real testament to you guys and the buy-in for it all. (2, 27)

Consultation facilitates change

The SENCo in interview 5 talked about the development of joint staff consultations to provide a more joined up approach:

we have a staff briefing every day and the same names will be coming up but maybe from different members of staff and then it's like well hang on, we need a more joined

up approach in how we can support these young people… so I talked with the EPs and we came up with this like almost SENCo EP surgery, and I tend to pick a student… raising concern… across the school and we'll invite all the staff to come along, and that'll be family outreach worker, it'll be their tutor, it'll be heads of key stage, anyone basically working with them, can come to these meetings and we'll just basically unpick everything, try and work out what's going on for them, and then actually try and put some actions in place for them. (49)

Participants also reflected on how many more students they can impact through this model, rather than through individual assessments.

Appendix O: Category 8 - additional evidence

Complexities/pressures of PRU work

Participants acknowledged the PRU as a setting that "has to deal with a huge amount of challenge and complexity" (3, 5), and the EP role was conceptualised as "bringing a psychological perspective for your setting and really acknowledging the fact that there's a lot of complexity in your setting and the work that you're doing is very challenging" (3, 7). Indeed, CYP were seen as:

often quite complex… they are complex young people usually… and I think there is a lot to unpick about… especially when they've been in multiple different schools and thinking with the young people themselves about you know… what's gone wrong, or what's been difficult for them, that maybe hasn't been recognised. (1, 34)

The impact of this on staff was noted:

I think you know some people, some of the students can have an impact on the staff, feeling like oh… he or she are always like this to me and that kind of came out in a few

sessions, where staff felt nearly kind of targeted at points, and that would be quite hard, and that would make you react. (5, 44)

Complexity in the wider systems was also highlighted:

I could also hear that there was a lot of dialogue about the systems and maybe there was a lot of discussion… I was hearing a lot of discussion about… feeling stuck or feeling like there was challenges around the systems. (2, 11)

In particular, staff absence and turnover was discussed:

I feel like… it has felt a bit like I've been doing catch up especially because there was a large period of staff absence before I took it so… I was only just in January writing up the referrals of you know things that you'd done reports on Hayley from the previous academic year. (2, 15)

The SENCO in interview 5 highlighted the stress of the job: "it has been very very very challenging, and I think you kind of see me at times Lucy when I've gone right that's it, I'm off, I'm going, I'm leaving!" (122). She also noted the isolation of the SENCo role and the impact of the wider context for CYP:

I'm on several online SENCo forums and stuff, everyone says how lonely the SENCo job is and actually I really found that this term, you know people don't necessarily want to talk about certain things at certain times but it's on your list of priorities of things to get done for that week, so I think it's just… yeah. (128)

it has been, it has been really difficult in school, behaviour has been really challenging for a whole host of reasons, the anxiety, the not knowing, the constant lockdowns, and I think we've seen in the last month, people have sort of raised an eyebrow at me when I've said this, but I think we've actually seen the consequences of the first lockdown coming out… massively, rather than saying 'oh it's just the second lockdown that's

sparked this' I actually think it's the first one, and it's sort of snowballing now and I really, I really don't know what we're going to find come January, for some of our… for some of our children, and that kind of really… that worries me umm but I think Lucy and Jane have actually, have sat me down a couple of times and gone 'no, you're doing really well, you need to keep going, you need to think about this, you know you've thought about this, let's find a way of actually doing it' but I guess that's umm… starting a new job in difficult circumstances. (24)

Difficulties with engagement

Participants gave plenty of examples of difficulties engaging CYP with individual work: "he refused to engage with me at all, he was just like, he sat there" (1, 73); "in this morning's meeting he didn't want to have anything to do with his annual review, and anything direct he wouldn't want to be part of" (2, 55). Parental engagement was also discussed: "like the one case Angela is talking about where I couldn't get hold of the parent, I think I rang them six times and I couldn't get hold of the parent" (3, 27). Uncertainty in this area was noted:

> I think if you look at that one case in particular when we initially started working with that family, it was difficult to know whether Mum would actually initially show up to those meetings and also you know how she would engage during those meetings. (1, 50)

Participants reflected on the impact of family complexity and needs on engagement, as well as previous difficulties with services and education:

> [you've] known the family for years and Mum's always been really tricky to kind of engage at points and has a lot of you know her own stuff going on umm which I think important to recognise. I think she is quite often… is doing the best that she can. (1, 49)

we were finding over that time that it was actually quite difficult to work with that family in particular, and obviously they had a lot going on for them as well, but you know, for the young man that we worked with he was then the fourth child of that family to come through the PRU. (1, 84)

parents were getting a lot of calls from, you know like daily welfare checks for any kids that weren't coming into school umm… that, I know that… for example that EHs Mum, Luke, it was really hard to get through… and partly I think felt quite overwhelmed with things going on in life, uhh, maybe other services involved umm, that's something else that can be a challenge. (2, 87)

Relational skills/EP as emotional container

The SENCo in interview 1 reflected on the impact of the EPs soft skills during consultation: "Laura's particular way with people is really warm and welcoming so parents are very quickly umm able to feel comfortable, and they share a lot" (48). The EP in interview 2 saw the EP role "providing a bit of… emotional support and containment for staff" (9) around the challenges in the work. The EP from interview 1 noted an example of containing a parent who was experiencing lots of difficulty managing her emotions:

being calm with her was really… and kind of just you know… rather than reacting back… whereas at the other school she was banned from the school site and things like that because her reactions were so big. But around us I felt like she was she was a lot more contained as well. (55)

The headteacher reflected on the EP supporting and containing her in her role, through providing supervision:

we had an Ofsted inspection three years ago, and we got a 'good' which I was devasted by… and I probably bent Steve's ear for a long time because I just had to download

about it, I just had to go 'it's so unfair', you know 'I was robbed', so things like that you know that's where… it's kind of supporting me and supporting the organisation as a whole. (4, 22)

Links to criminal justice system

The SENCO in interview 3 reflected on the shock and sadness felt when a CYP ends up involved in the justice system:

> I always think back to the other boroughs I've worked… and myself and my colleagues being utterly astounded and thinking that was such a nice young man, that was such a nice boy, oh my goodness what has he done and how could he have done it. (14)

She noted the "dark" outlook you can have around such outcomes when you feel "you're not making any impact" (14).

Appendix P: Category 9 – additional evidence

Flexible support and approach

Flexibility was highlighted as a fundamental quality of an EP in a PRU in interview 1:

> if you had an EP who was just you know 'well actually you booked me I'm here too bad I'm going' or 'no you said we were going to do this today, and they're not doing it, so I may as well go'… you would get nowhere. (60)

This was also discussed in relation to how to time is planned:

> there's something there about being flexible isn't there… we always make sure there's a bit of time left over from planning meetings where we're not kind of using up all of the time just in case things come up… and often Amy or the SENCo or someone might send me an email and say 'can we meet about this young person, or can we have a conversation about this' and there's always that time. (4, 10)

The SENCo in interview 3 talked about the flexible approach of the EP and responding to needs that arise accordingly with a "natural follow through" (23). Similarly, in interview 5 the SENCo reflected that "because we do work so well together, it's a bit more of a conversation like this between the three of us… so it is quite a fluid kind of approach to the plans for the term" (5, 108).

