

**A CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL
PSYCHOLOGISTS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STATUTORY ASSESSMENT OF
CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLES' SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS POST-2014
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Leading up to and following the 2014 Children and Families Act and 2015 Code of Practice (CoP) (Department of Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH), 2015), the activity of educational psychologists' (EPs') statutory psychological assessment has been viewed critically within literature (e.g. Lamb, 2009; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Buck, 2015). The current research explores EPs' and special educational needs and disability (SEND) officers' understanding of this activity considering the 2014/2015 policy reforms.

Case study methodology is adopted, using a single local authority (LA) where, despite ongoing development work, EPs remain critical of assessment processes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted using Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT, Engeström, 1999b) to understand how each group construct this activity. Identified contradictions within the data were taken forward in a Development Work Research (DWR) Lab (Engeström, 2007) to address and resolve key contradictions through the creation of a shared action.

The findings illustrate a range of professional and policy-based contradictions which may have contributed to these criticisms. Over time, EPs' practice has remained constant in its recognised strengths but identified contradictions in historic literature remained evident. Actions moving forward sought to redevelop graduated assessment processes, promote stronger multi-professional working, strengthen annual review processes and create effective methods for efficient data collection.

DEDICATION

To my sister Shauna who has done more for me than can be captured in a single dedication.

Thank you for the selfless decision you made and for the love and strength you show me each day.

To my partner Luke. Thank you making me laugh and smile every day and for keeping me going on the tough days. You have helped me to remember the bigger picture through the last three years and to stop and take a break when I have needed it.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CHAT	Cultural Historical Activity Theory
CoP	Code of Practice
CYP	Child(ren) and Young People/Person
DES	Department of Education and Science
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
DfE	Department of Education
DH	Department of Health
DWR	Development Work Research
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPs	Educational Psychologists
LA	Local Authority
LEA	Local Educational Authority
MBC	Metropolitan Borough Council
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
TA	Thematic Analysis

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Education, Health and Care Plans	<p>EHCPs were introduced into legislation in the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015). EHCPs sought to place Statements of SEN and draw together input from education, health and care professionals. Sections 1.2.1 and 3.2.2 outlines the content of these EHCPs in detail.</p>
Local Authority	<p>Within the CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) the term 'Local Authority' includes services for "education, housing, social care, employment and other services" (pg.13). For this volume, the 'LA services' which form the focus of inquiry encompass solely Seaview MBC's SEND officers who are responsible for writing the EHCPs, and Seaview SEND Service, which includes EPs.</p>
Special Educational Needs and Disability	<p>During this research, the term SEND refers to learning difficulties requiring additional support, as defined by the CoP which states that a CYP has SEND if they (DfE and DH, 2015, pg.15-16):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- <i>"have a learning difficulty of disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for him or her, or</i>- <i>have a significantly greater disability in learning than the majority of others of the same age, or</i>- <i>has a disability which prevents or hinders him or her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age in educational provisions"</i> <p>I recognise that the use and definition of SEND is a widely debated term (Terzi, 2005; Hodkinson, 2015) that brings associated risks of labelling and discrimination. Within this research, the term is used to ensure concordance with statutory policy and processes for the management of special education in England.</p>
Statements of SEN	<p>Statements of SEN were introduced into legislation in the 1981 Education Act and comprehensively outlined within the 1994 CoP (DfE, 1994). Within this code (DfE, 1994) Statements of SEN are drawn up where a CYP requires special educational provision beyond what can be reasonably provided within school resources. Section 3.2.1 outlines the content of these statements in detail.</p>
Statutory Assessment	<p>For this research, statutory assessment is defined as the LA process encompassed in Figure 1.2, starting from the person-centred meeting and ending with the formal EP statutory advice which contributes to the final EHCP. As part of this research, while prior casework was recognised as contributing to this process, statutory assessment was reported to begin at this timepoint. This decision also reflects the 'tell it once' approach outlined in the CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) and adopted by Seaview MBC wherein the initial statutory assessment report (informed by the person-centred meeting) can contribute to, or be used in full for, the statutory advice stage of the EHCP assessment process.</p>

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction to the Research

This volume presents research undertaken as part of a three-year (2017-2020) Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate professional training programme at the University of Birmingham.

This research focuses on the contribution of educational psychologists (EPs) to the statutory assessment process informing the construction of education, health, and care plans (EHCPs) (Department of Education (DfE) and Department of Health (DH), 2015) for children and young people (CYP)) with special educational needs and disability (SEND). Through the lens of Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) (Engeström, 1999a), I explore how this activity is conceptualised by EPs and SEND officers in one local authority (LA), 'Seaview Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC)'.

This chapter presents the personal, professional, local and political contexts, and expected knowledge contributions which shaped research aims and questions (Thomas, 2017).

1.2 Professional and Personal Interest

1.2.1 Special Educational Needs Support and Assessment

1.2.1 (i) Policy Leading up to 2014

Between the Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science (DES), 1978) and the 2015 Code of Practice (CoP) (DfE and DH, 2015), understanding of SEND, inclusion and the rights of parents/carers and CYP have undergone several developments, summarised in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1 A summary of key policy leading up to the 2014/2015 reforms

Key Documents	Warnock Report (DES, 1978) & 1981 Education Act	1993 Education Act & 1994 Code of Practice (DfE, 1994)	2001 SEN and Disability Act & 2001 Code of Practice (Department for Education and Skills; DfES)
Features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'Special educational needs' (SEN) and 'special educational provision - An appeals process for parents/carers - Annual reviews process - Statements of SEN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legal requirement for government to produce a 'code of practice' to guide Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and educational settings - 'Tribunals' as the formal terminology surrounding appeals - 1994 Code recognised key SEN categories for identifying need - Implemented five stages of intervention/assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disability policy was introduced into SEN policy - SEN categories of need were reduced to four and SEN graduated assessment stages were reduced to 'school action' and 'school action plus'
Position on Inclusion	<p>The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) adopts a position that while special schools have a place in SEN support, places were reserved for those children who could not be educated in mainstream placements.</p> <p>In the 1981 Act, placement in 'ordinary school' is encouraged so long as such a decision demonstrates efficient use of resources and effective provision is provided.</p>	<p><i>This policy was developed alongside the Salamanca Statement (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNESCO, 1994) which promoted mainstream placement over specialist.</i></p> <p>The Code reports that most CYP's SEN will be met within mainstream placement, with special schools again viewed as a final option of support.</p>	<p>The Code claimed to promote stronger rights for children to be educated in mainstream schools.</p>
Parent/Children's Rights	<p>Parents/carers were given the right to review draft versions of statements to ensure they were accurate and to appeal decisions they may be unhappy with in the assessment process.</p> <p>Children's views or rights are not detailed or specified.</p>	<p>Parents/carers rights remained largely consistent within the new Code and act.</p> <p><i>The Code was developed following the publication of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).</i></p> <p>The new Code detailed that within statutory assessment, some LAs would want to establish the views of children and these were placed within an appendix of the statement.</p>	<p>LEAs were required to provide services to parents/carers which supported and informed them of SEN processes and dispute resolution. Schools were also required to inform parents/carers when they were making SEN provision for their child.</p> <p>'Pupil participation' was given its own section. Pupils, where possible, were to be involved in decision-making processes and feel valued. All professionals should seek to ascertain pupil's views in their assessments (e.g. EPs). These views remained within the appendices.</p>
Recognised Strengths	<p>Warnock (2005) reflected on this policy as a driver in removing the labelling and stigma previously associated with SEN and disability.</p>	<p>Bines (2000) recognised that this code promoted the development of whole-school SEN policy.</p> <p>Lehane (2017) praised the accessible nature of the 1994 CoP which used language commonly adopted in schools, making it easy to read and follow.</p>	<p>Bines (2000) suggested this Code aimed to promote greater school responsibility for supporting pupils with SEN and aimed to reduce the number of Statements of SEN produced.</p>
Reported Limitations	<p>Barton (1988) criticised the policy changes for coming with no additional funding to support schools in this major policy change.</p> <p>Powell and Booker (1987) were notably critical of the 1981 Act. They criticised the within-child focus still adopted within the policy, alongside the absence of considerations such as a CYP's home/community within the Statement of SEN, the difficulty arising in distinguishing between needs and provision, and the absence of strengths within assessment.</p>	<p>The policy was seen to directly conflict with the education market forces culture of the time (MacBeath et al, 2006). The introduction of the National Curriculum directly conflicted with the Code's promotion of personalisation (Armstrong, 2005).</p> <p>Also, a report by the Audit Commission (2006) criticised the responsibility placed upon LEA SEN services regarding funding, leading to poor internal support for pupils with SEN.</p>	<p>Armstrong (2005) suggested the Code's promotion of CYP's voice provided a mechanism for controlling troublesome voices and was largely tokenistic in nature. This assertion was supported by the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) which conducted a comprehensive review of SEN practices. It found that statutory processes were notably stressful for parents/carers due to poor support and information. Statements of SEN were seen to be lacking and vague, supported by papers such as Cameron and Monsen (2005) and Warnock (2005). The enquiry (Lamb, 2009) also criticised the broad nature of outcomes within the statements.</p> <p>Despite previous intentions to reduce identification of SEN in CYP, numbers continued to rise (Norwich and Eaton, 2015).</p>

Table 1.1 demonstrates the policy developments which aimed to create a stronger, more effective system for recognising and supporting CYP with SEND, outlined further in Chapters 2 and 3 which consider historical influences. There has been growing focus on the rights of CYP and parents/carers, alongside increased ownership on LEAs, now encapsulated within the term LA (Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families, 2010), to provide stronger SEND support. However, these changes occurred within a contradictory era of austerity and cuts, making policy aims harder to meaningfully enact (MacBeath et al, 2006).

These policies have been subject to intensive scrutiny in academic papers. SEND policy has been seen to be lacking in its promotion of the rights of parents/carers and CYP (Lamb, 2009). Parents/carers were reported to be poorly informed of their rights and SEN procedures, and conflicting agendas between performance tables and personalised curriculum delivery had led to poor internal support for CYP with SEN (Bines, 2000; MacBeath et al, 2006). Statements of SEN were reported not to be fit for purpose (Warnock, 2005; Cameron and Monsen, 2005) producing broad outcomes or vague descriptions of CYP's needs.

Between 2001 and 2014, SEND policy remained largely unchanged, however several reviews and policies regarding education and equality were published. The 2003 Labour Government publication 'Every Child Matters' (DfES, 2003) ensured that every CYP had "the chance to fulfil their potential" (pg.6). Commitment was made to improving parent communication, promoting multi-disciplinary working and stronger information sharing, alongside a recognition that SEN support across the country varied widely. The report detailed the restructuring of LAs to create children's services which combined key services, e.g. EPs, under one service to achieve this agenda and promote an integrated service for CYP (DfES, 2003). Farrell et al (2006) positioned this as a "significant national strategic development" for EPs

(pg.7) which would place the profession “more centrally within community contexts” (pg.7). However, Hodkinson and Burch (2019) reflect that many of the plans put forward by this government were incompatible with the wider standards agenda.

A second notable policy is the Equality Act of 2010, one of the largest policy reforms regarding disability (Hodkinson, 2015). This policy introduced the legal concept of disability discrimination (Hodkinson, 2015) and set out clear expectations for schools in supporting pupils with ‘mental or physical impairment’.

However, in 2011, the Conservative-Liberal Democrat government of the time produced a document entitled ‘Support and aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability’ (DfE, 2011). This report presented criticisms of current SEN policy, stating that parents/carers found the SEN system “bureaucratic, bewildering and adversarial” (pg.4). CYP’s needs were often identified late and SEN continued to be overidentified. To address these criticisms, the government put forward multiple large-scale changes, detailed in the following section.

1.2.1 (ii) 2014/2015 Policy Reforms

The 2014 Children and Families Act introduced reforms across areas such as family justice and child welfare. Section 3 of the act introduced a new method of outlining the support CYP with SEND required across the areas of education, health and social care. The guidance moved from previous Statements of SEN to EHCPs which addressed health and social care needs more fully. The age range for which LAs remained responsible for providing for young people’s SEND was extended to 25, in lieu of the previous upper age limit of 19 years (DfE and DH, 2015). A summary of the key changes and practices within the Code can be found in Figure 1.1.

These new policies aimed to address previous concerns raised regarding the support and assessment of CYP with SEND (Table 1.1). The act incorporated the recommendations put forward within the Equality Act 2010 and Mental Capacity Act 2005 and included disability in its SEND terminology. Given previously raised concerns regarding the inequality of provision received by CYP, the Code (DfE and DH, 2015) aimed to create a single continuum of support (Hodkinson, 2015). The increased age range covered hoped to remove earlier criticisms of poor early identification of SEND and that some CYP experienced weak transitions into adult support or independent living (Hellowell, 2018).

The Code (DfE and DH, 2015) stated a greater commitment to the “participation of children and young people and parents/carers in decision-making” (DfE and DH, 2015, pg. 13) with dedicated sections to their inclusion at a strategic and individual level. Again, CYP must be consulted as part of statutory assessment procedures and their views should “sit at the heart of the assessment and planning process” (DfE and DH, 2015, pg.147), promoting person-centred practice. However, in a 2019 review of the process (Education Committee, 2019) it was highlighted that, despite previous criticism (Lamb, 2009), parents/carers continued to be poorly informed of their CYP's needs during statutory assessment and often secured independent reports to facilitate this process.

The requirement to capture the strengths and capabilities of a CYP within assessment, alongside their needs, was also recognised. While these changes have aimed to place CYP and parents/carers at the centre of assessment, rather than professionals (Hellowell, 2018), Hodkinson and Burch (2019) report that the policy continues to focus on within child models of disability.

General Changes

- Support now covers CYP aged 0-25 years, including guidance relating to disabled CYP as well as those with SEND
- Expectation that parents/carers and CYP should be included in strategic and individual decision making
- The development of a 'Local Offer', to provide clearer information for parents/carers in a single space which informs parents/carers and CYP about the SEND provision available within LAs across education, health and social care
- A graduated approach to identifying and supporting CYP with SEND termed 'Assess, Plan, Do, Review' and categorised as either 'SEN Support' or receipt of an EHCP (to replace School Action and School Action Plus)
- Class and subject teachers are given the primary responsibility to identify and support CYP making less than expected progress

Changes in Statutory Assessment

- Statements of SEN replaced by EHCPs, promoting collaboration between education, health and social care services
- Views and wishes of CYP are specifically included within Section A of the EHCP and the strengths of each CYP are also included in assessment
- Statutory assessment and EHCPs focus on producing SMART outcomes for CYP (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, time-bound)
- Focus is placed on preparing CYP for higher education and/or employment, independent living, participation in society and leading a healthy adult life
- Introduction of 'Personal Budgets', allowing parents/carers or CYP to secure their own provision as part of the EHCP
- Behaviour is no longer a recognised SEND category, instead using 'Social, Emotional, Mental Health'

Figure 1.1 A summary of the key changes made within the 2015 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2015)

Moreover, Warnock's (2005) concern that policy had been unsuccessful in removing the stigma associated with SEN remains relevant. Hodkinson and Burch (2019) argue that while SEND labels have changed in recent policy, they have done little "to inspire teachers to celebrate diversity" (pg.157) within the classroom.

Lehane (2017) reports the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) is 'relatively complex' and notably 'technical' in its language (pg.63), focussing on timescales and procedures rather than implementation. The policy is reported to be vague (Robinson et al, 2018) and lacking in practical content when compared to previous codes (Lehane, 2017). This has left the process

open to interpretation across LAs, producing a lack of uniformity in EHCP structure and the professional advice which guide them (Robinson et al, 2018).

In addition, the recommendations and vision put forward in the Code (DfE and DH, 2015) directly clashed with wider government policies occurring during a time of austerity (Lehane, 2017). Robinson et al (2018) reported many of the recommendations could not be implemented by some LAs due to an absence of funding, leading to “patchy provision” (pg.487). Reduced SEND categories have also been reported to leave those children who do not meet the criteria for an EHCP lacking “security and consistent support” (Robinson et al 2018, pg.488), failing to address previously highlighted concerns (Audit Commission, 2002).

Robinson et al's (2018) claims appear to be supported both within the media and government data. While the changes in legislation aimed to address concerns of an over-identification of children with SEN (Tomlinson, 2012), such trends have persisted. According to data published by the DfE (2019b), there has been a year on year increase in the number of new EHCPs issued, with 354,000 EHCPs currently in place as of January 2019 and the data for 2020 yet to be published. This increase may be linked to the decreasing support reported for children without an EHCP. An article published in August 2019 (BBC News, 2019a) argued plans to increase the funding provided for schools to support SEND pupils, did not equate to new money, but instead reversed previous cuts. In parallel, an article in September 2019 (BBC News, 2019b) detailed a statement issued by the National Audit Office which recognised pupils without an EHCP, but with SEND, were ‘particularly exposed’ and vulnerable to exclusions due to variations in LA practices.

Low levels of funding and support for SEND pupils were also recognised in the report produced by the Education Committee (2019), which criticised current practices surrounding

the assessment and support of pupils with SEND. Pupils without EHCPs were seen to be “neglected” (pg.15), in turn leading to increased parental requests for statutory assessment. The lack of standardisation in the EHCP process across LAs, and the poor input from health and social care professionals in the process, were also criticised.

1.2.2 Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

Changes in policy have led to challenges within EPs’ practice when conducting statutory psychological assessment. The profession has long been recognised as a contributor to this process (Chapter 3); however throughout academic literature concerns have been raised on this activity and its impact on workloads (E.g. DfE, 2019a).

The 2019 Education Committee review into the EHCP process reported that, while it is a requirement to do so, not all children received assessments of their SEND by EPs. This was seen to be linked to limited professional capacity and increasing statutory paperwork which has limited the 'lower level' work EPs can conduct in schools. The report presented information from the British Psychological Society (BPS) which detailed EPs concerns on the huge changes which came with the 2015 Code (DfE and DH, 2015).

Furthermore, the DfE (2019a) released a commissioned study which mapped out current workforce trends in educational psychologist (EP) services and identified factors which may have contributed to the current national shortage of LA EPs. The report identified that public sector employment of EPs had declined by 33% (2015-2017) and 68% of Principal EPs found it difficult to recruit. Moreover, 93% of LA Principal EPs stated the current workload demands outweighed their workforce, with a notable increase in statutory assessment work reported as the most common factor to contributing to workforce shortages.

This growing demand for EPs' psychological assessment and advice has other implications (Chapter 3). Cameron and Monsen (2005) recognised that EPs' statutory assessment is an activity which should occur over time to allow for "comprehensive" investigation (pg.287) of real world problems which cannot be easily explored in restricted working practices. Professional bodies support this notion, advising that assessment occurs over an extended period (BPS, 2015) to allow for hypothesis testing and knowledge building. Despite this recognition that longitudinal assessment is a marker of effective assessment, this is by no means universal practice. In January 2019, an article published by Schools Week (Schools Week, 2019) reported an EP's assertions to a government committee that EPs were being asked to conduct assessments of CYP in just one visit, while historical practice had allowed for multiple visits and assessments over time.

Alongside the professional challenges of limited capacity and restricted assessment, this model of working has historically been challenged by parents/carers. Within the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) parents/carers reported feeling less confident about the quality of assessment their CYP may have experienced when the EP involved was unable to spend extended time with a CYP to understand their needs.

The factors constraining the quality of EPs' psychological statutory assessment can also affect the quality of the end product of statutory assessments. The Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) reported that Statements of SEN were notably poor when information was replicated from professionals' advice without adaptation and were often inaccessible to parents/carers. The recognition that professionals' advice may be directly replicated within final documentation has been discussed within the literature. Buck (2015) reported that EPs reports are 'reverse-engineered' to match statutory documents which led to EPs' assessments becoming longer to

contain almost complete accounts of the SEND and provision. Reliance upon these assessments becomes problematic when considering the reported literature and media concerns that EPs are required to conduct this activity in shorter timeframes, limiting their ability to gain a comprehensive picture of each CYP (Cameron and Monsen, 2005).

The Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) reported the closeness between SEN teams and EPs led to a clear conflict: “The people who have to pay for the additional needs are also the ones employing the specialist advisers – a massive conflict of interest.” (pg. 86). The enquiry documented the growing pressure EPs experienced to produce statutory assessment reports which favoured LEA provision preferences. Chapter 3 explores this, considering the extent to which EPs may have become ‘resources definers’ and are influenced by LEA practices (Woods and Farrell, 2006).

At present, very little academic and empirical literature exists exploring EPs statutory psychological assessments. Given the increasing demands placed upon EPs, and their role at present within the wider statutory process, it could be argued to be an important time to revisit this activity (Buck, 2015) to ascertain whether the process is universally understood, effective in its aims, and professionally valuable.

1.2.3 Personal Interest

As part of the doctoral programme, I have undertaken supervised professional practice placements in three LA EP services, where I have contributed toward statutory assessments for CYP and experienced a variety of assessment processes. This experience led me to reflect on the daily conflicts which may occur between professional values regarding psychological assessment and the expectations of LA commissioners and colleagues. It also prompted me to think carefully about my expectations of psychological assessment, and to question how

my assessment may be used to inform the final EHCP. Such reflections have sharpened my appreciation of the responsibilities I carry in offering assessment and advice which inform legal documents which may travel with CYP until the age of 25 years.

These reflections became pertinent within my second and third-year placement, where the EP service had undertaken work with the LA's SEND team to develop a co-constructed, operational definition of psychological assessment. I was keen to explore how EPs' psychological statutory assessment was now understood by the two teams, in a LA where SEND officers and EPs work closely together (both in location and professionally).

Sewell's (2016) paper also had a notable influence upon my interest in this field, in her arguments that EPs' assessment reports construct a shared and readily accepted 'truth' about a child. This notion is also considered within Billington's work (2006) who highlights that the assessment of any CYP is affected by how experiences are captured within language, noting professionals should be mindful of this when seeking to capture the truth of a child. He goes on to detail that there may be differences between how a child is constructed by a professional and how they may construct themselves.

Given the reported emphasis placed upon psychological assessments within statutory processes by SEND teams (Lamb, 2009; Buck, 2015) and parents/carers (Lamb, 2009), I judged it timely and important to explore how this activity was understood by two professional groups who played a principal role in developing such truths: EPs and SEND officers. The decision to focus on these groups reflected a necessity to keep a tight research remit due to course timeframes, and a desire to focus on the producer and primary user of this information.

Finally, through my prior experience as a research psychologist working at an organisational level within schools, I have developed an interest in exploring organisational practices within the profession to consider the effect on day-to-day working. Hodkinson and Burch (2019) report that policies do not exist within a social vacuum but are underpinned by wider values and ideologies. To acknowledge this, I ensured my research considered the wider historical and current societal values which shape SEND policy and psychological statutory assessment.

1.3 Local Context

This research took place within a West Midlands LA, 'Seaview MBC'. The borough experiences high levels of deprivation, placing it in the top 15 most deprived boroughs in England (SeaviewTrends.gov.uk, 2020). It has higher rates (approx. 10%) of ethnic diversity within its population, compared to national averages across England and Wales and has a higher rate (approx. 0.5%) of individuals achieving no qualifications compared to averages across England and Wales (SeaviewTrends.gov.uk, 2020).

Seaview MBC has mirrored national trends of increased EHCP requests each year, showing small (approx. 0.1%) yearly increases since EHCPs began in 2015 (Seaview MBC data, 2018), although the percentage of pupils with EHCPs falls slightly lower (under 0.5%) than the region's average (DfE, 2019b).

The EP service is part of a multi-disciplinary education service, 'Seaview SEND Service', which includes specialist teachers for learning, mental health and autism, who, alongside EPs, work with schools in identifying and supporting pupils with SEND.

Seaview MBC has undergone a recent SEND Ofsted inspection (Ofsted, 2019), reviewing weaknesses across the LA's Children's Services identified by a 2017 inspection. In 2017, Ofsted noted concerns that:

- the timeliness, suitability and quality of statutory assessments and plans were poor;
- EHC plans were dominated by educational needs and frequently lacked health and social care information; and that
- at times, information from health and social care professionals was not received and, occasionally, when it was received, was not used.

The 2019 inspection (Ofsted, 2019) reported improvements in health and social care contributions to EHCP assessments but that opportunities for further improvement remained. In addition, the overall quality of EHCPs in Seaview MBC was judged to have improved, presenting as more accessible and showing strong co-production with parents/carers and CYP.

1.3.1 Seaview MBC Statutory Assessment processes

EPs are employed by Seaview MBC and work within multi-disciplinary teams to conduct work across many domains, including research, consultation and statutory assessments. As reported previously, government policy surrounding EHCPs leaves many aspects of the implementation of the statutory process to the discretion of each LA (Robinson et al, 2018). Seaview MBC's process for conducting statutory assessments is summarised in Figure 1.2.

Formal EHCP assessment begins with a 'person-centred meeting', led by the Seaview SEND Service employee who has engaged in casework with a CYP and the information gathered, alongside graduated assessment, is used to develop an initial report. This report can be submitted as part of the evidence to a multi-professional assessment panel, assessing each EHCP application to decide whether further assessment should occur.

This entire process takes 26 weeks, from start to finish.

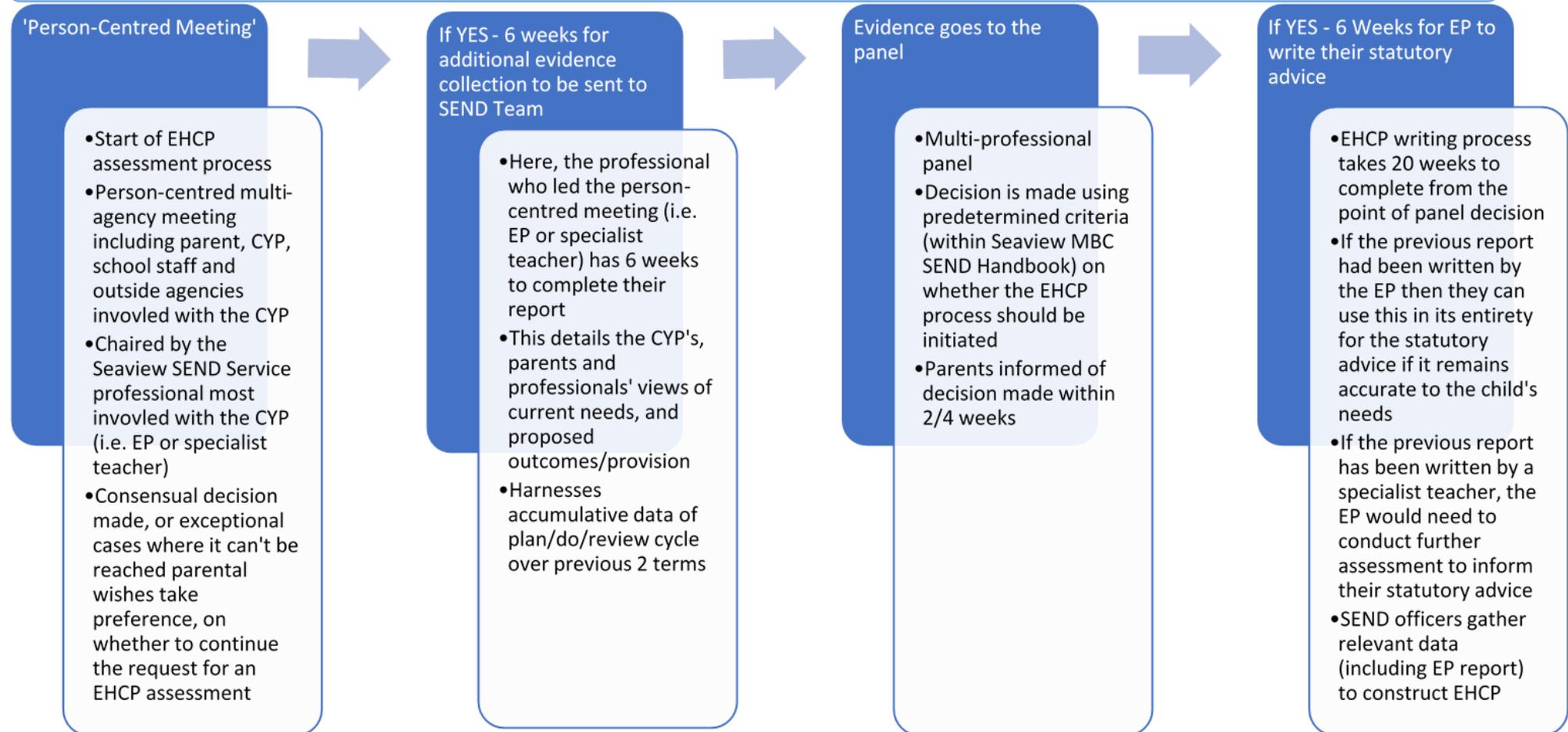


Figure 1.2: A summary of Seaview MBC process for statutory assessment for EHCP

Where an assessment is agreed, a request is made to the assigned EP to conduct a psychological statutory assessment. While no LA guidance or policy exists to inform the writing of these reports, a proforma is available which closely matches the final EHCP document. This proforma has undergone numerous changes within the service, most recently during a period of co-working between SEND officers and EPs.

The proforma asks EPs to comment on the needs of a CYP, establish outcomes for a CYP over two key stages of education and make provision recommendations which support these outcomes being achieved. EPs are asked to provide their formulation, defined in the report as: "A way of describing a child or young person's needs and includes possible causes, what maintains these, and how a child or young person may be supported to meet these needs." (Seaview SEND Service, 2018) This report goes forward, supporting the LA in their decision-making processing regarding the funding and placement allocated to each CYP.

1.3.1 Problem Conceptualisation

A quality assurance, multi-professional panel examines a selection of EHCPs and, therefore, EPs' statutory advice, and provides feedback to inform practice. Previous feedback has included concerns surrounding evidence of EPs' reports being copied and pasted across in entire sections to the EHCP without editing and the overreliance on EPs' assessment data where reports from medical professionals may be more applicable. These concerns appear to mirror some of the issues highlighted previously in this chapter by authors such as Buck (2015).

This feedback also echoes apprehensions raised within EP group meetings I have attended where concerns have been raised regarding how psychological advices are used within the wider statutory assessment process by SEND officers (EHCP writers). In these meetings, EPs

have queried the extent to which their psychological statutory assessments have informed the final EHCP, especially in the absence of other professionals' advices (e.g. health and care colleagues).

Another area of conflict lies within the Seaview MBC process for statutory assessment. While the inclusion of specialist teachers within this process was done to reduce EP workloads, it has meant some EPs are excluded from a CYP's case until the request for statutory advice is made. This has required some EPs to produce formal advice for a child they have limited knowledge of in a tight timeframe without conducting their own cycles of intervention.

Figure 1.3 summarises the key local factors which have contributed to the formulation of these research aims. Overall, these factors highlight a system where the activity of psychological statutory assessment challenges national professional advice on strong assessment (e.g. BPS, 2015) and has led to concerns within the Seaview SEND Service EP team. SEND officer development work has been undertaken to address these concerns, however such discussions remain a key part of EP meetings.

1.4 Contribution to Knowledge

I believe this research will provide an account of how the EP statutory assessment process is currently experienced by two professional groups (EPs and SEND officers) within Seaview LA. The findings contribute to the limited body of literature (e.g. Norwich, 1995; Buck, 2000; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Buck 2015) considering EPs' statutory psychological assessment following the 2014/2015 policy developments.

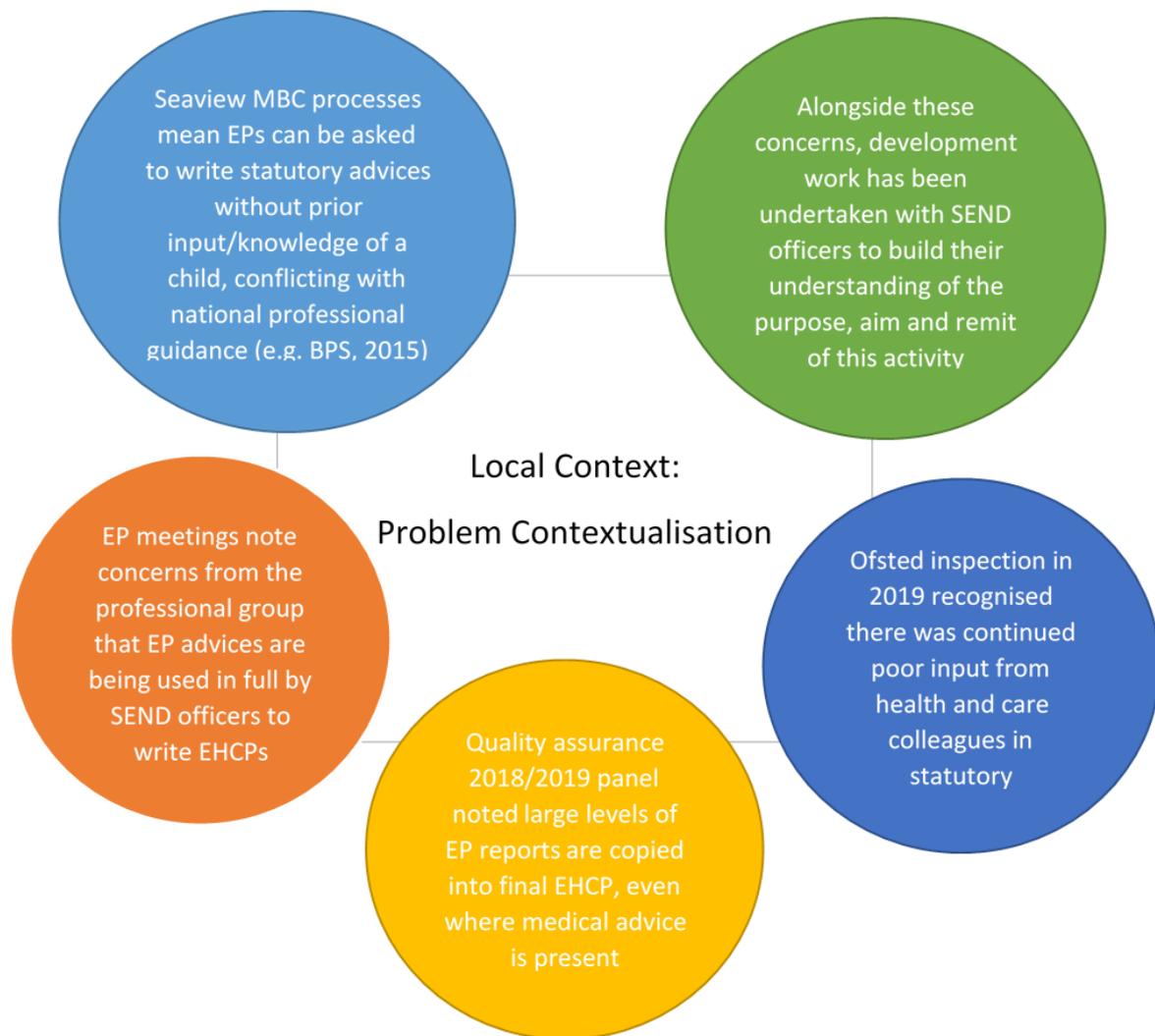


Figure 1.3: A Summary of key elements of research problem at a local level

Within Seaview SEND Service, research findings were harnessed to inform an action plan constructed by participants from each professional group, intended to be subject to continuing development and review. These findings would contribute toward the further development of working relationships within and between the two groups and strengthen EPs' psychological assessment.

Within the wider profession, I sought to abstract from this research, points for reflection and ongoing discussion within EP practice, considering how the profession may work with LA SEND teams to strengthen statutory procedures and make these more efficient and beneficial to EPs, addressing reported workforce trends (DfE, 2019a).

1.5 Research Aims

Figure 1.4 summarises the ideas, themes and questions which have shaped this research, leading to my final research questions (outlined in Chapter 5). This research, through the CHAT framework (Engeström, 1999a), explores how EPs' statutory psychological assessment is conceptualised and operationalised by EPs and SEND officers.

Historically, SEND assessment processes and EPs' statutory psychological assessment processes have been criticised for failing to achieve their intended aims and purposes (e.g. Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Education and Skills Committee, 2006; Lamb, 2009). While the newest policy reforms intended to address these concerns (DfE, 2011), criticisms have persisted and growing requests for EHCPs have produced a system which cannot adequately support all pupils.

A small body of academic literature from EPs suggests the profession is experiencing increasing demands to conduct statutory psychological assessments within decreasing timeframes, which have led to concerns on the quality of data being produced. This has wider implications given the reported focus placed on EP assessment (e.g. Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Buck, 2015) within final SEND documents.

This research aimed to extend the literature exploring EP psychological statutory assessment, considering the views of EPs and SEND officers within a single LA. While some literature in this field exists, research often focussed solely on EPs views of this activity, despite the recognition within the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) and Woods and Farrell's (2006) research that practice is heavily influenced by LA guidance.