Commissioners were also flexible in their work with parents and CYP:

> you're kind of checking in and saying this is what's happening, this is what might happen next, would you prefer this way, or this way, would you like Laura to contact you directly, I'm happy you know you can come in and sit down and go over the report with me, we could do it… you don't have to come and talk about it, you can just let us know if you're happy with it. (1, 48)

Ongoing support – not giving up

There were examples of staff offering support after CYP had left the PRU: "members of staff… who were able to actually go with the young people to interviews or to you know to their work placements at the beginning, and you know keep in touch" (4, 50). As the SENCo in interview 1 highlighted "I think it doesn't necessarily end when they leave us, and you know so the outcome isn't necessarily time limited is it" (81).

Staff showed a clear and passionate commitment to the work, and a desire to bring about positive change for CYP which manifested itself in the way they supported CYP and families, even after they had left the PRU:

> They've told me their story and I want to make sure that it's in and I don't mind if that's as far as I get with it because at least I know that it's been processed and if it's in that statutory process, it shouldn't then just get lost, but I also always say to those parents that umm my name is on there as the lead professional, I never put the lead professional

on where they're going because if they want to come back to someone, I want them to come back to me, so that I can still then be part of it. (1, 89)

EPs were also involved in this type of flexible, ongoing and committed support to families. In interview 1, the EP supported the system around a sibling of a child at the PRU: "you know, he's a primary aged child, he's not at the PRU, it was still that support, it didn't… you weren't just like 'no this is nothing to do with me, I'm involved with the older sibling'" (96). Through this work, slightly beyond the remit of her role, the youngest child was prevented from entering the PRU and received an EHCP.

Even when things were particularly tough for the SENCo in interview 5, commitment to the role and a desire to not give up was evident:

> having this has kind of allowed me to reflect that… it isn't going to be easy, I don't think it's easy in any school, but you've just got to keep ploughing on really, and I know that what I'm doing is coming from the right place, because you've almost sort of validated that Lucy with what you've been saying. (124)

Responding to individual CYP's needs

Noting the need to consider each CYP individually, the SENCo in interview 1 recalled a case where "he had a diagnosis of ASD and was quite um typically ASD, needed a specialist setting, umm and a PRU is just not the right place for a young person like him" (81). Similarly, the SENCo in interview 5 highlighted the need to question "have the school put everything in that they need to support those children… sometimes not, sometimes they have and that's obviously when we have to think about, well maybe then specialist or alternative provision is actually what, what they need" (22).

Appendix Q: Category 10 - additional evidence

Strengths based and solution focussed thinking

Participants were keen to help CYP understand that "you've done really well, these are the things you are really good at" (1, 91), and showed a desire to help "the young people themselves and their families to… recognise their strengths" (2, 5). Participants in interview 2 spoke about "writing some of the key messages and strengths on postcards and sending them to" a CYP (56). The SENCo in interview 3 reflected:

> in a way we all have needs, and what does it look like for me, what does it look like for Caroline, what does it look like for Max, what does it look like for Tom, that sense of we all have needs, we all cope with them in a different way, and if each student had a passport, or a one page profile, that kind of, and even if, then if the staff had it, I don't know if we'd share it with students, that's just a dream I have, but if the students had that one page profile which kind of said 'hey I've got needs just like everyone else, but my needs look like this' and it's not a case of special needs. (3, 75)

A similar strengths base approach was taken with staff. Through providing shared consultation spaces, the EP in interview 5 reflected: "it's quite strengths focussed… the sessions were quite positive weren't they" (12).

Hope filled planning

Participants showed plenty of examples of looking forward to future plans with hope:

> I think the intervention opportunity is a really interesting one, particularly probably the first time you would have worked with a group of young people with us… yeah, I'm really excited to see how they go too. (2, 61)

> We've actually got more ELSAs training at the moment, so we've got three new ELSAs training, so my vision is almost that every student has ELSA sessions, when they very

first come to school, not everybody needs to continue with them it might be just that they sort of like because you know that transition phase… when they first transition into school, I think you know that is a traumatic experience for any person, and actually if they have someone that they can talk to, maybe just for two weeks, that would actually really help them, the vision is for everybody to have ELSA and to have many more staff ELSA trained. (5, 67)

Shifting the narrative

Participants in interview 1 argued that CYP's narratives are often wrongly attributed and gave the example of one young person where "there [were] a number of needs that [hadn't] been recognised so his behaviour was being perceived as very much like um just him being defiant, being you know naughty all those kinds of things" (1, 15).

The SENCo in interview 3 highlighted the need to shift the whole narrative around SEND, and how they speak to parents and CYP about this:

I think that's why I avoid having conversations with parents about 'your child is on our special needs register' or we're going to put him on, or we're going to have assessments… I've not had enough of those 'hey this is kind of normal it's not exceptional actually it's kind of normal, and for your child what it meant is that they got to a point where they lost their place at school… your child's need led to these types of outcomes and what does it mean and how does a child see it, umm I don't think we have those conversations much, it is very much behaviour. Child did, don't do it again, these are the consequences, these are the people that can help, did they do it, did they not do it, mark it down, and it's just softening the edges a little bit so that it's just normal conversations. (3, 75)

As shown in previous sections participants were focussed on "how can we help the young person most importantly… have that narrative" (3, 78) that is more positive and that

understands their values, strengths and needs, and what best helps them, and to move away from the "very problem focussed narrative that can follow them around" (2, 9).

There were also examples of EPs and commissioners actively shifting their own narratives within conversations, to a more strengths-based and solution-focused way of thinking. For example, in interview 5, when I asked about the challenges they had to overcome to reach 'success' the SENCo laughed and said, "in all honesty, I don't think we have overcome…" to which the EP replied "yet, yet!" (5, 109-10). The SENCo responded by laughing and saying "oh yes, the power of yet! I did an inset on that the other day" (5, 111). This is an example of the EP and commissioner thinking carefully about language used, and how to shift the narrative around their work and the CYP, both within their relationship, but also the wider system. From this interaction it appeared that they had discussed this idea before, and that the use of such language had been part of their joint working before.

Appendix R: Category 11 - additional evidence

Transitions in and out

Discussions around transition involved thinking about how to support CYP when they arrive, such as the ELSA plans discussed in interview 5, which aimed to ensure that CYP were emotionally supported in that unsettling time, and to understand their perspective, values and what could best support them (67).

Participants in interview 5 recognised the difficulties that CYP from their PRU would face in the post-16 transition:

> there's quite a few year 11s especially within our boys' group that I think are really… gonna struggle with elements of college next year… so we have a transition coach that we employ… she's doing really really good stuff… giving them aspiration and actually thinking well ok you could do this, but also making sure we've got a plan b so that if

for any reason something doesn't happen, but also, I think what's really important is that we have realistic aspirations. (84)

Focus on CYP's future outcomes

Participants spoke about a range of practical approaches that helped them focus on achieving successful outcomes for CYP:

> waves, 1, 2 and 3 looking at provision mapping… I actually spent a sunny Sunday looking at it because it was, it had so much of what I would want to do held in one place, in terms of how we report, monitor um and look at outcomes, and just be able to hold everything in one place… we need to really up the game for all of them, and then up it again for those students with sort of diagnosed needs, I think that's the approach I'm looking for, umm yeah so that all our students get have some impact from the work. (3, 67)

> thinking about the end from the beginning, and therefore thinking about individual young people's success a lot more, and they might arrive in key stage 3 or key stage 4, but still we're thinking about them developing a um personal development profile for them to make sure they're individually understood and can then think about success for them. (2, 72)

Taking a future perspective around relationships and outcomes after they've left was also key:

> it's very much around umm how do we build sustained… build the capacity then… increase the capacity to form relationships. (3, 14)

> So, I think the outcomes are often ongoing long after they leave us too and I feel that's really important to kind of see it through. (1, 81)

Reintegration

Reintegration was seen as a main aim: "sometimes it's getting that report so we can then approach a school for reintegration which at a PRU is our main, that's our main goal is to get kids back into mainstream, or if not mainstream the right provision" (1, 48). But participants also spoke about the challenges of reintegration:

> it's not always successful, we get our bouncers back which we've had a few in the last term, but I don't think that's necessarily… I think that's the system to be honest, I think that's the system of going back into mainstream, do… you know have the school put everything in that they need to support those children… sometimes not sometimes they have and that's obviously when we have to think about, well maybe then specialist or alternative provision is actually what, what they need. (5, 22)

> so, in Key stage 3, the maximum is supposed to be two terms, it isn't always, but that's always the aim, so usually there would be two terms and there needs to be an exit plan but there are exceptions. (4, 47)

> if we get students coming to us at the end of year 9, or the very early in year 10, then we can hopefully transition them back by January, but once we get past January we find it… it's really difficult to kind of get them back in, because obviously GCSE courses are so far along, they might not have been doing the same courses…it's really hard to transition key stage 4 back… if they come to us in year 11, there's very little, in fact there's no hope of transitioning them back into school because obviously mainstream schools, they're going to have to fill the gaps in knowledge which is obviously going to take resources, and resources that many of the schools don't have. (5, 80)

> Yeah, well fingers crossed he's reintegrating as we speak! Apart from that, we've had zero this year, or we had BT who went back, and it didn't work out for him and uhh that really knocked his confidence, but also the confidence of his whole class, because

they were like… if he can't manage then what chance do we have, so almost it kind shook up… because that was… that is, for many of our students what success looks like, is going back to mainstream, not for all though. (2, 66)

Appendix S: Category 12 - additional evidence

Time and Money

Time and money were seen as key factors influencing EP work: "the other thing that's always a key factor in our work, very boringly is about time" (2, 40). Participants reflected on lack of EP time in mainstream schools and PRUs:

> I feel like conversations about money shouldn't really be the reason that kids are not getting seen, and I think that perhaps that's a reason maybe in mainstream schools… we're getting a lot of these kids who come through who haven't seen an EP, throughout their primary years, throughout their secondary years before they get to us because there's a finite amount of EP time in schools. You know some schools don't have a lot do they Laura… (Laura nods) they certainly don't buy as much as we do. So, I think it's a real shame when the amount of support that kids can get really comes down to a budget decision and that is a bug bear for me… because it's wrong. (1, 23)

The impact of how local of authority time is allocated to PRUs was mentioned in different contexts:

> I think our core allocation was based on the numbers on roll, which is obviously absolutely ridiculous because the numbers on roll don't you know reflect the level of need of the students and I argued and argued and, in the end, just gave up and said well we'll just pay for more then, and that's what we did and that's what we continue to do. (4, 55)

partly because of the needs of the young people, they also get quite a big local authority allocation. (2, 40)

Discussions about how to use the limited time available in an efficient way were had:

actually, we're probably using the time… more efficiently, more effectively, rather than spending lots of time… you know, in a room, and writing a report, you know we're in a room with a young person, and writing a report on our own, where it's in person, and then you have more time for… using the time for staff. (5, 46)

it means that I'm not sort of confined to being to you know writing lots of reports and umm, so the time doesn't sort of disappear in really big chunks by writing reports. (4, 6)

to think about a system that might actually benefit far more young people for the amount of time that's put into it. (2, 14)

And EPs flexibility with time was noted as important:

if your EP was a tick box EP that just sort of came in, did the work and then was like well that's my commissioned time or that's my you know you've paid for 37 ½ minutes, and actually that's 37 ½ minutes, see you later… we never get that sense from our EPs and in fact they're good to us in terms of you know making sure we've got what we need from them. (1, 44)

Work valued by system/SLT

EP work was generally valued by SLT and the wider system:

well, I've worked in this setting for just over 8 years… but I would say that all my work in ***** which is getting on for 25 years, I've always really valued the EPs' input… I would see an EP as being almost your quality assurer, so somebody who will… kind of

be able to judge, not in a negative way, but be able to judge sort of the… whether what you're doing is right I suppose, just in general. (4, 5)

We're very lucky that our boss can see the value in the Educational Psychology input that we have. (1, 21)

when we do the reflection at the end of a pupil focus meeting, if we've had EP input then that's always something that people say 'oh it was really good to hear this'. (2, 17)

Where it wasn't valued by SLT, this was seen a real challenge:

I've got an SLT that don't necessarily, they talk about special needs, and they talk about SEN, and they talk about it being a passion, and being really part of the school, but actually when it comes down to it, it stops at a certain point, so for me having two EPs that actually share my vision, and actually I can bounce off their vision umm and they kind of, I think you've actually kept me going a bit over the last term. (5, 24)

I think the resistance that you've been met with in some ways, is quite hard, and if you felt alone, it would be very easy to give up, but I think you know I've been working at that school for two years, and I felt frustrated on many occasions. (5, 25)

CYP let down by the system & common patterns in educational journey

Participants often spoke of CYP being let down, not receiving the support or assessment they have needed, or things breaking down at school before they could have their assessment:

I think it's incredibly valuable to have yeah, such direct access and close working relationships with educational psychologists here and sadly with nearly all of our young people it's the first time they also will have these kinds of encounters, attention as well… it's a handful of young people will come to us with an EHCP but very very few and trying to for example looking at the access arrangements for our current year 11s… there was one that was sent through from when someone was six… that was the last

time they'd had involvement and it raised lots of issues from when they were six but then nothing more had happened and they were excluded in year 11… umm so its… in an ideal world it's too late, or all of this should have happened earlier, but given that it hasn't, its umm its yeah its vitally crucial, both for us as staff working with young people to know what we can do to support them, but also for the young people themselves and their families to uhh really recognise their strengths and their difficulties and feel supported. Yeah… and I know that both of you have been doing initial consultations recently with umm… some of our families like… Hayley… HM I know that his Mum is really pleased to be… finally be having this kind of support and same with PC her family, they feel… there's a big sense of relief actually that finally people are trying to get to the bottom of their young person's needs and not just see them as a problem. (2, 5)

so, I think the main way that other EPs [from mainstream schools] work with us is mainly when we get students referred to us, who are undergoing statutory assessment, and things have kind of broken down at their school and so they're with us while that assessment is underway. (4, 44)

obviously, I don't know the situation so much with the older ones, but it sort of seemed like that pattern of, which is a pattern that we see with a lot of other young people, is coping in primary school, then having a really difficult secondary transfer, secondary not fully understanding their needs, then the young person's behaviour completing changing in the setting, umm and then being excluded. So I think getting a younger sibling who is year 6 transitioning to year 7, making sure he was going into that secondary school with you know a really good understanding of his background and his needs, and he does have an EHCP now as well, so it's kind of like making sure that they know from day one, this is this young person who is very vulnerable, and he has

got these needs, and this is the support he's going to need, we're hopefully then avoiding a situation, like with the others where their needs weren't understood, and then that behaviour becoming really challenging. (1, 87)

they haven't really been anywhere long enough sometimes as well for those professionals to be involved so you get to the point where they're in year 10 or year 11 and you just think argh, something really could, something helpful could have happened much earlier. (1, 20)