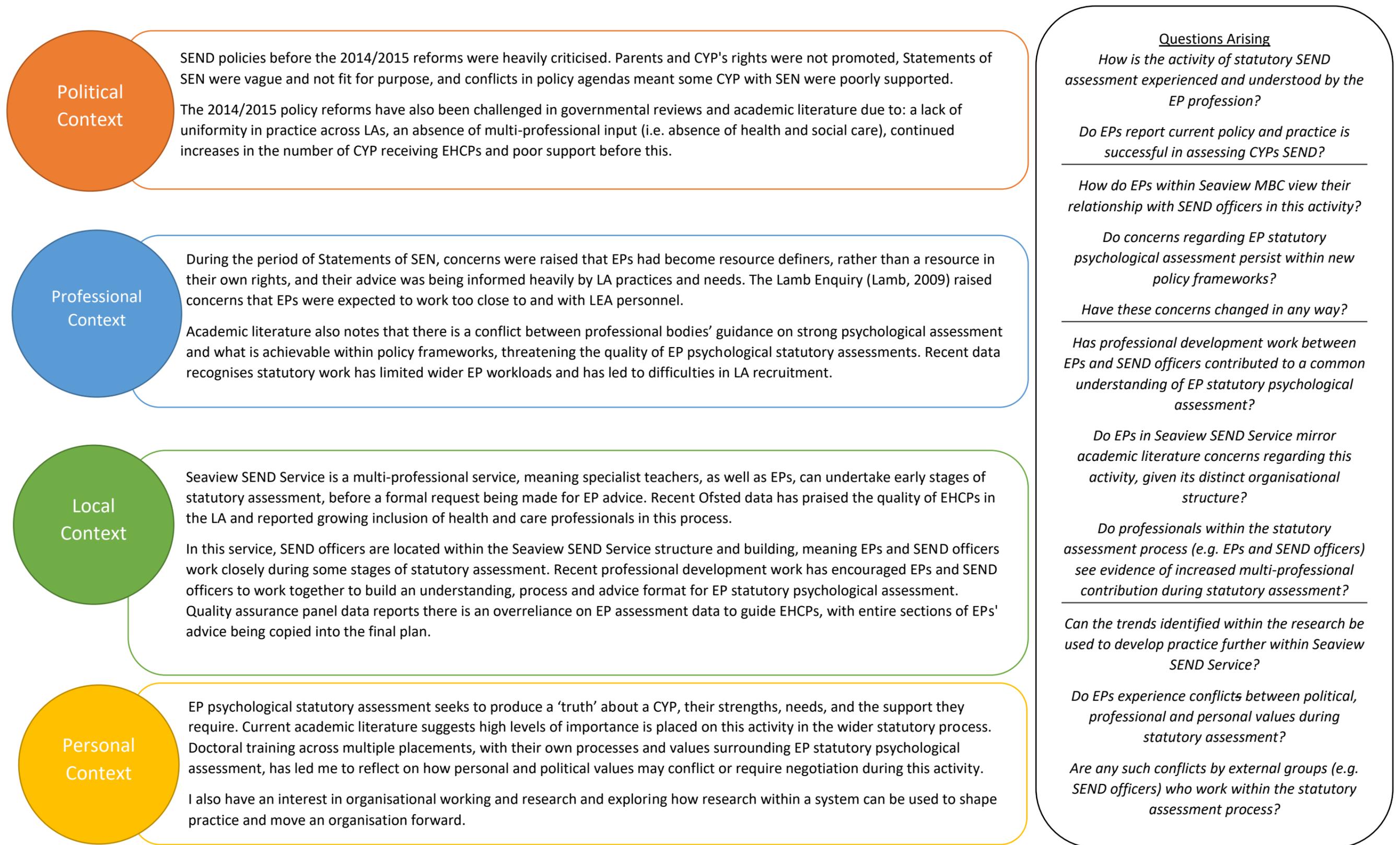


Figure 1.4 Key policy themes and questions arising to shape proposed research aims

A large proportion of current research predates the 2014/2015 reforms, making it difficult to ascertain whether the concerns raised within academic literature have persisted within these changes, especially with the increased focus on input from health and care, alongside education professionals, in statutory assessment.

My exploration of policy and academic literature recognised that changes in SEND practices, and therefore, EP statutory psychological assessment, cannot be understood without recognition of driving cultural values and wider political agendas. EP practice does not occur in isolation but is guided by LA needs and changing priorities in the importance of working with schools, parents/carers and CYP. This recognition of history and culture within the assessment process led me to Engeström's (1999a) CHAT framework to guide my research (outlined in Chapter 4). This framework also complemented my desire to try to develop, alongside research participants, actions which could be taken forward in the service.

1.6 Structure of Thesis

Table 1.2 provides a summary of this volume, listing each chapter and providing a summary of its contents and a rationale for its inclusion.

Table 1.2: A summary of chapter content and rationale

Chapter Title	Chapter Summary and Rationale
1 Introduction	The political, professional, local and personal context and rationale for this research are outlined. The research aims and possible contribution to professional knowledge are also presented. This chapter presents the thinking behind this volume which has shaped my research aims and questions (Thomas, 2017). It considers the background to the area of research (i.e. SEND statutory assessment), the issue (EP statutory assessment has been criticised as being poorly conducted, placing increasing demands on the profession and moving away from its intended purpose) and my response (exploring EPs and SEND officers views on this activity to identify a potential action plan) (Thomas, 2017).
2 History of the Development of SEN	<p>Historical developments of the construction of disability and inclusion within society and policy are presented. These are reflected upon in relation to their influence on and by EP practice.</p> <p>It is important to acknowledge what is already known about the area of research (Thomas, 2017). This chapter recognises the importance of history in conceptualises current practice (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) and outlines historical policy developments and agendas in defining inclusion and disability. By doing this, we can consider how EP statutory psychological assessment may be influenced by these values and how the professional activity has been shaped by policy.</p>
3 Statutory Assessment	<p>Policy developments pertaining to statutory assessment of disability and SEN are outlined. The specific role of EPs within statutory assessment, the professions conceptualisation of statutory psychological assessment, and key issues and debates within the activity are also outlined.</p> <p>This chapter's focus again recognises the importance of exploring what is already known (Thomas, 2017) and cultural and historical influences on the activity of EP statutory psychological assessment (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). This chapter captures the development of EPs' role in statutory assessment and considers whether this supports professional definitions of psychological assessment. Here, contradictions and tensions between professional values and policy agendas begin to emerge which were reflected upon within my own data.</p>
4 Cultural Historical Activity Theory and SEN	<p>CHAT and its historical developments are outlined alongside empirical research applications of the framework. A final extension of the framework, Development Work Research (DWR) Labs, is introduced, again considering empirical applications. The key themes from literature and policy presented in Chapters 2 and 3 are summarised within the CHAT framework.</p> <p>This chapter considers in depth the CHAT framework, and DWR lab process, which have underpinned my research, considering their theoretical roots and developments. My summary of the literature within the CHAT framework aims to bring together the key elements of historical policy which have facilitated and constrained the activity of EP statutory psychological assessment. This provides the background for my current research and allows for analysis within my findings of past and current cultural influences on the activity.</p>
5 Methodology	The methodological choices (philosophical stance, design, data collection and analysis methods) made within this research are outlined. A critical examination of each decision is made before detailing the research process and steps taken to ensure rigour.
6 Findings and Discussion	Key themes emerging from EP and SEND officer data are presented within the CHAT framework nodes selected for analysis and considered concerning the literature within Chapters 2 and 3.
7 Summary and Conclusion	The research questions are revisited and reassessed in light of the findings outlined, also considering how these findings may be applied to local and wider professional practice. Future directions which could be taken based on these conclusions are reflected upon in addition to potential methodological limitations.

Chapter 2: History of the Development of Special Educational Needs

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 explores changing constructions of SEND and how it should be supported, within education policy over time. Each section adopts the disability language used within policy of the time, although I recognise that many of these terms are now viewed as problematic and discriminatory. Historical developments are reflected upon in relation to how constructions of SEND may guide EPs' understanding and approach to the activity of statutory psychological assessment. Chapter 3 further develops these, outlining the history and current landscape of statutory assessment policy and psychological assessment.

2.2 Education and Special Educational Needs before 1944

Growing populations during the eighteenth century gave momentum to discussions regarding the need for stronger universal educational provision (Lawson and Silver, 2013). During this period, educational provision was guided by social class with the poorest of society often receiving education through charity schools or within factory apprenticeships (Musgrave, 2013; Lawson and Silver, 2013).

The 1870 Forster Education Act recognised the need to educate and train the future workforce to promote growth and implemented the development of school boards to provide sufficient education for children between the ages of five and 13. Attendance enforcement was left to the discretion of school boards and educational provision came with a fee which could be waived for poorer families. Following this, incremental changes were made within the policy (e.g. school age raised to 14 in the 1918 Act), leading up to the 1944 Act.

Alongside developments in universal education, emerging policy and movements arose pertaining to those children with disabilities. Figure 2.1 summarises the multiple political documents put forward between the 1870 and 1944 Acts to recognise and support CYP who were categorised as blind, deaf, epileptic or defective.

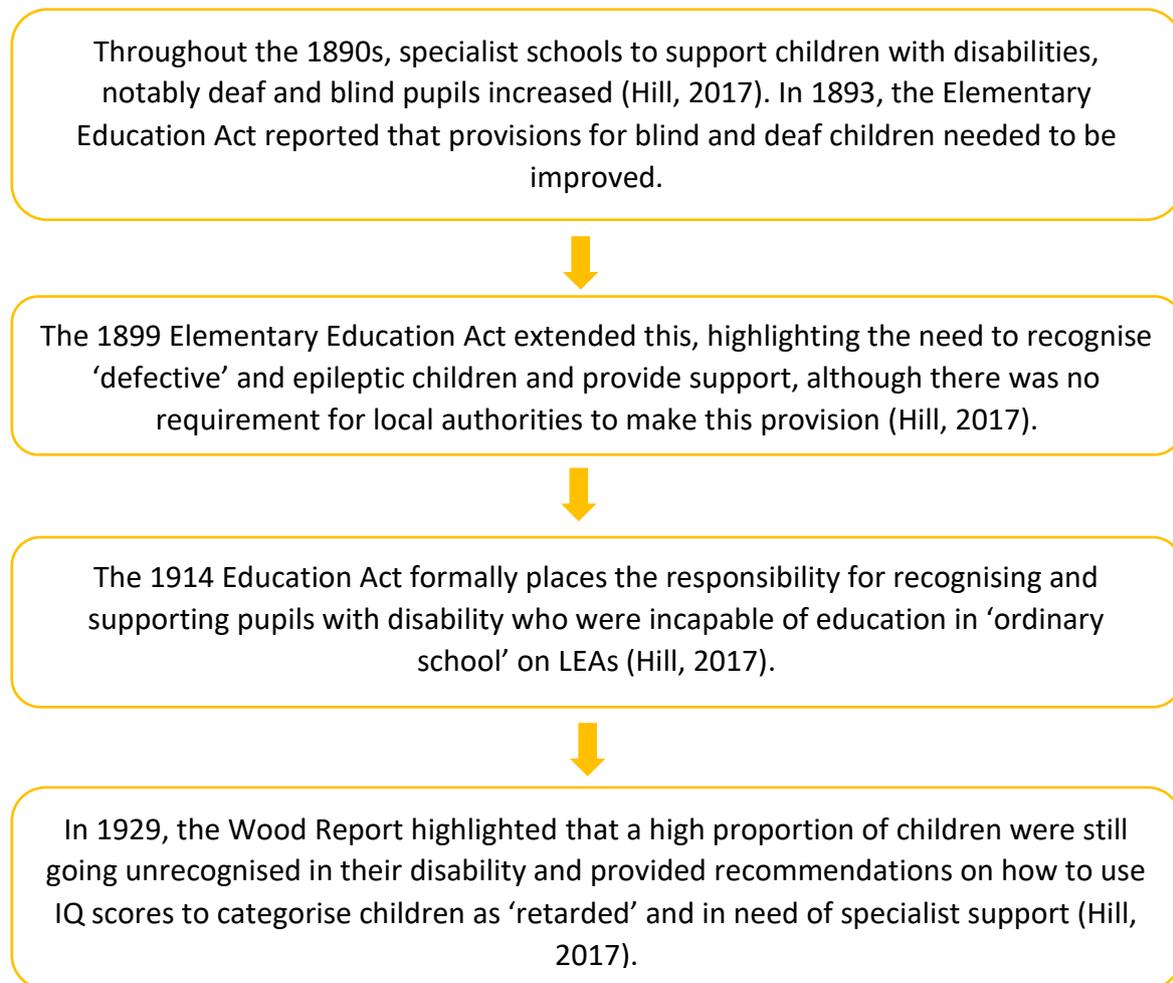


Figure 2.1: Policy development timeline for the 1880s relating to special education

This timeline shows the introduction of disability in educational policy, which paved the way for future reforms (Hill, 2017). While this era’s conceptualisation of the range of disabilities pupils experience was limited compared to later policies, it formalised the requirement that LEAs take an active role in identifying and supporting the education of children outside of the ‘typically-developing’ population.

2.3 The Butler Act 1944

The next key period of disability policy development was between 1944 and the 1978 Warnock Report (DES, 1978). The Education Act of 1944 required LEAs to provide suitable and sufficient educational settings, allowing parents/carers to secure education for children based on 'age, aptitude and ability'. The Act also established modern educational schooling systems, splitting education into nursery, primary, secondary and higher education, and introduced the term special schools into policy.

The 1944 Act adopted the term 'disability of the body or mind'. Disability of the mind referred to an 'incapability' to engage meaningfully in education, and/or the expected effects of disability in impeding opportunities for peers to receive suitable education. Provision was typically made within a mainstream school, for those whose disability was 'not serious', while those with serious disability were offered special school education.

Definitions of disability were expanded further in the 1948 Education Act to the following:

- Blind and partially sighted,
- Deaf and partially deaf,
- Delicate (physical conditions where a child could not be educated under 'normal regime' without health risk),
- Educationally sub-normal (those with 'educational retardation'),
- Epileptic,
- Maladjusted,
- Physically handicapped, and
- Speech Defect

While these categories in some regards, anticipate contemporary classifications of SEND (i.e. physical and sensory; speech and language; cognition and learning), the terminology was associated with children who were 'defective' in some aspect of development. However, there are early signs of changing constructions in a 1955 report on 'maladjusted children' (Committee on Maladjusted Children, 1955) which encompassed a range of disorders now associated with emotional difficulties or mental health disorders (e.g. nervous disorders and habit disorders).

In this report (Committee on Maladjusted Children, 1955) the ways in which categories of disability may overlap are considered, stating that young people may present with several difficulties linked to disability (e.g. speech defects may be the cause or effect of 'maladjustment'). Furthermore, the report began to consider the variety of environmental, societal and cultural factors which may precede a diagnosis of 'maladjusted' (e.g. experiences of family unemployment or school transitions), recognising that constructions of disability should not be limited to what may be missing in an individual's development.

2.4 1978 Warnock Report

Changing constructions of disability are perhaps most heavily evidenced by the changes introduced in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) and resulting policies. The report aimed to summarise and address the growing dissatisfaction with then-current educational policy and came from a request by government to review the educational support in place for 'handicapped' children (Warnock, 2005).

In the guidance, the term handicapped was replaced with 'children with learning difficulties' who had 'special educational needs' (SEN): these suggestions were incorporated into policy by the Education Act of 1981. SEN was defined in functional terms, in relation to whether a

pupil was able to 'make use' of general educational facilities provided. Through the shift to more generic terminology, the committee aimed to move away from medical models of diagnosis by describing the needs of a CYP with learning difficulties based in the support they needed (Warnock, 2005).

The report (DES, 1978) advocated a shift away from categorisation, toward appreciation of the interactive nature of learning difficulties, reducing the salience of diagnosis, and eroding stereotypes for CYP (Warnock, 2005). However, Bines (2000) reported the terminology continued to adopt a deficit model, while Warnock (2005) reported continued increase in the number of CYP identified with learning difficulties. In addition to this, the growing focus on categorising CYP's difficulties under a single category led to a lack of clarity and specificity in how best to support such pupils (Warnock, 2005).

The report (DES, 1978) echoed previous policy assertions that "no child should be sent to a special school who can satisfactorily be educated in an ordinary one" (pg.99). This thinking was extended, outlining the forms of integration which could occur for pupils with SEN inside 'ordinary schools', described in Section 2.5.1. The report also recognised that effective SEN provision should be informed by strong assessment (considered within Chapter 3) and provide "maximum opportunity" (pg.106) for children within ordinary schools to share experiences with their peers. Specialist placement outside the mainstream school environment was not considered unfavourable, but such placement was to be reserved for those with severe needs who could not "reasonably be provided in ordinary schools" (pg.121).

2.5 1994 SEN Code of Practice - 2020

The legacy of the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) remains evident in subsequent policy. Within the 1993 Education Act, a commitment was made to produce a CoP which would provide

“practical guidance to local education authorities... on their responsibilities towards all children with special educational needs” (DfE, 1994, pg.4), the first of which was published in 1994.

The 1994 CoP (DfE, 1994) guided the identification, assessment and support of children with SEN for LEAs, schools and professionals, and detailed the rights of parents/carers and CYP. The guidance re-emphasised that a CYP’s difficulties could arise from environmental, alongside individual factors. As with the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), the CoP acknowledged differences in context-specificity and duration of SEN, and that some difficulties would become more/less severe over a CYP’s life and/or in response to the special educational provisions made.

In this (DfE, 1994), and subsequent versions of the CoP (DfES, 2001 and DfE and DH, 2015), SEN categorisation has adapted, as summarised in Table 2.1. Sections 2.4.1-2.4.3 expand upon these developments, drawing on Lehane’s (2017) critical discourse analysis of each Code to consider how practices and approaches to SEND may have changed over time. While this paper provides a notably subjective analysis of changes, Lehane (2017) provides some interesting insights into each Code.

2.5.1 1994 Code of Practice (DfE, 1994)

The 1994 CoP (DfE, 1994) is reported to be far more accessible than later versions (Lehane, 2017), with high levels of procedural guidance and practical recommendations. The policy promoted the use of mainstream schools to educate children with SEN, recognising that the needs of “most children will be met in mainstream” (DfE, 1994, pg.13) and specialist placement was positioned as the final option in education. Some research (Lindsay, 2003) suggested professional apprehension surrounding specialist provision stemmed from

scepticism at the time, generated by the low evidence that those leaving specialist, compared to mainstream, provision did so with better outcomes and evidence of success.

Table 2.1: A summary of the SEN terminology used within the 1994 (DfE), 2001 (DfES) and 2015 (DfE and DH) Codes of Practice

1994 Code of Practice (DfE, 1994); Education Act, 1993	2001 Code of Practice (DfES, 2001); Education Act, 1996 and SEN and Disability Act, 2001	2015 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2015); Children and Families Act, 2014
Learning difficulties Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g. dyslexia) Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties Physical Disabilities Sensory Impairments (hearing or vision) Speech and Language Difficulties Medical Conditions	Communication and Interaction Cognition and Learning Behaviour, Emotional and Social Development Sensory and/or Physical	Communication and Interaction Cognition and Learning Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties Sensory and/or Physical <i>NB: Disability is formally brought into the SEN construction here, changing to SEND.</i>

2.5.2 2001 SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)

This policy made stronger links between SEN and disability, with references made to the 2001 SEN and Disability Act. However, within the 2001 CoP (DfES, 2001) the two terms remained largely separate.

The 2001 CoP (DfES, 2001) showed a political shift toward inclusion and CYP with SEN were positioned as having the right to be “engaged and included” (Lehane, 2017, pg. 62). It was expected that there should be a “stronger right for children with SEN to be educated at a mainstream school” (DfES, 1994, pg.iv). While references to inclusion within policy were not new or revolutionary (Lindsay, 2003), Bines (2000) reported that this policy aimed to place greater emphasis on changing schools, so they could better accommodate the needs of children with SEN, rather than adding programmes of enhanced support to otherwise unchanged schools.

Despite this reported inclusion agenda, the 2001 CoP (DfES, 2001) retained the right for mainstream education to be 'refused,' should this be judged to be "incompatible with the efficient education of other children" (DfES, 2001, pg.14; Armstrong, 2005), challenging the notion of inclusion and providing a qualifier that was almost impossible to accurately measure (Warnock, 2005).

2.5.3 2015 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2015)

The 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) introduced a number of changes in the construction of SEN. The most prominent of these is the reincorporation of disability, signalled through the use of 'special educational needs and disability', or 'SEND'. This policy constructs SEND based on what is needed and what is present. There is a clear expectation that assessment will encapsulate an individual's strengths alongside their needs, further aiming to detach from previous deficit model constructions of SEND. Moreover, the inclusion of health and social care aims to ensure a holistic analysis of a CYP's development, and coordinated, comprehensive provisions to address multi-factorial profiles of need through multi-systemic interventions.

The age bracket in which CYP's SEND are monitored and considered is extended up to the age of 25 (previous policy ended at 19 years of age) to ensure support was provided as pupils move into further education and address historical concerns regarding poor transitions into adult services of independent living for CYP with SEND (Hellowell, 2018).

In contrast to its predecessors, the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) is a more technical document (Lehane, 2017), largely lacking in specificity and guidance (Norwich and Eaton, 2015; Lehane, 2017). Inclusive terminology decreased (Lehane, 2017) and specialist placement returned as an effective choice for some CYP with SEND. Such placements had "an important role in

providing for CYP with SEND” (DfE, 2011, pg. 73), with the Government aiming to “remove the bias towards inclusion” and prevent the “unnecessary closure of special schools” (pg.5).

Chapter 1 critically examined the newest Code, highlighting its limitations in providing insufficient guidance to schools (Norwich and Eaton, 2015; Lehane, 2017; Robinson et al, 2018) and the implication that policy has led to poorly funded support for those pupils not receiving EHCPs (Robinson et al, 2018). Moreover, key changes adopted since the 2001 CoP (DfES, 2001) are noted, including a “stronger focus on high aspirations and improving outcomes” for CYP (DfE and DH, 2015, pg.14) and an incorporation of supporting those CYP with SEND in youth custody. While the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) does recognise the importance of using deprivation data to develop LA’s understanding of the types of needs CYP with SEND may have, Lehane (2017) reports that no “interrogation” (pg.62) is given to the relationship between poverty and disability.

2.6 Influences upon SEND Policy

Hodkinson and Burch (2019) remind us that policy does not exist within a social vacuum but is underpinned by values and ideologies, responding to the needs of the world at the point of conception. Alongside this, CHAT (Engeström, 1999a in Chapter 4) recognises that activities of practice are mediated not only by historical cycles of development but also by cultural rules and communities of individuals. This section considers some of the influences which may have shaped both historical and current policy.

2.6.1 Integration and Inclusion

It is useful to understand the changing conceptualisations of disability and inclusion which may have influenced policy developments and agendas. Changes in expectations regarding

how disability is defined and supported over time echo and interlink with shifts in the promotion and demotion of specialist placements as a valid and effective form of education.

As reported, focus on inclusion within policy is not new (Lindsay, 2003), despite ongoing “confusion” over the wide range of definitions and models of practice placed under the term (Education and Skills Committee, 2006, pg.22). To understand what is meant by the term inclusion, it is useful to also conceptualise the term integration. The two are often used interchangeably within policy but do not always equate to the same experiences for a CYP (Avramidis and Norwich, 2002).

Integration is largely associated with the ideas put forward within the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) which considered the forms in which joint education of those with and without learning difficulties could occur:

- locational integration where specialist schools or classes are established in ‘ordinary schools’,
- social integration where children with SEN have time to engage with their peers in activities outside of the classroom, and
- functional integration, the fullest form of inclusion, where joint participation in education is promoted

These categories of integration had a long-reaching effect on UK education (Booth, 1996) and recognised that there were clear differences between the experiences of CYP taught in parallel to ‘ordinary’ peers and those fully included. However, the proposed definition of integration and how it should occur in UK education was not universally adopted, with a variety of research and policy choosing to either expand upon this definition or produce their

own. Booth (1996) proposed integration focused on increasing participation of CYP in the culture and curriculum of a mainstream school.

Definitions of inclusion are extended within the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) which stated that to promote inclusion, professionals should aim to ensure all CYP were taught in mainstream education and be recognised as individuals who required a personalised curriculum and teaching plan. However, Hodkinson (2010, pg.61) suggested this “tidal wave of inclusive intent” led to a “disservice” for some CYP whereby focus on ‘full inclusion’ did not meet the needs of all CYP. Within this thinking, ‘full inclusion’ occurs where “all children are educated ... with no tolerance or justification given to the maintenance of a segregated system of special schooling” (Hodkinson, 2010, pg.63). While this definition is imbued with the authors own judgements, it highlights the continuum on which ideas and practices under the label of inclusion can occur.

This conflict in defining inclusion was again noted by Lauchlan and Greig (2015) who instead categorised two subgroup views of inclusion: ‘Moderates’ who include the use of special schools in their construction of inclusion, and ‘universalists’ who view specialist provisions as undermining the concept of full inclusion. Ravet (2011) provided alternative labels for these positions, using the terms ‘rights-based’ perspective, which argues for the end of specialist provisions and full inclusion, while a ‘needs-based’ perspective aims to highlight the dangers which can come from a tunnelled view of full inclusion.

What these papers highlight is a distinct lack of clarity in defining inclusion that appears to fall into differing perspectives, each with a position on the efficacy and need for specialist provision. The absence of consensus in educational policy as to how inclusion may be defined

and what best practice looks like is recognised within the 2006 Education and Skills Committee report.

2.6.1 (i) Models of Disability

When aiming to define inclusion, a connection should be made with how SEND is constructed within medical and social models of disability (Lehane, 2017), since conceptual and pragmatic inter-relationships cannot be ignored: how we construct disability or SEND informs how we view the extent to which those with SEND can and should be equal and active participants in mainstream education (Lindsay, 2003; Ravet, 2011; Alderson, 2018).

Traditional definitions of these models position the medical model as a framework which centres on labelling and diagnosing those with a disability to 'fix' or 'treat' an individual (Gillham, 1978; Scope, 2019). Lindsay (2003) extends this, recognising that the model not only covers the use of medical professionals to define and treat disability but also appears to ignore the role of environmental and societal factors in impairment. Within this model, it is easy to see how specialist placements can thrive and be promoted to support the schooling of children with learning difficulties (Booth, 1996; Armstrong 2005).

Alternatively, the social model positions disability as a societal issue arising from its response to impairment (Gallagher, Connor and Ferri, 2014). That is, the barriers put in place by society produce the construction of disability. In education, it is argued that SEN is a category socially constructed through ineffective educational practices (Bines, 2000). This form of thinking complements the intended aims of the Warnock Committee (DES, 1978; Warnock, 2005) who aimed to move away from deficit models of need and position a CYP's learning difficulties within what provisions (i.e. the environmental and societal adaptations) they required to thrive.

2.6.2 Cultural Values

Documents such as the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), which re-emphasised the expectation that CYP are taught within mainstream schools, line up with policies such as the 1994 CoP (DfE, 1994) and were entrenched in cultural drivers/values. By bringing these to the forefront, we are able to understand how processes such as statutory assessment may have changed in their focus and aims over time, leading us to current models of practice.

2.6.2(i) Benevolent Humanitarianism or Workforce Production

Policy agendas regarding the assessment, identification and support of CYP with SEND often occur within two competing agendas (Barton, 1988; Richardson and Powell, 2011; Tomlinson 2017; Hellawell, 2018). These agendas may be given different names in line with cultural values of the time but can be argued to focus around two drivers: benevolent humanitarianism and workforce production.

During the Industrial Revolution, growing populations prompted discussions regarding the need for education for all, as discussed in Section 2.1. This period also created 'societal misfits' (Hodkinson, 2015) who were limited in their inclusion and contributions. To address this section of society, charitable provisions were developed by wealthier individuals to care for those 'less fortunate', referred to within the literature as 'benevolent humanitarianism' (Hodkinson, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017). These provisions took the form of workhouses and asylums, alongside special schools for children who were blind or deaf.

However, this drive to protect and support CYP with disability (Barton, 1988) was viewed in an alternative light in some academic literature as one which sought to produce an efficient workforce and enforce societal control on problematic populations (Barton, 1988; Richardson and Powell, 2011; Tomlinson, 2017). Tomlinson (2017) highlights that discussions regarding

special education were historically guided by, in the 19th century, aristocrats with economic interests or, in the 20th century, politicians wanting to separate out unprofitable or difficult children. Early drives on special schools are reported to have been perpetuated by a 'payment-by-results' culture within education, which placed an emphasis on measurable outcomes and supported segregated education.

This was further supported within the 20th century by the eugenics movement (Hodkinson, 2015; Tomlinson, 2017), focussed on "selective breeding to promote the human race" and avoid unfavourable characteristics of society continuing over time (Tomlinson, 2017, pg. 46). This movement, Tomlinson (2017) reported, led to increasing numbers of CYP being placed in special schools due to concerns that children with disabilities may be a danger to society.

However, Barton (1988) argued that within this period concerns regarding the development of a dependent population led to increasing focus on ensuring CYP were brought back into mainstream education, to ensure such individuals were given an education which allowed them to be ready to join the larger workforce. This movement remains somewhat prevalent with current policy, with the 2015 CoP's (DfE and DH, 2015) extended age for support addressing historical criticisms that CYP with SEND did not successfully transition into independent adult lives (Hellowell, 2018).

Mainstream education continued to be emphasised towards the end of the 20th Century, tied to concerns regarding the need to save money within education and the 1981 Education Act's report that no additional funding would be provided for SEN (Barton, 1988). This again may go some way, alongside inclusion agendas of the time, to explain the focus on mainstream education placements in the 1994 CoP (DfE, 1994).

Richardson and Powell (2011) report that SEND policy does not move in a linear fashion from exclusion to inclusion, something which can be seen in the cyclical conversations regarding specialist provisions and disability and SEND definitions over time. In fact, Tomlinson (2017) proposes that as the 20th century drew to a close, policy values and agendas had begun to come full circle, moving back to a focus on market-forces culture (described in the following section) and, therefore, the promotion of special schools as an effective form of education. Moreover, early discussions regarding eugenics also appeared to resurface under the guise of ‘broken Britain’ within 21st century policy (Tomlinson, 2017). As stated previously, by explicitly outlining and recognising the drivers which have shaped and formed SEND definitions and policy, we can begin to clearly understand how processes such as statutory assessment has developed into the current, modern day framework (summarised within Chapter 4).

2.5.2(ii) National Curriculum and Market Forces Culture

Current educational policy positions specialist education as a positive placement option for pupils with SEND. This move back towards the use of specialist provision (Lauchlan and Greig, 2015) may in some part reflect the heavy criticism (Bines, 2000; Audit Commission, 2002; Armstrong, 2005; Warnock, 2005; MacBeath et al, 2006; Hodkinson, 2010; Norwich and Eaton, 2015) which was placed upon the policy and the education of all children within mainstream placements following the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) up until current policy (DfE and DH, 2015).

The introduction of the National Curriculum in 1988 coincided with a growing promotion of inclusion in mainstream education within policy. However, these two policy directions were seen to be conflicting in their aims. The strive towards uniformity in educating young people led to criticism that, rather than allowing those with SEN to experienced personalised

education, CYP instead were being provided with an equal opportunity to enter a 'narrow space' (Armstrong, 2005). Warnock (2005) argued that misinterpretation of the 1978 report's (DES, 1978) position on integration/inclusion had led to schools providing the same education for all CYP rather than an acknowledgement that some may require different educational provision. Furthermore, with the use of uniform curriculum came uniform assessment methods and the option for classrooms to be banded by ability groups, directly conflicting with inclusion policy and providing alternative means of classroom segregation (MacBeath et al, 2006).

This wider educational policy conflicted with the promotion of personalised learning within SEN strategies of the time, as recognised by the Audit Commission in 2002. The focus on personalised provision and outcomes for those with SEN directly challenged National Curriculum aims and school performance measures. The National Curriculum and associated assessment methods provided a 'market forces' culture to education whereby league tables were produced to provide a competitive environment to inform parental choice of schools for their children (Bines, 2000; MacBeath et al, 2006). Bines (2000) argues that this culture provided a new form of SEN marginalisation in mainstream settings to ensure a school's image remained 'strong'.

The outcome of this conflict in performance and inclusion is evident in literature both leading up to and following the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015). Bines (2000) suggested that the decision to place the responsibility of SEN provision on LEAs led to schools growing increasingly dependent on external support and a lack of internal support for CYP with SEN, reiterated in the 2002 Audit Commission report. MacBeath et al (2006) extended this, highlighting that the movement towards inclusion of CYP appeared to promote 'within-class segregation' where

teaching assistants worked in isolation with SEN pupils. Lauchlan and Greig (2015) report that many teaching staff viewed inclusion as small group work with support staff while Webster and Blatchford's (2018) research found that while inclusion had increased, so had the hiring of teaching assistants to support CYP with SEND. This mirrored earlier findings (e.g. Audit Commission, 2002) which suggested that the introduction of Statements of SEN appeared to promote segregation in a new form, rather than inclusion. Despite this, Norwich (2014) suggests that the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) aimed to discuss inclusion in a more honest way, promoting specialist provision and the right to choose.

2.7 Implications for Educational Psychology Practice

2.7.1 Changing Conceptualisations of SEND

The policies outlined here reflect a move away from a deficit model of understanding disability, acknowledging that SEND can arise from multiple internal and external factors in a child's life and that categories of SEND may be accumulative rather than discrete.

Changing constructions of SEND have also influenced the development of EP practice. The term SEND encourages professionals to discuss pupils in relation to what they need to succeed in education (DES, 1978; Warnock, 2005), working from a viewpoint which aims to identify what is missing in the child's environment, rather than what is missing within the child. Constructions of SEND help guide the activity of producing psychological advice for statutory assessment, shaping how a young person is written about in relation to their needs, how their progress is understood, and how the vision for their educational future is shaped.

In addition to this, the move away from a deficit model of constructing SEND, as seen in the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) and its expectation that an individual's strengths are referenced alongside their needs, changes the nature of SEND assessment. Psychological advice should aim to identify strengths and needs, and this objective should place a young person at the

centre of the assessment process and provide a mechanism for their successes to be explored and recorded.

2.7.2 Changing Perceptions on Inclusion and Specialist Placement

In 1978, Gillham highlighted a need for EPs to shift away from medical models of disability when understanding CYP with SEN. By doing so, the profession moved to a viewpoint which considered how a CYP's environment may enable or disable them to thrive in education. The changing discourse surrounding what is 'best practice' in inclusion and specialist education is an important one to consider in relation to educational psychology. By understanding the viewpoints and influences underpinning the profession and the current perceptions surrounding inclusion, we can become aware of potential conflicts in psychological values and legal duties when conducting assessment for statutory purposes.

Research suggests, historically, EPs have been asked to provide recommendations for the type of provision or placement they feel a child would benefit from in their statutory assessments (e.g. Norwich, 2002; Lamb, 2009). In understanding the themes in inclusion policy and discourse we can also begin to understand the legal and personal rules which may govern the construction of psychological advice and consider how these rules may shape the approach undertaken to this activity. EPs will have trained in a variety of political landscapes, with different perspectives on specialist provision and inclusion, inevitably shaping each professional implicitly and explicitly and guiding how they experience the activity of statutory assessment now.

2.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the historical landscape surrounding the construction of SEND and special educational provision have been presented. Both have seen multiple changes in definition

and priorities over recent decades and have had important implications in shaping psychological statutory assessment. Since early policies in the eighteenth century, construction has moved away from terminology such as 'defective' or 'maladjusted', moving towards the landmark changes in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978) to the modern terminology of SEND. A summary of the key changes of each era of policy, issues/limitations which remained, and key drivers of the period are summarised within Table 2.2.

These developments and influences have also shaped EP practice. Changing rhetoric regarding SEND, inclusion and specialist placements have in turn guided EPs' assessments, shaping how disability is observed and recorded (e.g. moving towards strengths as well as needs). These changes are also important to note as EPs consider their own professional and personal values regarding inclusion and special schools and how these may challenge or complement wider political recommendations.

Chapter 3 extends this historical exploration of policy, exploring the statutory assessment process and how this has developed over time to introduce EPs. The nature of psychological assessment for statutory assessment is also examined to consider where these two practices again may compliment or challenge each other.

Table 2.2: A summary of the SEND policy changes dating from 19th to 21st Century

Period	Policy	What were the key influences?	What did the policy achieve?	What issues remained?	
19 th Century	1870 Act	Creation of the idea of societal misfits in the population, addressed by the development of charitable provisions to educate this group. Further influenced by mainstream educations 'payment-by-results' ethos which encouraged segregation	Created school boards which must provide sufficient education for children aged 5-13 years of age	These provisions were not compulsory. They were often in the form of asylums and workhouses, where poorly educated individuals taught others. These settings were criticised as providing a mechanism for societal control	
	1893 Act		Recognised the need for improved educational provisions for blind/deaf children		
	1899 Act		This recognition was extended to defective and epileptic children		
20 th Century	1914 Act	Tomlinson (2017) argued that this era reflected a focus on politicians seeking control of troublesome populations through segregation and assessment. Eugenics movement was also key which sought to purify and protect human genes and remove threats to the gene pool (e.g. those with disability) into segregated education	LEAs became responsible for identifying those children with a disability that were unable to be educated in mainstream settings	The 1929 Wood Report stated that a high number of CYP with disability were still going unrecognised. The subsequent 1944 and 1948 Acts were criticised for focussing on deficit models of disability which used within child language, ignoring the role of environment in disability	
	1918 Act		Compulsory education was extended to the age of 14		
	1944 Act		Compulsory education extended to 15 years of age. LEAs became responsible for providing schooling options which catered to a range of ages, aptitude and abilities. This policy introduced the terminology of 'disability of body and mind'		
	1948 Act	Categories of disability were broken down further to include areas such as 'delicate' and 'maladjusted'			
	1978 Warnock Report & 1981 Act	Wider inclusion agenda (e.g. UNESCO, 1994) became focussed on mainstream education as the most effective way of supporting CYP with learning difficulties Governmental cuts in spending limited the extent to which specialist placements could be promoted and supported	New terminology introduced ('learning difficulties' and 'special educational needs') which remained prominent in policy for many years and recognised that disability can be influenced by environmental factors. This thinking aimed to reduce SEN identification rates. Focus was placed on holistic assessment that covers a range of areas		Despite its aims, high numbers of CYP continued to be identified as having learning difficulties. The single category of 'learning difficulties' was criticised for leading to a lack of specificity in how best to support children with additional needs
	1993 Act & 1994 Code of Practice		1993 Act required all future governments to publish a 'code of practice' to support the identification, intervention and assessment of CYP with SEN. Special education was positioned as a last option informed by poor evidence for effectiveness of this in research		
21 st Century	2001 Code of Practice	There was a political shift towards inclusion, echoing previous funding cuts and poor evidence for benefits of specialist education. There was increased focus on personalisation for CYP within education to support the focus on mainstream placements alongside the introduction of the National Curriculum and market forces culture in education.	Stayed largely the same as 1994 Act other than reductions in the number of categories of SEN reported and emphasising right to mainstream education for all CYP	National Curriculum and market forces culture made this policy contradictory. Children were seen to fit into a narrow space in the mainstream classroom which challenged personalisation strategies. Some academics argued focus on full inclusion may prevent some children from accessing specialist education which may benefit them. Led to increasing focus on the use of TAs in the classroom which challenged the notion of inclusion. Criticisms of poor support for young moving into adult life/adult services and ongoing overidentification of CYP with SEND	
	2015 Code of Practice	'Broken Britain' agenda came full circle in identifying 'troublesome' populations and the Government sought to 'remove the bias towards inclusion' with new policy	Promoted the role of special schools and asserted it as a valid option, changing the focus from behaviour to mental health as a category of need and focussing on strengths as well as difficulties in assessments. Age support ends increased to 25 years.		Continued criticism of poor funding for pupils with SEND without EHCPs. Continues to lead to increasing numbers of pupils being recognised as having SEND and requests for EHCPs. Poor integration of environmental data such as poverty into how this may contribute to needs which may be linked to wider policies of the time (e.g. Broken Britain)

Chapter 3: History of Statutory Assessment and EP Role

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 explored SEND policy developments, detailing the cultural drivers and criticisms of each era and their influence upon EP practice. Chapter 3 expands this, focussing on the development of statutory assessment processes and the activity of EP statutory psychological assessment, exploring the changing role of EPs, the professions' definition of psychological assessment and how these data are harnessed by the LA. Throughout, I reflect upon the ways policy and professional values may conflict to create the challenges in EP assessment identified within Chapter 1.

3.2 Statutory Assessment Policy

3.2.1 Certificates of Disability to Statements of SEN

Before the recommendations laid out in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978), formal examination of children with learning difficulties led to a certificate which detailed the nature and extent of a CYP's disability. The earliest reference of this is within the 1899 Elementary Education Act which discussed the need for improved provision for those children categorised as 'defective' or epileptic, stating:

“For the purpose of ascertaining whether a child is defective or epileptic... a certificate to that effect by a duly qualified practitioner approved by the Education Department shall be required” (Elementary Education Act, 1899, Chapter 32:3)

The 1944 Education Act developed this, stating for those children “suffering from any disability of mind or body” (pg.28) examination and certification would be undertaken by a medical officer. This examination could be supported by information from “teachers or other

persons with respect to ability and aptitude” (pg.28) that were obtainable. Tomlinson (2017) argues this focus on medical professionals at the time arose from a need to demonstrate credibility as a professional group.

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) challenged previous guidance on the assessment of CYP with disability, highlighting that “full investigation of a child’s disabilities calls for more than a medical examination. A psychological examination is necessary” (pg.58). The report (DES, 1978) also recognised the role of social workers and professionals such as therapists or specialist teachers. Four main principles of effective assessment were detailed, as summarised in Figure 3.1

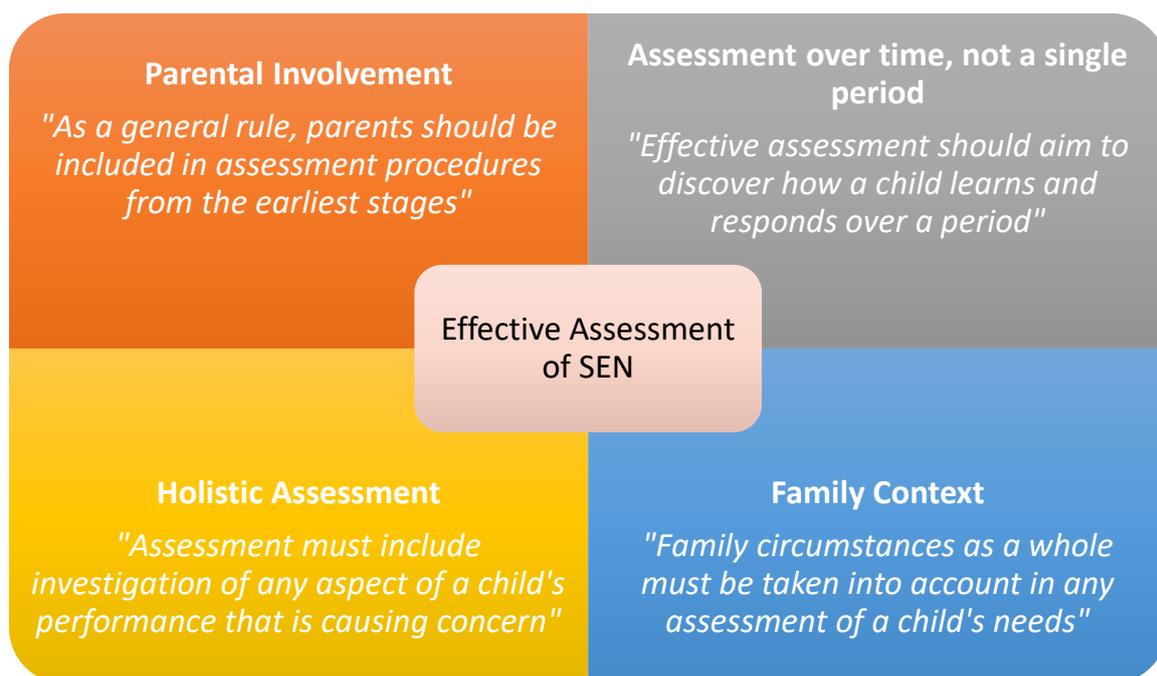


Figure 3.1: A summary of principles of effective assessment as reported in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978, pg.59)

Assessment over time proposed five stages of graduated involvement and support which slowly introduced external professionals to provide support to a school. Stages Four and Five encompassed a period of assessment undertaken by the LEA to decide if, initially, statutory assessment should be undertaken. If agreed, formal assessment of a CYP's needs lead to the production of a Statement of SEN. The principle of assessment over time explicitly recognised

the need for professionals such as EPs to have opportunities to observe and explore a CYP's SEN in multiple contexts, working with several partners (e.g. parents/carers and teachers).

The 1981 Education Act adopted these recommendations, detailing that LEAs must undertake assessment where a CYP is thought to require special educational provision and a Statement of SEN. Following this, Circular 1/83 recognised that while the structure of these statements may be left to the discretion of LEAs (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2010), the views of CYP should be meaningfully included (Cline, 2018) and assessment should focus on both a CYP's needs and their protective factors/resources (Lindsay, Dockrell and Wedell, 2020).

This guidance was extended in the 1993 Education Act and 1994 Code (DfE, 1994), summarised in Figure 3.2. The features outlined in Figure 3.2 remained largely unchanged in the subsequent 2001 Code (DfES, 2001). Statements of SEN remained the product of assessment; however, the stages of graduated assessment leading to this were combined to 'school action' (Stages 1 and 2) and 'school action plus' (Stage 3), the latter leading to the initiation of statutory assessment. With each Code (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; DfE and DH 2015), the role of CYP as decision-makers and key stakeholders in their assessment became more prominent to reflect wider policy priorities such as the UN Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989).

The Warnock Report (DES, 1978) cemented the expectation that statutory assessment reflected a period of assessment which included psychological input. Over time, this process has become less formalised, i.e. 'plan, do, review' cycles rather than moving from Stage 1-5, to encourage schools to take more responsibility in SEN support (Norwich and Eaton, 2015). The 2001 CoP (DfES, 2001) intended to place greater responsibilities on schools to support

CYP with SEN and reduce the number of Statements of SEN produced (Bines, 2000) but this was not successful (Norwich and Eaton, 2015).

Statutory Assessment Principles

- Statutory assessment encapsulates stages four and five of the graduated response
 - o Stage One: class teachers identify/register a CYP's SEN, working with the Special Educational Needs Co-Ordinator (SENCO) to take initial action
 - o Stage Two: SENCO begins to gather information and co-ordinate a CYP's special educational provision. Here an individual education plan (IEP) is created which outlines a CYP's difficulties, the special education provision implemented, current targets for the CYP, and arrangements for the reviewing and monitoring of the IEP
 - o Stage Three: class teachers and SENCO are supported by outside specialists
 - o Stage Four: LEA considers the need for statutory assessment and undertakes this if required, requests can be made by a CYP's school, an involved agency, parent/carer, or maintained school
 - o Stage Five: LEA considers need for a CYP to be issued a Statement of SEN and, if required, creates this
- Requests should include evidence of parent/carer's and (where appropriate) the CYP's views, IEPs and their reviews, evidence of Stage Three or Four involvement of specialist professionals
- The statutory assessment process in its entirety will take 26 weeks; this begins with the request for assessment, a period of six weeks to decide whether this assessment is necessary, 10 weeks to undertake this assessment, two weeks for a draft statement to be produced by the LEA which is sent to a CYP's parents/carers to review and name their preferred school placement, and eight weeks to complete the final statement of SEN
- Within this 10-week period of assessment, educational and psychological professionals and social services have six weeks to provide evidence
- Decision-making criteria as whether to undertake assessment can be developed by each LEA

Figure 3.2: A summary of the statutory assessment procedure put forward in the 1994 Code of Practice (DfE, 1994)

Statements of SEN were reported to be a 'useless safety net' with no clear criteria regarding who should be provided with one (Warnock, 2005). Where assessments were undertaken, parents/carers reported that the process was notably stressful (Lamb, 2009) and the final document was reported to be vague and unclear (Cameron and Monsen, 2005). There was a

recognition within governmental and academic literature that a new system was needed which would address the “adversarial” (DfE, 2011, pg.4) nature of statutory assessment and the continued overidentification of CYP with SEN.

3.2.2 Education, Health and Care Plans

The 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) proposed substantive changes to SEND and statutory assessment process as guided by Section 3 of the 2014 Children and Families Act and Sections 3-14 of the 2014 SEND Regulations. Statements of SEN were developed into more comprehensive ‘Education, Health and Care Plans’. Figure 1.1 provides an overview of the key changes occurring within this policy and Figure 3.3 details the areas within the policy which allow LAs to make best arrangements in line with local resources and needs.

<p>Guidance for all LAs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Content of EHCPs: EHCPs set out an individual’s current SEND, expected outcomes across education, relationships, emotional resilience and transition to adulthood, and the required provision to achieve these outcomes- Inclusion of CYP and Parents/Carers: The guidance states the views of CYP and parents/carers must be sought and included through every stage of the assessment process (pg.20), adopting the “tell us once” process which seeks to avoid the need for CYP and parents/carers to provide the same information on multiple occasions- Professionals’ views sought in process: Health, care and educational, including an EP, professionals should be consulted as part of the statutory assessment process. It is stated that evidence need not be submitted more than once if previous data remains relevant- Timeframes: The EHCP process in its entirety now takes 20 weeks however, professionals still have six weeks to provide their contributory evidence <p>Discretionary powers of LA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Decision making processes and criteria for whether an EHCP assessment should occur (pg.146), and- The structure and format of advice which should be provided (pg.157)- The final format of the EHCP (pg.161) so long as this format reflects the principles and minimum sections outlined within the CoP
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Figure 3.3: A summary of the LA guidance and responsibilities laid out in the 2015 Code of Practice (DfE and DH, 2015)

Academic literature outlined in Chapter 1 reports that the current policy has created an assessment system which is lacking in uniformity across LAs in both EHCP structure and professional advice (Robinson et al, 2018), putting “further pressure on a strained system” (Education Committee, 2019, pg.16). In addition, when considering the intended aims of this policy, the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) has been unsuccessful in addressing overidentification rates (DfE, 2019b), in part due to poor support for many pupils without an EHCP. It has created new burdens for parents/carers, who are reported to be making their own statutory assessment requests to try and secure stronger support for their CYP (Education Committee, 2019).

3.2.3 The Role of Educational Psychologists

The role of EPs in SEND policy slowly developed leading up to and following the Warnock Report (DES, 1978). While reference is made in the Education Act 1944 to the consideration of additional reports from teachers or those ‘with respect to the ability and aptitude of the child’, no guidance is provided as to who may be suitable to provide such reports. Some reference was made to EPs employed within school psychological services in the 1955 report on maladjusted children. Through these references and the early work of Cyril Burt (discussed in Section 3.3.1), EPs’ contribution was largely limited to the assessment of a CYP’s the aptitude and ability.

The Warnock Committee (DES, 1978) challenged this, positioning EPs as members of the LEA who could valuably donate to the statutory assessment process and recommended that consideration should be given to providing the profession with statutory status. Following this, EPs’ contribution in conducting holistic, graduated assessments became formally recognised in policy (Table 3.1).

Despite this recognised important contribution, the degree of guidance of how EPs may be involved in this process appears to have decreased through each Code (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; DfE and DH, 2015) as their identity becomes increasingly part of the wider LA, summarised in Table 3.1. The table documents a reduction in the level of detailed guidance for EPs conducting statutory assessments. The initial Code (DfE, 1994) provided lengthy guidance and clear expectations of how professionals' information should be collected and used, while the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) moved to overarching assessment aims with no expectation for explicit referencing of information sources within the final EHCP. The decreasing distinction between EPs as a contributing professional group and LA employees echoes Lamb Enquiry concerns (Lamb, 2009) that EPs' employment within LEA services created conflicting agendas which could often leave EPs feeling pressured to recommend LEA preferred provisions/placements within their advice.

By removing the clarity in expectations regarding what EP assessment may feasibly capture, there is risk that the profession may 'over-extend' its reach to comment on a CYP's physical health and social care needs. This is especially relevant given the criticisms within data such as Seaview MBC's Ofsted inspections (Ofsted 2017; Ofsted 2019) and the 2019 Education Committee review which noted the absence of assessment data from health and care professionals in the statutory assessment process.

Section 3.3 considers parallel EP professional development, noting EPs' concerns surrounding psychological advice construction. Buck (2015) recognises that the extensive 2014/2015 policy reforms provide a creative and timely opportunity to explore EPs' role and processes within statutory assessment.

Table 3.1: A summary of the changing guidance regarding EP statutory psychological assessment within policy (DfE, 1994; DfES, 2001; DfE and DH, 2015)

	Code of Practice 1994 (DfE, 1994)	Code of Practice 2001 (DfES, 2001)	Code of Practice 2015 (DfE and DH, 2015)
Guidance on EP Assessment	<p>This code provided a clearly outlined and detailed subsection relating to EPs and their psychological advice.</p> <p>The section listed the range of areas the EP should advise on (e.g. communication, approach to learning, self-image) and the times whereby the EP may need to consult external professionals (e.g. physiotherapists or occupational therapists).</p> <p>The provision of advice must come from an LEA EP.</p>	<p>Very little guidance was provided, and none directed solely towards EPs. The general guidance provided states that any advice from ‘other professionals’ should consider features relevant to current and future educational needs and how these played a role, alongside provision recommendations.</p> <p>EPs were a potential resource for obtaining the views of the individual being assessed.</p>	<p>Again, general advice for contributing professionals is provided. Here, any submitted advice should include clear and accessible information regarding the young person’s needs, expected outcomes for the end of the key stage, and appropriate educational provision needed to achieve these. LAs may provide formal guidance on the structure and additional content of advice.</p> <p>The provision of psychological advice will normally be obtained from an EP employed or commissioned by LA.</p>
Use in final statement or EHCP	<p>LEA officers constructing the final statement must explicitly reference any advice taken from professionals as well as include all reports in the appendices.</p>	<p>Again, explicit reference must be made to any advice taken from professionals and the SEN officer must explain how contradictions between professionals have been resolved.</p>	<p>Collated advice from professionals including EPs is placed in Section K of the EHCP. No expectation is stated that advice included in the main body of the plan from external professionals should be explicitly referenced.</p>

Given the lack of standardisation in EHCP content and the psychological advice which informs it, understanding how the profession defines this process is a useful step in exploring the constructions surrounding the activity. In the next section, these definitions will be explored historically, considering key issues and debates which have guided EPs beliefs surrounding psychological assessment.

3.3 Psychological Assessment

Norwich (2002) considered the relationship between psychological and statutory assessment, reporting the two should be distinguished to consider whether EPs contribute to this process as psychologists or as 'special education advisors'. This section examines the issues and definitions surrounding psychological assessment, and its reported role in wider statutory assessment. Exploration of these issues help build an understanding of how this activity has developed, considered further within Chapter 4. To understand the history of assessment is not to think about a unidirectional change but an ever-evolving and ongoing process of development informed by prominent values and policy (Freeman and Miller, 2000).

3.3.1 Historical Changes in Assessment Methods

The assessment methods used by EPs is an area which has long been discussed and debated in the literature, particularly regarding the use of psychometrics. EPs use of standardised cognitive assessment methods began with Cyril Burt in 1913 (Hill, 2017), the first appointed EP in England, who was recruited to assess children intended for specialist or grammar schools (Norwich, 2002; Cameron and Hardy, 2017).

From the 1970s, debates began regarding the ethics of using these methods in statutory processes. Changing definitions of effective assessment supported the suggestions put

forward in the Warnock Report (DES, 1978; Figure 3.1). Bersoff (1973) suggested that assessment should incorporate observations and idiographic methods aimed at understanding an individual in their unique context, echoed by Gillham (1978) who reported that psychological assessment should be prospective, informing and guiding interventions, rather than retrospective explorations of cognitive deficits.

This shift in political and professional thinking, and the recognition that these assessment methods lacked real-world validity (Bersoff, 1973), led to more detailed definitions of psychological assessment being established which aimed to move away from intelligence testing. In 1993, Dockrell and McShane defined assessment as "a process which should guide decision making... by identifying a profile of strengths and needs". They went on to state assessment should be "hypothesis-driven" (pg. 28-29), informed by a multitude of factors within and around a young person, considering cognitive aspects of disability alongside the individual's learning environment.

3.3.2 Assessment Over Time

Changes in the definition of statutory and psychological assessment emphasised the need for longitudinal explorations of a CYP's needs which considered a range of contexts (DES, 1978) and response to interventions (e.g. BPS, 2015). Despite this, in Chapter 1 I outlined that EPs are often required to conduct their assessments in single visits or shorter timeframes (Schools Week, 2019).

The importance of assessment over time is detailed in Cameron and Monsen's (2005) paper who report that psychological assessment captures a 'problem-solving process' that requires time to build an understanding of a CYP's 'problem', which is often complex and not readily solved. They argued that EPs require time and professional opportunity to use "innovative

and creative” (pg.286) applications of psychology to produce meaningful psychological advice. Wicks (2013) extended this, highlighting that effective assessment should be useful and capture a wide range of sources to inform effective interventions. Despite this, data from the Audit Commission in 2002 indicated that statutory assessment often revealed very little new information about a CYP.

These data would suggest that currently the activity of EP statutory psychological assessment is ineffective both in time and professional value, notably concerning in light of increasing numbers of EHCP requests being made each year (DfE, 2019b). The growing picture of an ineffective and potentially professionally unfulfilling activity may in some part explain why 93% of LA Principal EPs reported current workload demands outweighed their workforce, with a notable increase in statutory assessment work being reported as the most common factor to contributing to these shortages.

3.3.3 Access to Resources or Resource Definers?

Another concern which emerges within literature after the 1990s relates to resource definition as the purpose of psychological assessment. Faupel and Norgate (1993) stated that the 1981 Education Act’s proposals led to “perhaps the single greatest disaster” for EP practice by positioning the profession as “providers of additional resources...via Formal Assessments” (pg.132). The paper argued that EPs had become bureaucrats at the cost of their applied practice and ability to advocate for CYP and parents/carers.

This concern is common within the academic literature which reports EPs, through their assessments, are being asked to adopt the role of resource definers rather than being viewed as an accessible resource in their own right (Thomson, 1996; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon, Woods and Rooney, 2010). In addition, Norwich (1995) reported that EPs were

pressured to tailor their advice to available provisions, rather than what they felt was most appropriate for a CYP, echoing the criticisms raised within the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009). This conflicts with professional guidance (e.g. BPS, 2015) which reports that EPs should feel able to exercise professional judgement over what is included in their assessments.

This perceived pressure to define the resources a CYP with SEND should be allocated leads to a risk of psychological assessment in its intended form being diminished. Faupel and Norgate (1993) recognised this, stating that as EPs became more entrenched in LEA systems and within schools, it had become more difficult for them to be critical of school practice. This may also account for some of the reported changes in EP advice within academic literature. The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP, 2004) stated that psychological assessment should include evidence of psychological knowledge. However, Buck (2015) reports psychological theory has depleted within EP advice, linking this to the 'reverse-engineering' of psychological assessments to better fit LA needs.

The concern that psychological assessment has become less about hypothesis testing and psychological knowledge, and more allocation of resources, again links into the ideas raised by Norwich (1995 and 2002). EP psychological assessments were identified as being heavily relied upon in statutory assessments by Norwich (1995), due to their objective and unbiased nature. However, Norwich (1995) highlights that this evaluation of EP assessment did not provide a clear rationale for the role of psychological assessment in statutory procedures. If psychological assessment was about hypotheses development and construction of a CYP's needs to remove barriers to learning, Norwich (2002) argued that this should be viewed as distinct from the statutory process of SEN identification for additional support.

3.4 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the historical developments of statutory processes and, within that, psychological assessment and advice construction, have been presented. Over recent decades, SEND policy has promoted the role of EPs while placing more responsibility on LAs to govern the statutory process. Alongside this, the profession has moved through debates surrounding the purpose and the process of psychological assessment with academic literature reporting growing input and influence from LA policy. Table 3.2 summarises my own conceptualisation of these changes, highlighting the developing role of EPs over time and the debates which have been undertaken by the profession in a changing statutory assessment landscape.

Psychological assessment has been highlighted as the perceived core function of EPs by stakeholders such as SENCOs despite this appearing to be at odds with the desires of those within the profession (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). In addition, this activity is reported to put greater burdens upon EP workloads and recruitment (Audit Commission, 2002; DfE, 2019a).

Given the increasing demand placed upon EPs, it is timely to revisit the psychological assessment process (Buck, 2015). This research asks EPs and SEND officers to reflect on the purpose of statutory psychological assessment using the CHAT framework (Engeström, 1999b). By understanding constructions of this activity, we may be able to identify why it may be subject to ongoing criticism.

Chapter 4 introduces the conceptual framework adopted within this research to explore my research aims (Chapter 1), CHAT (Engeström, 1999a). Following an account of the framework, I will summarise the key themes arising across Chapter 1, 2 and 3 of this volume to reflect upon the current and historical development of the activity of statutory psychological

assessment. The framework will then be critically evaluated before introducing a key research method applied in this research; DWR Labs (Engeström, 2007).

Table 3.2: Summary of developments in statutory and psychological assessment

Assessment Era	Key Policy	Limitations in Arrangements	Professional Debates
"Certificates of Disability" 1899-1978	1899 Education Act 1944 Education Act	Assessment was focussed on medical professionals, ignoring environmental factors in disability	<i>Profession was emerging within this period and developing itself as a professional group which had a role in the statutory assessment of CYP</i>
"Statements of SEN" 1978 - 2015	1978 Warnock Report 1981 Education Act Circular 1/83 1994 Code of Practice 2001 Code of Practice	Statements of SEN were seen to be vague documents which did not meet their reported remit. The responsibility placed on schools did not reduce rates of identification of learning difficulties but raised them further. The process was reported to be stressful and challenging for parents/carers	70s – 80s: Psychometric assessments were challenged as EPs began to recognise the constraints of this approach and argued that assessment should use methods such as observations and dynamic measures 90s: EPs argued assessment should be hypothesis driven, working longitudinally to understand a CYP's needs. Questions also began to emerge of whether EP assessments served the sole purpose of resource definition 00s: Statutory psychological assessments were seen to be burdensome and focussed on defining the resources/placement a child required. EP assessments were reported to be heavily constrained by LEA requirements, notably due to LEA employment. Finally, growing criticisms emerged that assessment over time was not always able to occur
"Education, Health and Care Plans" 2015 - Present Day	2014 Children and Families Act, Section 3 2015 Code of Practice	Overidentification rates remain, further exacerbated by poor support for pupils without an EHCP. Parents/carers continue to struggle to have their CYP's needs assessed, with poor input from health and care professionals. A lack of uniformity in the structure and format of assessments and EHCPS has led to a post-code lottery culture	The demanding nature of this activity is argued by Principal EPs to have contributed to LA staffing shortages with EHCP requests, and therefore EP workloads, continuing to rise. Arguments have been made that the psychological theory within statutory EP reports has declined over time and that EP reports have been reverse engineered to cover all aspects of the final statutory document

Chapter 4: History of Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

4.1 Introduction

This research explores the activity of EPs' statutory psychological assessment, building an understanding of how it is constructed from the subject position of two professional groups: EPs and SEND officers, through the lens of CHAT. CHAT is a conceptual and analytical framework which seeks to understand the social and cultural drivers which shape an activity both historically and in the present (Leadbetter, 2011). An activity is defined within the framework as "social practices orientated at objects" (Engeström, 1999b, pg.380). In this chapter, I outline the historical development of CHAT, applying the framework to themes abstracted from the literature in Chapters 1-3. I examine empirical applications of the framework, reflecting upon some of the limitations of CHAT. I then introduce an extension of the framework, known as DWR Labs (Engeström et al, 1996).

4.2 Activity Theory Development

4.2.1 Vygotsky and First-Generation CHAT

CHAT has its roots primarily in the work of Marx (Sannino and Engeström, 2018), Vygotsky (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999; Yamazumi, 2006), Leont'ev (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999), and Engeström (Leadbetter, 2002), moving through three generations of the theory as knowledge and understanding of the original ideas have been translated and developed.

Vygotsky's (1978) early work on CHAT focussed on the idea that all actions are directed towards a goal (i.e. object) and are influenced (i.e. mediated) by a subject's (individual or group) cultural and social contexts (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). These mediating contexts include both concrete, e.g. machinery, and abstract artefacts, e.g. language, (Leadbetter, 2017). Activity was positioned as a way of understanding change that was rooted

within society (Soan, 2012). Academic literature argues the framework aimed to move away from the behaviourist models of the time (Leadbetter, 2017), developing a model of human behaviour which incorporated the idea of mediation influencing actions (Greenhouse, 2013). First-generation CHAT had three nodes: subject, object and artefacts (Figure 4.1).

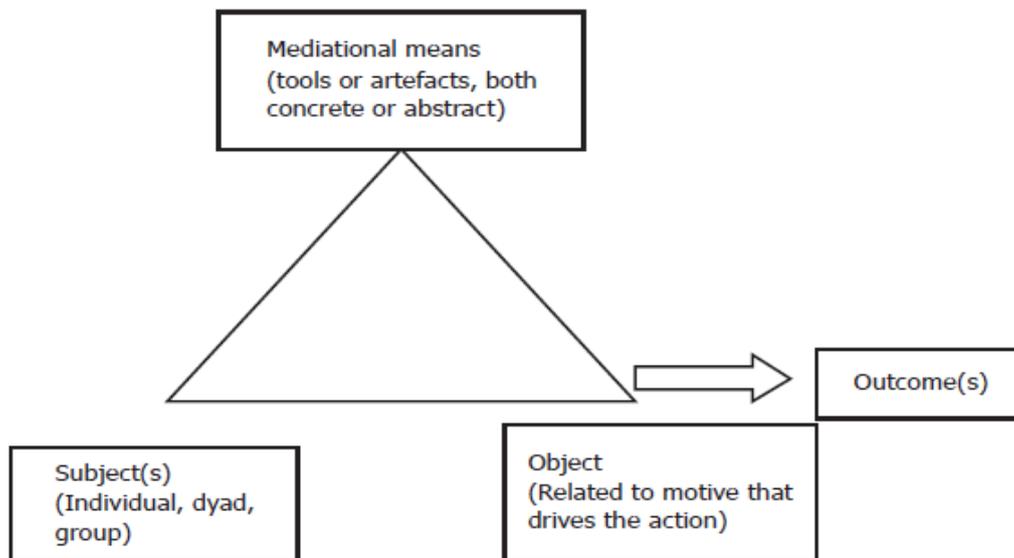


Figure 4.1: First-generation CHAT (Taken from Leadbetter, 2017, pg. 256)

4.2.2 Second Generation CHAT

First generation CHAT provided little consideration as to how an individual's definition of an object was influenced by their motivations (Leadbetter, 2017) and how activity was defined in relation to action. To address this, Leont'ev (1981) expanded upon Vygotsky's work, distinguishing actions from activities (Greenhouse, 2013). Actions had a clear achievable goal, while an activity could be defined as a group act moving towards a wider object. Objects within a group are difficult to define and interpreted differently based on an individuals' motivations, which are shaped by macro-level elements such as historical and cultural factors (Leadbetter, 2017).

These elements were acknowledged in Engeström’s second generation model of CHAT (Figure 4.2), incorporating three new nodes: rules, division of labour and community (Greenhouse, 2013) to recognise that actions do not take place in a ‘sealed environment’ (Leadbetter, 2017, pg.256). Through this revision, a collective dimension was brought to CHAT (Yamazumi, 2006) and historicity was placed as a key principle (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). The node of object was placed within a circle, recognising it as a focal element of the theory and its ambiguous nature due to individual constructions (Sannino and Engeström, 2018).

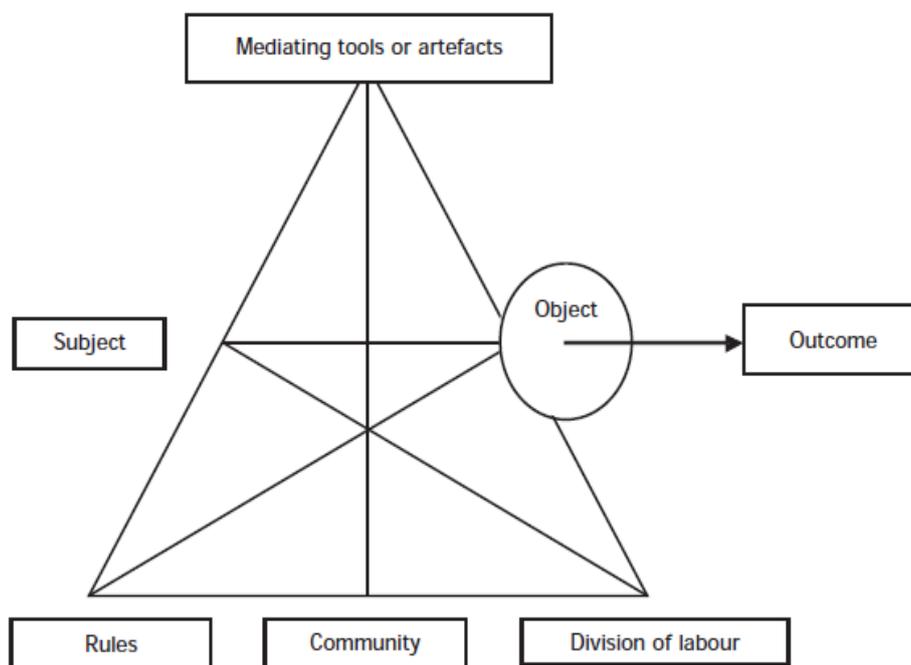


Figure 4.2: Second-generation CHAT (Taken from Leadbetter, 2016, pg. 257)

Each node has its considerations and associated questions which allow the researcher to explore the chosen activity system, summarised in Table 4.1 (Engeström, 1999b; Leadbetter, 2017). These questions provided the interview schedule for phase one of my data collection process, described in Chapter 5.

Table 4.1: A summary of CHAT nodes (adapted from Engeström, 1999b and Leadbetter 2017)

Node	Description of the node
Subject	<p><i>Whose perspective are we taking?</i></p> <p>This can take the position of the individual, group or dyad to understand the activity.</p>
Object	<p><i>What is being worked on or what is the focus of the activity?</i></p> <p>The object is the hardest node to define, often due to the lack of clarity between individuals in the activity group. It is directly related to motivations and, due to this, can be interpreted differently by all involved.</p>
Outcome	<p><i>What is hoped to be achieved?</i></p> <p>Leont'ev (1981) explores the relationship between actions and activity, objects and objectives. He explains that an individual's actions are directed towards individual objects which aim to achieve or contribute to achieving a higher purpose, or outcome.</p>
Mediating Artefacts	<p><i>What is being used?</i></p> <p>This can relate to practical (concrete) tools or more abstract artefacts such as language. Engeström (1999b, pg.381-382) considered these in the following categories (these are not fixed in nature);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 'What' artefacts used to identify and describe the objects - 'How' artefacts used to guide and direct processes or procedures surrounding objects - 'Why' artefacts aim to diagnose or explain the properties or behaviours of the object - 'Where to' artefacts think about the developments of the object
Rules	<p><i>What supports or constrains the work?</i></p> <p>In this research, this node was considered in relation to the concept of historicity: how have these supports, or constraints developed over time for the individual and in the local and national societal structures. These relate to explicit and implicit regulations, norms and conventions associated with the activity.</p>
Division of Labour	<p><i>Who does what? How is the work shared out and why?</i></p> <p>This links to role separation and role expectations and emerges from Marx's ideas (Vygotsky, 1978; Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) which position change within social practices and historical developments.</p> <p>Leont'ev (1981) was influenced by Marx's ideas and explained that labour is a collective activity wherein actions are shared between the group, each individual taking on different roles, actions and objects to move the group towards their outcome.</p>
Community	<p><i>Who else is involved in the work?</i></p> <p>Leont'ev (1981) recognised that it is important to understand the relationships and connections within any activity as the tools which guide an object are socially mediated.</p>

4.2.3 Historicity, Expansive Learning and Third Generation CHAT

'Historicity' is a central element in understanding the development of any activity system (Engeström, 1999a; Leadbetter, 2001), considering change over time from an individual and local level, alongside wider cultural and societal developments. This idea of an evolving activity system was entitled 'expansive learning' (Engeström, 2001). Here, new activity structures arise through a process of "individuals questioning existing practice" and group level developments of new ways of working which address previous tensions and contradictions in the process (Engeström, 1999b, pg.383; summarised in Table 4.2).

Engeström's expansive learning process (Engeström, 1999b) demonstrates both a naturally occurring cycle of change which can occur within activity systems, and a framework which can be applied to promote planned change within a system. Within this research, expansive learning was harnessed as a framework to promote change, with the researcher questioning existing practices and enabling participants (i.e. 'group level') to develop actions to promote a new activity system.

In addition to historicity, Engeström stated that the voices of multiple interacting subjects ('multivoicedness') needed to be considered to allow an activity to evolve (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999). This thinking is encapsulated in his third-generation model of CHAT (Figure 4.3) which embraces the role of contradictions in facilitating change (Kerosuo, Kajamaa and Engeström, 2010).

Table 4.3: A summary of the expansive learning process (Taken from Engeström, 1999b, pg.383-384))

Expansive Learning Cycle Stage	Description
1. Questioning	Questioning, criticising or rejecting elements of current practice
2a. Historical analysis 2b. Actual-empirical analysis	Mental, discursive or practical transformation of the situation to find out causes or explanatory mechanisms through an exploration of origin/evolution and by constructing a picture of its inner systemic relations
3. Modelling the new situation	Modelling the new explanatory relationship in a publicly observable medium. This means constructing an explicit, simplified model of the new idea that explains and offers a solution to the situation
4. Examining the new model	Running, operating and experimenting on the new model to grasp its dynamics, potentials and limitations
5. Implementing the new model	Making the model concrete through practical applications, enrichments and conceptual extensions
6. Reflecting on the process	Reflecting on and evaluating the process
7. Consolidating the new practice	Consolidating the outcomes into new stable forms of practice

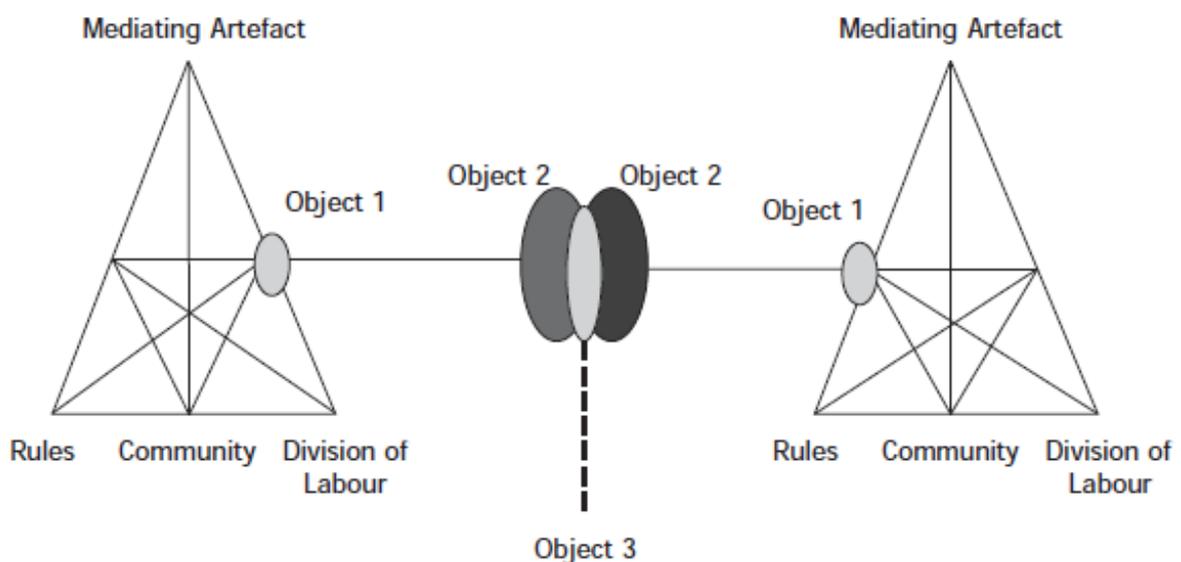


Figure 4.3: Third-generation CHAT (Taken from Leadbetter, 2017, pg. 258)

By considering expansive learning cycles over time, and recognising the voices of multiple subjects, the contradictions surrounding an activity can be both identified and addressed. Engeström (2019) stated that contradictions can occur on four levels, depending on the

nature of the contradiction and whether it occurs across nodes, time, or activity systems (summarised in Table 4.3 using an example relevant to statutory assessment).

Table 4.4: A summary of Engeström's proposed contradiction levels (Taken from Engeström, 2019, pg.71)

Contradiction	Explanation and Example
Primary	Contradictions within a node <i>(e.g. while EHCPs should include multi-professional input, these documents often focus largely on educational advice and data – ‘division of labour’ contradiction)</i>
Secondary	Contradictions between two nodes <i>(e.g. While policy promotes greater parental rights and advocacy within assessment (‘rules’), parents/carers may not get to review the EP’s statutory advice before submission (‘division of labour’))</i>
Tertiary	Contradictions between previous models of activity’s object, and new ones <i>(e.g. historically, the object of EP assessment was to categorise children for special school placements based on their deficits but now the objective is to gain a holistic perspective of a CYP’s strengths and their SEND)</i>
Quaternary	Contradictions between the central activity and neighbouring systems <i>(e.g. If the function of EP assessment is to define the resources a CYP requires (including placement) this is contradicted by what is available in LA’s budget and special school spaces)</i>

Through collaborative working which identifies existing contradictions between activity systems for analysis and resolution, Engeström proposes that an opportunity arises to establish new objects (Yamazumi, 2006). This process can be facilitated by DWR labs (Engeström, 2007; Section 4.7) in order to facilitate a process of organisational change (Leadbetter, 2017).

4.3 Summary

CHAT is a framework which has undergone extensive development, often adopted by researchers to suit their research and methodologies (Holzman, 2006). The framework has no singular definition or construction (Leadbetter, 2001) however, Engeström proposed five key principles to conceptualise CHAT, detailed in Table 4.4 with examples relevant to this research topic (Engeström, 2001).

Table 4.4: Five key principles of CHAT (Adapted from Engeström, 2001 pg.136-137)

Element	Example
<i>A collective, artefact-mediated and object-orientated activity system is the prime unit of analysis</i>	This denotes the overall activity system (here, the activity of statutory psychological assessment) which is informed by tools and language and guided towards an object
<i>Activity systems are a community of multiple voices</i>	Activity systems do not centre on an individual but instead include multiple individuals (e.g. EPs and SEND officers) working towards a shared object
<i>Historicity is of central importance as activity systems develop over time and are a product of their history</i>	Activities are a product of their historical developments which shape new models of working meaning groups can learn from the past debates, models and policies (e.g. the developments highlighted across Chapters 2 and 3)
<i>Contradictions are a source of change and development arising through tensions within and between activity systems</i>	Contradictions (Table 4.3) provide a mechanism for discussion and analysis of current working practices
<i>Activity systems are open to transformation through cycles of expansive learning where contradictions are highlighted and creatively reconceptualised</i>	Change in working practices can occur when current tensions and contradictions are discussed and analysed to produce new objects (e.g. this research may lead to multi-professional assessments which produce a single advice)

4.4 CHAT and SEND

To ensure Engeström’s (2001) principles are acknowledged, and to understand the activity central to this research, EPs’ contribution to statutory assessment, we must first position the historical development of the activity within CHAT, outlined in Figure 4.4. By doing this, historical contradictions and the evolution of the process can be better understood. Figure 4.4 considers key themes and contradictions identified within a deductive analysis of my literature review. The italicised questions summarise the information being sought within each CHAT nodes and were used as a coding system during my analysis (examples can be found in Appendix One).