Working with mainstream

Participants shared examples of being frustrated with mainstream schools:

Natalie: I was going to say, I think something else I know that we've also seen in the past that was quite frustrating… there was one case I can think of in particular where the school hadn't put any support in place, prior to that young person coming to us and I contacted the school and said 'has this young person seen your EP?' and they said 'well no because he doesn't have any needs' and I just didn't understand it because what they were saying was he was such high priority and behaviour was so poor that he didn't meet the criteria for him to see the educational psychologist because they felt he didn't have any umm learning needs and I know we've seen a couple like that in the past which is also quite frustrating, especially when you've got a young person that's such high priority and that you're really concerned about, I just don't get why a young person wouldn't have access to an EP within a school.

Laura: Yeah… I think… yeah, I agree… I think sometimes people see EPs as… when we're thinking about our role in learning needs, as just being you know 'do they have literacy difficulties' or cognitive difficulties. You can have a young person who doesn't have those needs, but still where there are those barriers to engaging in learning and… that's a huge it's just a huge thing to unpick. (1, 27-28)

the primary school weren't willing to make the EHCNA request because they didn't think he needed, despite everyone else saying 'he needs it' … 'we need to break the cycle' and kind of… yeah… um and it was actually another service that were involved, that were supporting Mum to make a parental request that actually Louise was involved in supporting them to fill out the form, because you've done so many of them. (1, 96)

unfortunately we've had a bit of a case in the last two weeks… they excluded him without him going back… we had a big meeting with the parents, they weren't happy he was going back, he refused to go back, they excluded him within two days, without him setting foot in the school, and I was like… goodness. (5, 57)

you've done your bit but that's actually that's something that needs to change at the other end and needs to be… the school needs to be held to account for that because… yeah, I think that the cultures changing in the borough but in the process of change becomes young people who fall through the cracks in that change and that's the sad thing I think, the hard thing. (5, 58)

They commissioned the work, she's dual reg…umm but yeah, she struggles to stay in a classroom, because there's so much anxiety, and there's so much going on for her, that actually the behaviour was coming out, and you know to the point where she was excluded during year 7… and was supposed to be at the PRU for six weeks and has been there a full year (laughs)… yeah, another issue. (1, 32)

then once they get them in the door you find that the EP time just doesn't really happen. And what I find is you just get more frustrated, and I just say this kid's already waited, they're in year 10, you know and so I just I put them on our books, and we end up using our EP time. (1, 21)

although I have to say that this school did also want to unpick whether there was any learning needs… and they did prioritise … well they didn't prioritise her… they got me involved just before she was about to be kicked out but yeah… I think schools just see the behaviour, and they see the EP as role as being narrower than what I think it is. (1, 34)

from having been relatively recently moved from working in mainstream schools to working at the PRU, I feel… I always think about the big contrast because I don't think I'd met an educational psychologist before working at the PRU although they would have been involved somehow in the background with our very stripped bare SEN department, ermm, I think it's incredibly valuable to have yeah, such direct access and close working relationships with educational psychologists. (2, 5)

I couldn't believe the email… that there's already been an exclusion, how can someone be excluded when they haven't been in school! (2, 49)

Covid

Examples of different ways of working during Covid were discussed, and the positive consequences of this:

we started doing sort of like the supervision side of things back in lockdown… because we were visiting students 3 times a week… we actually felt for some of these staff who were at home on their own but making these phone calls, where did they then have somewhere to think about what had been said to them. (5, 11)

we couldn't come in to do that 1-1 direct assessment, so you thought, I suppose you had that kind of umm backing from people in the school, ok so we have these EP hours, how are we going to use them? Let's use them… in this way, and then we tried that out and people became comfortable with it and then it's continued into this term. (5, 23)

I think on the other side of that we realised that during lockdown would be a really good time for you to do some training sessions with the tutors who often don't really get much access to CPD, although they're invited to join in when they can, they're on a casual hours contract so it's not quite the same as the permanent staff, but because of lockdown, they were able to join in umm those, I think you did pretty much weekly sessions, during the second half of the summer term, and they absolutely loved that you know, the feedback, they were so thrilled to have that training and they talk about it all the time, so I think that was one of the positives of the Covid situation, that they got something that they you know it would have been really difficult to have the time to do that. (4, 26)

a sort of unplanned positive consequence as well because obviously the tutors work very in isolation a lot as you say they're out and about in students homes, or libraries and stuff so the concept of team is quite tricky, there's no timetabled team meeting or anything like that, but that bringing them together for that training, I think really helped to foster the team spirit, and interestingly, very recently we've introduced the whole concept of online teaching, via you know google meets, and the tuition team were actually the first ones to pilot it, because we thought they'd be the first ones who'd need it the most and actually they worked absolutely brilliantly as a team to support each other so those with more technical knowledge supported the others and it's only just occurred to me that actually that could be a consequence of coming together as a team, once a week for that training, although it was virtual but they were still all seeing each other in a way that they would never have done before and that sense of togetherness, I've had several emails from them this term saying you know 'we do feel part of a team' 'we feel that we're a community'. (4, 38)

it's one of the good things about covid actually, it's made me think in a way that's not so hyped on Ofsted and does it look good its more about was it meaningful, and maybe just keeping things less is more you know umm, just keeping things a little bit simpler, I mean Caroline when you drew out the person-centred outcomes, you know that piece of work for a student was more helpful than a lot that we've done as a school in terms of reports etc that a child never sees umm and never gets to give a view on, the fact that they were there and formulated that report umm has to be more meaningful. (3, 79)

However, participants also noted the ongoing uncertainty around Covid: "I haven't actually got any real plans at this moment in time, because I think part of me is a bit like I'm not quite sure what January is going to be looking like" (5, 103). The ongoing impact of Covid was also highlighted:

we put in a bid from the Mayor of London's fund, and it's specifically for PRUs and it's to give sort of additional support, particularly for year 11 students, to, it's kind of a covid thing, obviously students have missed a lot of their education. (4, 14)

Appendix T: Table of additional relevant studies identified for discussion (chapter 6) when original search terms from preliminary literature search (figure 7) were re-run on EBSCOhost on 08.04.21

Full reference	Participants, sample and method
Boyd, R. (2021). Black boys' experiences of exclusion and reintegration in mainstream secondary schools. *Educational and Child Psychology, 38*(2), 52-70	Interviews with 6 male secondary aged pupils of African or African-Caribbean descent. All had experienced external exclusion followed by reintegration to mainstream – IPA study.

Caslin, M. (2021). 'they have just given up on me' how pupils labelled with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties (sebd) experience the process of exclusion from school. *Support for Learning*. *36*(1), 116-132.