Subject: Whose perspective are we taking?

The choosing of an appropriate subject position within the activity of constructing SEND can be argued to be linked to the social and medical models of disability (Lindsay, 2003; Gallagher et al, 2014).

Within the social model of disability, the processing of SEN is positioned as a method of social control (Armstrong, 2005) or a socially constructed notion to address ineffective education (Bines, 2000). Considering this, an insightful subject position to take would be societal groups (e.g. schools, LAs or professionals) who have the largest role/influence within the activity.

Subject position may also be associated with considerations as to who the primary EP client is during assessment. While EP professional bodies (AEP, 2004; BPS, 2015) stated the CYP is the primary client, Norwich (2002) questioned whether in reality, it was the LEA. These different positions may change discussions around the priority perspectives which should be taken to promote change within the activity.

Artefacts: What is being used?

EP assessment measures have changed over time as policy has moved away from 'aptitude and ability testing' to categorise children to a holistic assessment process which recognise SEN occurs across a complex continuum (DES, 1978). This is also complemented by language changes in constructing SEND (Norwich and Eaton, 2015) which guide the methods undertaken for assessment and type of evidence that is expected legally.

The change from early 'certificates' of disability (Education Act 1944), to Statements of SEN and finally EHCPs have led to changes in processes, timeframes and stakeholder involvement.

Division of Labour: How is the work shared and why?

The constructing of SEN has seen a historical shift in who held the 'power' to conduct assessments of CYP, tied to the changing construction and understanding of SEND. In early policy, this activity was undertaken by medical officers and supported by reports from "other persons in respect to aptitude and ability" (Education Act 1944, pg.5), with little input from EPs beyond psychometric scores (Gillham, 1978). In line with this, EPs' (through the work of Cyril Burt) early role was to conduct psychometric tests to ascertain where CYP should be educated (Cameron and Hardy, 2017).

As policy and constructions regarding SEN have developed, greater focus has been placed on holistic, graduated assessments being conducted in multi-professional contexts (DES, 1978; Dockrell and McShane, 1993; Code of Practice, DfE and DH, 2015). This has shared the work across a range of professional groups (i.e. health and care). The BPS (2015) guidance acknowledges that health/care needs may be touched upon by EPs, but this is not for them to detail and provide recommendations upon primarily. However, LAs have been given high levels of autonomy (Norwich, 2015). SEND practices are open to variation across LAs (Code of Practice, 2015; BPS, 2015) and no legal guidance on EP advice has been found but there is growing recognition of needing to work multi-professionally.

The role of EPs in assessment appears to be construed as one of resource definition and guiding provision (Thomson, 1996; Norwich, 2000; Fallon et al, 2010). It is seen as the key role of the profession (Ashton and Roberts, 2006; Fallon et al, 2010) however, given the absence of psychology stated to be found in reports, it is unclear how this activity differs from educational assessment (Norwich, 2002).

Figure 4.4 (part 1): Summary of the thematic analysis undertaken across literature review, framed within the CHAT nodes



Figure 4.5 (part 2): Summary of the thematic analysis undertaken across literature review, framed within the CHAT nodes

4.5 Rationale for Use

While the CHAT framework (Engeström, 1999a) was chosen to underpin this research, early consideration was given to collaborative action research (CAR) (Lawson et al, 2015) as a potential guiding framework. CAR (Lawson et al, 2015), a form of action research, is a design which operates as a 'small-scale intervention' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017, pg.441) moving through cycles of research, action and evaluation to support improvements in practice, similar to Engeström's model of expansive learning (Engeström, 1999b). It is a design frame commonly adopted in education-based research (Cohen et al, 2017) which hopes to support both practical and theoretical development. Within CAR, focus is placed upon researcher and participant working together (Locke, Alcorn and O'Neil 2013) to promote transformations (Kendon, Pain and Kesby, 2007) and improvement (Cohen et al, 2017).

However, while this design frame is well positioned to examine social practices (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017) a key distinction of the CHAT framework is that it focuses on the development of working practices (Engeström, 1999b; Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2017). For this research, the remit of the CHAT framework was found to be preferable due to its theoretical and practical focus on activities of work.

Another strength of the CHAT framework which led to its selection in this research is its recognition that working with the multiple voices of a system to identify and analyse current tensions and contradictions provides an effective mechanism for ongoing development. The CHAT framework has been praised as a resource for exploring multi-professional working (Daniels et al, 2006; Greenhouse, 2013), and is acknowledged as a highly flexible resource which has developed formative interventions to facilitate processes of change (Sannino and Engeström, 2018) through the consideration of contradictions within the activity system.

Engeström's (2001) move towards a celebration of contradictions as a vehicle for change provides a positive frame for considering different individual's constructions within a single activity and provides a practical vehicle for moving forwards (Yamazumi, 2006) and recognising re-occurring difficulties within an activity. I felt this to be pertinent within my research field, given the recognition within Chapter 3 that wider statutory assessment processes continued to be criticised within the EP profession and academic literature.

The CHAT framework has been applied within empirical research across multiple disciplines (Nussbaumer, 2011), serving several purposes. Leadbetter (2011) outlines the use of CHAT to document transformations in EP practice, while other academics adopt the framework to explore interprofessional engagement (Daniels et al, 2006; Kilpatrick, Gallagher and Carlisle, 2010). It has also been positioned as a useful tool to study how professional practice may transform (Leadbetter, 2011), notably in educational research where the dynamic relationships and social resources which influence an activity system can be carefully explored (Nussbaumer, 2011).

In addition to this, in comparison to other models of organisational development (e.g. Argyris and Schön, 1978), CHAT focuses on history as a mechanism for understanding changes in an activity system. This is important within the field of educational and SEND policy, which have been recognised as cyclical fields (Freeman and Miller, 2001) which move back through historical rhetoric (Tomlinson, 2017). The role of historicity in SEND development is evidenced within Chapters 1-3 and provide context to how the current activity system has been formed and adapted over time.

4.6 Limitations of CHAT

While the use of CHAT as an analytical tool in research has rapidly expanded in the last 10 years (Leadbetter, 2017), the framework is not without limitations. The lack of evidence to inform the methods which can be adopted within the framework has been argued within academic literature as a sign of the 'emptiness' of the framework (Bakhurst, 2009) and leaves it lacking in the rigour of its analytical potential (Nussbaumer, 2011). While the CHAT framework places importance upon the mediating role of language in experience (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999), very little development has occurred on how best to analyse the use of language when conducting CHAT analysis (Leadbetter, 2017). Chapter 5 outlines the chosen analytical method adopted within this research and its associated strengths and limitations. This limitation was not seen to render the framework unsuitable, with Engeström (1999a) praising the flexibility of this framework and reporting that expansions/developments of the CHAT framework are 'unproblematic' (pg.20) and may allow new versions of the framework to form.

One area of caution recognised within the literature centres on the exploration of historicity. While a key principle of the CHAT framework (Table 4.4), it is often overlooked in empirical work, with Engeström (1999a) acknowledging the difficulty associated with exploring this area. History can be tricky to 'chunk' and there is a risk of such work becoming descriptive if individual constructions are focussed on, or too general if societal constructions are the focus. This was a recognised difficulty quickly experienced within my own examination of the literature and required ongoing reflections and critique of my exploration of the historical developments.

Finally, while subject position has been recognised within each generation of CHAT, exploration of how subject identity construction may affect the wider system remains an area open to further research (Leadbetter, 2017). Within Chapter 5 and 6, reflections on subject identity are included, both in relation to my researcher identity (Chapter 5) and how such constructions may influence the activity system (Chapter 6).

4.7 Development Work Research Labs

DWR Labs emerged from Vygotsky's ideas regarding double stimulation (Engeström et al, 1996). Vygotsky stated that any task is interpreted and reconstructed by an individual based on their schemas and the nature of any task can be adapted by mediation (Vygotsky, 1978). Within the DWR Lab process, the CHAT framework mediates participants' exploration of contradictions within the activity system, allowing them to travel backwards and forwards in time (Engeström, 2007).

DWR Labs also draw upon Engeström's work on expansive learning (Engeström, 1999b, Table 4.2), to develop new models of working. The values behind DWR Labs are to build cross-boundary working, encouraging movement between the Lab and shop floor practice, and move towards refining the objects which inform an activity system (Engeström, 2007). The DWR Lab identifies, explores and resolves systemic factors which contribute towards problems individuals experience in their daily work (Virkkunen, Mäkinen and Lintula, 2010), highlighting contradictions between the intended and experienced objects of the activity system (Engeström, 2019). Data collected before the sessions is analysed and presented back to the group in the form of contradictions and participants are invited to comment and reflect. Figure 4.5 outlines the structure the DWR Lab typically takes (adapted from Engeström, 2007).

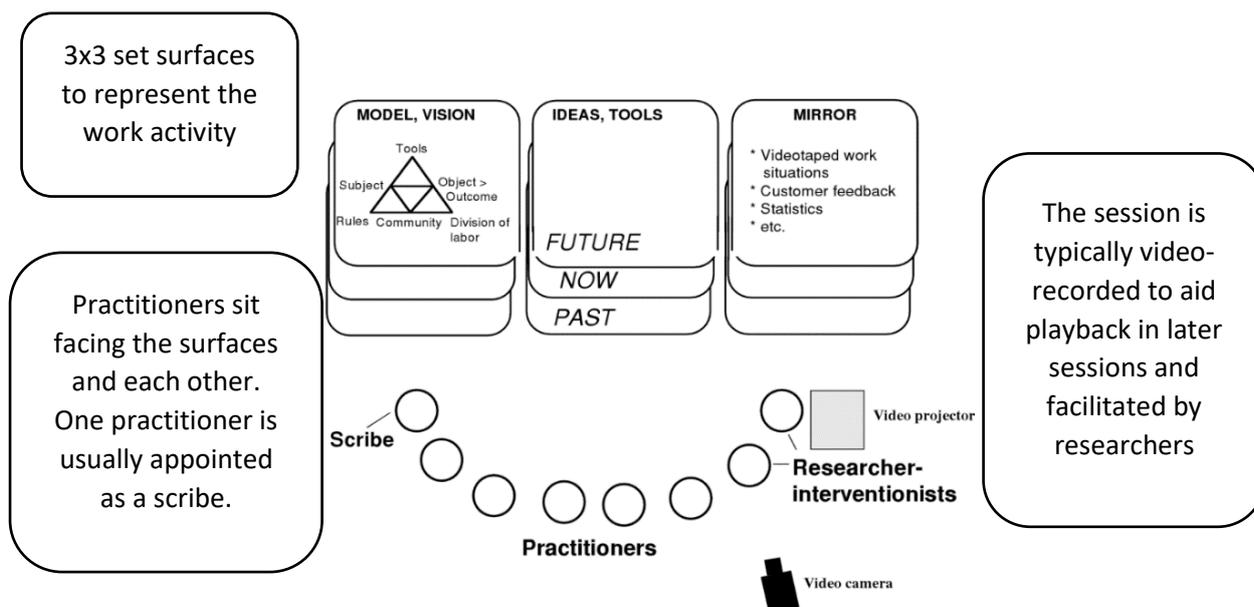


Figure 4.5: Outline of DWR Lab session (Adapted from Engeström, 2007, pg.372)

The ‘mirror surface’ represents working practices as they currently stand, encapsulating potential problem areas and solutions. The ‘model/vision’ surface serves as a theoretical tool for analysis (Engeström, 1996). The centre (ideas, tools) is kept for ‘intermediate cognitive tools’ such as diagrams and flowcharts (Engeström, 2007, pg.372) as the group moves between the current activity system and theoretical future working models. Movement through time occurs as participants start at the present problems and unpick these through past working models of practice. Current models of working are then modelled to identify potential contradictions and future models of practice.

DWR Labs were first undertaken in Finland to support post office development (Engeström, 1996) and have since been used in a range of research projects including work exploring multi-agency teamwork (e.g. Daniels, 2006; Leadbetter, 2017) and agricultural farming (Seppänen, 2002). Research conducted by Edwards and Kinti (2010) reported that DWR Lab sessions allowed participants to be honest and open about their constructions of the activity and

professional identities to expand their interpretation of the object. Leadbetter (2017) suggests the DWR Lab is a fruitful tool which can be employed by EPs to support learning in organisations.

Over time, Engeström (Engeström, 1999b; Engeström and Glăveanu, 2012) has highlighted some key considerations which should be made when conducting a DWR Lab. It is important that this work focuses on both short and long-term change and is conducted at a point where an organisation is ready to undertake change. In addition, the Lab process must occur on the 'shop floor' within the organisation, working vertically across the system to include day-to-day workers and management to facilitate change.

However, the process is not without potential limitations. Young (2001) identifies that in Engeström's model of expansive learning (1999b), questioning can be perceived as troublemaking. However, Engeström (1999b) argues that there is a common goal to be sought in the activity system and that contradictions are a natural trigger for research and learning. Young (2001) challenges these assumptions in the area of vocational and educational training and suggests this learning cycle may not apply to all scenarios. Engeström and Glăveanu (2012) acknowledge that the DWR Lab process must be a flexible one which responds to the local needs and is sensitive to the historical conditions of each activity system. However, the guidance does suggest this process should occur over multiple sessions to revisit newly proposed models of working for further refinement.

4.8 Chapter Summary

The CHAT framework explores social practices and work activities (Engeström, 1999a), through the social and cultural factors which drive them. The framework recognises the

importance of historicity in understanding the evolution of any activity system (Engeström, 2001) and the role of 'multivoicedness' in exploring contradictions (Yamazumi, 2006). By understanding contradictions, new models of practice can be developed (Yamazumi, 2006), using methods such as DWR Labs (Virkkunen, Mäkinen and Lintula, 2010).

Section 4.3 summarises the historical drivers which have shaped SEND construction and policy, and in turn, the activity of EPs' statutory psychological assessment. Changing values in how CYP with SEND are described, categorised and educated have influenced the methods used within this activity and the language and values prioritised as focus is placed on holistic statutory assessments. Despite this, the 2014/2015 reforms were unsuccessful in addressing some of the issues (Education Committee, 2019) previously raised within the statementing process (DfE, 1994) and produced new contentions (Hodkinson and Burch, 2019). EPs face increasing statutory workloads, feel constrained by LA expectations, and are often unable to prioritise longitudinal assessment making it timely (Buck, 2015) to re-evaluate this activity within an LA which has recognised these threats and began its own development work (Chapter 1). This research explores how this activity is understood across two professional groups: EPs conducting assessments, and SEND officers, who may play a role in shaping the structure of this activity.

Chapter 5 details the methodological considerations associated with this research, detailing the design, methods and analytical processes adopted.

Chapter 5: Methodology

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 outlines the methodological choices and major ethical considerations made within this research pertaining to philosophy, design, data collection methods and analysis.

5.2 Research Aims and Questions

5.2.1 Research Aims

This research explores EPs' and SEND officers' understanding of the EP psychological statutory assessment process within Seaview MBC. The purpose of this activity, the role of each team, and beliefs about best practice are explored, considering development over time and future practice. The research presents conflicting themes within the data to the group to move towards the creation of a shared action plan (Stages Four and Five in Engestrom's expansive learning cycle, Table 4.2).

5.2.2 Research Questions

The research questions associated with this project, and their links to the CHAT framework, are outlined in Figure 5.1.

5.3 Philosophical Stance

Within research, consideration must be given to how the research questions position knowledge formation (Thomas, 2017) by identifying the ontological and epistemological assumptions made. Ontology refers to assumptions made about the social world (Waring, 2012).

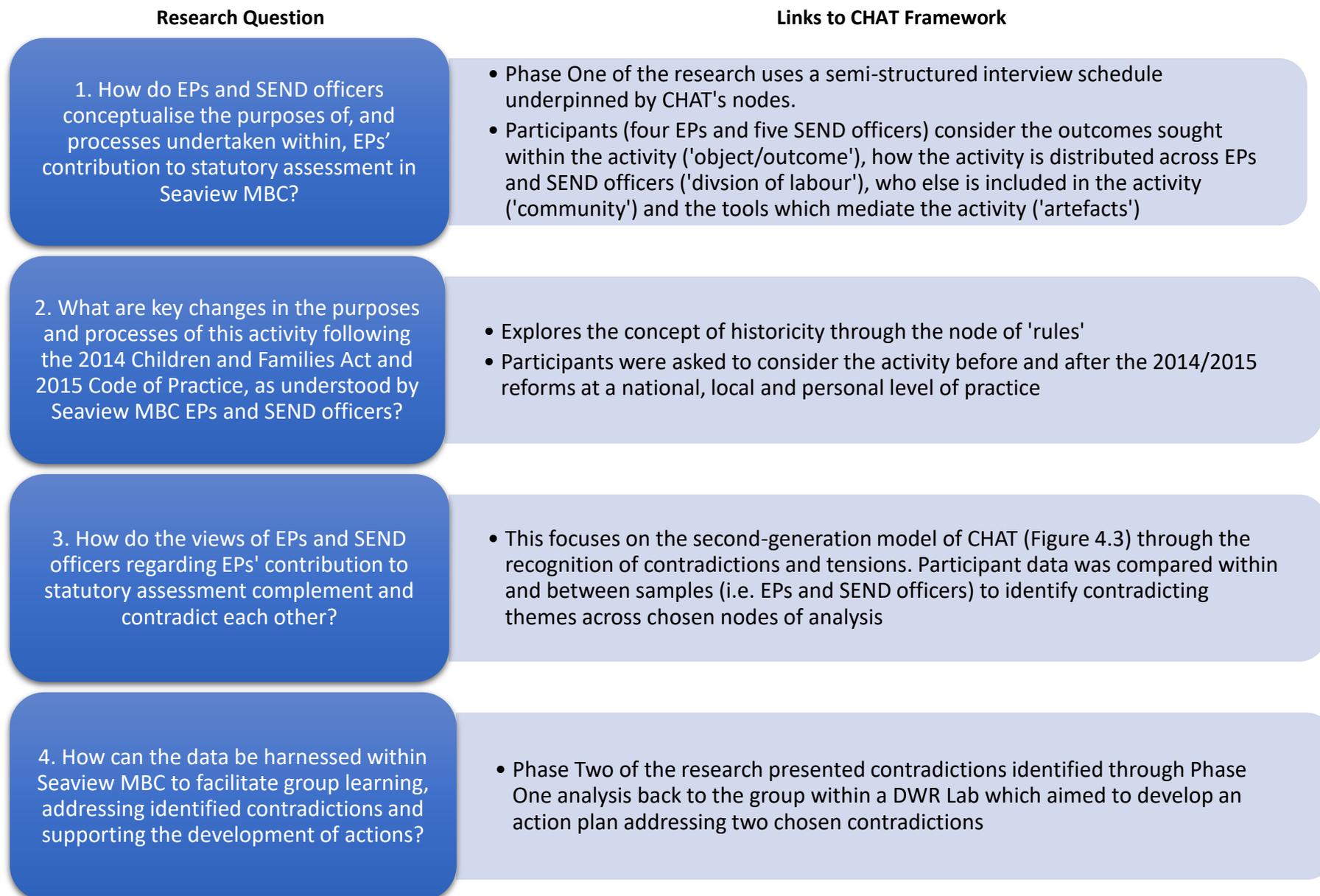


Figure 5.1: A summary of research questions and links to CHAT framework

In this research the interpretivist ontology is adopted, where reality is individually constructed by our experiences and sense-making processes (Waring, 2012). This position is supported by the epistemological assumptions adopted by CHAT (Engestrom and Miettinen, 1999), qualitative data collection methods (Newby, 2014), and Thematic Analysis (TA) (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

5.3.1 Epistemology

Epistemology refers to the study of knowledge development and acquisition (Waring, 2012; Newby, 2014; Thomas, 2017). Epistemological positions lie along a continuum relating to the extent which knowledge is directly observable or individually constructed based on experience and language. In this research, the latter of these is taken: social constructionism (Lock and Strong, 2010; Arthur, Waring and Coe, 2012).

5.3.1(i) Social Constructionism

Social constructionism assumes knowledge is context-bound (Cohen et al, 2017) and meaning is individually constructed from personal human experience (Lock and Strong, 2010; Robson and McCartan, 2016). Moreover, it places an emphasis on language and socio-cultural factors as mediators of knowledge construction, as supported by Vygotsky and CHAT (Engestrom and Miettinen, 1999; Yamazumi, 2006).

This epistemological position argues that an individual's behaviour can be understood by sharing their world of reference, exploring how they have constructed the reality they exist in (Cohen et al, 2017). It acknowledges the subjectivity of any research undertaken, due to the unique nature of knowledge construction (Cohen et al, 2017), and the difficulties which would arise in aiming to make population-based generalisations.

These assumptions complement the principles of CHAT which acknowledge that an activity system and individual constructions of the object are heavily influenced by historicity and socio-cultural factors (Engestrom and Miettinen, 1999; Leadbetter, 2017).

5.4 Research Design

The design frame adopted in any research can be seen to be the scaffolding (Thomas, 2017) which provides guidance for the evidence which should be sought (Cohen et al, 2017).

5.4.1 Case Study Design Frame

The case study design adopted in the current study supports an in-depth holistic exploration of a single phenomenon using a range of methods (Yin, 2009; Thomas 2015; Hancock and Algozzine, 2016). Various definitions of the format of a case study (Yin, 2009; Cohen et al, 2017) have been summarised by Thomas (2015) through the concepts of subject, purpose, approach (presented in Table 5.1 in relation to my research).

Table 5.1: Considerations regarding case study design (Informed by Thomas, 2015)

Case Study Element	Research Choice
Subject: what type of case has been selected to be studied	Local knowledge case: this case study reflects my own naturally arising access to Seaview MBC through my doctoral placement
Purpose: what is the aim of the case study	Instrumental and exploratory: this case study aims to gain understanding surrounding an under-researched area of EP practice (statutory psychological assessment)
Approach: what does the case study aim to do	Illustrative: this research intends to describe the phenomenon of statutory assessment as it is experienced by a single LA
Process: how will the case study be approached	Single, snapshot: this research focuses on a single LA as it stands at a point in time

5.5 Procedure

5.5.1 Ethics

A comprehensive review of the ethical considerations associated with this piece of research was undertaken in line with the University of Birmingham’s ethical review process and a completed Application for Ethical Review can be found in Appendix Two with key considerations in Table 5.2. Considerations were made using the guidance provided by the BPS Code of Conduct and Ethics (2018) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2018).

Table 5.2: Major ethical considerations undertaken for research

Ethical Area	Considerations Made
Confidentiality	Participants were assigned a unique number to provide a degree of confidentiality to their data set. Any participant quotes used were done so only referring to their professional group where necessary. However, all participants would be aware of each other at the DWR Lab stage of data collection.
Potential Risk: Sharing of views	The process is open to risk due to the nature of the DWR Lab whereby participant views are shared for group discussion and action planning, which could lead to tensions or conflict. Using risk assessment, this was deemed to be a low probability risk with the potential for moderate impact which was managed through a comprehensive verbal script at the start of the DWR Lab which will emphasise that all views will be respected and treated with equal weight. Furthermore, all participants were asked not to share the data presented outside of the DWR Lab and my own identity in the session as a researcher, not LA employee, was reiterated. The session itself was led by two skilled facilitators (university tutors) to provide a level of distance with the data set.

5.5.2 Sample

5.5.2(i) Local Authority Context

This research was undertaken in Seaview MBC, the LA where I am undertaking my doctoral training programme. This is an LA EP service based within a multi-professional inclusion

service (Seaview SEND Service) employing EPs and SEND officers, alongside specialist teachers. The research was seen to contribute to ongoing service development focussed on improving statutory assessment processes and building on developing working relationships between EPs and SEND officers.

5.5.2(ii) Reflexivity and Positionality

Thomas (2015) highlights that when conducting case study research, the researcher is inevitably deeply immersed in the process, and their interpretations will shape all stages of the research. Due to this, he states that researchers should be mindful of their positionality, explicitly monitoring and making reference to it where needed and recognising where their identity may have shaped data and outcomes (i.e. reflexivity; SAGE Research Methods, 2020).

During my placement at Seaview SEND Service, I have had professional experience of conducting statutory assessments, working closely with both groups. Throughout the process, I was mindful of asserting my identity as a doctoral researcher, as opposed to an LA member or trainee EP, as these may limit or shape the information given during interviews. I employed strategies to support the removal of my LA professional identity and continually monitored for influences upon data collection and analysis. During recruitment and data collection stages I took steps to promote my researcher identity such as sending paperwork using university headings, using appropriate professional group terminology rather than the use of 'we' or 'our' in regard to LA processes and using professional titles rather than 'our team' or 'your team'.

Despite these endeavours, during my Phase One data collection, I noted that SEND officers continued to identify me as a member of the EP team, suggesting I was unsuccessful in

promoting a separate research identity. However, this implicit categorisation is in some part explained and acknowledged by the social constructionist paradigm which recognises that individuals construct their own reality based on experience, here linked to my time working as a trainee EP in the service and working alongside SEND officers in this professional capacity.

5.5.2(iii) Sampling and Recruitment

Nine participants were recruited (four EPs and five SEND officers) using voluntary sampling (summarised in Figure 5,2 and Table 5.3).

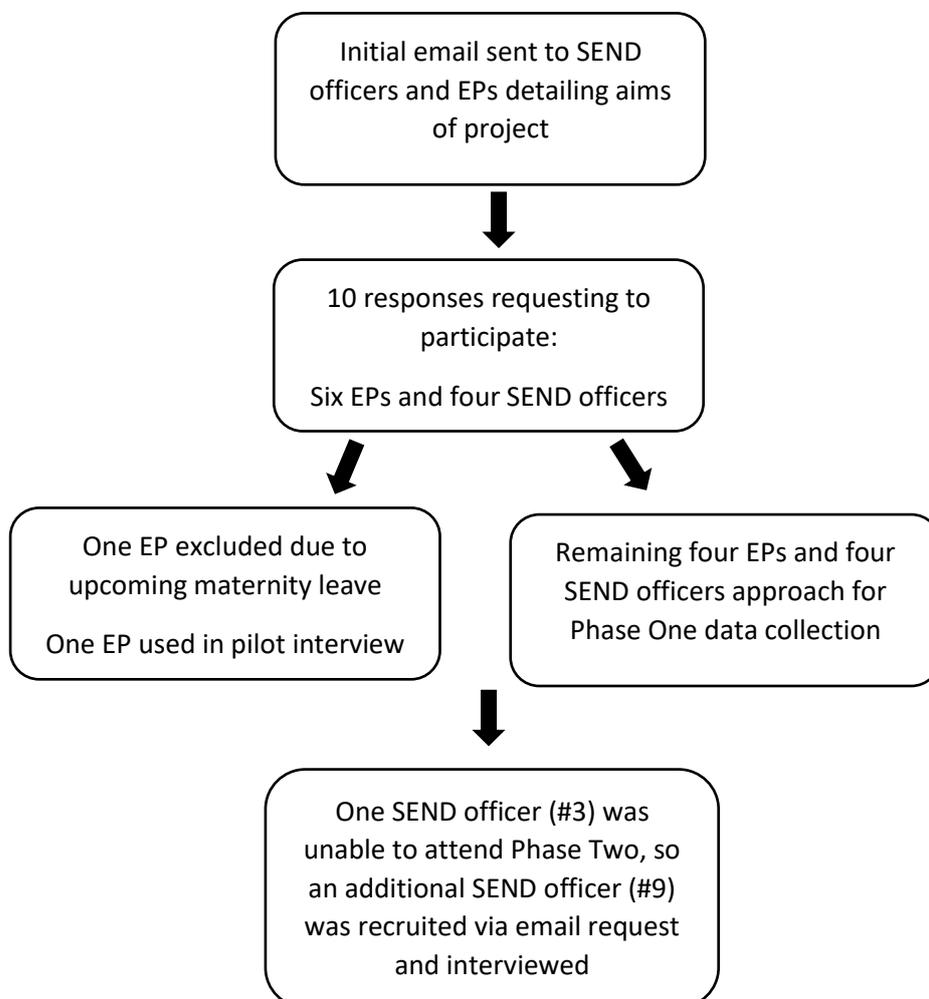


Figure 5.2: A summary of the sampling procedure

Table 5.3: Sample demographics and employment information

Participant Number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Sex	M	F	M	F	F	F	F	F	M
Current Professional Title	SEND officer (Early Years Lead)	Principal EP	SEND officer – Team Leader	Senior Specialist EP - SEMH	SEND officer (Post-16 Lead)	Senior Specialist EP – Early Years	EP – Post 16 Lead	SEND officer	SEND officer (Post 16 Lead and Area Team Manager)
Relevant Previous Employment and Training History	Trained as primary school teacher Taught in the UK and abroad Advisory worker for Autism West Midlands Transfer writer in Seaview MBC	PGCE Teacher Completed EP training	Litigation, working in education law SEN team member	Graduate psychologist Completed EP training EP for alternative LA	College support worker for SEN students Connexions careers advisor	Completed teacher training Teacher in infant school Completed EP training EP for alternative LA	Voluntary work as an assistant EP Completed EP training Worked as a private EP	Secondary teacher	Connexions advisor across mainstream and specialist provisions within Seaview MBC
Experience of Statements of SEN?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes (personal and professional)	Yes	No	No	No
Time at Seaview MBC	4 years	20 years	3 years	5 years	4 years	15 years	4 years	2 and a half years	4 years

Voluntary sampling is not without its limitations, namely that it may leave the sample open to selection bias (Thomas, 2017). In this research, participants who volunteered to be interviewed may have reflected those with stronger, or polarised views of the EP assessment processes. To mediate this, some selection criteria were placed on the sample. During initial recruitment, it was requested that participants were required to have a range of service lengths, covering employment in the field of education or SEND both before and following the 2014/2015 reforms. Braun and Clarke (2013) report that a sample size of 6-10 participants is judged acceptable and sufficient for data saturation.

5.5.3 Data Collection

Qualitative data were gathered using semi-structured individual interviews (Phase One), followed by a single focus group (Phase Two; DWR Lab). In this section, each phase of data collection is outlined and reviewed.

5.5.3 (i) Timeline

Table 5.4 outlines of the research procedure and timeline.

Table 5.4: *Outline of research timeline*

Research Activity	Date Completed
Research idea initially considered and shared with university tutor and LA placement managers to check for suitability	September 2018
Research panel at university with two academics providing questions for clarification/ further points for consideration in research questions/design	February 2019
Application for ethical approval submitted to university board (Appendix Two)	January 2019
Full ethical approval confirmed	17 June 2019
Initial expression of interest email distributed to service	11 July 2019
Expressions of interest gained from 10 individuals (eight EPs and four SEND officers)	18 July 2019
Pilot interview conducted with one EP	25 July 2019
Eight final participants approached for formal consent to take part	25 July 2019

Phase One data collection: Eight individual semi-structured interviews conducted, oral consent reiterated at the start of the process using consent script	20 August 2019 - 05 September 2019
All interview data transcribed from Dictaphone recordings	06 September 2019
Data analysis undertaken	October 2019
All participants contacted to confirm consent to participate in the second phase of data collection	17 October 2019
Additional SEND officer interviews and subsequent analysis of data	07 January 2020
Phase Two data collection: DWR Lab undertaken with all eight participants, verbal consent reiterated at the start of the process using consent script and session led by university tutors	15 January 2020
Data analysis undertaken, and a summary provided for participants	January 2020

5.5.3 (ii) Qualitative research

Qualitative research largely comprises inquiries with design or method produces data in the form of language, rather than data that can be represented numerically (e.g. ratings or test scores) (Braun and Clarke, 2013), as is the case in this research. As a paradigm, it does not work from the assumption that there is a single ‘correct’ version of reality which can be measured and analysed but instead considers individual knowledge construction based in context (Newby, 2014). Strengths and limitations of qualitative research are summarised in Table 5.5 (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Gray, 2014; Newby, 2014).

Table 5.5: *Strengths and limitations of qualitative research (Summarised from Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014; Gray, 2014)*

Strengths	Limitations
Allows for the collection of rich, meaningful data that is not isolated from its context	Vulnerable to the influence of the researcher-participant relationship
Encourages reflexivity to address the level of subjectivity which may be present in the analysis	Often subjective in its analysis based on the researcher's context
A strong method to explore a phenomenon where very little is presently known	Time-consuming as a method both in collection and analysis
Flexible as a method, responding and adapting to the data as new insights are gained	
Allows for a wide range of methods to be adopted and combined to produce a detailed analysis	

Implications for this Research

I have been cautious of the 'researcher-participant' relationship, detailed in Section 5.5.3. Analysis was checked back with participants through the DWR Lab to limit subjectivity. Amount of time spent on such research was carefully managed but a limitation which could not be prevented.

The strengths of qualitative research were harnessed, notably its flexibility to adopt both interviews and DWR Lab methods. My research topic is relatively under-researched in relation to current policy and the qualitative design produced a rich data set for discussion.

5.5.3 (iii) Pilot Interview

One EP identified within the initial phase of recruitment was approached and asked to engage in a pilot interview for this research. The pilot interview established which CHAT nodes may require further explanation during the interviews, or where additional prompts may be required. Through this, I hope to strengthen the quality of the data collection process.

The interview followed the intended semi-structured interview schedule presented in Table 5.7a, using the left-hand column of questions and additional prompts where necessary. The interview was audio-recorded while I made notes on the process and where I judged additional prompts necessary or helpful.

Following the interview, critical reflection was undertaken with the participant, sharing my own notes and considering times where questions were unclear or further clarification may have been needed. Overall, the interview question schedule was judged to be suitable however, we considered that additional information was required to aid participants' understanding of the type of response sought when considering the 'Rules' node. A visual aid was adopted in consultation with my second academic supervisor (see Figure 5.3) to provide guidance on the feedback sought.

	Now	Past	Future
National			
Local			
Personal			

Figure 5.3: Supplementary visual aid summarising the CHAT node of ‘rules’ used during phase one data collection

5.5.3 (iv) Phase One: Semi-Structured Interviews

During the initial phase of data collection, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews were conducted individually with each participant. Semi-structured interviews are formed around an interview guide (Braun and Clarke, 2013; Thomas, 2017), in this case, structured through the CHAT nodes. In comparison to structured interview schedules, the semi-structured interview seeks to ensure responsiveness and scope to explore any ideas raised in more detail during data collection. Interviews allow the interviewer to play an active role in co-constructing meaning with participants through questioning (the implications of this noted in Section 5.5.3) and are well suited for smaller samples (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Consideration of the strengths and limitations of this method is presented in Table 5.6 (Gillham, 2000; Arthur et al, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014; Thomas, 2017).

This data collection method was chosen to allow movement between the CHAT nodes and additional questioning, ensuring a rich data collection process within a naturalistic conversational dynamic. Table 5.7a presents the semi-structured interview schedule and prompts which could be used during the interview process while Table 5.7b outlines the rationale for these questions. The development of prompts in semi-structured interviews is common practice and their creation is encouraged during the interview development phase

(Braun and Clarke, 2013; Thomas, 2017; Cohen et al, 2017). However, Cohen et al (2017) caution against heavy reliance on prompts, which risk rendering the process more open to researcher influence through the follow-up questions chosen. During the interview process, prompts were used carefully, ensuring similar probes were used across each interview where detail or clarity was needed.

Table 5.6: Strengths and limitations of semi-structured interviews (Summarised from Gillham, 2000; Arthur et al, 2012; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Newby, 2014; Thomas, 2017)

Strengths	Limitations
Uses open-ended questions to capture a range of responses in participants own words	Notably, time-consuming both in conducting and analysing
The researcher has control over the data which is collected through the research guide and additional prompts which increased the 'usefulness' of data collected	Smaller sample sizes can reduce the breadth of data collected
The interviewer can clarify any misunderstandings during the process to increase the validity	May not be an appropriate method for addressing sensitive topics due to the face-to-face nature of the process (lack of anonymity)
Natural feeling in its flow eliciting strong responses	Heavily reliant on the building of a strong, positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee
Suitable for smaller sample sizes	

Implications for this Research

While I endeavoured to obtain a representative sample of each team (EPs and SEND officers), Chapter 7 recognises my sample only accounts for a small number of voices within each team and within Seaview SEND Service. My own positionality within the service meant I had a pre-existing relationship with all participants, allowing rapport to be quickly established. However, it is unclear the extent to which a lack of anonymity and an immersion within the service may have altered the data gathered.

Through audio-recording, I was able to establish a verbatim transcription of each interview, removing a level of subjectivity in my analysis. The question schedule and additional prompts, refined through my pilot phase, were an invaluable tool to ensure my literature themes, and CHAT nodes were suitably explored.

Table 5.7a: Outline of semi-structured interview questions and prompts used in phase one data collection

CHAT Node	Prompts for EP	Prompts for SEND officer
Subject - Introductions; tell me a little bit about yourself. What is your experience so far of EP assessments? How long have you been in your role? How long have you worked for the Local Authority?		
Object: what are you/ the EP working on?	Where does the statutory assessment process begin? What are you trying to find out?	Where does the statutory assessment process begin? What are they trying to find out?
Outcome: what are you / the EP hoping to achieve?	What is the intended end product? How will this be used in the wider aim of an EHCP?	What is the EP hoping to achieve/produce at the end of the report? What do you need to achieve from the produced statutory advice?
Rules: what supports or constrains the work? <i>Supplementary figure used</i>	What, before the Children and Families Act of 2014, helped guide your assessment process? What made it difficult? What helps guide you now? What makes this harder? What would help you in the future? What do you see as a future threat to this work and your intended aims?	What, before the Children and Families Act of 2014, helped guide your assessment process? What made it difficult? What helps guide you now? What makes this harder? What would help you in the future? What do you see as a future threat to this work and your intended aims?
Community: who else is involved in the activity?	How do you give weighting between stakeholder's views?	How should weighting be split between stakeholder's views?
Labour: how is the work shared? What is your role in the assessment process?	What is the role of SEND officers when presented with EP psychological advice? How should the EP's psychological advice be used to guide the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) writing process?	How does the EP information guide the EHCP construction?
Artefacts: what measures are used in the assessment?	What measures are most/least useful? What is the purpose of these measures? What guides your approach to this assessment? Do you feel some methods of collection hold more impact? What skills are necessary to understand the information provided by these tools? What systemic drivers are here for which assessment tools are used? How do you distinguish between good advice and less good advice?	What methods of assessment do you expect to see in EP advice? Are there any methods of collecting information that is more useful/ less useful? What guides EP assessment methods? Which methods of assessment hold more benefit for informing the EHCP process? How do you distinguish between good advice and less good advice?

Table 5.7b: Rationale for interview questions and prompts used in phase one data collection

CHAT Node	Prompts	Rationale
Subject	Introductions; tell me a little bit about yourself. What is your experience so far of EP assessments? How long have you been in your role? How long have you worked for the Local Authority?	Table 4.1 recognises we must understand whose perspective we are taking, exploring their experiences of policy changes, Seaview MBC and of SEND overall.
Object: what are you/ the EP working on? Outcome: what are you / the EP hoping to achieve?	Where does the statutory assessment process begin? What are you/they (EPs) trying to find out? What is the intended end product/ What is the EP hoping to achieve/produce at the end of the report? How will this be used in the wider aim of an EHCP? What do you need to achieve from the produced statutory advice?	This aimed to split thinking between the object, that is what individuals' actions are directed towards, and the objective, the higher purpose that they are seeking to achieve. Policy (e.g. DES, 1978; DfE and DH, 2015), professional guidance (e.g. BPS, 2015) and academic literature (e.g. Cameron and Monsen, 2005) all prioritise assessment over time and given that I wanted to understand whether the activity stretched beyond the formal six-week request for EP advice.
Rules: what supports or constrains the work? <i>Supplementary figure used</i>	What, before the Children and Families Act of 2014, helped guide your assessment process? What made it difficult? What helps guide you now? What makes this harder? What would help you in the future? What do you see as a future threat to this work and your intended aims?	These questions are linked to the ideas put forward in Table 4.1 and the notion of historicity.
Community: who else is involved in the activity?	How do you give weighting between stakeholder's views?	Figure 4.5 questioned who the primary client is within this activity (i.e. child or LA). I also wanted to extend this to understand how promotion of child and parent/carer rights (DfE and DH, 2015) are managed and mediated in the activity. The prompt used here asked EPs to consider how they triangulate information and which views may be given higher precedence.
Labour: how is the work shared? What is your role in the assessment process?	What is the role of SEND officers when presented with EP psychological advice? How should the EP's psychological advice be used to guide the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) writing process? How does the EP information guide the EHCP construction?	Prompts here linked to the idea of reverse engineering (e.g. Buck, 2015) and aimed to establish the extent to which EP assessment data is edited alongside other professionals' advice. Prompts regarding how this information guides construction also sought to consider the claim that the activity had become one of resource definition (e.g. Fallon et al, 2010).
Artefacts: what measures are used in the assessment?	What measures are most/least useful? What is the purpose of these measures? What guides your approach to this assessment? Do you feel some methods of collection hold more impact? What skills are necessary to understand the information provided by these tools? What systemic drivers are here for which assessment tools are used? What methods of assessment do you expect to see in EP advice? Are there any methods of collecting information that is more useful/ less useful? What guides EP assessment methods? Which methods of assessment hold more benefit for informing the EHCP process? How do you distinguish between good advice and less good advice?	Papers such as Woods and Farrell (2006) reported assessment practices were heavily influenced by LA requirements, while Kelly and Gray (2000) reported a historic focus on psychometrics in EP assessments. I wanted to explore what methods were used in the activity, looking at the role of consultation and observations alongside assessment measures. With the academic literature in mind, I wanted to understand whether there was a focus on specific assessment measures and whether EPs felt able to exercise their own professional judgement (BPS, 2015).

Chosen probes aimed to capture additional areas of exploration which might be relevant and were refined during the pilot. While the use of prompts may leave the process vulnerable to some degree of variation in the interview schedule each participant engages with, what is often seen to be important in interviews is ‘stimulus equivalence’ whereby participants’ understanding of each interview question is broadly the same (Cohen et al, 2017, pg.509).

Interviews were conducted on-site at Seaview SEND Service using a Dictaphone to record the interview process. Before starting each interview, participants were reminded of their ethical rights, the intention to invite them to engage in a follow-up focus group session and asked to confirm orally their consent to take part.

5.5.3 (v) Phase Two: Development Work Research Lab

A summary of the DWR Lab process, and the process undertaken in this research is presented in Table 5.8. Four EPs and three SEND officers took part in this phase.

Table 5.8: A summary of DWR element and application within current research

DWR Element	Application within the current study
The session includes a scribe, practitioners and researcher-interventionists and should be undertaken in the workplace in a protected space.	The sessions were facilitated and scribed by two university tutors who had prior experience of the DWR Lab process. Notes regarding ‘ideas and tools’ were taken by the scribe using flipchart paper and presented around the room for reference throughout the session. The session was held in Seaview MBC in a meeting room space booked for the session. The session ran for 3 hours and all participants were asked to protect this time to avoid distractions. Consent was sought again at the start of the session, reiterating the length of the session.
Mirror data is presented to identify existing structural tensions in practice and where these may have stemmed from historically.	Mirror data consisted of the thematically analysed interview data collected in Phase One. Key quotes were provided to summarise two key contradictions through a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix Three). The CHAT framework and expansive learning cycle (Chapter 4; Engestrom, 1999b) were also provided within this PowerPoint.

Participants were asked to decide whether they would like to address one or both contradictions during the session. Both were explored due to adequate time being available.

The session is typically video recorded for future use in DWR Lab sessions.	This session was audio-recorded, rather than video recorded. This decision was made as analytic focus was placed on the actions developed rather than behavioural and non-verbal reactions to the data/DWR Lab. Audio-recording had been used during Phase One data collection and participants were familiar with the process, The Dictaphone was placed at the centre of the group for recording of all voices.
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5.5.4 Data Analysis

5.5.4 (i) Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a data analysis method outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006) and employed in qualitative research. It is a widely used method known for its flexibility, aiming to identify patterns and meaning across data sets through a process of thematic coding (Braun and Clarke, 2013). While there are several variations of TA, the approach adopted in this research is deductive or theoretical, aiming to understand the data in relation to the selected CHAT nodes. TA is positioned solely as a method of data analysis with no prescribed methods which should be used to support it and no underpinning philosophical position.

This analytic method was chosen due to its flexibility, accessibility, and openness to a range of philosophical stances when used in its intended form (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Data analysis aimed to identify themes across the two groups to present back to participants, with the focus of research being moving towards shared constructions of the activity rather than aiming to understand the effects of language on construction.

An outline of the stages of TA and how they were undertaken in this research can be found in Table 5.9 (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2013, pg.202-203) with examples of my coding process included in Appendix Four.

Table 5.9: Outline of stages of TA (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2013, pg.202-203 and University of Auckland, 2019)

TA Stage	Process Undertaken
1. Transcription	Following the completion of audio-recorded interviews, data was transcribed electronically while recordings were listened to by the researcher. Braun and Clarke (2013) state that in TA, a focus is placed on what was said, rather than how things were said, and due to this less focus is given to 'non-semantic sounds' (e.g. hesitations, pauses, laughter etc). Due to this, pauses were not transcribed, and laughter was only noted when the context was important for the tone of utterances.
2. Reading and familiarisation; taking note of items of potential interest	Data were read twice, using the process to check for any transcription errors, to build familiarity with each interview. During this stage, initial ideas of interest were noted on transcripts (e.g. key repeated phrases or notable constructions of the activity).
3. Coding	The data were then re-examined, making notes on important features of the data that may answer the research questions. In this stage, the coding was done by hand under each activity theory node heading for reference.
4. Searching for themes	In Braun and Clarke’s 2019 paper, this stage is reworded to ‘generating initial themes’ and focuses on revisiting the generated codes to consider patterns of meaning. In this stage of the process, initial codes were compared across individual data sets to identify repetitions or similar codes to combine into initial themes. These themes were listed on paper to refer back to the data in Stage 5.
5. Reviewing themes	The initial themes are 'checked back' against the data set to consider whether they accurately reflect the story/meaning conveyed by participants. Here, each coding element in the data was revisited to ensure it was complementary to its proposed theme, tallying its presence within the data set. Where this did not occur, this data was highlighted, and new themes were developed. During this time, some themes were reworded or combined to produce a more accurate story. This stage links to considerations of reflexivity (Section 5.5.2 and Chapter 7) and reliability (Section 5.6.3 and Table 5.10) to ensure themes represent interviewee data rather than my own interpretations based on my own knowledge/experiences.
6. Defining and naming themes	In this stage, a detailed analysis of each theme is established to develop an informing name. Noted final themes were then brought together to create main themes and subthemes which accurately captured the data and story being told through the codes.

The process presented in Table 5.9 is neither rigid nor linear but encourages researchers to move flexibility through the stages, developing their codes and revising them as their understanding and saturation with the data develops (Braun and Clarke, 2019). Braun and Clarke (2019) state that quality TA occurs through meaningful engagement with a data set. Themes do not ‘pop-up’ in the data but instead develop a creative account of the patterns which have been identified. A consideration of the key strengths and limitations of TA (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013) can be found in Table 5.10.

Table 5.10: A summary of the strengths and limitations of TA (Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006; Braun and Clarke, 2013; Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013)

Strengths of TA	Limitations of TA
Flexible in its approach making it easily applicable to a range of philosophical positions, methodologies and research questions	Hard to ensure the reliability of codes established and such process do not check that the codes are objective but ensures the same subjective perspective can be taken by multiple researchers
Easy to adopt by new researchers and produces data/results which are widely accessible	Perceived to lack ‘substance’ compared to alternative analysis methods such as grounded theory
Quick and easy to learn as an analysis method	Limited interpretative power if not used within an existing theoretical framework
Provides an opportunity to provide rich, detailed accounts of data	The voices of individual participants can get lost as the focus is placed on patterns across data sets
	Cannot make claims about the effect of language
Implications for this Research	
Reliability of identified conflicts were checked back with participants within the DWR Lab, which went some way to check the reliability of established codes. All participants were able to understand and expand upon these contradictions. Interpretations were guided by the CHAT framework although this framework provides little guidance on interpreting language. Within Chapter 6, individual voices are captured through a recognition of the number of participants who have contributed to themes, including single voices where pertinent.	

5.5.4 (ii) Analysis of Development Work Research Lab

Scribe data, audio recording data and identified actions from the DWR Lab were analysed to create an account of the focus group discussions. These data were presented in two forms: a summary account was sent to the participants to ensure they felt the salient points had been documented alongside a detailed account of discussions (Chapter 6). This account was mapped onto the activity theory nodes to consider how the agreed actions may shape a new activity system model.

5.6 Considerations of Rigour

To think about rigour in research is to consider elements such as validity, reliability and generalisability (Thomas, 2015). Cohen et al (2017) consider how constructs of validity can be adapted into qualitative research, recognising that traditional definitions of validity may be unsuitable for such research designs. Furthermore, Thomas (2015) proposes when considering validity and reliability in case study designs, researchers should ensure the methodological approach undertaken is carefully implemented to ensure reliability and validity. In an extension of this thinking, Engestrom (1999a) proposes that in CHAT, validity and generalisability are associated with the viability of new working models being taken up by similar systems, rather than a focus on similar constructions being found across systems.

5.6.1 Internal Validity and Trustworthiness

Internal validity relates to the extent which reported data trends are supported by the design and methods and is linked to credibility in qualitative research (Cohen et al, 2017). The current research ensures internal validity through a transparent detailing of the methods used for collection (Section 5.5.4) and analysis (Section 5.5.5). Themes extracted from the data were

checked back with participants in the DWR Lab. Through this triangulation, participants were able to examine key themes taken from the data and clarify their contributions, checking back the accuracy of my interpretations and ensuring that reliance was not placed upon a single data collection method.

5.6.2 External Validity and Generalisations

The nature of generalisations within qualitative research has been debated (Cohen et al, 2017), considering the forms of generalisations which can be made within case study research (Yin, 2009).

Thomas (2015) proposed due to its exploration of a particular case, the case study design frame does not assume that the approach, data, or sample could be used to make wider generalisations or be accurately repeated. The unique set of natural variables and contextual factors arising in a case study make statistical generalisations and standardised procedures impractical (Thomas, 2015). Moreover, when considering the uniqueness of any research, case study or experimental, the knowledge gained is often provisional on many elements (Thomas, 2015). With this in mind, focus is instead placed upon theoretical generalisations rather than the frequency of evidence in a wider population (Yin, 2009).

5.6.3 Reliability

In qualitative research, reliability is often reframed as dependability with Newby (2014) explaining that dependability occurs when sufficient research context is given to allow the reader to agree with the conclusions made. Cohen et al (2017) extend this, stating reliability in qualitative research focuses on the fit between what occurs and what is recorded. As previously outlined in Section 5.5.4, when considering reliability within semi-structured

interviews, focus is placed upon 'stimulus equivalence' (Cohen et al, 2017, pg.509). Again, reliability is seen to be strengthened through a triangulation of data (Newby, 2014), here done by the inclusion of two methodologies. In addition, data were carefully explored in light of the academic literature presented, seeking to strengthen any claims made. Data collection and analysis processes were critically discussed through supervision with academic tutors and reflective research logs (example in Appendix Five) and outlined within this chapter.

Within Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis process, reliability can be linked to the concept of double hermeneutics. Double hermeneutics recognises that, as stated within the social constructionist paradigm, individuals interpret the world around them individually (Cohen et al, 2017). When conducting qualitative analysis, the researcher is required to "understand others' understandings of the world" (Cohen et al, 2017, pg.247) which can contribute to the subjective nature of this analysis process. Checking back data with participants, as was done through the DWR Lab, can go some way to counteract this (Newby, 2014).

5.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter outlined the philosophical and methodological choices made in this research, providing rationale for inclusion, adoption within this research and current critiques. Phase One of this research employs semi-structured interviews to ascertain EPs and SEND officers constructions of EP statutory psychological assessment within the CHAT framework. Phase One analysis then abstracted key themes and conflicts presented back to the group within Phase Two of data collection. Phase Two then sought to establish a group action plan which addressed these tensions moving forwards. Chapter 6 presents the results of each phase of

data collection for discussion, considering the key findings highlighted in relation to the presented literature (Chapter 2 and 3).

Chapter 6: Findings and Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Thomas (2017) highlights that in 'social scientific research' it can be difficult to untangle results from discussions, particularly in interpretive pieces of research where the two occur in conjunction, and findings are understood in relation to pre-existing knowledge. Chapter 6 presents my findings, split by professional group and organised under CHAT nodes, in relation to the literature presented in Chapters 1-3.

For reference, the research questions are:

1. How do EPs and SEND officers conceptualise the purposes of, and processes undertaken within, EPs' contribution to statutory assessment in Seaview MBC?
2. What are key changes in the purposes and processes of this activity following the 2014 Children and Families Act and 2015 Code of Practice, as understood by Seaview MBC EPs and SEND officers?
3. How do the views of EPs and SEND officers regarding EPs' contribution to statutory assessment complement and contradict each other?
4. How can the data be harnessed within Seaview MBC to facilitate group learning, addressing identified contradictions and supporting the development of actions?

Analysis was undertaken across all CHAT nodes, using TA (Braun and Clarke, 2009) to identify themes within each node, within each group (EPs and SEND officers) and contradictions within these themes. Following analysis, two nodes (community and artefacts) were excluded from write-up as high consistency between the groups meant these nodes were prioritised low in their contribution to the research questions. A summary of the data identified for

community and artefacts is presented in Appendix Six while reflections on this decision are included in Chapter 7. Four key nodes are presented in my analysis: object, outcome, division of labour and rules. Throughout each, complementary and contradictory data are presented, using thematic mapping and verbatim quotes to summarise.

The first two research questions are addressed in section 6.1 and 6.2, Research Question Three is explored within section 6.3 before the data arising from the DWR Lab session, described in section 6.4, is presented to address Research Question Four.

Figure 6.1 summarises the abstracted themes from each professional group (i.e. EPs and SEND officers) while Figure 6.2 provides a colour-coded reference to demonstrate how thematic maps will be presented throughout the chapter. Data under each node were organised into overarching and main themes which encompass several subthemes.

Rules

EP Themes
Before
Now nationally
Supports

- Person-centred
- Broader picture

Constrains

- Deadlines

Now locally
Supports

- Person-centred practice

Constrains

- EP role/identity
- Absence of graduated response
- Capacity
- Outcomes

Future

SEND Officer Themes
Before
Now nationally
Supports

- Person-centred

Constrains

- Timeframes

Now locally
Supports

- Cohesion of process
- Communication between teams

Constrains

- Absence of graduated response
- Capacity
- Absence of multi-professional working

Future

Outcomes

EP Themes
Psychological formulation
Authenticity
Preparing for adulthood

SEND Officer Themes
Removing barriers
Authenticity
Upskilling CYP

Object

EP Themes
EP Aims

- Broad picture of needs
- Graduated approach
- Person-centred
- Triangulation

Statutory Aims
Conflicts

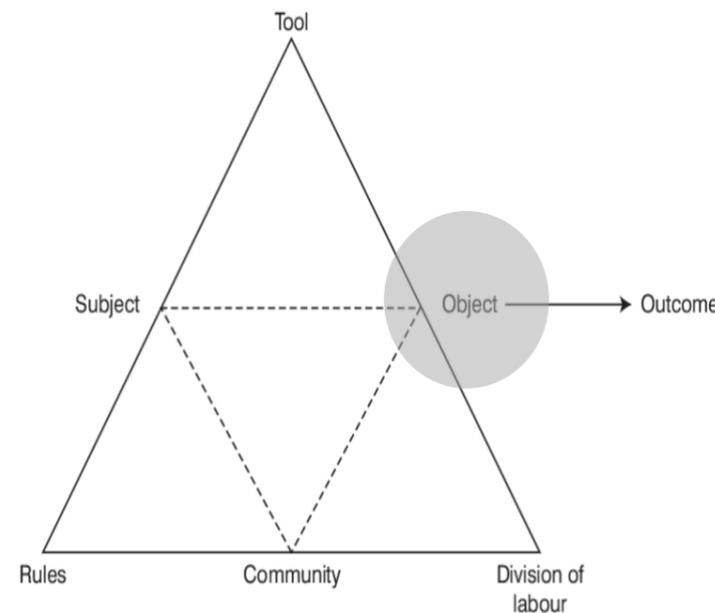
- Part or all
- Boundaries

SEND Officer Themes
Code of practice aims
Assessment as a legal resource

- Accountability
- Decision Making

EP contribution

- Expert view
- Graduated
- Person-centred
- Objective



Division of Labour

<p>EP Themes <u>EP Role</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Backbone of EHCP - Expert contribution - Unclear role boundaries <p><u>SEND Officer Role</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Editor - Knowledge base - Inconsistency <p><u>Actions</u></p>	<p>SEND Officer Themes <u>SEND Officer Role</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Editor and co-ordinator - Varying levels of activeness <p><u>EP Role</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Backbone of EHCP - Expertise?
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Key:

Node or Group
Overarching Theme
Main Theme
 - Subtheme

Figure 6.1: A summary of the CHAT themes arising SEND officer interviews and EP interviews



Figure 6.2: Color-coded key for thematic mapping process and theme levels

6.2 EP Findings and Discussion

6.2.1 Object

Figure 6.3 presents the thematic map established for EPs construction of the object of EPs statutory psychological assessment.

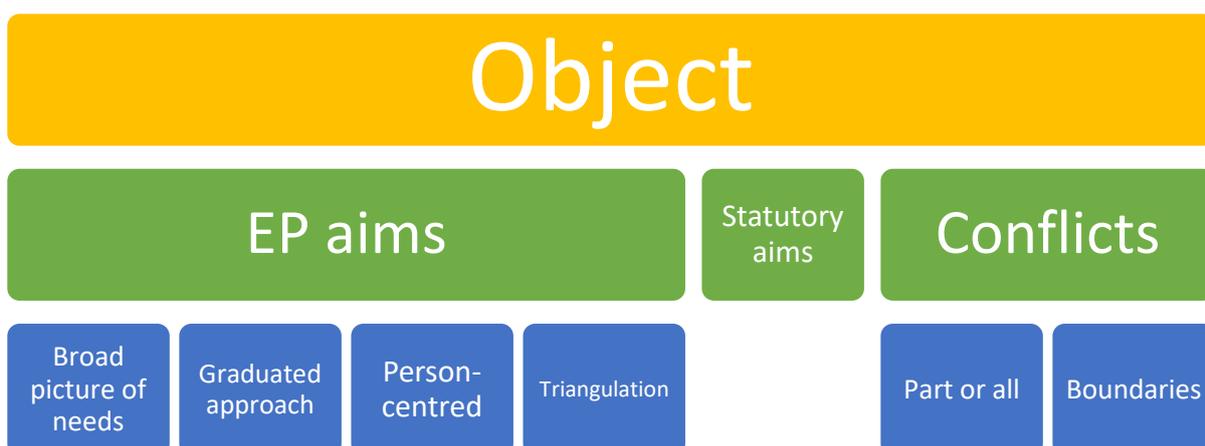


Figure 6.3: EP object thematic map

6.2.1(i) EP Aims

The subthemes broad picture of needs and person-centred encapsulated the recommendations made within the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015). All EPs recognised the need to obtain a holistic understanding of a CYP's needs. One EP reported they would focus on securing a clear developmental history when working with parents/carers to support this. The group agreed that assessment should promote person-centred practice, with three EPs linking this to the promotion of a CYP's aspirations throughout their advice, while the remaining EP reported that they would ensure strengths as well as areas of need were included in their advice.

Broad picture of needs

“I think you're trying to achieve a holistic understanding of that young person of their needs and how they've come to be in the position they are in at the moment” (Participant #2, EP)

Graduated approach

“You wouldn't just do a one-off assessment you'd wanna assess a child or young person over time” (Participant #7, EP)

Person-centred

“I think it's just that person-centeredness and making sure that it's preparing, me personally, preparing them for that adult life” (Participant #7, EP)

Triangulation

“Being able to pull together information that provides an accurate picture of their history”
(Participant #4, EP)

The group all reported the need to triangulate information from several sources to ascertain the story of a CYP's needs. Triangulation of data allowed EPs to ensure their conceptualisation of a CYP's story was valid and balanced in its representation of multiple stakeholders' views (e.g. school staff, parents/carers and child). Emphasis was also placed on the need for a graduated response which allowed EPs to build an understanding of CYP's needs over time and their response to interventions.

This conceptualisation of the objectives of EPs' statutory psychological assessment support the assertions made within professional guidance and policy (e.g. DES, 1978; DfE and DH, 2015; BPS, 2015). These subthemes recognise the role of EP assessment in developing a CYP's story slowly and carefully, consulting a range of individuals, monitoring progress over time and gathering a holistic picture of their strengths, contexts and needs. This captures the cautions given by academics such as Sewell (2016) and Billington (2006), who recognise that in conducting assessment and writing advice EPs develop new truths for a child which play a role in deciding their future experiences.

Guidance by the BPS (2015) states psychological assessment should be a process which happens over time, rather than a single piece of work. Throughout the data, there was clear apprehension regarding the quality of data where this was not possible. The 'ideal' assessment process had prolonged EP input, adopting 'plan, do, review' cycles to understand each CYP adequately. This apprehension mirrors concerns reported by Schools Week (2019) but provides an interesting discussion point relating to workloads. DfE data (2019b) highlighted that increasing workloads and statutory assessment demands played a significant role in the shortage of LA EPs. Despite these data, EP participants were clear that the activity should not be rushed to ensure best practice.

6.2.1(ii) Statutory Aims

Statutory Aims

"Reflects A. what a child's needs are but also provides a good level of detail around the provision that they need to promote their progress in school their educational success" (Participant #4, EP)

Here, EPs discussed the legal objectives (DfE and DH, 2015) associated with the activity, focussing on the identification of outcomes and provision to inform a CYP's EHCP. Through this, Gillham's (1978) assertion that assessment should be prospective, guiding interventions

rather than retrospectively identifying deficits, is promoted. For one EP, this theme and notably the inclusion of provisions, was linked to an awareness of the central role the team had in supporting EHCP construction and may be seen to support the idea that psychological assessment has become one of resource definition (e.g. Norwich, 2002).

6.2.1(iii) Conflicts

Part or all

*“Yes and then sometimes when I’ve written one recently I’ve thought well is my report supposed to inform the plan, am I supposed to be commenting on everything or is it just a little part”
(Participant #6, EP)*

Boundaries

“But we’re also asked to comment on things like physical which overlaps with health and sometimes it’s not quite clear where that finishes” (Participant #6, EP)

One EP reported that external pressures (e.g. SEND officer needs and absence of multi-professional advice) had required EPs to comment on areas outside of their psychological knowledge and professional competency (such as care and health needs), leading to the subtheme of boundaries.

Three EPs reported a lack of clarity as to how their object remained distinct from the wider aims of the final EHCP document (part or all subtheme). This theme arises across all the presented activity theory nodes and is considered later in my analysis. Concerns appeared to be rooted in the growing mirroring of EP psychological advice formats and the final EHCP which has reportedly allowed EP data to be copied over to the final EHCP more readily, and the notable absence of additional professional advice. This supports Buck's (2015) belief that the role of psychological assessment has changed over time to more readily fit in with and form the basis of SEND reports and procedures. When considering Norwich's (2002) question of how psychological and SEND assessment may be different, these data suggest the two are a singular process which prioritises statutory needs.

6.2.2 Outcome

Figure 6.4 presents the thematic map established for the three EPs who reflected upon the different outcomes achieved within their assessment.

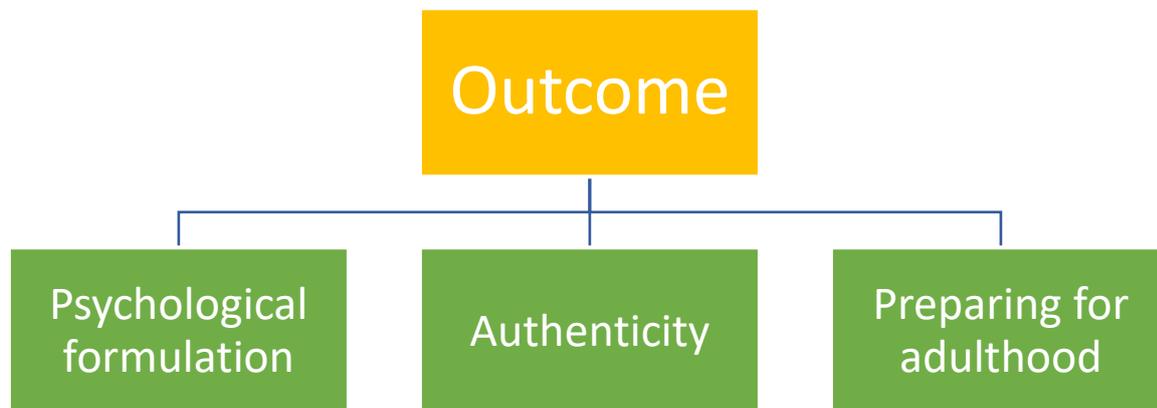


Figure 6.4 EP outcome thematic map

6.2.2(i) Psychological Formulation

Psychological formulation
"I suppose it's coming to that formulation understanding why they are the way they are in a sense but also being able to understand what it is that helps them so that I can then inform others of the best way to support that young person going forward using some of the information of what has helped them in the past but also understanding some of the psychology underlying their needs and what psychology's gonna do to support them going forwards" (Participant #2, EP)

This theme encapsulated a desire to understand the psychological theory underlying a CYP's needs and how this could be utilised to support a CYP further. This outcome echoes Cameron and Monsen's (2005) guidance on psychological assessment which recognises that best practice allows for the exploration of a range of possibilities and factors which may play a role in shaping a CYP's development.

6.2.2(ii) Authenticity

Authenticity related to the need to have prolonged involvement in a CYP's case to produce a detailed assessment which was credible in its conceptualisation of a CYP. This is again important when considering that EP assessment often constructs a truth about a CYP which

becomes normalised and accepted within statutory practice (Sewell, 2016) and so must be developed cautiously and ethically (Billington, 2006).

Authenticity

"Ideally we should know that all of our, everything we have is thorough, everything we have is detailed its genuine its authentic and its credible."

"And having multiple perspectives in their so knowing that you've balanced lots of different people knowing that it's got clear valid information in it so multiple sources of information that we've checked out and have checked are kind of credible and meaningful." (Participant #4, EP)

6.2.2(iii) Preparing for Adulthood

This theme was provided by an EP specialising in post-16 work and focussed on the need for psychological assessment that was future focussed, ensuring outcomes and provision supported the CYP into their adult life, echoing the changes made within the 2015 Code (DfE and DH, 2015).

Preparing for adulthood

"Making sure that its preparing me personally preparing them for that adult life and I know that this is probably a little bit controversial but I know there's a lot of focus in schools I think on can they read CVC words ... so I wanna make sure that the aspirations and the outcomes that I'm working towards are gonna be helpful for that person in a functional way for their lives"
(Participant #7, EP)

6.2.3 Rules

Figure 6.5 presents the thematic map established for EPs construction of the rules which support or constrain the construction of statutory psychological advice on a national and local level. This theme considers historicity, exploring developments 'before' the 2014/2015 reforms, 'now', and how this activity may develop in the 'future'.

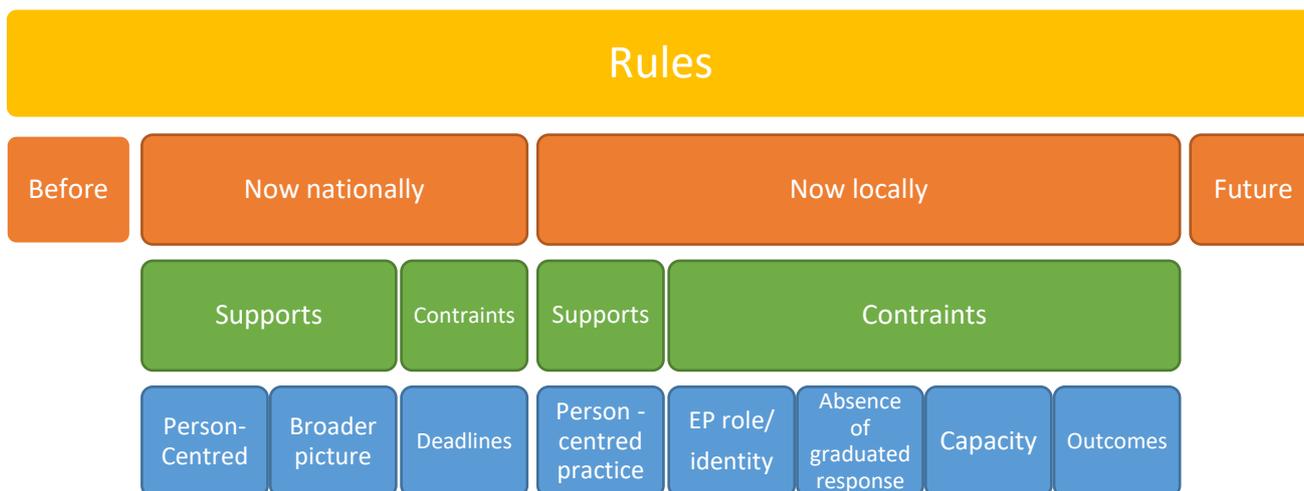


Figure 6.5: EP rules thematic map

6.2.3(i) Before

Before

“It was about oh this child’s got this need so they will need this provision but not thinking really about well how can we tailor that provision so that it has a specific outcome for the child”
(Participant #6, EP)

The previous statementing process was reflected upon critically by those with professional experience, supporting literature of the time (e.g. Warnock, 2005; Cameron and Monsen, 2005). Statementing procedures were viewed as procedural, rather than personalised, in their support of a CYP, taking a medicalised, deficit construction of SEND. However, EP practice was seen by all to remain constant throughout this period. EP outcomes and professional values remained stable, with the data positioning the post-2014 policy as a method of ‘enshrining’ existing EP methods into formal practice.

6.2.3(ii) Current National Supports

Person-centred practice was reported to be a notable strength of national policy. The focus on future aspirations of CYP was praised and the expectation of graduated, holistic assessments to inform the activity was seen to ensure that parents/carers and CYPs' views were focussed on throughout.

Person-centred

“Now spend much longer exploring with parents with the child or young person themselves as far as possible or looking at I would look much more at what seems to work for them” (Participant #6, EP)

Broader picture of needs

“Erm, yeah it feels like it gives a richer picture of the child without sort of pigeonholing them in the same way” (Participant #6, EP)

6.2.3(iii) Current National Constraints

The pressure of statutory deadlines was agreed to be a national constraint producing a conflict for some participants between the need to gather accurate information and the need to meet legal deadlines. Time based pressures may be argued nationally to be exacerbated by the reported overidentification of CYP with SEND (DfE, 2019b) and poor support for children without an EHCP (Education Committee, 2019), however this was not referenced by participants.

Deadlines

“I think that any of us now who aren’t able to do that for any reason sometimes it’s really hard if a pupil is absent for instance or abroad now the need to get that information outweighs the need to meet the deadline” (Participant #4, EP)

6.2.3(iv) Current Local Supports

Person centred-practice

“That is a ‘person-centred meeting’ where we generate outcomes, co-construct outcomes with parents, carers, teaching staff and the young person themselves if they’re there” (Participant #4, EP)

Two EPs praised the local strategy of person-centred meetings (Figure 1.2) which, despite the associated notable time commitments, were central to developing robust psychological advice. An additional EP recognised the importance of these meetings but found that school

staff often viewed the meeting as a stepping stone to EHCP assessment, rather than a standalone resource.

6.2.3(v) Current Local Constraints

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Absence of graduated response</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“I think for the EP to be involved in that part of process I think it makes the process much more meaningful than to be told oh right this assessment needs to be done go and see this child now”</i> (Participant #6, EP)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Capacity</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We’re heavily constrained aren’t we in terms of capacity”</i> (Participant #7, EP)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>EP role/identity</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“We are working to what SEN want and need and what makes things easier to write a plan rather than focussing on what we need to do as psychologists to write a good report”</i> (Participant #7, EP)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Outcomes</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Outcomes for the end of the next key stage well actually that could be 6 years in advance I can’t predict”</i> (Participant #7, EP)</p>

For some cases, EP involvement came only at the point of a request for statutory psychological advice (subtheme of absence of graduated response). This could occur due to parental requests, out of borough cases, or other professionals in the service failing to communicate the commencement of statutory processes to EPs where they had prior involvement. In these cases, EPs questioned how well they were able to understand a CYP’s needs in an artificial context (e.g. reduced time to build relationships and their own constructions of a CYP, and limited opportunity for ‘plan, do, review’ cycles). This was increased by an additional constraint of reduced team capacity, with two EPs highlighting that the high workload and reduced team size could further reduce the potential for practitioners to conduct ongoing assessments to inform statutory work, echoing national trends (DfE, 2019a).

One EP raised concerns regarding the professional group's close working relationships with SEND officers (EP role/identity subtheme), reporting that professional practice was heavily shaped by SEND officer requirements, supporting academic literature findings (e.g. Lamb, 2009). With this came an apprehension that EP identity may be lost within the wider LA workforce and that the primary aim of psychological assessment had become one of making the plan writing process easier. This concern highlights Norwich's (2002) perceived necessity to keep psychological assessment distinct from SEND statutory processes to ensure it stays true to EP aims and values. It also echoes Buck's (2015) concern that psychological assessments have become 'reverse engineered' to fit with statutory processes.

Moreover, EPs reflected on the shift in local practices to report more specific and measurable outcomes as part of their assessment. This was an uneasy development which was seen to be a challenge to the group. Participants were concerned about their ability to predict a CYP's development across multiple key stages, and this was seen to conflict with the person-centred nature of assessment. This concern is not discussed within academic literature although Buck (2015) cautions that EPs will be prevented from reflecting on the "bigger picture" of a CYP's profile through a focus on "behavioural outcomes" (pg.225) within statutory assessment which better suits the needs of SEND teams.

6.2.3(vi) Future

Future

"The other thing would be the workstream thing so that idea of when we are writing advice that we've become involved at the right time" (Participant #4, EP)

One EP reflected upon the need to re-establish professional identity through a redevelopment of the aims of the profession which extend beyond statutory assessment. Another suggested greater communication was needed across the service to ensure stronger graduated

assessment and greater EP awareness of when a case may be moving towards statutory assessment. Two EPs reflected upon the significant role local person-centred meetings played in shaping their assessment and felt that policy could be revisited to ensure they are always included in these meetings.

6.2.4 Division of Labour

Figure 6.6 presents the thematic map established for EP participants' constructions of the division of labour.

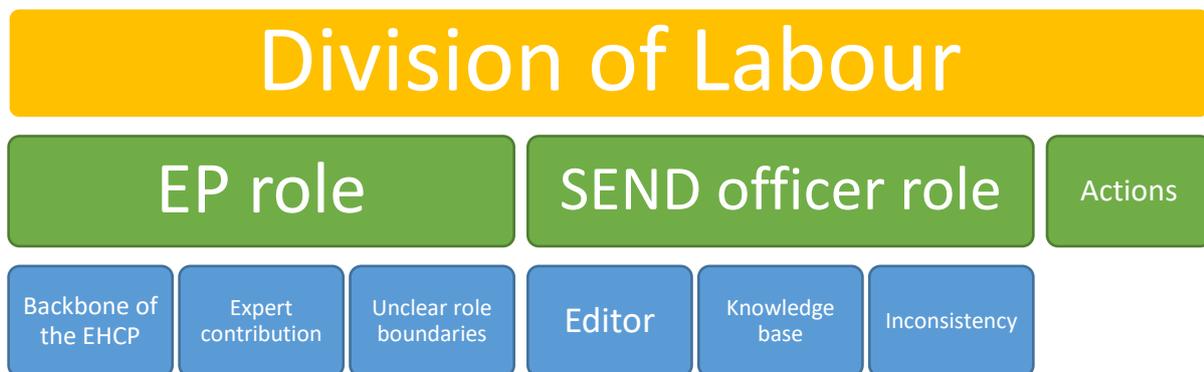


Figure 6.6 EP division of labour thematic map

6.2.4(i) EP Role

Backbone of EHCP

“Yeah because I think we might get frustrated as a group that some of our stuff is just copy and pasted cause that’s not what we’re here to do we’re not here to write the plan” (Participant #7, EP)

Expert contribution

“Yeah that is interesting cause I don’t really see myself as an expert at all” (Participant #6, EP)

“But they don’t have that area of expertise so they are very much reliant on what we say so the balance is kind of tipped in our favour really so we hold quite a lot of influence” (Participant #2, EP)

Unclear role boundaries

“I haven’t seen medical advice recently cause we don’t actually get all of the reports now that support the plan but that still seems to be the case that they would draw upon what we’ve written to look at the child’s health needs” (Participant #6, EP)

There was a consensus that EP assessments made up a large portion, if not all, of a CYP's EHCP, echoing trends reported in Seaview SEND Service quality assurance panel. EPs perceived themselves as a key source of information due to the absence of other professionals' input in the process (e.g. health and care practitioners) and greater cohesion between their own reports and the EHCP structure.