13 in-depth case studies of CYP excluded drawing on perspectives of 13 pupils (through a range of creative tools such as graffiti walls, storytelling, interviews and life grids), 10 parents (interviews) and 10 teachers (interviews) – constructivist grounded theory approach.

Demie, F. (2021). The experience of Black Caribbean pupils in school exclusion in England. *Educational Review*, *73*(1), 55–70.

Semi-structured one-to-one interviews with headteachers, teachers, parents, pupils and EPs. Focus groups: 19 focus groups (including on average 4 people each) comprised of 14 Black Caribbean parents, 15 teachers, 17 governors, 8 SENCos, 5 EPs and 20 school staff, including TAs and learning mentors.

Facey, D., Holliman, A., Waldeck, D., & Wilson-Smith, K. (2020). Exploring the experience of mainstream education: Perspectives from pupils in alternative provision schooling with social, emotional or mental health difficulties. *Psychology of Education Review*, *44*(2), 99–101.

Semi-structured interviews with 3 13-14 year old pupils attending AP – IPA study.

Greenhalgh, R., Fflur, S., Donnelly, K., Kirkaldie, H., & McDonnell, L. (2020). An evaluation of the impact of attachment and trauma training for pupil referral unit staff. *Developmental Child Welfare*, *2*(2), 75-91.

Attachment and trauma-informed training delivered to 4 PRUs in Wales – 64 staff members, self-reported knowledge and confidence measures pre-training, post-training and post skills development sessions.

Page, D. (2021). Family engagement in alternative provision. *British Educational Research Journal*, *47*(1), 65–84.

Semi-structured interviews with 23 school staff across 5 AP settings (primary and secondary), ranging from TAs, headteachers, and pastoral and attendance staff.

Appendix U: Summary of findings and guidance document circulated to participants (draft)

A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective (Blyth, 2021)

Brief findings and a reflective guide for EPs and commissioners

Study aims and methods

This study aimed to explore 'successful' EP practice in KS4 PRUs and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this. Taking a grounded theory (GT) approach (Charmaz, 2014), 5 joint interviews were conducted with EPs and commissioners of EPs working in KS4 PRU settings. 12 participants (6 EPs and 6 commissioners) from 5 London boroughs were included.

Summary of findings

Findings (represented in the GT diagram above) frame the EP/commissioner relationship as a 'parental relationship' and highlight the impact of this on all other aspects of the system or 'family'. Relationships across the 'family' were seen as fundamental for facilitating change and joint working, reflection and learning across relationships was key. The importance of shared core values, goals, approaches and language were highlighted, such as strengths-based approaches, prioritising CYP involvement and agency, flexibly supporting needs, going above and beyond, taking a systemic approach and planning for positive futures. Literature relating to the idea of 'containment' within APs was reviewed after the theory was initially formed. This was due to the central role of containment within parenting and its link to many of the categories. Consequently, related psychodynamic ideas linking emotions, thinking and learning were also drawn on when discussing the GT and implications for practice. For a list of related references and further reading, please see the end of this document.

Guide to GT diagram (p. 1)

Within this GT there are 12 theoretical categories, each represented by a coloured section on the diagram. The GT diagram shows how categories are linked using arrows. Each category is numbered, and the first three categories, presented in capitals at the top, were found to have a strong influence and connection to all subsequent categories. Codes within categories 3&5 have also been included as these were particularly pertinent to the GT. Plain black text, outside the colour coded sections, demonstrate examples of specific practical approaches used by participants.

Purpose of this document

This document outlines a summary of each theoretical category. Based on the GT it also presents questions to guide the development of a positive working relationship and reflection between EPs and commissioners working in PRUs. It is the hope that this document can support development of practice in these settings and enhance joint reflection skills. You may consider using this for your own professional development or jointly in your planning meetings, and when contracting and reviewing work together. While this is particularly relevant for EPs working in PRUs and APs, this document may also prove useful for those considering their role in other educational provisions.

Theoretical category	Key findings	Practice questions to consider
1. POSITIVE 'PARENTAL' RELATIONSHIP - COLLABORATIVE AND OPEN	Close and valued relationship between EP and commissioner, which is honest, open, reflective and comfortable. Importance of humour and informal spaces to connect and support each other. This relationship both impacts and is influenced by all others in the system, much like a parental relationship within a family.	How often do you have check-ins with each other? Do you foster opportunities for informal relationship building e.g. coffee breaks together? Do you foster honesty and reflection in your relationship? Does it feel safe to give feedback to each other? What has helped or could help foster this? What helps build a sense that you are 'working together'? What has led to examples of successful joint working between you?
2. SHARED CORE VALUES, GOALS, APPROACH AND LANGUAGE	Importance of shared values, goals, approach and language between EP and commissioner, particularly relating to how 'needs' and SEND are conceptualised, having a shared ethos around 'success' and the type of support CYP need. These shared values influence the work completed and the rest of the system, just like the impact of shared values and approaches between parents.	Do your values align? How do you know? Are there opportunities to discuss and agree on work ethos and values? How do you contract the EP work? How do you agree goals and review them together? How do you talk about SEND? What is the vision of the PRU in how you conceptualise the young people's needs and goals? How does the EP feed into thinking about EHCPs/SEND support at the setting?
3. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE 'FAMILY'	Importance of relationships across the 'family', including how the EP is positioned and how this might impact relationships with, and between, staff, families, CYP and across agencies. The importance of the EP fostering staff trust and respect and supporting development of staff relationships with CYP and families. The quality of the EP-commissioner relationship impacts other relational patterns, just like parents within a family.	How is the EP positioned in the system? How is this communicated to the wider staff and students? How 'visible' and accessible is the EP in the setting? How are relationships between staff and EP being positively fostered? How do you work together to foster relationships with CYP and families? Do families feel included and listened to as part of your work together? How are you supporting staff to develop these relationships? What systems are in place to improve multi-agency working? How can the EP support this?

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4. Nurturing wider environment - systemic focus	Focus on systemic and strategic work, alongside individual work, to benefit a wider range of students. Creating a joined up and collaborative 'whole school' approach. Consideration of racial inequality and allowing space to reflect on this in relation to the work. This links to how parents create and shape the wider environment around a child, to impact their development.	Is there scope for the EP to be involved in work around systems and processes? If so, what's been helpful about this work, or how would you like to develop it? Are systems and processes at the setting containing for staff and students? Are there aspects which you would like to improve? How do you reflect on aspects of identity e.g. race and culture and how does this impact your work with each other and with staff and students?
Relationships as a tool for change and intervention / Trust / Trauma and intergenerational needs / **5. Internal working model - rebuilding trust and expectations**	Relationships are a tool for change and intervention and each interaction with a staff member or other adult is an opportunity to reframe YPs views and expectations of the world. Past trauma, and intergenerational needs across the family, must be considered when building trust. Links to the impact of parental relationships on a child's development of their 'internal working model' – a blueprint for how they view themselves and the world around them.	How do you focus on empowering those working closest to young people? Do you view every situation and relationship as an opportunity for learning for both the CYP and team around them? How could you do this more? What do you do to help foster trust across your setting, and especially with your young people and families? How are intergenerational needs thought about with the families you work with? How does an attachment and trauma-informed approach impact your work?
6. Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency	Importance of prioritising CYP's involvement in their education, support and future planning. Providing space to listen to CYP, engaging in holistic and person-centred practice and empowering CYP with agency, parity and self-reflection skills. Links to adolescent development, and the need for parents to navigate CYPs increased desire for independence and autonomy.	Are you adopting a democratic and person-centred approach with students at the PRU? Have you considered using some person-centred planning techniques such as PATH with children and families? How are you empowering student voice and how could be doing this more? How do you help CYP have a sense of agency over decisions about them? Do you use a model of pupil focus meetings or anything similar? How do you help staff think about what might be going on for students? Do you advocate for a 'mentalising' approach?