This had led to a lack of clarity regarding role boundaries, highlighted by half of the group and within the object node. Growing reliance on EP advice had led to EPs commenting on wider areas than was felt to be within their professional remit (e.g. health and care needs). This is not a new trend. Norwich (1995) recognised that LAs perceived EPs to be the most suitable professional group to provide holistic assessments of CYP, regardless of whether their professional training adequately equipped them to guide curriculum adaptations. This had led to a change in identity where EPs were viewed as educational assessors, rather than conductors of psychological assessment. To address this, Norwich (1995) proposed EPs should narrow their assessment, focussing on areas such as emotions and behaviour and move away from commenting on areas such as sensory difficulties.

The subtheme expert contribution highlighted that the EP participants had mixed perceptions about the construction of their role as an expert. While three EPs were able to recognise their expertise in comparison to SEND officers, the final EP stated they did not view themselves as an expert and they were a mechanism for presenting the views of others. With this varying perception of their expertise came differing levels of comfort regarding the importance placed upon EP advice in constructing EHCPs.

This perceived growing pressure to comment on a wider range of SEND areas, and mixed perceptions of professional expertise, may go some way to explain as to why academic

literature has been critical of EP assessments. Cameron and Monsen (2005) argued that EP statutory assessments have become descriptive accounts of needs, without a clear rationale to link assessment, formulation and intervention. Moreover, Buck (2015) observed a historic reduction of psychological theory in statutory assessments which he linked to the adapting of this activity to better fit statutory documents.

6.2.4(ii) SEND Officer Role

Editor

“But I think what I actually see is that they copy and paste our information and it must be frustrating for them to be in that situation” (Participant #4, EP)

Knowledge Base

“I think it’d be difficult to create the outcomes because they don’t know the specific child, but they may have perspectives on provisions that they used in other seen used in different cases or which is really where we get our provisions from as well” (Participant #6, EP)

“A lot of the plan writers of the SEN officers don’t have the expertise or the knowledge I suppose, I suppose it develops over time but they don’t have that area of expertise so they are very much reliant on what we say” (Participant #2, EP)

Inconsistency

“They’ve reported you know the educational psychologist said quote but other than that it’s very much their narrative of what they think is going on but then there are others where it’s just been changed to the educational psychologist said copy and paste so I think it depends” (Participant #7, EP)

Construction of the SEND officers' role explored how EP assessment data were used within the EHCP process. SEND officers were seen to be editors, often restricted to copying EP data into the EHCP document due to the absence of health and care professionals' input. However, this role was reported to be inconsistent across the SEND officer team with two EPs detailing their differing experiences with the team. The extent to which assessment data were used verbatim or as a part of a wider story construction for a CYP was seen to be dependent upon SEND officer confidence and experience and varied greatly.

This linked to the subtheme of knowledge base. While some EPs reported that SEND officers did not have the expertise to contribute to EHCP construction, and thus would be more reliant on EP data, others recognised the experience this team may have, reporting that their knowledge that could be drawn upon to contribute to the provision section of the final EHCP.

This conflict in how labour could or should be shared across the teams could explain why EP assessment processes have focussed on resource definition (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon et al, 2010). EPs' awareness of their growing role in shaping EHCP construction may have led to external and internal pressure to provide more information in psychological assessments than deemed appropriate in professional guidance (e.g. AEP, 2004; BPS, 2015). Within the data set, there appeared to be a perception that if information was not included by the EP, it was not included in the final EHCP, supporting the possibility of growing pressure to cover wider areas within the assessment than originally perceived when defining psychological assessment.

6.2.4(iii) Actions

Actions

“Yeah I guess so, and I mean really what I think, what could work better was if they were actually writing you know co-constructing the plan with the advice-givers in the room so in the way that we do a ‘person-centred meeting’” (Participant #4, EP)

Future actions, provided by two EPs, focussed on ensuring EPs and other contributing professionals were included in the construction and editing of EHCPs. This was seen to be important to continue promoting co-construction throughout the process and allow EPs to regain some control over how their information may be used and adopted into the final plan.

6.3 SEND Officers Findings and Discussions

6.3.1 Object

Figure 6.7 represents the thematic map of SEND officers' constructions of the object of EPs' statutory psychological assessment.

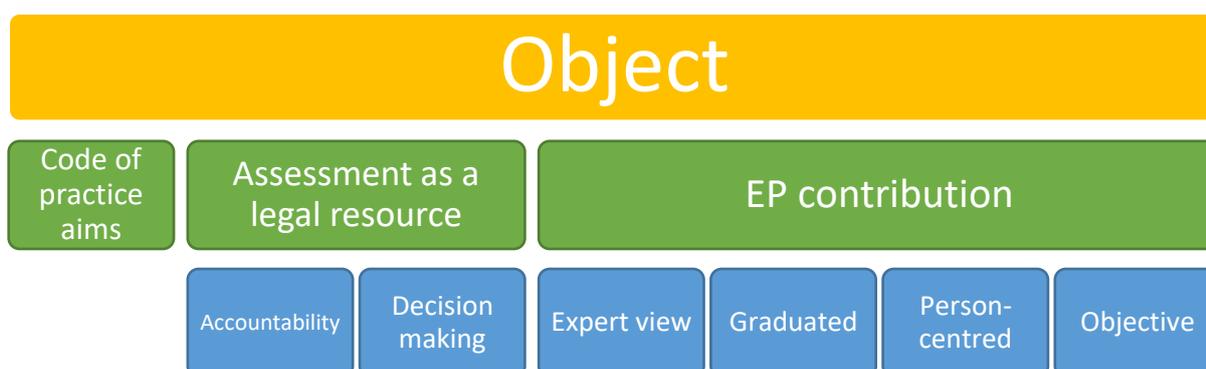
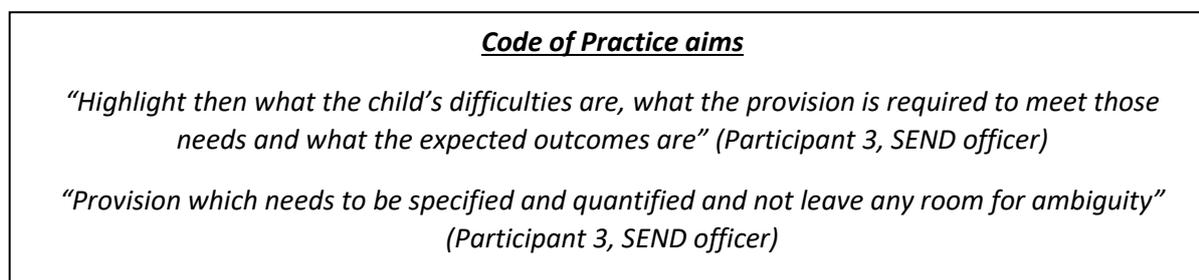


Figure 6.7: SEND officer object thematic map

6.3.1(i) Code of Practice Aims



All SEND officers focussed on the legal requirements of EP advice, detailing the procedural elements of this assessment which must be included (i.e. needs, outcomes and provision) to achieve the requirements laid out in the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015).

6.3.1(ii) Assessment as a Legal Resource

SEND officers spoke in detail on the need for EP advice to aid decision-making processes and to support SEND officers in holding schools accountable regarding specified provisions and outcomes for a CYP. The centrality of EP assessment data in the final EHCPs often meant they were responsible for detailing how support should look for each CYP.

EP advice was seen to guide decisions on a CYP's future educational placement, with clear expectations that EPs would advise on what placement may be most suitable for each CYP. Advice was judged to be less successful where this was done ambiguously. This supports the concerns raised by Norwich (1995) and the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) who reported that EPs experienced pressure from LAs to tailor their advices. While SEND officers did not require EPs to list specific placements, there was an expectation that EPs would advocate for either specialist or mainstream educational placement which was weighted heavily in final EHCP construction. This appears to support academic literature claims (e.g. Norwich, 1995; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon et al, 2010) that EPs statutory assessments primarily serves the function of deciding additional resources and funding.

The data provides a note of caution for EPs linked to Sewell's (2016) assertion that assessment is the construction of truths which inform action. Here, this knowledge construction is expected to guide decisions on the type of provision a CYP should receive, i.e. specialist or mainstream education. Chapter 2 and 4 outlined that such decisions are informed by a range of social-cultural factors, alongside each practising EP's constructions. The focus placed on EPs, in some part due to the absence of additional professional groups' advice, leaves the process vulnerable to a lack of triangulation and objectivity.

Accountability

"Professionals will say they want him to be able to do something more often or to be better at something but better isn't quantifiable" (Participant #8, SEND officer)

Decision making

"If we receive EP advices which aren't that, that aren't specific and aren't quantified and aren't clear then it's difficult for us to make a decision and ultimately it may mean the child doesn't end up in an appropriate setting" (Participant #3, SEND officer)

6.3.1(iii) EP Contribution

Expert view

“The first reason why their advices are so important cause that’s why they are experts in the field of educational psychology particularly in regards to SEN” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Graduated

“EP would be involved with the child prior to the application being made as part of a graduated approach” (SEND officer #)

Person-centred

“They encapsulate the child’s views and aspirations and in terms of the report in a totally gather it in a person-centred way” (Participant #8, SEND officer)

Objective

“EP advice is always independent of any other external factors so we can confidently rely on the advice” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

This theme outlines the aspects of EP psychological assessment which SEND officers reported gave it its importance. EPs provided an expert view to each case, using their psychological knowledge to explore a CYP’s needs across a range of areas, potentially challenging Buck’s (2015) findings that psychological content in reports had decreased.

With this expertise also came a perception from two SEND officers that EPs were able to offer independent, objective advice, allowing it to be heavily relied upon in EHCP construction. This supports Norwich (1995), who stated that EPs were seen to serve the role of ‘external assessors’ (pg.32) holding no bias or underlying agendas. Moreover, the person-centred nature of EP psychological assessment was recognised and praised by three of the group, allowing the aspirations of CYP to be ascertained. Finally, the graduated and longitudinal nature of EP assessment was supported by the expectation that, where possible, an EP should be included well before statutory assessment may be required to strengthen assessment.

6.3.2 Outcome

Figure 6.8 presents the thematic map established from three SEND officers’ reflections of the wider outcome achieved during EP statutory assessment.

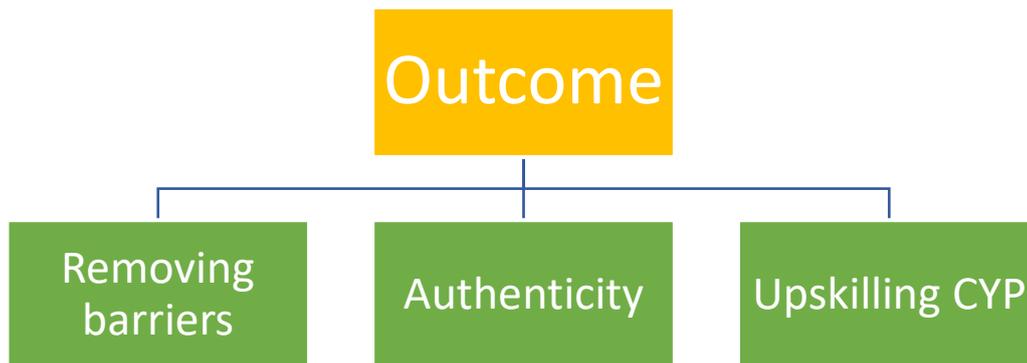


Figure 6.8 SEND officer outcome thematic map

6.3.2(i) Removing Barriers

Removing barriers

"Even bigger than that I suppose in terms of education it encapsulates a lot more than that doesn't it so the EP should be looking to remove any barriers which are effecting their access to education as well which might include social, emotional, mental health issues" (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Removing barriers demonstrated the belief that EP assessment should aim to provide interventions which develop a supportive learning environment for a CYP and mirrors the language adopted in the CoP (DfE and DH, 2015).

6.3.2(ii) Authenticity

Authenticity

"Sometimes you feel like you're not able to do the child justice and as I say that's not the fault of the EP but it's the fault of the system and the process" (Participant #5, SEND officer)

Authenticity encapsulated a need to do a CYP justice during EP assessment and recognised that this can often not happen when the opportunity for assessment over time is removed.

6.3.2(iii) Upskilling Children and Young People

One SEND officer discussed the need for EP assessment to focus on adult life and future post-16 support for each CYP, echoing CoP aims (DfE and DH, 2015). This was positioned as assessment focussing on the outcome of upskilling CYP to play a meaningful role in society in later life and ensuring that each CYP is given a voice to express their aspirations.

Upskilling CYP

"What do we need in order to help upskills them to get them to a level that's realistic for that young person at that time"

*"But you we could as a whole service not just a psychology department but as a whole service focus it more on preparing for adulthood agenda... perhaps what we need to do is focus on developing the wider holistic skills so they got a firm base they can use in society going forwards"
(Participant #9, SEND officer)*

6.3.3 Rules

Figure 6.9 details the themes constructed from SEND officer data regarding the rules which support and constrain EP psychological assessment, outlining historic and current factors at a local and national level.

6.3.3(i) Before

Before

"It didn't encapsulate anything beyond the black and white difficulties that a child had and the provision that they need, so it was almost like a deficit model" (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Data relating to historical practice were brief, limited to the two SEND officers with extensive previous professional experience, and focussed on statementing procedures overall. As with the EP sample, these statutory assessment processes were seen to be lacking depth and quality concerning the information gathered, and in the person-centred elements of the activity, again supporting claims made within the academic literature (e.g. Warnock, 2005; Cameron and Monson, 2005).

6.3.3(ii) Current National Supports

Person-centred

"The aspiration for more person-centeredness more things to be based on the young person's aspirations which makes it much more personalised and much more relevant" (Participant #5, SEND officer)

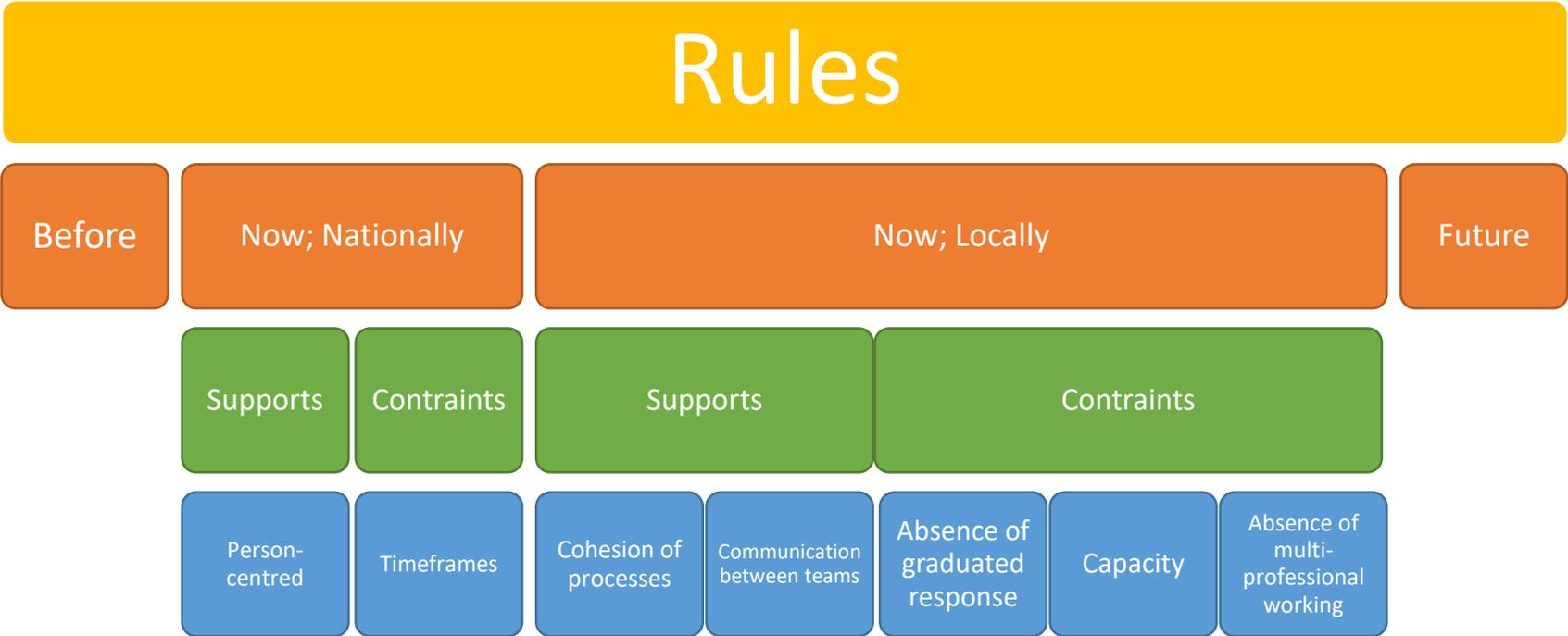


Figure 6.9 SEND officer rules thematic map

Current practices were reported by two SEND officers to be heavily supported by the person-centred nature of the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) which had allowed assessments to focus on the aspirations of CYP (person-centred practice subtheme).

6.3.3(iii) Current National Constraints

Timeframes

“Where actually we’ve got legal deadlines this part has to be done within 6 weeks the next part has to be done within a certain deadline” (Participant #1, SEND officer)

Timeframes were recognised by all as a key constraint at a national level, which conflicted with the need for a longitudinal assessment. This raised a moral dilemma which has not been discussed within the included academic literature between the development of good enough, timely assessment data that facilitated prompt provision decisions and EHCP writing, and the need for detailed, holistic explorations of children’s needs.

6.2.3(iv) Current Local Supports

Cohesion of processes

“We better mirrored the EHCP template so now what you’d see our EHC template is the same as the EP advice” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Communication between teams

“In terms of the culture within the service for questions to be bounced back in terms of the advices and I think initially it was quite spikey in terms of how that challenge was put across but over time it has improved the quality of the advices” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

There were some supporting factors which facilitated EP psychological assessment and EHCP construction. The cohesion of processes captured the LA’s decision to make EP psychological advice mirror the structure and remit of the final EHCP. All SEND officers saw this to be a crucial organisational achievement which had improved the quality of EP advice and ensured better representation of EPs' views in the EHCP.

The positioning of this development as a supporting factor conflicts with Buck's (2015) criticism of the reverse engineering of EP assessment processes to fit SEND requirements, and EP data which suggested frustrations at the blurring of EP identity, and greater external demands being placed upon EPs by the SEND team.

Communication between teams focussed on the content and nature of EP advice and increased opportunities for inter-professional working. Both developments were reported to have strengthened SEND officers' understanding of the EP role, the philosophies guiding this activity, and provide a culture of constructive challenge to improve EP assessment data.

6.2.3(v) Current Local Constraints

Absence of multi-professional working

"You've got a child with complex medical needs, and you as an EP are supposed to be assessing them but you've got no idea what the detail of those needs are, your jobs impossible" (Participant #5, SEND officer)

Capacity

"In terms of the threats I think it is a lack of capacity within the educational psychology service" (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Absence of graduated response

"The worst reports...is where the EP has been given that child's name they've never met them before, they go in and have to complete you know a huge piece of work... in a tiny period of time" (Participant #5, SEND officer)

Two SEND officers challenged current policy expectations (DfE, and DH, 2015) of stronger support from health and care professionals and the extent to which this occurred locally, leading to an absence of multi-professional working. There was a recognition that the absence of health and care professionals in some cases had led to EPs assessing a CYP's needs without a full understanding of their medical needs and there was a conflict between policy and actual practice.

SEND officers also recognised increasing workloads and reduced staff numbers in the EP team meant procedures needed to be timely and effective to reduce pressures and prevent future reductions in service. Reduced EP capacity was seen to further threaten the activity by reducing the EP role in some assessments and led to underdeveloped knowledge and practices in areas such as post-16 assessment.

Three SEND officers raised a final local constraint, reporting that when EPs were not involved in a CYP's case prior to a statutory advice request, the advice they produced often lacked depth and quality. They also reported that this had a secondary effect on their ability to make decisions on the level of funding and type of provision a CYP should receive. As with the EP sample, this constraint was seen to be perpetuated by processes such as parental requests and a lack of communication between EPs and Seaview SEND service specialist teachers involved in a CYP's case.

6.2.3(vi) Future

Future

“Because to keep abreast of any development and be at the centre of good practice we need to be communicating how we think things can be improved” (Participant #3, SEN officer)

Future development focussed on extending this ethos of open communication and joint-working further to promote good practice across the teams.

6.3.3 Division of Labour

Figure 6.10 details the thematic map for SEND officers' perceptions of the division of labour.

Division of Labour



Figure 6.10 SEND officer division of labour thematic map

6.3.3(i) SEND Officer Role

Editor and co-ordinator

“Bringing it together, essentially it is a co-ordinator role so it’s about the assessment being completed which to us means we’ve received all the reports from all the agencies and then it’s about amalgamating that into the EHCP using their expert and specialist knowledge in terms of statutory process” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Varying levels of activeness

“I’ll work with what I’ve got so that’s my approach I know what I’m working for and I know what I’ve got and I’m the bit in the middle whereas a lot of other plan writers will just take the EP report directly and not alter it at all make it the EHCP” (Participant #8, SEND officer)

The SEND officer role was construed by all as one of editor and co-ordinator, bringing together pre-existing information from the EP and other stakeholders into a single document. SEND officers identified EPs as experts and no interpretation of their information should be undertaken in EHCP construction. To date, no research has detailed the role of SEND officers as receivers and users of EP assessment data to make comparisons with.

However, this also led to a reflection by SEND officers on the variations in practice across the professional group (subtheme varying levels of activeness). Two acknowledged their own experience and felt confident to form their picture of a CYP which summarised submitted advice to create a single story. Alternatively, another SEND officer took a cut and paste

approach where information was directly transferred to prevent misinterpretation. Moreover, where officers appeared to have an active engagement with the assessment data, they felt confident going back to the EP with questions and clarifications further down the EHCP process. This again linked to constructions regarding their expertise and ability to contribute to and engage with the data they receive.

6.3.3(ii) EP Role

Backbone of the EHCP

“It is quite central the EP advice cause it forms the backbone of the EHCP” (Participant #3, SEND officer)

Expertise?

“The EP report to fill out the skeleton then look at right speech and language therapy right the therapist is saying this does it contradict” (Participant #5, SEND officer)

“For example, if an EP makes recommendations for speech and language or occupational therapy we need to, or what we should be doing is weighing that up against advice given by an occupational therapist” (Participant #5, SEND officer)

SEND officers agreed that EPs were the backbone of the EHCP using this terminology throughout all interviews. Due to their objectivity and knowledge, EPs’ psychological advice served as the starting point for EHCP construction, with other information being added to support this evidence for many areas of SEND. This centrality was also facilitated by the adaptation of EP reports to mirror the EHCP format, allowing easier movement of information.

While there was group consensus that the EP played a key role in developing a CYP’s EHCP, the areas which the profession was seen to be able to comment upon varied. All SEND officers recognised that the training each EP had undergone made them experts within the field of education. However, three SEND officers reported that EPs would be limited in their contribution to fields such as health and physical disabilities, and here advice from

professionals such as occupational therapists would be prioritised. This would appear to support concerns within the literature that EPs are heavily relied upon in statutory processes (e.g. Buck, 2015). However, there appears to be some limits to this reliance, dependent upon the availability of other professionals' advice, which supports the changes in EP role put forward by Norwich (1995).

6.4 Identified Contradictions

The themes outlined in Section 6.3 produced multiple within and between group contradictions (detailed in Figure 6.11), leading to the production of four overarching contradictions:

1. Conflicts between policy, practice and values regarding the need for graduated and longitudinal assessment,
2. Contradictions between the teams regarding the extent to which EP assessment data should shape the final EHCP, notably due to the absence of other professionals,
3. The conflict in SEND officer assessment objectives regarding decision making processes and EP aims, and
4. Contradictions in practice and definition of the SEND officer role

Contradictions one and two were taken forward to the DWR Lab session where the group were able to decide which contradiction they would like to address and develop actions for, although the group decided to discuss both. These contradictions were seen to capture the wider concerns and conflicts raised within Section 6.3 and were robustly supported by the interview data.

Contradictions in National/Local Rules and Practice:

- EPs and SEND officers both recognised that processes were constrained where EPs could not be involved in the graduated period of assessment, despite wider policy promoting a 'plan, do, review' cycle (DfE and DH, 2015)
- SEND officers also recognised that assessments and EHCP construction were constrained by the absence of health and care professionals' advice

Contradictions in Division of Labour:

- Both groups recognised that EP assessments functioned as the backbone of EHCP although EPs challenged this role while SEND officers praised it
- While all SEND officers recognised EPs as making an expert contribution, EPs varied in their adoption of this role
- EPs were unclear of the boundaries of their professional advice and distinctiveness of their own role within the LA due to close working between SEND officers and EPs, while SEND officers praised the strong inter-professional working between the two teams
- Both teams recognised there was variation across the SEND officer team in the extent to which information was copied and pasted or developed into a single synthesised account
- One EP viewed SEND officers as a knowledge base which could contribute to the construction of provisions within an EHCP while two EPs were clear that this should not occur

Contradictions in Object Definition:

- EPs were unclear as to the limits of their role in assessing health and care needs due to the absence of additional professionals' advice and the reliance upon their data in EHCP construction
- EPs were unclear whether their final advice served as part, or the entirety of the final EHCP
- Both groups recognised that assessment should occur over time in a graduated assessment period although this was not always possible
- SEND officers reported that assessment informed decisions regarding funding and placements, and supported holding schools accountable for implementing provisions and achieving stated outcomes

Figure 6.11 A summary of contradictions emerging within the data

6.4.1 Selected Contradictions

Contradictions can occur on multiple levels (Table 4.2) and are acknowledged in Engeström’s expansive learning model (Engeström, 1999b) as a driving force in facilitating change (Kerosuo, Kajamaa and Engeström, 2010). Two contradictions arising in the data are detailed in this section (summarised in Table 6.1) and considered in relation to the literature.

Table 6.1 A summary of the contradictions presented during the DWR lab

Identified Contradiction	Contradiction Level	Example Quote
<i>Need for graduated assessment</i>	Primary contradiction within rules	<i>"A reasonable majority of the time we have known that child over a period of time so we are able to show that graduated approach and demonstrate the person-centeredness. The problem is when it doesn't happen, it really doesn't happen so when it happens well it's really good but when it doesn't happen, and you just get this snap request it's not good at all" (EP)</i>
	Secondary contradiction between rules and object Secondary contradiction between community and division of labour and object	
<i>Extent of contribution</i>	Primary contradiction within division of labour	<i>"We are working to what SEN want and need and what makes things easier to write a plan rather than focussing on what we need to do as psychologists to write a good report" (EP)</i>
	Secondary contradiction between rules and division of labour	
	Secondary contradiction between division of labour and community	<i>"We better mirrored the EHCP template so now what you'd see our EHC template is the same as the EP advice so when I said that the EP advice is the backbone of the EHCP that's what I meant" (SEND officer)</i>
	Tertiary contradiction between previous practice and currently policy	

6.4.2 Need for Graduated Assessment

The need for longitudinal assessment has been recognised within professional guidance (e.g. AEP, 2004; BPS, 2015), and my own data set, as necessary to fully understand a CYP’s needs and produced effective psychological advice. Despite this, Contradiction One (detailed in

Table 6.1 and Figure 6.12), demonstrated that EPs are not always able to conduct longitudinal assessment, challenging the quality of their final advice.

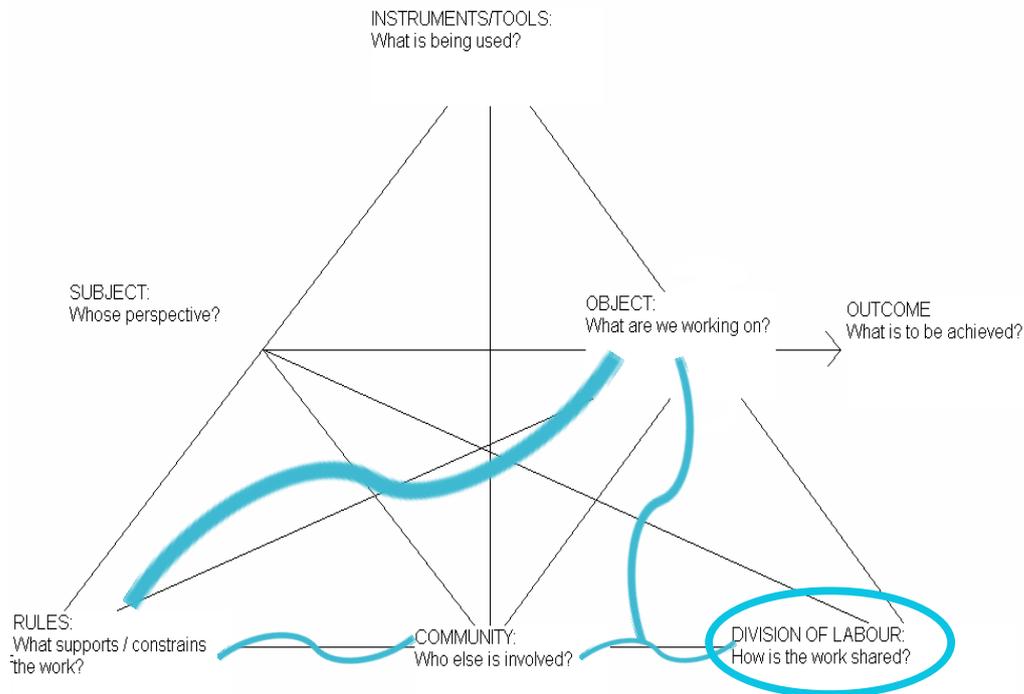


Figure 6.12 A summary of contradiction one within the CHAT framework

Both groups recognised that when EPs were absent from early ‘assess, plan, do, review’ cycles, the subsequent psychological advice they produced was weaker, lacking in depth and knowledge of a CYP. However, by including specialist teachers in early stages of the statutory process, instances arose where EPs had no knowledge of a CYP prior to the request for statutory psychological assessment. In such cases EPs were also absent from the person-centred meeting which was recognised during interviews as a key artefact in producing stronger advice. Nationally, longitudinal EP assessment was threatened by parental or out of borough requests where EPs had no knowledge of a CYP prior to receiving a statutory assessment request.

Contradiction occurs within the node of rules between EP professional guidance on psychological assessment and national policy expectations for graduated assessments,

against current practices, leading to a reported feeling of unease for the EPs. The group reported when cases came through they were unfamiliar with, they were required to jump straight away without having enough time to know a CYP. Where other professionals in the service had led initial assessment, reports were limited to their specialist areas and provided a challenging resource for EPs to form their understanding of a CYP within the specified timeframes. This was echoed by the SEND officers who felt EP advice was often weaker where they had not had prior case involvement.

Both groups recognised that the local policy of person-centred meetings was a crucial artefact to address this contradiction but currently EPs were not always invited to attend. These meetings provided an opportunity for the EP to orientate themselves to a CYP's case where they were not lead professional. However, these were acknowledged as being a lengthy process, often lasting several hours. This extends the contradiction when considering EP workforce data (DfE, 2019a) which linked statutory time demands linked to the growing shortage of LA EPs.

Contradiction also occurred on a secondary level between rules, object, outcome, community and division of labour. Psychological assessment was reported under the node of object to serve the purpose of acquiring history and in-depth understanding of a CYP, something which is directly challenged by the current local practices described here. Moreover, while the inclusion of additional Seaview SEND Service professionals in earlier stages of assessment was undertaken to improve the division of labour within the service, it has led to increased pressures being placed upon EPs later in the activity timeline. This provides a contradiction between how the work is shared (division of labour), and who should be included in the assessment process (community) for the activity to truly achieve its intended objectives.

6.4.3 Extent of Contribution

A second contradiction highlighted within the node of division of labour, and producing conflicting themes between the groups, was the extent to which EPs currently contribute to the final EHCP and how this influences the activity of psychological assessment (Figure 6.13). Both groups reflected that locally, over recent years, the proforma EPs have been asked to use has been adapted to mirror the format of EHCPs. This decision is one which Buck (2015) reported great apprehension of as he reflected on the processes normalised in the previous era of statementing.

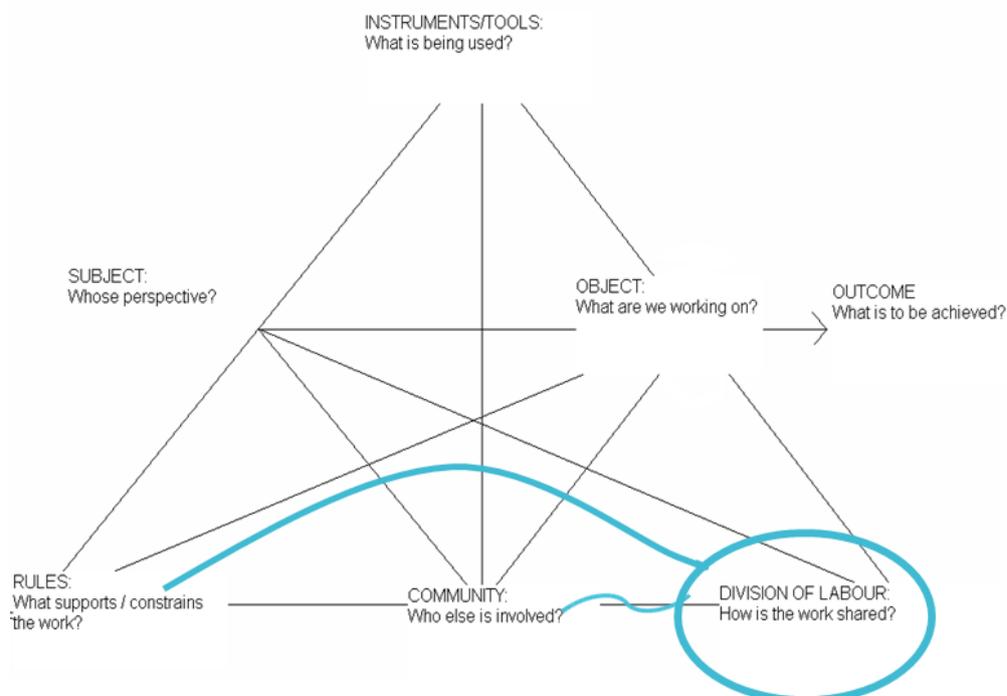


Figure 6.13 A summary of contradiction two within the CHAT framework

SEND officers reflected upon this decision positively, reporting it had allowed them to represent EP views more accurately within the final EHCP document, and enable EP advice to more readily become the backbone of the EHCP. Moreover, this decision was reported to be a logical one which intertwined the two processes and meant the quality of EHCPs was held up by the quality of EP assessment.

Alternatively, this decision and change in processes had produced concerns for the EPs. The group reported a sense of pressure to ensure any and all information was included in their psychological advice to ensure its inclusion in the EHCP. The group expressed a desire to take back their professional identity and for greater communication between the two groups to provide EPs with greater input over how their information is presented in the final plan.

This contradiction raises an interesting question regarding which professional in this activity has greater agency and influence over the process of psychological assessment. Woods and Farrell (2006) reported that assessment practices were largely influenced by LA practices, supported by Lamb (2009), and the data presented here appears to support this suggesting EPs may have reduced autonomy within the activity.

This contradiction also highlights wider issues within statutory assessment in Seaview MBC, and within previous and current practice. The 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) stated an expectation that health and social care professionals would provide evidence where relevant to inform a CYP's EHCP. However, the data gathered in this research suggests that in Seaview MBC this still has a long way to go. EPs reported that the absence of other professionals meant psychological advice was now reviewed in isolation during EHCP construction and EPs often crossed boundaries with other professional groups. The apprehension regarding this and the extent of an EP's contribution was evident with the EP group.

The absence of other professionals within assessment was reflected upon by Norwich and Eaton (2015) who queried the extent to which health and care professionals would collaborate and engage within the new EHCP process. Furthermore, SEND officers reported a need to compare information from professionals in specialist areas (e.g. speech and language with the EP or occupational therapists with the EP) to ensure an accurate account of the CYP,

their outcomes and future provision was created. However, where this was absent, heavy focus was placed upon the EP advice.

6.5 DWR Lab

The DWR Lab presented the outlined contradictions to the group for further discussion and reflection. The session initiated a process of organisational change by analysing contradictions to form new models of working (Engeström, 1999b; see Table 4.2 for more details).

In the following section, the discussions regarding each contradiction are organised by the associated actions proposed. Within each set of actions, the dialogue taken to reach these are summarised, before being reflected upon with reference to literature.

6.5.1 Contradiction One: The Need for Graduated Assessment

Throughout the discussion, several actions were proposed by the group which aimed to redefine the object of EP psychological assessment, adapt local level rules and practices, and change current divisions of labour (summarised in Figure 6.14).

6.5.1(i) Redefining the Object/Outcome

Action Point One came from the group's recognition that the purpose of EP psychological assessment had changed to one of decision-making rather than establishing a CYP's story. Early stages of the statutory process were seen to take the role of deciding if a CYP needed an EHCP and what sort of educational provision they required, contradicting local policy which states this should occur later in the timeline. The group reported this was linked to historical changes in practice which had combined placement allocation with statutory assessment processes and distorted the intentions of the EHCP document.

Redefining the object/outcome

1. The language surrounding graduated assessment to be revisited; considering moving away from the triangular model to emphasise the place of annual reviews in keeping the EHCP as a live story of a CYP's needs, rather than a one-off passport to funding

Adapting local level rules

2. Principal EP to establish a place on the annual review steering group and feedback focus group data, consideration of also having plan amenders in this group too
3. The 'Preparing for Adulthood' framework should be adopted more clearly into the statutory process and annual review paperwork

Changing divisions of labour

4. The annual review process needs to be considered, focussing on changing the expectation that EPs should lead in cases where other professionals may know the child best or have expertise in the primary need
5. Educational settings should be appropriately trained in the annual review process to facilitate stronger evidence gathering and long-term outcome production

Figure 6.14: Proposed actions for contradiction one

This change in focus to decision-making was highlighted by EPs as problematic when conducting assessments with no prior knowledge of a CYP. However, the group reflected that parents/carers appeared comfortable with this practice which may be due to contradictions in the perceived outcome of assessment, and the final EHCP. Parents/carers were reported to view the EHCP as a method for securing funding, support, and suitable provision, with perhaps less concern on how this was reached and when an EP became involved. This led one EP to question whether EPs needed to 'let go' of their role in assessment processes and accept this change in practice, rather than a change in rules and labour division.