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	Participants and staff jointly listening, reflecting, reviewing practice, and being open to change is vital. Slowing down, and avoiding reactive practice leads to successful practice. Consultation is helpful for facilitating reflection, learning and change. Links to the focus parents have on helping CYP learn and develop, through engagement in and reflection on everyday circumstances and relationships.	What spaces currently exist to facilitate joint reflection between and among staff? Are CYP included in opportunities for reflection and learning? How could you do this more? Have you considered using restorative approaches? Is there opportunity for families to take part in reflective spaces? If not, what would you need to facilitate this? Is reflection seen as an important part of multi-agency collaboration? As part of reflective opportunities, how much do you pay attention to unconscious processes at play for the staff, CYP and families at the PRU?
7. Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development		
8. Acknowledging and containing difficulty	Acknowledging the complexities and pressures of PRUs, including difficulties engaging YP and families. Links to the criminal justice system and other negative outcomes were highlighted. Relational skills helped the EP act as an emotional container for the system. Links to the containing role parents play in supporting CYP through challenging circumstances and emotions.	How are the staff, young people and families currently being 'contained' and 'held'? How are YPs and families' difficulties heard and acknowledged? What ways have been successful in engaging YP and families, and the systems around them? How are links with social care and the criminal justice system managed and is there anything you'd like to change in this area? Is there opportunity for staff supervision? Is the senior leadership team currently feeling 'heard' and contained? What else might help the system feel more contained? Are there strong systems and processes in place for when challenges arise?
9. Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond	Staff (including EP and commissioner) offered a flexible approach, providing ongoing support and not giving up on YP. The importance of responding to individual needs and going 'above and beyond' was highlighted. Links to how attuned parents respond to YPs needs and the lengths that parents will go to do this, responding flexibly to ensure they are happy and healthy.	If staff are going 'above and beyond' for young people and families, how are they being supported in this work? What do staff need to be able to respond in this flexible, individualised way? How do you think together with and involve families in this flexible approach to meeting their YPs needs? How do you manage taking this flexible approach with your EP? Is there enough flexibility in your relationship to facilitate the type of support that these YP and families need? What do you both need to ensure this?

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10. Seeing the best in children	Participants saw the YP they were working with in a positive light and approached their work with them accordingly. This involved taking a strengths-based and solution focussed approach, planning future work through a hopeful lens, and shifting the narrative around YP to a more positive one. Links to the idea of shared parental values and language, parents 'seeing the best' in their children and encouraging their full potential.	How is a strengths-based approach and perspective adopted at the PRU? Where could this be helpful and how could you do this more? How are you empowering YP to know their strengths? Are you adopting solution-focussed approaches in your practice? If so, when has this been helpful? If not, how could this be helpful? What sort of narrative are you encouraging around the CYP in your setting? What language is used and why? How are you helping to shift the narratives about them?
11. Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures	Participants showed passionate vision to equip YP for successful futures, where they could thrive. This involved facilitating successful transitions into and out of the PRU, whether that be reintegration to mainstream or preparing for life post-16 in the community/further education, employment or training. Relationships and YP involvement were key. This links to how parents hope and dream for their children- supporting them to be positive, healthy, successful and safe adults.	What induction processes do you have in place for when YP arrive? Are there any other ways the EP can support with these? When YP arrive, how do you discuss vision and goals for their future? How do you involve them in these decisions and processes and how else would you like to develop this area of work? How are YP supported in their transitions out of the PRU? What works in this process and what would you like to develop? How are relationships in the PRU equipping YP for life after the PRU? What else would like to harness in this area?
12. Impacted by resources, external pressures and 'parental' support network	Recognition of the impact of financial and resource pressures, Covid, support from the wider system/SLT in the setting and practice in mainstream settings. These factors were thought to impact the success of the work carried out by EP & commissioner. Joined up vision and goals were seen as key. Links to the pressure parents feel if family income and support is stretched, or there are challenging relationships in the wider family.	How embedded is your EP within wider leadership at the PRU? Do the senior leadership team share your vision and values for the work? If not, what do you think could help shift this? What are your working relationships like with the mainstream settings in your borough? How would you like to develop these? Consider common educational patterns (in mainstream or previous provision) CYP in the PRU have experienced. Considering the time and resources available to you, are these being used efficiently and to reach as many CYP as possible?

Blyth, F. (2021). *A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective.* (unpublished thesis).

Examples of successful practice tools/strategies in findings and literature
☐ Person-centred planning tools e.g. PATH. Strategies which model reflection and involve CYP in the process.
☐ Pupil focus meetings – placing CYP perspective and experience at centre of discussion, may involve feedback from EP.
☐ Systemic projects and organisational change projects looking at PRU systems and processes e.g. designing a new induction process alongside the EP.
☐ Work discussion groups for staff.
☐ Individual and group supervision for staff.
☐ Encouraging a 'mentalising' approach in team around CYP and parents – considering the YPs perspective.
☐ Reflective staff consultation groups and regular drop-in sessions with the EP.
☐ Multi-disciplinary reflective meetings to discuss CYPs needs - encouraging joint perspectives and working.
☐ Use of personal development and planning tools with CYP to encourage development of planning and executive function skills e.g setting and reviewing personal development goals.
☐ EP providing strategic reflective support to SLT.
☐ Using consistent adult relationships to provide support to CYP – harnessing power of close and trusted relationships.
☐ Supporting CYP to identify their values and strengths through 1-1 work e.g. with ELSA.
☐ Shifting the language around SEND – empowering CYP with knowledge about their strengths and needs through feedback.
☐ Using reflective practice in staff training, taking a 'so-what' approach to training content and tailoring it to the setting's needs.
☐ The EP having a regular presence on site, to build staff trust.
☐ Using consultation to acknowledge staff expertise, validate the challenges of the work, and empower staff agency in meeting CYPs needs.
☐ Creating safe spaces for staff to process challenges and emotions of work and feel contained.
☐ Using restorative approaches with CYP and staff – modelling thinking and reflection to rebuild relationships.
☐ Going above and beyond to build relationships and trust with families e.g. home visits and food parcels during Covid-19 lockdown – EP supporting this work through supervision.
☐ Empowering families' involvement in EP work and listening to their perspective e.g. attending pupil focus meetings
☐ Continuing to provide support to CYP and families after they have left the setting.
☐ Supporting families with paperwork around EHCPs etc and liaising with professional networks. Providing support to wider family to prevent further cycles of exclusion in siblings, for example.
☐ Regular action planning and review meetings between EP and relevant staff, to monitor and track impact.

Blyth, F. (2021). *A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective.* (unpublished thesis).