Alongside this, the group agreed that the current language and visual representations surrounding graduated assessment in the service needed to be revisited to highlight that the assessment process does not end at the procurement of an EHCP. Instead, the 'live' nature of

the EHCP document and the role of annual reviews in updated and reassessing a CYP's EHCP should be emphasised, as was originally intended in policy (DfE and DH, 2015).

The DWR Lab data and actions appear to validate the concerns raised in Chapter 3 that the purpose of EP psychological assessment has become one of resource definition and gatekeeping (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon et al, 2010). The group discussed that the statutory assessment process may be seen by parents/carers to provide a gateway to additional funding and specialised provision, warping the intended object of psychological assessment. However, SEND officers within the session continued to place great emphasis on EPs to inform their own decision making regarding provision and funding. By highlighting annual reviews as a process to 'quality check' EHCPs, this may remove some of the pressure placed upon EPs in the early stages of statutory assessment to provide in-depth assessment data through single pieces of work. This, in turn, may address the discomfort EPs reported during interviews when they were unable to play an active role in the early stages of the graduated assessment process. This action captures the primary aim of third-generation CHAT (Leadbetter, 2017) which seeks to use the identification of contradictions to create shared understanding and redevelopment of the object which works for both systems or subject positions.

6.5.1(ii) Adapting Local Level Rules

Annual reviews were recognised as an artefact which could strengthen the graduated assessment process under this new model of working. At present, annual review processes in Seaview MBC were reported to be poor, with an absence of high-quality evidence and updated outcomes provided by SENCOs. In the discussion, one SEND officer identified a current steering group which had been established locally to address this, which the group

were unaware of. Due to this, an action was noted to ensure members of the DWR Lab had a role in this group to feedback recognised contradictions and potential actions.

Moreover, as discussions focussed on the extension of the graduated approach to better encapsulate annual reviews, the group considered how to ensure strong data were gathered in these meetings. SEND officers highlighted the absence of future-orientated outcomes both in some EP assessments, and annual review data from schools. The 'Preparing for Adulthood' framework (PfA, 2020) was identified as an artefact to address this, with EPs acknowledging that this framework needed greater embedding in psychological assessment and the wider statutory process. Leadership staff within the group took forward the action of including the 'Preparing for Adulthood' framework (PfA, 2019) more explicitly in all stages of assessment paperwork.

6.5.1(iii) Changing Divisions of Labour

Current expectations placed upon EPs to lead decision making discussions and statutory processes such as annual reviews, despite not always knowing the CYP best, were then explored. SEND officers in the group highlighted EP knowledge and training often made them best placed to lead but recognised that the EP may not always have the strongest knowledge of a CYP's case. In addition, EPs reported that the service held the perception that 'once it's statutory it's an EP case' which had contributed to increasing EP workloads. To address this, Action Point Four redistributes labour across the EP and specialist teacher teams, adapting local rules to ensure the professional with the strongest knowledge of a CYP leads these processes.

Finally, the group considered the role of schools in the statutory process and their reliance upon EPs to guide annual reviews. Currently, schools were reported to be reluctant to conduct

comprehensive annual reviews without an EP to guide outcome writing and lead discussions on a CYP's progress. To address this current inefficient labour division, Action Point Five focussed on building school staff's competency in outcome writing and evidence gathering for annual reviews. Through this, the group hoped to reduce demands placed upon EPs and SEND officers and embed an understanding that graduated assessment extends beyond EHCP procurement.

The actions presented provide new models of labour distribution which aim to redefine EPs role in statutory work, focussing on a case knowledge model to promote greater multi-professional working. The reflection that the EP team may need to 'let go' of their role expectations by recognising other professionals within the service may take the lead on a CYP's case before statutory assessment provides an interesting lens to highlight a difficult conflict within the profession. While research (Kelly and Gray, 2000) suggests that EPs are prevented from fully applying their skills by statutory work and view other elements of their practice as more valuable to schools (Ashton and Roberts, 2006), professional guidance states psychological assessment should demonstrate hypothesis testing over time (AEP, 2004; BPS, 2015). While DWR Lab data provides a mechanism to develop the EP identity, moving away from a statutory focus, this can challenge the fundamental values guiding psychological assessment. Therefore, the actions, while largely focussing on division of labour, also present an opportunity for deeper change in EP identity construction and the rules which define psychological assessment.

6.5.2 Contradiction Two: Extent of EP Contribution

Discussions regarding Contradiction Two focussed on developing existing artefacts that guide EP psychological assessment, adapting current division of labour to strengthen the role of

each group (i.e. SEND officers and EPs), and the creation of opportunities to promote shared learning between these professional groups (summarised in Figure 6.15).

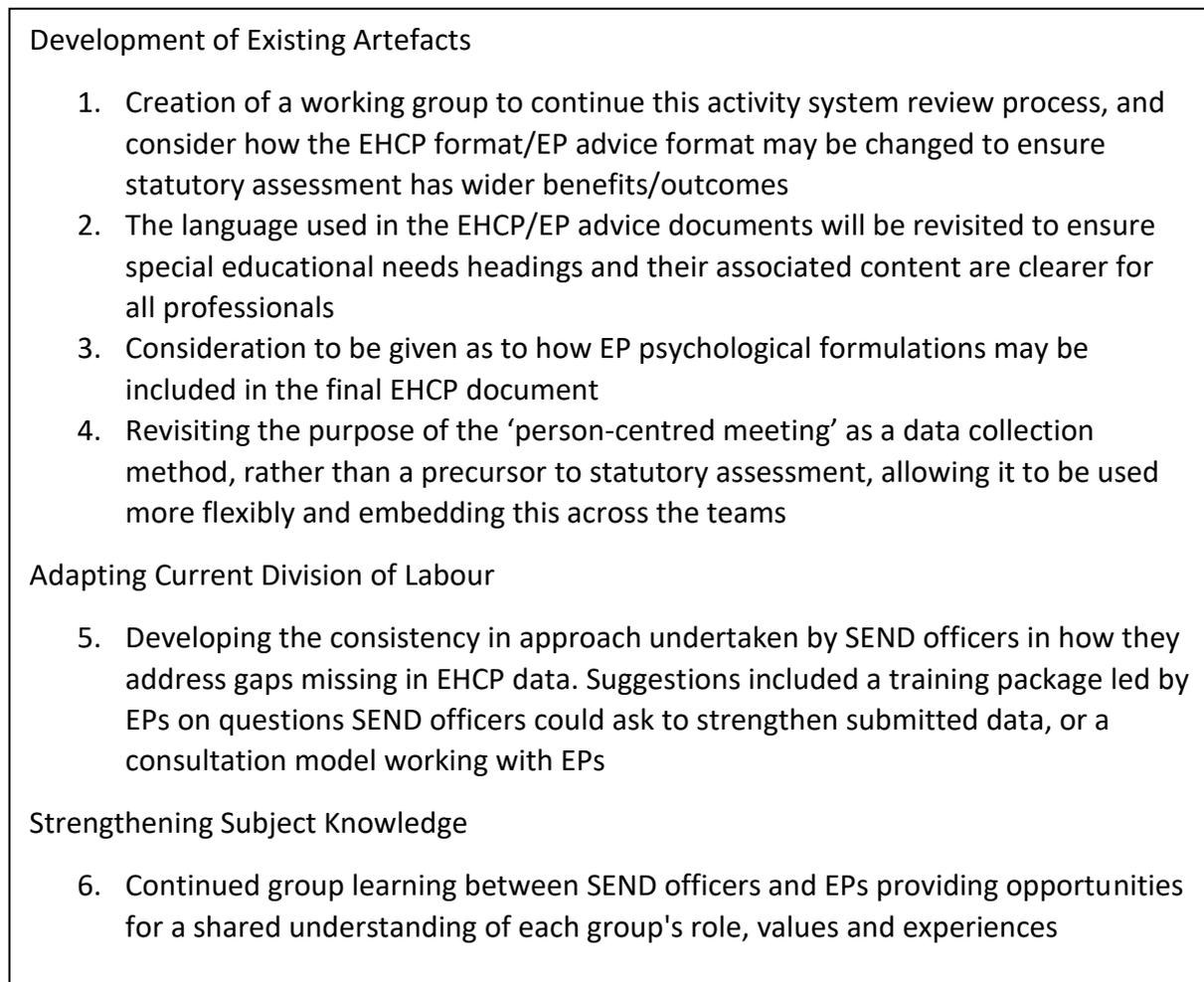


Figure 6.15: Proposed actions for contradiction two

6.5.2(i) Development of Existing Artefacts

The group began by considering the historical route which had led to EP advice formats being reverse engineered to fit into the EHCP format and SEND officers outlined previous concerns of misinterpreting EP assessments. By adapting the EP advice format to match the EHCP document and its headings, this had been removed. However, both EPs and SEND officers recognised this had, in turn, led to a fragmentation of EP information, breaking up the account of a CYP's needs into headings that were not always clearly interpreted. This was identified

as an issue for identifying the correct heading to place needs such as sensory processing difficulties or social communication skills under.

The group reflected on the current use of EP psychological assessment data, with SEND officers asking whether this activity and its final artefact served any additional purposes (e.g. was the report fed back to school to identify where the EP may be able to provide further support). EPs identified that psychological assessment data solely served the purpose of contributing to the final EHCP document. The activity was perceived to be an undesirable admin task, heightened by the absence of EPs psychological formulation in the final EHCP. EPs reflected that these formulations were often the most important part of their assessment process in achieving the object of developing a holistic understanding of a child's needs.

Through these reflections, the group recognised the need to develop a working party which would provide additional time and resources to addressing the contradictions and potential actions raised within the DWR Lab. Action Points Two and Three emphasised the need to revisit the EP advice format and final EHCP document to clarify the information which should be adopted from EP psychological assessment and how this should be categorised in the advice format. These action points were initiated by SEND officers and recognised that EP psychological assessment should be meaningful and multi-purpose, rather than an administrative process.

Moreover, the group emphasised the importance of person-centred meetings in improving the quality of EP assessment data, rather than functioning as a precursor to statutory assessment. This highlighted a contradiction from the original intended purpose of this meeting, which was to establish a co-constructed story of a CYP's need and future goals. In light of this, the group developed Action Point Four to recommunicate the purpose of the

person-centred meeting as a data collection method which could be used at any point in practice, rather than a stepping stone to statutory assessment.

The positioning of EP advice construction as an admin task is not novel, with Cameron and Monsen's (2005) study, and DfE data (2019a) recognising the strain statutory assessment has placed upon EP workloads. The actions created within the DWR Lab emphasise the role of SEND departments in influencing EP practice and provide a mechanism to use this influence for shared benefit. Moreover, by revisiting both report formats, the service can begin to address the concern raised within the Education and Skills Committee Report (2006) that EP assessments often produce very little new data, by considering their wider purpose in supporting CYP.

Furthermore, research continues to highlight the absence of psychological theory in EPs statutory advice (Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Buck, 2015). The developed action of exploring how psychological formulation is included in the final EHCP document may begin to challenge this and allow EPs to ensure that CYP's needs move away from descriptive accounts (Cameron and Monsen, 2005). In addition to this, the contributions made *as* practitioner psychologists, rather than simply *by* EPs (Norwich, 2000), may become stronger within the activity.

6.5.2(ii) Adapting Current Divisions of Labour

During the DWR Lab, SEND officers aimed to elaborate on the perception that EP reports were the backbone of the EHCP document. The current reliance on EP information was reported to arise from faith in the reliability of EP information and the absence of other multi-professional input in some cases. The proximity of the two professional groups had provided greater opportunities for communication when SEND officers identified gaps in their knowledge of a CYP during EHCP drafting. Given this, the group considered whether the relationship between

EPs and SEND officers could be developed to upskill SEND officers in conducting their own information gathering to strengthen their data around a CYP. By doing this, EPs hoped less pressure would be placed upon their assessment and SEND officers would feel confident querying information provided by SENCOs or other professionals. This reflection led to Action Point Five, with strategies such as training programmes or consultation models of practice put forward to help SEND officers develop their own questions/ information gathering skills.

This shift in labour divisions, to upskill SEND officers to conduct additional information gathering in the statutory process, provides an exciting opportunity. Kelly and Gray's (2000) research highlighted that EPs perceived themselves to be deskilled within statutory assessment work. By changing professional roles, EPs may be able to work on a more systemic level within the LA, training SEND officers in models of consultation and approaches to psychological problem-solving frameworks. This could allow EPs to apply their knowledge regarding assessment in a new environment and reduce demands placed upon them within the process.

6.5.2(iii) Strengthening Subject Knowledge

In addition to discussions regarding how practice could be developed to move the activity of EPs' psychological assessment forward, the group praised the opportunity the DWR Lab had provided to facilitate multi-professional discussions. Current communication between the two teams was seen to be strong, however, the group recognised that through the session they had been able to build upon this and develop their understanding of the values and roles of each team. Action Point Six aimed to capitalise on this and establish future opportunities to learn with and from each professional group.

6.6 Chapter Summary

Chapter 6 outlined the findings of two data collections stages: nine individual interviews conducted with four EPs and five SEND officers, and a single DWR Lab with seven participants. Interview data were presented using a deductive thematic analysis, relating to selectively harnessed nodes of the activity system, and discussed in relation to literature presented in Chapters 1-3.

Following this, two key contradictions were extracted from this data set and presented for analysis. These contradictions were used to guide the second data collection stage through a DWR Lab. The data from this stage were presented, considering the actions which were developed through the lens of CHAT and reflected in the literature.

The data presented in this chapter supports some of the concerns and challenges identified in the literature. Psychological assessment was seen to serve a purpose of resource definition to guide SEND officers' allocation of funding and provisions, as highlighted by researchers such as Norwich (2002), Cameron and Monsen (2005), and Fallon et al (2010). The purpose and structure of psychological assessment had become intertwined with that of the final EHCP document, supporting Buck's 2015 paper. However, the actions arising from the DWR Lab provide interesting next steps in addressing the presented contradictions.

In Chapter 7 of this research, the research questions are revisited. Implications for wider EP professional practice will also be explored alongside my critical methodological reflections and areas of potential future research which have arisen.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This research explored EPs' and SEND officers' constructions of EP statutory psychological assessment through the lens of CHAT (Engeström, 1999b) in a single LA. Chapter 7 considers the conclusions which can be drawn from the data in Chapter 6 in relation to the research questions (RQ), which were:

1. How do EPs and SEND officers conceptualise the purposes of, and processes undertaken within, EPs' contribution to statutory assessment in Seaview MBC?
2. What are key changes in the purposes and processes of this activity following the 2014 Children and Families Act and 2015 Code of Practice, as understood by Seaview MBC EPs and SEND Officers?
3. How do the views of EPs and SEND officers regarding EPs' contribution to statutory assessment complement and contradict each other?
4. How can the data be harnessed within Seaview MBC to facilitate group learning, addressing identified contradictions and supporting the development of actions?

Implications for practice, future research avenues and a critical reflection of the methodology employed within this research are also presented.

7.2 RQ1: How do EPs and SEND officers conceptualise the purposes of, and processes undertaken within, EPs' contribution to statutory assessment in Seaview MBC?

Overall, EPs viewed the activity's main objective as the creation of a holistic story of a CYP's needs, with wider outcomes linked to application of psychological knowledge to authentically formulate a CYP's strengths and needs. Where SEND officers had engaged in joint work with

EPs regarding post-16, this had developed a greater appreciation of these outcomes associated leading to fewer contradictions within the data.

Overall, SEND officers' conceptualisation of the activity focussed on statutory objectives (needs, outcome, provision recommendations) and how assessments could support them in holding schools accountable for the implementation of a CYP's stated provisions and outcomes. EPs were construed as 'experts', providing reliable objective advice and bringing psychological knowledge of child development which could be used to shape the EHCP.

In contrast, EPs did not place statutory aims so centrally but reported that informing the final EHCP document was currently the sole purpose of assessment. Within the DWR Lab this was extended. EPs reported, to their discomfort, that they were required to make key LA decisions, including whether an assessment for an EHCP should be undertaken and what sort of educational placement a child required.

The focus on EPs providing information to inform placement decisions, funding allocations and accountability criteria for provisions seems to support academic literature which reports EP assessments inform LA resource allocation (Norwich, 1995; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon et al, 2010). Within SEND officer interviews, it was expected that EPs would clearly state their preference for mainstream or specialist education within assessments, to support SEND officer decisions. In addition, SEND officers required specified provisions and outcomes to allow funding decision criteria to be applied appropriately and to ensure accurate checking of the support in place in schools during annual review processes. However, the data suggest that this purpose has emerged from a recognition of EPs' psychological knowledge and, in Seaview MBC, the SEND officers' inability to conduct direct casework to build their own understanding of a CYP.

For both groups, assessment was successful where the problem-solving process occurred over time allowing for triangulation of data. Repeatedly, both groups discussed the need for a graduated assessment which monitored response to interventions over time and allowed EPs to slowly build an accurate picture of a CYP's strengths and needs. The focus on assessment over time within the data produced a key contradiction (detailed in Section 7.4) for further analysis. While the group's discussion of the purpose of statutory assessment matches closely with policy (DfE and DH, 2015) and academic literature (e.g. Cameron and Monsen, 2005), news articles (Schools Week, 2019) and interview data demonstrate that this way of working is not always achieved.

7.3 RQ2: What are key changes in the purposes and processes of this activity following the 2014 Children and Families Act and 2015 Code of Practice, as understood by Seaview MBC EPs and SEND officers?

EPs reported that their assessment processes had remained constant before and following the 2014/2015 policy reforms, with the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015) enshrining existing practice (e.g. the promotion of person-centred methods of assessment). Within Seaview MBC, the adoption of person-centred meetings was endorsed and seen to be a key tool in conducting a strong psychological assessment.

Where SEND officers discussed previous practice, their experiences focussed on the wider statementing process rather than EP assessments. Both groups data echoed literature critiques (DfE, 1994; Warnock, 2005; Lamb Enquiry, 2009) which suggested Statements of SEN were ineffective and vague in describing the needs and required provisions of a CYP.

However, the responses provided by EPs regarding the objectives and purposes of statutory psychological assessment suggest similarity with historically raised concerns within the

academic literature. Cameron and Monsen (2005) identified that assessment is effective where the EP can undertake extensive information gathering over time to build an understanding of the CYP's 'problem' (pg.288), as often they will not have immediate understanding and solutions to any occurring difficulties. This requirement of adequate assessment time was clear within the data and led to discussions regarding the challenges of conducting single assessments. This also supports the data presented within the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) which included reports from parents/carers that assessments were weaker where the EP had been unable to work with their CYP over time.

Data from EPs also support academic literature concerns that the profession has been encouraged by LA processes to take on a purpose of 'resource definition' (Norwich, 1995; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; Fallon et al, 2010) within statutory assessment. The data extend this, suggesting that EPs are expected to advocate for mainstream or specialist education to inform SEND officer decisions. In addition, heavy reliance upon EP data in the final EHCP at present meant the profession was expected to provide specific and measurable provision statements which could be checked out during annual review processes to assess the support offered by a school.

When discussing current practice, both groups noted that health and care professionals remained absent from a large proportion of EHCP assessments, challenging the quality of information which could be gathered by the EP and translated into the EHCP where complex medical or care needs were present. This challenges data from the 2019 Ofsted inspection for Seaview MBC (Ofsted, 2019) which reported an improvement in health and care professional presence in EHCP assessments.

Within both groups, the application of psychological knowledge was recognised and praised, challenging Buck's (2015) assertion that the psychological content of EP statutory psychological assessments has depleted over time. It also raises some interesting questions within the data as to whether these groups have changed their threshold for what may constitute psychological knowledge within the activity, or whether procedures in Seaview MBC have facilitated greater application of psychology. The answer to this remains unclear, especially in light of DWR Lab data where EPs reported a frustration that their psychological formulations were not included within the final EHCP.

7.4 RQ3: How do the views of EPs and SEND officers regarding EP statutory psychological assessment complement and contradict each other?

Both groups agreed that EP assessment data currently functioned as the backbone of the final EHCP, viewed differently by each group. SEND officers valued EP statutory psychological assessments as an objective and reliable resource to inform an EHCP, especially given the absence of other professionals' reports. Given this, the current structure of EP statutory advice, which mirrored the final EHCP closely, was seen to be an additional strength which removed the need for SEND officers to misinterpret EP information. Alternatively, EPs reported an unease that their assessment data was 'cut and paste' into the final EHCP document, but again recognised this was often linked to the absence of other professionals in the process.

Both groups agreed that the person-centred practices within Seaview MBC were strong and all participants recognised the constraint current EP capacity and deadline pressures had on the activity. In addition, as previously highlighted, both groups celebrated the application of psychological knowledge to inform EP statutory psychological assessment. Both groups were

consistent in their focus on CYP at the heart of any assessment and were driven to ensure they ‘did a CYP justice’.

Two key conflicts in the data analysis did arise (presented in Table 7.1 and detailed further in Table 6.1 and Section 6.4), which were presented back to the group for reference and discussion in the DWR Lab.

Table 6.5: Key contradictions and example quotes used for DWR lab

Identified Contradiction	Example Quotation
<i>Need for graduated assessment</i>	<i>"A reasonable majority of the time we have known that child over a period of time so we are able to show that graduated approach and demonstrate the person-centeredness. The problem is when it doesn't happen, it really doesn't happen so when it happens well it's really good but when it doesn't happen, and you just get this snap request it's not good at all" (EP)</i> <i>"EP involvement should be well ahead of the statutory assessment" (SEND officer)</i>
<i>Extent of contribution</i>	<i>"We are working to what SEN want and need and what makes things easier to write a plan rather than focussing on what we need to do as psychologists to write a good report" (EP)</i> <i>"We better mirrored the EHCP template so now what you'd see our EHC template is the same as the EP advice so when I said that the EP advice is the backbone of the EHCP that's what I meant" (SEND officer)</i>

7.5 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Practice

Section 7.5 encapsulates the final research question of this project and details how these findings extend knowledge in the field and provide implications for practice at a local, professional, and wider policy level.

7.5.1 For Seaview MBC

Here, the final research question is addressed:

How can the data be harnessed within Seaview MBC to facilitate group learning, addressing identified contradictions and supporting the development of actions?

Through the DWR Lab, the group were able to create a detailed action plan to address recognised tensions in Seaview MBC (detailed in Section 6.5). Actions focussed on revisiting the LA graduated assessment process, establishing annual reviews as a critical part of the EHCP process, group learning to strengthen further the role of SEND officers and remove pressure away from EPs during assessment, and consideration of how to include EP formulations in the final EHCP document.

The actions arising in Contradiction One redefined the activity's objectives by incorporating annual reviews into the graduated assessment cycle, removing apprehensions held by EPs and SEND officers regarding single assessments and the insufficient data they produce. These actions also sought to change divisions of labour, removing the pressure placed upon EP capacity and incorporating Seaview SEND Service specialist teachers in annual reviews.

Contradiction Two further addressed the expectations placed upon EPs regarding the extent to which their data contributed to EHCP development. By promoting the person-centred meeting artefact as a data collection method rather than statutory assessment step, EPs could work more collaboratively with professionals, parents/carers, CYP, and schools to strengthen their assessment data.

Those involved in the DWR Lab praised the session as a mechanism for strengthening inter-professional working and were keen to continue the working group to monitor and adapt practices regarding this activity.

7.5.2 For Educational Psychologists

Within the DWR Lab, one EP queried whether the profession needed to 'let go' of its priority for longitudinal assessment, something prioritised in the data and wider academic literature (e.g. AEP, 2004; Cameron and Monsen, 2005; BPS, 2015). The group discussed whether parents/carers expected prior EP input or EP assessment over time to build a picture of their CYP's needs, or whether they prioritised the securing of funding and additional support which came with an EHCP, regardless of how this was conducted. The Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) challenges this historically, with parents/carers emphasising the need for extended EP assessment. However, with academic literature reporting that children without an EHCP receive poor SEND support (Robinson et al, 2018; Education Committee, 2019), parents'/carers' priorities and expectations regarding EP assessment may have changed.

If this is the case, it raises an interesting question regarding who the main stakeholders are within EP statutory psychological assessment. Professional body advice (AEP, 2004; BPS, 2015) and current policy (DfE and DH, 2015) place CYP and parents/carers at the heart of assessment processes. With this in mind, EPs may need to revisit their conceptualisation of this activity to consider how to balance professional values with stakeholder needs.

This thinking is extended further when considering the data regarding the service's person-centred meetings. Within the DWR Lab, it was recognised that this process could be used to address concerns raised by both groups regarding the quality of assessment data where the EP had no prior knowledge of a CYP.

During this research, the Joint Professional Liaison Group (JPLG) have begun their own developments in this area, recognising that the activity requires streamlining by promoting strategies which will encourage multi-professional working. At the point of submission, the

JPLG had begun drafting updated advice (JPLG, May 2020) to EPs regarding best practice in this activity. This advice includes the use of person-centred meetings, where EPs verbally contribute their assessment information to support the co-production of a single advice which informs EHCP construction. This practice mirrors Seaview MBC processes somewhat and encourages the profession to reflect upon how assessments and advice construction may be more creatively undertaken.

The research and JPLG developments also highlight the opportunity for EPs to work creatively with SEND officers to develop and discuss current statutory psychological assessment processes to create a system which works for both groups that is meaningful and efficient. Through this research and ongoing professional development work, these groups have been able to address tensions in the activity and create an action plan which hopes to reduce workload and create an artefact which works for both groups.

7.5.3 For Wider Policy

While not explicitly linked to EP statutory psychological assessment, the DWR Lab focus on annual reviews provides an interesting implication for wider policy. The data support historical concerns raised by the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) that annual review processes were often poorly implemented. The group's approach of changing the way the graduated assessment process is conceptualised within Seaview MBC, to incorporate annual reviews as an equally crucial element of the EHCP development process begins to address this. If this was to be mirrored within national policy it may in some part, as suggested by participants, remove some of the pressure EPs reported experiencing to ensure their assessment data captured everything required for the final plan.

7.6 Critical Reflection on Methodology

The contributions to knowledge and future practice implications identified in this chapter present a strength of this research. Alongside this, Section 7.1 shows evidence of how this research has been successful in achieving its intended aims. The second-generation CHAT framework (Leadbetter, 2017) provided an effective framework for recognising the ‘multivoicedness’ (Engeström and Miettinen, 1999) of this activity and for conceptualising tensions which existed within the activity system.

Interestingly, when reflecting on my initial understanding of the research topic and early literature explorations, psychometric assessment tools were not a topic of tension within the data. Given its prominence as a debate within the academic literature historically (e.g. Gillham, 1978; Dockrell and McShane, 1993; Kelly and Gray, 2000), this is a promising development. It is not clear though, whether this trend in data can be argued for wider practice or whether this is unique to Seaview MBC.

While Chapter 5 details the overarching strengths and potential limitations for each of my methodological decisions, there are some specific reflections to be made of my research process.

Overall, nine participants (four EPs and five SEND officers) were interviewed and while this is a suitable sample for data collection and analysis (Section 5.5.2) it does represent a limited proportion of each professional group. These views cannot be reliably argued to represent each profession both in and out of Seaview MBC and are also limited in scope by the exclusion of specialist teachers within the service to reflect the wider period of graduated assessment.

The interview methodology employed within this research yielded a large amount of data, unfortunately leading to a decision during analysis to include only some CHAT nodes' themes within the writeup. However, a summary of these data can be found in Appendix Six and overall, the two data sets (EPs and SEND officers) for the excluded nodes showed a high level of commonality and agreement, providing very little additional knowledge to my research questions.

While Engeström (2012) praises the flexibility and adaptability of the DWR Lab methodology, it is important to acknowledge that this DWR Lab does not follow Engeström's (1996) original model. Due to the scope of this research, a single session was conducted, limiting the extent to which identified actions and changing activity system constructions could be further analysed, monitored and discussed by the group. Young's (2001) caution that questioning within the DWR Lab methodology can be perceived as troublemaking did not appear evident within the session. All participants were notably positive about the session and keen to continue the working group post-research to further build upon the identified actions.

In Chapter 4, I recognised that the CHAT framework is often criticised for its lack of consideration of how subject identity construction may alter the wider activity system (Leadbetter, 2016). This may be notably relevant within this research, with EPs' identity construction varying in their perspective of whether they are 'expert' contributors during this activity or a mechanism for multiple perspectives to be assimilated.

Identity construction may also have been shaped by my own role with the research, as recognised within Section 5.5.2 of this volume. The data presented here is collected and analysed through my own practitioner position within Seaview MBC which affords some level of prior knowledge and experience. While this is recognised through my reflexivity and critical

reflections of analysis and data collection, it is unclear the extent to which this identity may have shaped the sample's interview contributions. However, I feel this personal experience was also a harnessed strength. Through personal understanding of the context, I was able to ensure my research was appropriate, provided a positive contribution to the LA and helped quickly build rapport with the sample to strengthen data quality.

7.7 Future Research Opportunities

The views and experiences of some stakeholders are absent from this research and provide a variety of possible future research opportunities. The decision to focus on EPs and SEND officers within this research was based on restricted timeframes, ease of access to these stakeholder groups and a decision to focus on one system within this activity: assessment producers (EPs) and assessment users (SEND officers). Future research should seek to capture the views of additional stakeholders, working to build a shared understanding of EP assessment and the purposes of EHCP statutory assessment.

Parents/carers are an interesting stakeholder group absent from this research given the question raised within the data as to whether they require longitudinal EP input to feel confident in the psychological assessment undertaken. Future research could aim to revisit the Lamb Enquiry (Lamb, 2009) findings within a new policy context to explore how tensions and concerns in this activity may have changed or stayed constant over time.

EPs and SEND officers both reported frustrations regarding the absence of other professional groups in the EHCP assessment process and the constraints this placed upon EP assessment. This absence has also been recognised within government literature (Education Committee, 2019). An important next step in this research would be, I feel, to explore the perceptions and experiences of health and care professionals. Such research would not be limited to their

conceptualisation of EP assessment, considering what they feel this professional group brings to the EHCP process and where their professional reach should end, but should also explore perceptions their role in EHCP assessment. By understanding the potential constraints experienced within these professions, and their construction of the EHCP process, we may be able to identify ways in which strong multi-professional working can be established.

Finally, in the initial development of my research, I considered working with CYP to understand how they experience EP assessment. However, I believe this is an important research topic and could not be appropriately and adequately explored within my research remit. Future research may wish to use methodology such as the Mosaic Approach (Clark and Moss, 2011) to capture CYP's views of this activity. This is particularly timely given the reinforced focus on CYPs right to be included put forward in the 2015 CoP (DfE and DH, 2015).

7.8 Concluding Comments

The data outlined presents EP statutory psychological assessment as an activity which continues to play a key role in guiding wider EHCP assessment and is valued for its robustness and psychological knowledge. Nationally and locally, concerns regarding the efficacy of EP assessment in a time-bound and pressured environment remain persistent. However, through the CHAT framework and DWR Lab process adopted within this research, future actions to address current local tensions within this activity were able to be collaboratively developed.

The themes and actions arising from these data present a range of implications and opportunities for future research that might continue to address concerns regarding the time-consuming nature of EP assessment and the pressure reported by professionals to serve as 'resource definers', adhering rigidly to LA guidance and priorities.

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Appendix One – Examples of Deductive Analysis of Literature Using CHAT Stage 1; Initial coding using CHAT Nodes

Warnock Report 19... x

special equipment, facilities or resources, modification of the physical environment or specialist teaching techniques;

(ii) the provision of a special or modified curriculum;

(iii) particular attention to the social structure and emotional climate in which education takes place.

These are by no means exclusive and a child may, very often have more than one of these forms of special educational need.

3.20 Special means of access to the curriculum may be required by children with impairments of sensory or motor functioning, including visual, hearing, speech and physical disabilities. For example, children with severe visual disabilities may need reading material translated into braille. A special or modified curriculum is likely to be required by children who are currently described as educationally sub-normal. Children with particular difficulty in meeting the social and emotional needs of the school may require special attention to the emotional climate and the organisation within the school, for example as regards the relationship

Zoe1_Capper Feb 6 Reply

Tools/Rules: by producing a definition of what can constitute SEN, this shapes what is looked for and spoken about in assessment

Status

Cameron and Mon... x

3 / 25 | 102%

- Although beyond the remit of this paper, it may be noted that bureaucratic problems with the statutory action assessment procedures are well recognised (Audit Commission, 2002) and the Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) have stated objectives of reducing the time spent on Statutory Action Assessments, maximising EP contributions within the classroom and initiating the training necessary for their developing role (DfEE, 1997, pp.10 and 67). Indeed, it is possible that statutory assessment may be left to wither away, as SEN resources are gradually devolved to schools or such services purchased by LEAs (for which, read children's services) in the future.
- LEA expectations and within-school pressures have often led to a lack of focus on the child and an over-concern with resources (see Faupel & Norgate, 1993). In the case of the child or young person with special needs, the ever-increasing demands for statutory action assessment have forced EPs into the role of

Norwich 1995.pdf x

6 / 8 | 125%

that LEAs are no longer able to maintain advisory teams of special education advisory teachers, who with more training might have been able to meet some of the requirements. The situation is even more complicated by recent doubts amongst many EPs that routine external individual SEN assessment is a satisfactory professional role. This role has gone against the trend which is moving away from individually focused work towards consultative work with teachers.

These considerations raise the difficult question about the nature of psychological assessment and how it differs from an educational assessment. There is sometimes a wish to define psychological assessment in terms of what psychologists do. So, if EPs according to this view do external generalist special educational needs assessments, then that assessment, as discussed above, then EPs would make a more limited contribution.

Other changes could also affect the role of EPs in the statutory assessment system. One is the development of SEN audits in which teachers in ordinary and special schools identify the level and nature of pupils' need for additional and differentiated provision. Psychologists have played a key role in the development of some of these schemes, especially the moderation exercises in which external assessors compare and contrast the work of teachers across schools.

Zoe1_Capper Feb 6 Reply

Question of how object differs from educational assessment and what the purpose of EP psychological assessment actually is

Quality Psychology

“resource definers” rather than “defined resources” and this has led to a form of casework which contains only a modicum of psychological knowledge and professional expertise (c.f. Norwich, 2000).

Zoe1_Capper 11:12 Reply

Division of Labour and Object: EP's have become the role of resource definition - done so by SEN departments and their requirements, with reduced psychological contribution

Add a reply...

Stage 2; Generating Themes

Node	Paper and Points	Reflections/Summary Themes
Object Outcome	<p>Warnock (1978)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions wider aim of preparing CYP with SEN to be ready for adult life and to contribute to society in a meaningful way <p>Norwich (1995)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to question <i>why</i> EPs psychological assessment plays a role in statutory work <p>Thomson (1996)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highlights original objective of assessment was identifying 'educationally subnormal pupils' and now serve the purpose of resource definition <p>Norwich (2002)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early purpose of identifying CYP needing specialist educational placements but questions what the psychological purpose actually is <p>AEP (2004)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognises purpose as removing educational barriers for a child, clear assessment to guide outcomes and interventions and promotes assessment over time <p>Cameron and Monsen (2005)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects that EPs have become resource definers rather than a recognised resource • Depletion of psychological knowledge because of this <p>Armstrong (2006)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policies on inclusion drive placements in special schools <p>Macbeath et al (2006)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests statementing purpose was to protect the interests of children with SEN <p>Fallon et al (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EP's have become gatekeeper and resource definers in their assessment <p>Hodkinson (2010)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wider societal aim of educating children to be productive members of economy/society <p>Lauchlan and Grieg (2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses wider role of EHCP and policy legislation of preparing CYP for adulthood <p>BPS (2015)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again purpose is removing educational barriers, conducting assessment over time <p>Cameron and Hardy (2017)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment should occur over time and be hypothesis-driven • Discusses the increasing focus on strengths in assessment 	<p>Historically, EP assessment has served the purpose of recognising 'subnormal' populations to place them within specialise provision.</p> <p>Moving forward, this appears to have persisted as an external objective of EP assessment, with a growing body of literature highlighting concerns on a focus towards resource definition. This has been linked to reductions in psychological content in reports. Policy also appears to focus on producing future workforce and meaningful members of society.</p> <p>Inside the profession, assessment appears to focus on removing educational barriers and establishing hypothesis of needs over time. This has incorporated strengths and aspirations of CYP.</p>

Stage 3; Reviewing Themes

Activity Theory Node	Considerations in how we process SEN
Object Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, linked to constructions of disability but policy would state the object is 'processing of SEN' through statutory assessment • Outcome would then be to provide an account of a CYP's needs to identify the support they will need in school/life to promote best possible outcomes • <i>Contradictions over time</i>; early on in policy the outcome would have been to identify 'uneducable' children or those that needed alternative teaching provision to remove them from the future workforce/mainstream classroom environment

Appendix Two – Application for Ethical Review (AER)

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW
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Who should use this form:

This form is to be completed by PIs or supervisors (for PGR student research) who have completed the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review of Research Self Assessment Form (SAF) and have decided that further ethical review and approval is required before the commencement of a given Research Project.

Please be aware that all new research projects undertaken by postgraduate research (PGR) students first registered as from 1st September 2008 will be subject to the University's Ethical Review Process. PGR students first registered before 1st September 2008 should refer to their Department/School/College for further advice.

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

1. The project is to be conducted by:
 - staff of the University of Birmingham; or
 - postgraduate research (PGR) students enrolled at the University of Birmingham (to be completed by the student's supervisor);
2. The project is to be conducted at the University of Birmingham by visiting researchers.

Students undertaking undergraduate projects and taught postgraduate (PGT) students should refer to their Department/School for advice.

NOTES:

- An electronic version of the completed form should be submitted to the Research Ethics Officer, at the following email address: aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. Please **do not** submit paper copies.
- If, in any section, you find that you have insufficient space, or you wish to supply additional material not specifically requested by the form, please put it in a separate file, clearly marked and attached to the submission email.
- If you have any queries about the form, please address them to the [Research Ethics Team](#).

X Before submitting, please tick this box to confirm that you have consulted and understood the following information and guidance and that you have taken it into account when completing your application:

- The information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (<https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research-Ethics/Ethical-Review-of-Research.aspx>)
- The University's Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf)

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

A Cultural Historical Activity Theory analysis of educational psychologists' contributions to the statutory assessment of children and young peoples' special educational needs post-2014 Children and Families Act

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

- University of Birmingham Staff Research project
 University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project
 Other (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

a) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATORS OR SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family	Ms Sue Morris
Highest qualification & position held:	Applied Educational Psychology Doctorate Programme Director
School/Department	School of Education
Telephone:	[REDACTED]
Email address:	[REDACTED]

Name: Title / first name / family name	
Highest qualification & position held:	
School/Department	
Telephone:	
Email address:	

b) PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF ANY CO-INVESTIGATORS OR CO-SUPERVISORS (FOR PGR STUDENT PROJECTS)

Name: Title / first name / family	Dr Colette Soan
Highest qualification & position held:	Applied Educational Psychology Doctorate Programme Tutor
School/Department	School of Education
Telephone:	
Email address:	[REDACTED]

c) In the case of PGR student projects, please give details of the student

Name of student:	Zoe Capper	Student No:	[REDACTED]
Course of study:	Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate	Email address:	[REDACTED]
Principal supervisor:	Sue Morris		

4. ESTIMATED START Date: **OF PROJECT**

ESTIMATED END OF Date: **PROJECT**

5. FUNDING

List the funding sources (including internal sources) and give the status of each source.

<i>Funding Body</i>	<i>Approved/Pending /To be submitted</i>
N/A	

If you are requesting a quick turnaround on your application, please explain the reasons below (including funding-related deadlines). You should be aware that whilst effort will be made in cases of genuine urgency, it will not always be possible for the Ethics Committees to meet such requests.

There are a small number of time sensitivities associated with this project which would benefit from a quick turnaround of ethical submission;
- I have 14 months (From December 2018) to conduct, analyse and write-up this project, all of which will be guided by the point at which ethics is returned

6. SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon. Please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases.

The aim of my research is to explore the educational psychologist (EP) psychological advice process which contributes to statutory assessment as indicated in Section 3 of the Children and Families Act. This piece of policy moved to the new Education, Health and Care Plan format and states children and their families should be involved in any decision-making processes. Educational Psychologists have a statutory role of providing advice for, and the assessment of, young people (aged 0-25 years) who have special educational needs or disability (SEND). This assessment takes the form of a psychological advice which assesses a young person's strengths, areas of need and current learning environment to help a local authority SEND service develop an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) for a young person. This guidance is more explicitly set out in detail in the SEND Code of Practice, developed by the Department for Education and Department for Health in 2015.

In my research, I would like to find out what key stakeholder's understanding of this process is, focussing on what they understand the purpose of this EP assessment to be, the key policy which informs this process, how the assessment data is used, and the structure/format such assessment should take. The groups I would like to work with are;

- Educational Psychologists (EPs),
- Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) officers, who write the EHCPs; and

This piece of research is particularly timely for the Local Authority (LA) I am placed in. In 2016, Ofsted undertook an inspection of the LA's Children's Service and identified a weakness in the quality of statutory assessment data, noting concerns regarding the poor outcomes which are created for a young person's EHCP based on the provided assessment data. In a responsive 'Statement of Action' by the LA, which addressed Ofsted's concerns, it was acknowledged that there needs to be work done with all those involved in statutory processes to develop a shared language and understanding of assessment to improve the outcomes which stem from this data.

7. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used

The figure below shows the data collection and analysis process I will undertake. Question schedules can be found in Appendix C for the interview phase. The question schedule for the focus group phase of this research will be guided by the data gathered and, due to this, no schedule can be provided as present. However, an overview of question topics is provided here.

1. Semi-structured interviews will be undertaken with;

- 4 educational psychologists
- 4 SEND officers

These will be undertaken in Local Authority offices or a young person's school, and audio-recorded and run by myself

2. Interview data will be transcribed and qualitatively analysed to identify themes and conflicts in stakeholder perceptions.

This analysis will include anonymised quotes for reference alongside the production of a thematic map, highlighting data patterns.

3. The educational psychologist's and SEND officers approached during the interview phase will be asked to attend a follow-up focus group (run by myself and my 2 university supervisors).

The themes and quotes extracted from the data will be fed back to the group to form the basis of a discussion task looking at any conflicting perceptions. The session will be audio recorded.

4. The audio recording will be transcribed and a second analysis will take place based on focus group data which summarises the actions taken forward.

8. DOES THE PROJECT INVOLVE PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE OTHER THAN THE RESEARCHERS AND SUPERVISORS?

Yes No

Note: 'Participation' includes both active participation (such as when participants take part in an interview) and cases where participants take part in the study without their knowledge and consent at the time (for example, in crowd behaviour research).

If you have answered NO please go to Section 18. If you have answered YES to this question please complete all the following sections.

9. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

Describe the number of participants and important characteristics (such as age, gender, location, affiliation, level of fitness, intellectual ability etc.). Specify any inclusion/exclusion criteria to be used.

Educational Psychologists

- Four participants will be recruited
- These will be employed members of the LA service I am currently placed in
- Selection criteria will focus on the length of service an EP has in the LA I am placed in, purposively sampling to ensure a range of times are recruited (e.g. 1 year, 10 years, 15 years)

SEND officers

- Four participants will be recruited
- These will be employed members of the LA service I am currently placed in

RECRUITMENT

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student).

Note: Attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

Educational Psychologists

- Will be approached through the LA service I am placed in,
- An open invitation to attend the focus groups will be sent via an email with the appropriate information/consent forms attached
- This may need to be sent around a second time to serve as a reminder.

SEND officers

- Will be approached through the LA service I am placed in,
- An open invitation to attend the focus groups will be sent via an email with the appropriate information/consent forms attached
- This may need to be sent around a second time to serve as a reminder.

10. CONSENT

a) Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are minors or for other reasons are not competent to consent, describe the proposed alternate source of consent, including any permission / information letter to be provided to the person(s) providing the consent.

Educational Psychologists

- Opt-in consent via letter (Appendix A)
- This will be returned either as a scanned copy via email OR by hand via my office post tray
- A second round of verbal consent will be established at the start of the interview (verbal script can be found in Appendix B)
- For the focus group session, an invitation to attend (Appendix B) will be distributed to all interview participants. A second round of verbal consent will be established at the start of the focus group (verbal script can be found in Appendix E)

SEND officers

- Opt-in consent via letter (Appendix A)
- This will be returned either as a scanned copy via email OR by hand via my office post tray
- A second round of verbal consent will be established at the start of the interview (verbal script can be found in Appendix B)
- For the focus group session, an invitation to attend (Appendix B) will be distributed to all interview participants. A second round of verbal consent will be established at the start of the focus group (verbal script can be found in Appendix E)

Consent forms will be developed using university headers and university supervisor contact information to facilitate any further questions which may arise.

Note: Attach a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (if applicable), the Consent Form (if applicable), the content of any telephone script (if applicable) and any other material that will be used in the consent process.

b) Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study? Yes No

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Explain what feedback/ information will be provided to the participants after participation in the research. (For example, a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).

- As part of my course requirements, a (approximately) 25,000 word Volume 1 report will be written containing an account of my work, recommendations for practice, and an anonymised version of my findings (including anonymised quotations)
- I will also need to produce a feedback document of my findings for focus group stage (stage 3) of my data collection

11. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

a) Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project.

Interviews (Stage 1)

- The consent form will detail participants right to withdraw from the data collection process. Should participants wish to withdraw following the completion of the interviews, they will have one month to do so. This will be reiterated to all participants at the start and end of their interview.

Focus Group (Stage 3)

- Participants will be made aware on the initial consent form that I will be unable to remove their data from the audio recording and transcription due to an inability to discriminate between colleague's voices. At this stage, they can signal if they do not wish to attend the focus group. This will be reiterated at the start of the focus group session and participants will be provided with an opportunity to leave before the focus group starts.

b) Explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

Interview (Stage 1)

- Individual ID codes will be used to identify participant data. All participants will be assigned a code, noted by myself on the returned consent forms, which will be used when transcribing the data for reference. This code will use the following format; Initials and date consent was returned (e.g. AB-1101) and be stored on a password protected document.
- Should a participant wish to withdraw, they will be asked to make contact with myself or the lead supervisor, stating their name, from which I will be able to find the associated ID code in all relevant data and remove responses (i.e. shred any paper copies of data or delete electronic versions). There will be no consequence of withdrawal outside of the potential risk to participants in providing their name at the point of withdrawal. This will be managed in a supportive, non-judgemental way to reduce any emotional effect.

Focus Group (Stage 3)

- Participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw at the start of the focus group without any consequence.
- If, during the session, participants wish to leave, they may but their data up until that point will remain in the focus group recording/transcription.

12. COMPENSATION

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial

Yes No

ii) Non-financial

Yes No

13. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous?

Yes No

b) Will all data be treated as confidential?

Yes No

Note: Participants' identity/data will be confidential if an assigned ID code or number is used, but it will not be anonymous. Anonymous data cannot be traced back to an individual participant.

Describe the procedures to be used to ensure anonymity of participants and/or confidentiality of data both during the conduct of the research and in the release of its findings.

Interviews (Stage 1)

- Confidentiality will be secured by assigning all those approached with a ID code, meaning when information is logged it is not identifiable to others. These ID codes will only be accessible through a password protected document and only I will know the password for this document

Focus Group (Stage 3)

- Participants will be assigned a numerical value when transcription of the data occurs to ensure confidentiality when quotes are used in the write-up process

If participant anonymity or confidentiality is not appropriate to this research project, explain, providing details of how all participants will be advised of the fact that data will not be anonymous or confidential.

This information will be provided both in the initial consent form sent out to all participants and in the follow up verbal script used at the start of any data collection session.

14. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

Describe what research data will be stored, where, for what period of time, the measures that will be put in place to ensure security of the data, who will have access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

Data (i.e. recordings and transcriptions of sessions and ID codes) will be stored securely using the university's software and only relevant parties (myself and supervisors) will be able to access this data for reference. Interviews will be recorded using a Dictaphone and recordings will be deleted the device once transferred to the university systems. Paper-based data (e.g. any flip chart notes or handwritten accounts of interviews/focus groups) will be kept in my own home office in a locked cabinet until it is finished with/ scanned into secure systems then will be destroyed via shredder. For each participant, the following data will be obtained/stored; initial contact, returned/signed consent form, participant data set and demographic information. Data will be kept securely for 10 years following completion of the project, my own records will be deleted in the previously outlined methods following completion of the project write-up and graduation from the course as is in line with the UoB guidelines.

15. OTHER APPROVALS REQUIRED? e.g. Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks or NHS R&D approvals.

YES

NO

NOT APPLICABLE

16. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

Sample Level Benefits

Educational Psychologists;

- This research allows this stakeholder to reflect on how they contribute to the statutory assessment process at present and the way in which their work is experienced by young people
- It will also allow them to reflect on the degree to which their current practice is in line with the recommendations made in the 2014 Children and Families Act and 2015 Code of Practice.
- It will also help move towards a shared understanding of the EP assessment process for those undertaking this work (i.e. the EPs) and those who work with the produced data (i.e. SEN officers)

SEND Officers;

- As with EP's, this research will help move towards a shared understanding of the EP assessment process and provide an opportunity to reflect on the role of young people in assessment

Population Level Benefits

- Overall, I hope this research provides an opportunity for those working with young people to consider how they are involved in statutory assessment process and bring to light and potential conflicts in how EP's contribution to statutory assessment process is understood. This may, in turn, encourage stakeholders in other Local Authority services to begin conversations and reflections on their processes and how young people are involved.

17. RISKS

a) Outline any potential risks to **INDIVIDUALS**, including research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap

I will need to manage professional based risks both in relation to myself and between professionals. By working with a range of stakeholders, with the aim of identifying and reflecting back perceptions, I need to ensure no tension arises between each group where there may be conflicting views.

- **Low probability risk with a potentially moderate impact**
- This will be managed through a comprehensive verbal script at the start of the focus group which will emphasise that all views will be respected and treated with equal weight.
- Furthermore, I will need to emphasise the importance of keeping information shared confidential, and that participants do not seek each other outside of the group to challenge any views raised.
- For my own potential risk of highlighting any conflicts in my placement service, I will need to clearly distinguish my role as a researcher rather than a member of the service and keep in regular contact with my own supervisors to reflect on this.

b) Outline any potential risks to **THE ENVIRONMENT and/or SOCIETY** and the measures that will be taken to minimise any risks and the procedures to be adopted in the event of mishap.

N/A

18. ARE THERE ANY OTHER ETHICAL ISSUES RAISED BY THE RESEARCH?

Yes No

19. EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

You may be asked to nominate an expert reviewer for certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks. If you anticipate that this may apply to your work and you would like to nominate an expert reviewer at this stage, please provide details below.

Name
Contact details (including email address)
Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability

20. CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and young people aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments
- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life)
- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher
- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out
- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants.
- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes
- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety
- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons

Please check that the following documents are attached to your application.

	ATTACHED	NOT APPLICABLE
Recruitment advertisement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview Schedule	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

NB: Appendix List

- A; Consent Forms**
- B; Interview Consent Script**
- C; Question Schedule for Interviews**
- D; Focus Group Invitation**
- E; Focus Group Script**

21. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

I submit this application on the basis that the information it contains is confidential and will be used by the University of Birmingham for the purposes of ethical review and monitoring of the research project described herein, and to satisfy reporting requirements to regulatory bodies. The information will not be used for any other purpose without my prior consent.

I declare that:

- The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it.
- I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (http://www.as.bham.ac.uk/legislation/docs/COP_Research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines.
- I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.
- I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer.

Name of principal investigator/project supervisor:

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Date:

--

Please now save your completed form, print a copy for your records, and then email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk. As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy.

Application for Ethical Review – Appendices

A; Consent Forms

Doctoral Thesis Project: Perspectives on Educational Psychologist's Contribution to Statutory Assessments

Background Information

- I am a trainee educational psychologist working [LOCAL AUTHORITY NAME] and currently undertaking a doctorate in Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. As part of my doctoral training, I am required to undertake research.
- This information leaflet is being given to you because I am seeking your consent to take part in a project I am running to inform my thesis. Before you decide whether or not you will take part, please read this leaflet so you understand why the research is being conducted and what it will entail.

Purpose of the Project

- The purpose of the project is to work with educational psychologists and SEND officers who have been involved in an educational psychologist's contribution to psychological advice, to understand their perspectives on this process.
- By collecting these views, I aim to understand what different groups think of the educational psychologist (EP) contribution to the statutory assessment process.

What will the project involve?

- The project will involve interviews (lasting approximately 1 hour) where I ask you to consider what you believe to be the purpose of an EP statutory assessment, what resources are used in this process, and how the information gathered is used by your professional group. I will ask four people from each group to be involved.
- I will also invite you to attend a follow-up focus group where the information gathered is shared with each group together, so they can reflect on the findings and consider how the professional groups can better work together created a shared understanding of the EP contribution to statutory assessment.

What will happen to the information collected?

- In line with the 2018 Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation, all information derived from interviews and focus groups will be stored securely and confidentially. Under no circumstances will your name be used in any documents. It is important to protect the data and keep it anonymous. The interviews will be recorded on a Dictaphone and then written up as a transcription. My research supervisors and I will have access to these recordings and notes during this time and they will be stored securely on the University's data storage programme for 10 years, after which they will be deleted.
- The interview will be recorded, and I will listen back to write down what is said. Each person will be given a unique code which will mean only I am able to identify specifically which transcription relates to which interviewee.
- After I've transcribed the interviews, I will read and analyse the data to identify themes. This data, and the identified themes will be written up as part of my doctoral thesis and fed back to each group in the follow-up session. I will also use quotes in my report, these will be anonymous.

Do I have to take part?

- No, you are free to decide whether you want to take part in each session. This consent form allows you to signal whether you are willing to take part. I will also ask you again at the start of the interview/focus group and you may leave at any point during the sessions without hesitation, should you, in the event, prefer not to proceed.

What if I want to remove my data after the interview?

- If, after your interview, you decide you do not want your comments included as research data, this is okay. Please email or phone me or my supervisor and provide your name. This will be used to identify your unique IQ code and allow me to remove your data. You will be able to do this for up to one month following the interview.
- I am not able to delete contributions from the recording of the focus group, nor from the transcription, in light of difficulties in reliably differentiating between colleagues' voices.

Contact details for further information:

- Zoe Capper (Trainee Educational Psychologist) [REDACTED]
- Sue Morris (Supervisor) [REDACTED]
- Colette Soan (Supervisor) [REDACTED]

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.

Please complete the consent form for your participation in my doctoral research project exploring perceptions of educational psychologist's contribution to statutory assessments.

Name: _____

Professional Group: EP / SEND Officer

- *I have read and understood the project information sheet*
YES / NO
- *I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project*
YES / NO
- *I agree to take part in the initial interview session*
YES / NO
- *I agree to take part in the follow-up focus group session*
YES / NO
- *I understand that my participation is voluntary. and that I can leave a session at any time.*
YES / NO
- *If, after an interview, I want to withdraw my data, I have up to one month to inform Zoe Capper. I know that I do not have to give any reasons for withdrawing data.*
YES / NO
- *I understand that, whilst I can leave a focus group at any point, it will not be possible for my contribution to the discussion to be selectively deleted.*
YES / NO

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete the consent form. Please get in touch if you have any questions or queries.

Yours Sincerely,

- Zoe Capper (Trainee Educational Psychologist) [REDACTED]
- Sue Morris (Supervisor) [REDACTED]
- Colette Soan (Supervisor) [REDACTED]

Please return the completed consent form to: [LA ADDRESS]

B; Interview Consent Script

Thank you for giving consent to take part in this interview. Before we begin I will go over the information provided on your consent form. At the end of this you will be asked to confirm consent that you agree to continue with the interview. You do not have to agree at this point and may leave without explanation and/or any repercussions.

The aim of this interview is to explore your understanding and perceptions of the contribution of educational psychologists in statutory assessment. I will be interviewing 3 other people in your professional group and 4 other people from (**INSERT OTHER GROUP HERE**).

This research will contribute to my doctoral degree in Educational Psychology and form the basis of Volume 1 of my thesis. The interview will last approximately one hour. During this time, I will ask you to consider what you think the purposes of an EP's statutory assessment to be, what resources are used in this process, and how the information gathered is used by your professional group. I will also ask you to consider what elements of this process could be improved or have improved since the introduction of the 2014 Children and Families Act.

I will record our interview on a Dictaphone and then transcribe it electronically. All this data will be stored on the University of Birmingham's secure data storage programme and the audio-recording will be deleted once the data have been transferred. Only I will be able to identify participants; but anonymous quotes may be used in my final report.

If you agree to take part, you may still leave at any time during the interview and I would then delete your data. After the interview, you have one month to let me know if you wish to remove your data. After this, I will begin analysis and synthesis, making any deletion of individuals data problematic.

After the information has been analysed, you will be invited to attend a focus group where the key themes from the data set as a whole are fed back to you for consideration. You do not have to take part in this even if you complete the interview. Do you have any questions? (PAUSE) I will now ask you to say yes or no to the following statements;

- I understand this will be interview exploring my views on the EP contribution to statutory assessment
YES / NO
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project
YES / NO
- I understand I will be invited to attend a follow-up focus group session
YES / NO
- I understand that I can leave the sessions at any time, and have one month after to remove my data
YES / NO
- Do you agree to stay for the research interview?
YES / NO

C; Question Schedule for Interviews

Activity Theory Element	Question for Educational Psychologist (EP)	Question for SEN Officer
Subject; whose perspective are we taking	Introductions; tell me a little bit about yourself. What is your experience so far of EP assessments? How long have you been in your role? How long have you worked for the Local Authority?	
Object; what are people working on Outcome; what are you hoping to achieve?	What is the aim of your assessment work? What are you trying to find out? What were you hoping to achieve during the assessment? What is the intended end product?	What is the aim of EP's psychological advice? What are they trying to find out? What is the EP hoping to achieve/produce at the end of the report? What do you need to achieve from the produced assessment data?
Rules; what supports or constrains the work	What, before the Children and Families Act of 2014, helped guide your assessment process? What made it difficult? What helps guide you now? What makes this harder? What would help you in the future? What do you see as a future threat to this work and your intended aims?	
Community; who else is involved	Who is involved in the information gathering for the EP's psychological advice? Who would typically be consulted?	
Labour; how is the work shared	What is the role of SEN officers when presented with EP psychological advice? How should the EP's psychological advice be used to guide the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) writing process?	
Artefacts; what measures are being used	What measures are used by EPs to inform their psychological advices? What measures are most/least useful? What is the purpose of these measures? What skills are necessary to understand the information provided by these tools? What information do they provide for the EHCP writing process?	

D; Focus Group Invitation

Doctoral Thesis Project: Perspectives on Educational Psychologist's Contribution to Statutory Assessments – Focus Group Session

Dear [PROFESSIONALS NAME],

Recently, you have taken part in an interview regarding how educational psychologists contribute to statutory assessment. During this process you signalled that you would be willing to take part in a follow-up focus group reflecting on the interview findings. The purpose of this form is to establish where you would still like to take part in this focus group and provide further information about the aims/process of the focus group session.

What will the focus group involve?

- The project will involve a focus group lasting approximately 1 hour where I ask you to consider the findings from interviews with educational psychologists and SEND officers.
- You have been invited to attend this focus group as you previously signalled you would be willing to participate in this process. All four educational psychologists and four SEND officers will be invited to take part in the focus group.
- During the focus group, themes emerging from the interview data will be presented back to the group, so you can reflect on these findings and consider how we can better work together created a shared understanding of the EP contribution to statutory assessment.
- My two university supervisors (Sue Morris and Colette Soan) will also attend the focus group to facilitate the process and take notes of what is said.

What will happen to the information collected?

- In line with the 2018 Data Protection Act and General Data Protection Regulation, all information derived from interviews and focus groups will be stored securely and confidentially. Under no circumstances will your name be used in any documents. It is important to protect the data and keep it anonymous. The focus group will be recorded on a Dictaphone and then written up as a transcription. My research supervisors and I will have access to these recordings and notes during this time and they will be stored securely on the University's data storage programme for 10 years, after which they will be deleted.
- The focus group data will be recorded, and I will listen back to write down what is said. Each person will be given a unique code which will mean only I am able to identify specifically which transcription relates to which interviewee.
- After I've transcribed the focus group, I will read and analyse the data to identify themes. This data, and the identified themes will be written up as part of my doctoral thesis. I will also use quotes in my report, these will be anonymous.
- Unfortunately, I am not able to delete contributions from the recording of the focus group, nor from the transcription, in light of difficulties in reliability differentiating between colleagues' voices.

Do I have to take part?

- No, you are free to decide whether you want to take part in each session even if you have previously signalled you would like to take part. This consent form allows you to signal whether you are willing to take part. I will also ask you again at the start of the focus group and you may

leave at any point during the sessions without hesitation, should you, in the event, prefer not to proceed.

Contact details for further information:

- Zoe Capper (Trainee Educational Psychologist) [REDACTED]
- Sue Morris (Supervisor) [REDACTED]
- Colette Soan (Supervisor) [REDACTED]

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this information leaflet and for considering your participation in the study.

Please complete the consent form for your participation in my doctoral research project exploring perceptions of educational psychologist's contribution to statutory assessments.

Name: _____

Professional Group: EP / SEND Officer

- *I have read and understood the project information sheet*
YES / NO
- *I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project*
YES / NO
- *I agree to take part in the focus group session*
YES / NO
- *I understand that my participation is voluntary. and that I can leave a session at any time.*
YES / NO
- *I understand that, whilst I can leave a focus group at any point, it will not be possible for my contribution to the discussion to be selectively deleted.*
YES / NO

Participant signature _____

Date _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete the consent form. Please get in touch if you have any questions or queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Zoe Capper (Trainee Educational Psychologist) [REDACTED]

Sue Morris (Supervisor) [REDACTED]

Colette Soan (Supervisor) [REDACTED]

Please return the completed consent form to: [LA ADDRESS]

E; Focus Group Script

Thank you for giving consent to take part in this focus group. Before we begin I will go over the information provided on your consent form. At the end of this you will be asked to confirm consent that you agree to continue with the focus group. You do not have to agree at this point and may leave without explanation and/or any repercussions.

The aim of this focus group is to explore the data which was gathered during the interview phase of this research to consider notable themes which arose during analysis. These themes may reflect contradicting views between the professional groups which may need to be unpicked further or similar perceptions that can be built upon for future practice. You have all been invited to attend as you were involved in the interview phase of this research.

During the session, I may use anonymised quotes from the interviews you took part in. In order to keep confidentiality, please do not try to find out who has said which quote during the session unless an individual chooses to personally disclose their comments. All comments will be treated with equal importance and respect by everyone in the focus group and there are no right answers to any questions asked or contradictions highlighted. Please do not share the content of this focus group with anyone outside of the session.

This research will contribute to my doctoral degree in Educational Psychology and form the basis of Volume 1 of my thesis. The focus group will last approximately one hour. I will record our focus group on a Dictaphone and then transcribe it electronically. All this data will be stored on the University of Birmingham's secure data storage programme and the audio-recording will be deleted once the data have been transferred. Only I will be able to identify participants; but anonymous quotes may be used in my final report.

My university supervisors, Sue Morris and Colette Soan are here to facilitate this process and make notes of what is said during the session.

If you agree to take part, you may still leave at any time during the focus group. However, I am not able to delete contributions from the recording of the focus group, nor from the transcription, in light of difficulties in reliably differentiating between colleagues' voices.

Do you have any questions? (PAUSE) I will now ask you to circle yes or no to the following statements on the sheets provided to you;

- I understand this will be focus group exploring the collated views on the EP contribution to statutory assessment
YES / NO
- I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the project
YES / NO
- I understand it is fine if I choose to leave however, due to difficulties isolating voices, my contribution will not be deleted from the recording
YES / NO
- Do you agree to stay for the research interview?
YES / NO

Appendix Three – DWR Lab PowerPoint Slides

EPs and SEN Officers: EP Psychological Assessments

Development Work Research Lab's
15/01/20

1

Outline

- Reflecting back interview data
- Discussion of current practice
- Future and action plan

2

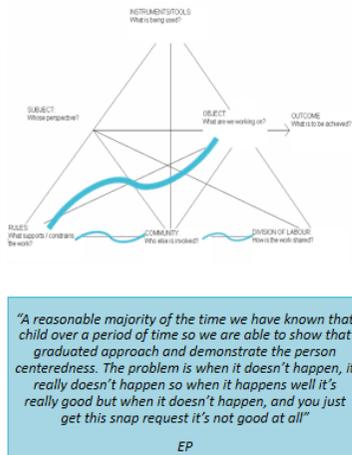
Expansive Learning Cycle

```
graph TD; 1[1. Need state / ethnography] --> 2[2. Analyzing contradictions]; 2 --> 3[3. Designing a new model]; 3 --> 4[4. Examining the new model]; 4 --> 5[5. Implementing the new model]; 5 --> 6[6. Reflecting on the process]; 6 --> 7[7. Consolidating the new practice]; 7 --> 1;
```

Activity Theory

```
graph TD; I[INSTRUMENTS/TOOLS  
What is being used?]; S[SUBJECT  
Whose perspective?]; O[OBJECT  
What are we working on?]; OUT[OUTCOME  
What is to be achieved?]; R[RULES  
What supports / constrains the work?]; C[COMMUNITY  
Who else is involved?]; DL[DIVISION OF LABOUR  
How is the work shared?]; I --- S; I --- O; I --- OUT; S --- O; S --- OUT; O --- OUT; R --- S; R --- O; R --- OUT; C --- S; C --- O; C --- OUT; DL --- S; DL --- O; DL --- OUT;
```

“Need for graduated assessment”



“A reasonable majority of the time we have known that child over a period of time so we are able to show that graduated approach and demonstrate the person centeredness. The problem is when it doesn’t happen, it really doesn’t happen so when it happens well it’s really good but when it doesn’t happen, and you just get this snap request it’s not good at all”

EP

- Contradiction between:
- Rules (professional VS local VS national)
 - Rules VS object/outcome
 - Rules VS community VS division of labour

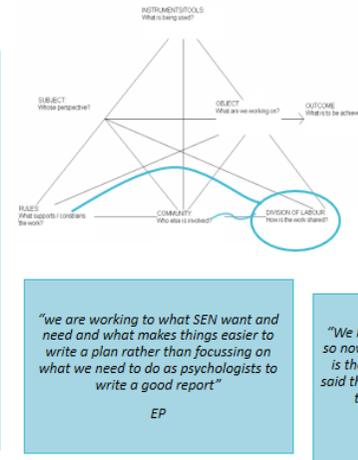
“So good EP assessment would be informed by more than one visit”

“EP involvement should be well ahead of the statutory assessment”

SEN Officer

5

“Extent of EP Contribution to EHCP”



“we are working to what SEN want and need and what makes things easier to write a plan rather than focussing on what we need to do as psychologists to write a good report”

EP

“We better mirrored the EHCP template so now what you’d see our EHC template is the same as the EP advice so when I said that the EP advice is the backbone of the EHCP that’s what I meant”

SEN Officer

- Contradiction between:
- EP’s and SEN officers perceptions of division of labour
 - Division of labour and community
 - Rules and division of labour

6

Appendix Four – Example of Thematic Analysis Process for Interviews

TA Stage	Examples
<p>2. Reading and familiarisation; taking note of items of potential interest</p>	<p><i>Example of notes made for Interview #2</i></p> <p>M: I think you're trying to achieve a <u>holistic understanding of that young person</u> of their needs and how they've come to be in the position they are in at the moment and just <u>collating</u> all of the evidence around that so it's looking at all <u>areas of their needs</u> so even though we've got education and then there's health and there's social care, part of <u>our assessment incorporates</u> that as well so I think that we kind of <u>assimilate</u> all the information available to us to help other people understand that young person in the best way that <u>they</u> can really that's, yeah, I a nutshell. Do you want me to expand more upon that?</p> <p>I: Well, that's probably it, for you what's the end goal, through doing all of that assimilation what will you get at the end?</p> <p>I suppose it's coming to that <u>formulation</u> understanding <u>why they are the way they are</u> in a sense but also being able to understand what it is that helps then so that I can then inform others of the <u>best way to support</u> that young person going forward using some of the information of what has helped them in the past but also understanding some of the <u>psychology underlying</u> their needs and what psychology's gonna do to <u>support</u> them going forwards so at the end of that assessment it is about how do you <u>support</u> that young person, ultimately</p> <p><i>Handwritten annotations:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → needs, holistic (pointing to 'holistic understanding') → collating evidence (pointing to 'collating') → needs (pointing to 'areas of their needs') → covering other prof areas (pointing to 'our assessment incorporates') → collating (pointing to 'assimilate') → needs/formulation (pointing to 'formulation') → provision (pointing to 'best way to support') → psychology (pointing to 'psychology underlying') → provision (pointing to 'support')

3. Coding

Example of notes made for Interview #2

Object

holistic understanding of needs

collating

covering other professionals

formulation

best way to support (provision)

Psychology

as a part ^{SA} vs the whole aim ^{ETCP}

Start point - legal vs actual

→ no change in EP role / power

Rules

Now

Then

"glorified statement"

Education but not others

Timeframes (added pressure) → LA



EP's times haven't changed -

↳ local front loading

(some of recommendations: prescriptive

EP's guiding plan: outcomes

* AMP - lack of consistency

4. Searching for themes

Black ink shows initial naming of themes from data based on presence across sample groups

① EP - Object

Holistic 1 Gro
 Collating
 Covering other prof's
 Formulation
 Provision 3 → can
 Applying psychology
 Part of the EHCP cum
 Legal vs Actual
 Multiple voices to shape ep view
 History of child
 Needs
 Graduated assessment
 Main part of plan
 Outcome
 Person centred 8
 Aspirational
 Positive
 Consultative
 Deficit vs Strengths Conflict
 SEN agenda vs eps
 Accessible
 Triangulation
 Future focussed.

EP needs → 1
 ← 2

SEN Object

Needs 1
 Outcomes
 Provision 2
 Expert view of child
 Psychological knowledge 3
 Graduated process
 SPA end product 4
 Across a range of areas
 Measurable/Specificity 5
 YP advocate
 Legal resource 6 Legal res
 Guides placement
 Objective evidence 7 Aspirational/Pragm
 Backbone of EHCP
 Interlinked to EHCP 8
 Accountability to schools
 Holistic/Comprehensive 9
 Improving chance to succeed
 Strengths of YP 10 Informing/One part of EH
 One part of EHCP
 Banding guidance
 Inform EHCP
 Aspirational
 Funding guidance

SEN content needs [1. Ne
 2. Ou
 3. Pr
 4. FD

5. Reviewing themes

Themes were then checked back against the data, making comments in line with themes identified in Stage 4

Yes, yeah I think that can only be a positive thing can't it and you're research framing the

research like that to have a shared understanding of what because it feels very much like that the

whole plan is based on what the EP writes and if the EP doesn't put it in then it shouldn't go in

but obviously sometimes it does and SEN will come back to us and say that but sometimes it does

feel like oh they come back and feel like oh you only got C minus for this one because you haven't

put in what's needed so there's a sort of judgement about your advice

I: Because it's so central to the plan

Yeah

I: Yeah, it's interesting isn't it and where that sits sort of professionally with our own

Yeah because I guess that means it's much more prescriptive about how we write the advice

because if they're saying oh you haven't put this in and you haven't put that in or you haven't

worded this in particular way, that was there with statements because you were never allowed

to refer to specific named provisions for instance so there was that sort of unwritten rule about

what you could put in your report and what you couldn't but now it's because it the plan is so

reliant on having these needs outcome and provision then they've got to get it from somewhere

haven't they



Zoe1 Capper

DOL: EP as backbone



Zoe1 Capper

Communication or SEN as a knowledge base (DOL)



Zoe1 Capper

DOL: EP as Backbone



Zoe1 Capper

DOL: EP role: Backbone

6. Defining and naming themes

Themes were tallied for their presence found in Stage 5. Green and blue ink show the refinement of themes following this tallying. These lead to the final thematic maps found in Chapter 6.

① EP - Object

1.1	Holistic	1	Graduated/Holistic/History of child/Needs
1	Collating		
	Covering other profs		
	Formulation	2	Person-centred/aspirational/Positive
1.1.1	Provision	3	Consultative/Collating/Triangulation/Multiple voice
1	Applying psychology		
1	Part of the EHCP/aim	4	Formulation/Applying P
	Legal vs Actual		
1	Multiple voices to shape EP view	5	Outcomes/future focussed
1	History of child		
1	Needs	6	Provision
1	Graduated assessment		
	Book Main part of plan	7	Accessible
	Outcome		
	Person centred	8	Conflicts: SEN/aim vs EP's
1	Aspirational		Deficit vs Strengths
	Positive		Part of EHCP vs All of it
	Consultative		
1	Deficit vs Strengths Conflict		
1	SEN agenda vs EPs		
	Accessible		
	Triangulation		
	Future focussed.		
		1	In-depth process: Broad picture
		2	Person-centred
		3	In-depth process: triangulation
		4	EP Knowledge/expertise
		5	Outcomes
		6	Provision
		7	Accessible: focus
		8	Conflicts

part of EP conflicts

SEN needs

SEN benefits/realise

SEN Object

1.1	Needs	1	Needs/Across a range/Holistic
1.1	Outcomes		
1.1	Provision	2	Outcomes/Measurable
1	Expert view of child		
	Psychological knowledge	3	Provision/Specificity
1.1	Graduated process		
1	SA end product	4	Expert view of child/Applying P knowledge
1	Across a range of areas		
1	Measurable/Specificity	5	Graduated (S)/A end product
1	YP advocate		
	Legal resource	6	Legal resource/Specificity/Accountability
1.1	Guides placement		
1	Objective evidence	7	Aspirational/YP advocate/Improving chance to succeed
	Backbone of EHCP		
1	Interlinked to EHCP	8	Legal Guides - placement - funding
1	Accountability to schools		
1	Holistic/Comprehensive	9	Objective
	Improving chance to succeed		
1	Strengths of YP	10	Informing/One part of/Backbone of EHCP/Interlinked
	One part of EHCP		
	Banding guidance		
	Inform EHCP		
	Aspirational		
	Funding guidance		
		1	Needs
		2	Outcomes
		3	Provision
		4	Expertise
		5	Gradual process over time
		6	Legal resource - accountability
		7	Person centred
		8	Legal resource: guidance
		9	Objectivity
		10	Interlinked to EHCP.

SEN content needs

Appendix Five – Research Diary Logs

Reflection on 21/08/19; am I being viewed as an EP - will this limit the data provided by SEND officers?

- First SEND officer interview makes numerous references to my EP role and therefore knowing the processes
- Discussed with CS; how could this have been eliminated. Well it can't really as they have constructed an identity for me and I need to consider researcher bias in how I speak and how I'm spoken to in implications in methodology

Reflection while typing on first two interview transcripts 29/08;

- I do at times with EP interviews defer to 'our' in regards to processed BUT in SEND Officer interviews I don't do this - need to ensure this is done across data sets

Reflection on 09/09/19;

- Throughout remaining SEND officer interviews there is stronger distancing in my identity (they/their in relation to EPs) but still instances where I am referred to within EP role (e.g. "and you as an EP are supposed to be assessing them")

Community Node Data

All EPs and SEND officers discussed working with parents/carers, school staff (e.g. SENCOs, learning support staff and class teachers), pupils, and professionals both inside Seaview SEND Service and externally (e.g. speech and language therapists, social care staff and child and adolescent mental health workers). School staff were recognised by EPs as a valuable resource for understanding a CYP's cognition and learning needs. One EP recognised that pupil views could be more challenging to ascertain where there were complex needs evident while one SEND officer discussed the use of learning support staff to speak on behalf of CYP where they may be unable or reluctant to participate.

EPs reported that they served as an advocate for a CYP and should ensure that a CYP's aspirations and views were incorporated into the assessment. Two EPs recognised that they may at times, need to adapt these aspirations during outcome creation to ensure they were realistic and achievable. One EP reflected that in post-16 cases, there appeared to be greater emphasis placed on multi-professional working during their assessment.

SEND officers recognised that EPs had unique and distinctive assessment styles which led to variations in how views of stakeholders were gathered and reported. One SEND officer discussed parent views and recognised that where direct views had not been submitted by a parent, EP assessments became an important tool in capturing parents'/carers' thoughts on their CYP's strengths and needs.

Artefact Node Data

EPs and SEND officers referenced multiple methods used within EP assessments including observations, consultations, standardised and dynamic assessments, and direct work with pupils. In regards to standardised measures, SEND officers were in agreement: the narrative explanations which provided context to assessment data were more important than numerical data.

EPs appeared to have different methods they navigated to from experience and all reported they had a high level of professional autonomy to use methods they felt were most appropriate within their assessment. This was echoed by SEND officers who recognised the personal variations found in EP assessment methods and that artefact choices should be made by each EP.

For EPs, assessment was seen to be guided by concerns raised or ongoing hypothesis development and focussed on monitoring a CYP over time to understand how their needs may change alongside their response to interventions. SEND officers reported that assessment methods should support the development of provisions and help their team make funding allocation decisions. Two SEND officers recognised that EP assessment was stronger where assessment was undertaken over time, monitoring responses to intervention. Joint working between Seaview SEND Service specialist teachers and EPs to write reports where EPs did not have ongoing input in a CYP's case was celebrated and seen to strengthen EP advice.