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Appendix V: Summary of findings and guidance document (amended based on participants feedback) – work in progress, to be circulated post viva

THEORY: EP & COMMISSIONER AS 'PARENTS'

Blyth, F. (2021). *A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective.* (Unpublished thesis).

2. SHARED CORE VALUES, GOALS, APPROACH AND LANGUAGE

INFLUENCING

1. POSITIVE 'PARENTAL' RELATIONSHIP - COLLABORATIVE AND OPEN

INFLUENCING

3. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE 'FAMILY'

12. Impacted by resources, external pressures and 'parental' support network

Differing perspectives/ priorities among staff

Multi-agency working

Working together as a team/positive relationships

EP in the system?

Fostering staff engagement, trust and respect

Student-staff relationships

Relationships with families

CYP/EP relationship

Building shared understanding and approach

9. Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond

6. Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency

4. Nurturing wider environment - systemic focus

Relationships as a tool for change and intervention

Trust

Trauma and inter-generational needs

Shifting the narrative around CYP

Helping CYP identify strengths

Solution focussed practice

Person-centred planning
Pupil focus meetings
Pupil voice

7. Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development

5. Internal working model - rebuilding trust and expectations

Consultation approach – empowering staff

10. Seeing the best in children

11. Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures

8. Acknowledging and containing difficulty

EP providing emotional containment for system. Supporting staff to further understand and contain student's needs.

Positive interactions with EP and staff - providing CYP & families with opportunities to experience people and the world differently.

Focus on transitions in and out – 'end from the beginning'

A grounded theory of successful Educational Psychology practice in Key Stage 4 Pupil Referral Units: a jointly constructed perspective (Blyth, 2021)

Brief findings and a reflective guide for EPs and commissioners

Study aims and methods

This study aimed to explore 'successful' EP practice in KS4 PRUs and to identify and explain the mechanisms and factors that can facilitate this. Taking a grounded theory (GT) approach (Charmaz, 2014), 5 joint interviews were conducted with EPs and commissioners of EPs working in KS4 PRU settings. 12 participants (6 EPs and 6 commissioners) from 5 London boroughs were included.

Summary of findings

Findings (represented in the GT diagram above) frame the EP and commissioner as 'parents', who hold a parental role and function in the system and impact all other aspects of the system or 'family'. Relationships across the 'family' were seen as fundamental for facilitating change through developing trust, joint working, reflection and learning. The importance of shared core values, goals, approaches and language were highlighted, such as strengths-based approaches, prioritising CYP involvement and agency, flexibly supporting needs, going above and beyond, taking a systemic approach and planning for positive futures. Literature relating to the idea of 'containment' within APs was reviewed after the theory was initially formed. This was due to the central role of containment within parenting and its link to many of the categories. Consequently, ideas relating to systems psychodynamics (Neumann, 1993; Eloquin, 2016) were also drawn on when discussing the GT and implications for practice. For a list of related references and further reading, please see the end of this document.

Guide to GT diagram (p. 1)

Within this GT there are 12 theoretical categories, each represented by a coloured section on the diagram. The GT diagram shows how categories are linked using arrows. Each category is numbered, and the first three categories, presented in capitals at the top, were found to have a strong influence and connection to all subsequent categories. Codes within categories 3&5 have also been included as these were particularly pertinent to the GT. Plain black text, outside the colour coded sections, demonstrate examples of specific practical approaches used by participants.

Using this document

This document outlines a summary of each theoretical category. Based on the GT it also presents questions to guide the development of a positive working relationship between EPs and commissioners working in PRUs. It is hoped it can support development of practice and enhance joint reflection skills. You may consider using this for your own professional development or jointly in your planning meetings, and when contracting and reviewing work together. For ease of use, it is recommended that you start by focusing on one or two categories which feel most pertinent to your work. While this is particularly relevant for EPs working in PRUs and APs, this document may also prove useful for those considering their role in other educational provisions.

Theoretical category	Key findings	Practice questions to consider
1. POSITIVE 'PARENTAL' RELATIONSHIP - COLLABORATIVE AND OPEN	Close and valued relationship between EP and commissioner, which is honest, open, reflective and comfortable. Importance of humour and informal spaces to connect and support each other. This relationship both impacts and is influenced by all others in the system, much like a parental relationship within a family.	How often do you have check-ins with each other? Do you foster opportunities for informal relationship building e.g. coffee breaks together? Do you foster honesty and reflection in your relationship? Does it feel safe to give feedback to each other? What has helped or could help foster this? What helps build a sense that you are 'working together'? What has led to examples of successful joint working between you?
2. SHARED CORE VALUES, GOALS, APPROACH AND LANGUAGE	Importance of shared values, goals, approach and language between EP and commissioner, particularly relating to how 'needs' and SEND are conceptualised, having a shared ethos around 'success' and the type of support CYP need. These shared values influence the work completed and the rest of the system, just like the impact of shared values and approaches between parents.	Do your values align? How do you know? Are there opportunities to discuss and agree on work ethos and values? How do you contract the EP work? How do you agree goals and review them together? How do you talk about SEND? What is the vision of the PRU in how you conceptualise the young people's needs and goals? How does the EP feed into thinking about EHCPs/SEND support at the setting?
3. RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION ACROSS THE 'FAMILY'	Importance of relationships across the 'family', including how the EP is positioned and how this might impact relationships with, and between, staff, families, CYP and across agencies. The importance of the EP fostering staff trust and respect and supporting development of staff relationships with CYP and families. The quality of the EP-commissioner relationship impacts other relational patterns, just like parents within a family.	How is the EP positioned in the system? How is this communicated to the wider staff and students? How 'visible' and accessible is the EP in the setting? How are relationships between staff and EP being positively fostered? How do you work together to foster relationships with CYP and families? Do families feel included and listened to as part of your work together? How are you supporting staff to develop these relationships? What systems are in place to improve multi-agency working? How can the EP support this?

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4. Nurturing wider environment - systemic focus	Focus on systemic and strategic work, alongside individual work, to benefit a wider range of students. Creating a joined up and collaborative 'whole school' approach. Consideration of racial inequality and allowing space to reflect on this in relation to the work. This links to how parents create and shape the wider environment around a child, to impact their development.	Is there scope for the EP to be involved in work around systems and processes? If so, what's been helpful about this work, or how would you like to develop it? Are systems and processes at the setting containing for staff and students? Are there aspects which you would like to improve? How do you reflect on aspects of identity e.g. race and culture and how does this impact your work with each other and with staff and students?
Relationships as a tool for change and intervention / Trust / Trauma and intergenerational needs / **5. Internal working model - rebuilding trust and expectations**	Relationships are a tool for change and intervention and each interaction with a staff member or other adult is an opportunity to reframe YPs views and expectations of the world. Past trauma, and intergenerational needs across the family, must be considered when building trust. Links to the impact of parental relationships on a child's development of their 'internal working model' – a blueprint for how they view themselves and the world around them.	How do you focus on empowering those working closest to young people? Do you view every situation and relationship as an opportunity for learning for both the CYP and team around them? How could you do this more? What do you do to help foster trust across your setting, and especially with your young people and families? How are intergenerational needs thought about with the families you work with? How does an attachment and trauma-informed approach impact your work?
6. Prioritising CYP involvement: empowerment and agency	Importance of prioritising CYP's involvement in their education, support and future planning. Providing space to listen to CYP, engaging in holistic and person-centred practice and empowering CYP with agency, parity and self-reflection skills. Links to adolescent development, and the need for parents to navigate CYPs increased desire for independence and autonomy.	Are you adopting a democratic and person-centred approach with students at the PRU? Have you considered using some person-centred planning techniques such as PATH with children and families? How are you empowering student voice and how could be doing this more? How do you help CYP have a sense of agency over decisions about them? Do you use a model of pupil focus meetings or anything similar? How do you help staff think about what might be going on for students? Do you advocate for a 'mentalising' approach?

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7. Joint reflection to facilitate learning and development	Participants and staff jointly listening, reflecting, reviewing practice, and being open to change is vital. Slowing down, and avoiding reactive practice leads to successful practice. Consultation is helpful for facilitating reflection, learning and change. Links to the focus parents have on helping CYP learn and develop, through engagement in and reflection on everyday circumstances and relationships.	What spaces currently exist to facilitate joint reflection between and among staff? Are CYP included in opportunities for reflection and learning? How could you do this more? Have you considered using restorative approaches? Is there opportunity for families to take part in reflective spaces? If not, what would you need to facilitate this? Is reflection seen as an important part of multi-agency collaboration? As part of reflective opportunities, how much do you pay attention to unconscious processes at play for the staff, CYP and families at the PRU?
8. Acknowledging and containing difficulty	Acknowledging the complexities and pressures of PRUs, including difficulties engaging YP and families. Links to the criminal justice system and other negative outcomes were highlighted. Relational skills helped the EP act as an emotional container for the system. Links to the containing role parents play in supporting CYP through challenging circumstances and emotions.	How are the staff, young people and families currently being 'contained' and 'held'? How are YPs and families' difficulties heard and acknowledged? What ways have been successful in engaging YP and families, and the systems around them? How are links with social care and the criminal justice system managed and is there anything you'd like to change in this area? Is there opportunity for staff supervision? Is the senior leadership team currently feeling 'heard' and contained? What else might help the system feel more contained? Are there strong systems and processes in place for when challenges arise?
9. Flexible, responsive to needs, going above and beyond	Staff (including EP and commissioner) offered a flexible approach, providing ongoing support and not giving up on YP. The importance of responding to individual needs and going 'above and beyond' was highlighted. Links to how attuned parents respond to YPs needs and the lengths that parents will go to, to do this, responding flexibly to ensure they are happy and healthy.	If staff are going 'above and beyond' for young people and families, how are they being supported in this work? What do staff need to be able to respond in this flexible, individualised way? How do you think together with and involve families in this flexible approach to meeting their YPs needs? How do you manage taking this flexible approach with your EP? Is there enough flexibility in your relationship to facilitate the type of support that these YP and families need? What do you both need to ensure this?

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10. Seeing the best in children	Participants saw the YP they were working with in a positive light and approached their work with them accordingly. This involved taking a strengths-based and solution focussed approach, planning future work through a hopeful lens, and shifting the narrative around YP to a more positive one. Links to the idea of shared parental values and language, parents 'seeing the best' in their children and encouraging their full potential.	How is a strengths-based approach and perspective adopted at the PRU? Where could this be helpful and how could you do this more? How are you empowering YP to know their strengths? Are you adopting solution-focussed approaches in your practice? If so, when has this been helpful? If not, how could this be helpful? What sort of narrative are you encouraging around the CYP in your setting? What language is used and why? How are you helping to shift the narratives about them?
11. Big dreams - planning for positive and successful futures	Participants showed passionate vision to equip YP for successful futures, where they could thrive. This involved facilitating successful transitions into and out of the PRU, whether that be reintegration to mainstream or preparing for life post-16 in the community/further education, employment or training. Relationships and YP involvement were key. This links to how parents hope and dream for their children - supporting them to be positive, healthy, successful and safe adults.	What induction processes do you have in place for when YP arrive? Are there any other ways the EP can support with these? When YP arrive, how do you discuss vision and goals for their future? How do you involve them in these decisions and processes and how else would you like to develop this area of work? How are YP supported in their transitions out of the PRU? What works in this process and what would you like to develop? How are relationships in the PRU equipping YP for life after the PRU? What else would you like to harness in this area?
12. Impacted by resources, external pressures and 'parental' support network	Recognition of the impact of financial and resource pressures, Covid, support from the wider system/SLT in the setting and practice in mainstream settings. These factors were thought to impact the success of the work carried out by EP & commissioner. Joined up vision and goals were seen as key. Links to the pressure parents feel if family income and support is stretched, or there are challenging relationships in the wider family.	How embedded is your EP within wider leadership at the PRU? Do the senior leadership team share your vision and values for the work? If not, what do you think could help shift this? What are your working relationships like with the mainstream settings in your borough? How would you like to develop these? Consider common educational patterns (in mainstream or previous provision) CYP in the PRU have experienced. Considering the time and resources available to you, are these being used efficiently and to reach as many CYP as possible?

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Examples of successful practice tools/strategies in findings and literature

- ☐ Person-centred planning tools e.g. PATH. Strategies which model reflection and involve CYP in the process.
- ☐ Pupil focus meetings – placing CYP perspective and experience at centre of discussion, may involve feedback from EP.
- ☐ Systemic projects and organisational change projects looking at PRU systems and processes e.g. designing a new induction process alongside the EP.
- ☐ Work discussion groups for staff.
- ☐ Individual and group supervision for staff.
- ☐ Encouraging a 'mentalising' approach in team around CYP and parents – considering the YPs perspective.
- ☐ Reflective staff consultation groups and regular drop-in sessions with the EP.
- ☐ Multi-disciplinary reflective meetings to discuss CYPs needs - encouraging joint perspectives and working.
- ☐ Use of personal development and planning tools with CYP to encourage development of planning and executive function skills e.g setting and reviewing personal development goals.
- ☐ EP providing strategic reflective support to SLT.
- ☐ Using consistent adult relationships to provide support to CYP – harnessing power of close and trusted relationships.
- ☐ Supporting CYP to identify their values and strengths through 1-1 work e.g. with ELSA.
- ☐ Shifting the language around SEND – empowering CYP with knowledge about their strengths and needs through feedback.
- ☐ Using reflective practice in staff training, taking a 'so-what' approach to training content and tailoring it to the setting's needs.
- ☐ The EP having a regular presence on site, to build staff trust.
- ☐ Using consultation to acknowledge staff expertise, validate the challenges of the work, and empower staff agency in meeting CYPs needs.
- ☐ Creating safe spaces for staff to process challenges and emotions of work and feel contained.
- ☐ Using restorative approaches with CYP and staff – modelling thinking and reflection to rebuild relationships.
- ☐ Going above and beyond to build relationships and trust with families e.g. home visits and food parcels during Covid-19 lockdown – EP supporting this work through supervision.
- ☐ Empowering families' involvement in EP work and listening to their perspective e.g. attending pupil focus meetings
- ☐ Continuing to provide support to CYP and families after they have left the setting.
- ☐ Supporting families with paperwork around EHCPs etc and liaising with professional networks. Providing support to wider family to prevent further cycles of exclusion in siblings, for example.
- ☐ Regular action planning and review meetings between EP and relevant staff, to monitor and track impact.

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