

**VOLUME 1**

**“IT’S MADE ME REALISE THE POWER OF PRESSING PAUSE”: A QUALITATIVE EXPLORATION  
OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS’ AND TRAINEE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS’  
EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC THROUGH THE LENS OF LIMIALITY AND  
THE IMPACT OF THIS ON THEIR PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY AND THEIR PLANS FOR FUTURE  
PRACTICE**

**by**

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A thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of  
APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORATE

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June 2021

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## ABSTRACT

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed the working practices of many professionals, including Educational and Trainee Educational Psychologists (EPs and trainee EPs). Previous research suggests that major world events, including pandemics, force change upon professionals, which can lead to a 'liminal space' (Chen and Reay, 2020) whereby professionals can reflect on their current and future working practices, the important components of a profession and their professional identity. This study explores EP and trainee EP experiences of practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic, using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The study considers the ways in which EPs and trainee EPs have been practicing and the challenges and opportunities they have encountered whilst practicing during this time. This study examines whether this period has led EPs and trainee EPs to consider the important components of their role, what helps and hinders their practice, their professional identity, and their plans for future practice. Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was used to analyse initial questionnaires and later, semi-structured interview data from six EPs and two trainee EPs. The research revealed that although practicing during this time encompassed many challenges, EPs and trainee EPs did find this period to be an opportunity to consider the important components of their role, their professional identity and how they would like to practice in the future. A liminal space as it is conceptualised in the literature appears to have been encountered by participants and led to reflections regarding their professional identity and their future practice. Conclusions centre around the impact of the pandemic on participants reflections regarding their professional identity and plans for future practice. The implications of my findings are discussed and considered in a

real-life context, centering around the factors that are helpful to EP and trainee EP practice and professional identity, with a view to increasing these aspects in everyday practice.

## **DEDICATION**

To my Mum and Dad, for believing in me and for helping me to believe in myself.

To Tom, for always supporting me and for being my rock throughout everything.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

My sincere thanks to the participants of this study for taking the time to take part in the interviews and for providing their insightful thoughts and reflections.

My gratitude to my university tutor, Nick Bozic, for his unwavering support and encouragement throughout the doctorate.

Thank you to all my wonderful colleagues at the Local Authority who have inspired me over the last two years. A special thanks to Judith McAlister, for always being there to support me and for teaching me so much.

A heartfelt thank you to all of my family for always encouraging and supporting me through everything.

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## **GLOSSARY**

EP – Educational psychologist

EPS – Educational Psychology Service

CYP – Children and young people

EHCP – Education, Health and Care Plan

EHCNA – Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment

LA – Local Authority

PIF – Professional Identity Formation

UK – United Kingdom

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1. Background of thesis**

During my second and third years of the Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate, I was employed as a trainee EP in a city council Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in the East Midlands. This research project forms the first volume of a two-volume thesis. This study utilises thematic analysis to explore the experiences of trainee EPs and EPs practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **1.2. Rationale**

When Covid-19 was declared a pandemic in the UK, it quickly became clear that our working practices needed to change rapidly. In March 2020, the Prime Minister of the UK announced a full lockdown, which included school closures. Conversations about what this meant for us as a service began, including how we would continue to support CYP, schools and families. We quickly adapted to our new ways of working and began to develop an understanding of the limitations and opportunities this presented to us. I was soon involved in conversations with fellow trainee EPs and EPs expressing that the pandemic had made them reassess what was truly important to their role, with some explaining that this time had made them reassess their professional identity and what it meant to them to be a trainee EP or EP. The challenges and opportunities practicing during the pandemic had presented appeared to be affording trainee EPs and EPs the time and space to make these considerations. These conversations formed the basis of my research topic, inspiring me to explore this further.

I decided to investigate further to see whether there was a basis in the literature for insights like these following a crisis or rapid change to working practices. Dating as far back as 1909, and originating as a concept in anthropology (Van Gennep, 1960) was 'liminality'. Liminal spaces have been found to be useful ways of reconsidering and recontextualising previously held knowledge and are also thought to impact professional identity and future working practices. Through this research project, I hope to explore whether participants had reflected on their professional identity and plans for future practice.

### **1.3. Aims of the study**

The aims of my study were:

- (1) To explore whether there were changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs and trainee EPs during this period, and if so, in what ways.
- (2) To explore the ways in which EPs and trainee EPs were reflecting on the challenges and opportunities presented during this time.
- (3) To explore whether EPs and trainee EPs show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward, and if so, in what ways.

### **1.4. The structure of volume one**

Following this introductory chapter, chapter 2 details three literature reviews; the Covid-19 pandemic, including challenges and mitigating factors, liminality, and professional identity, in general and relating to the EP role.

Chapter 3 details the methodology used in this study, including the research design, the chosen methodology and analysis. The participant recruitment methods, demographics and ethical considerations are also considered.

Chapter 4 details the findings, and relates these to the literature review findings, with similarities and differences considered.

Chapter 5 details the conclusions of the research project and discusses the possible implications of the project, limitations, and possible directions for future practice.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction to chapter

Three literature reviews were conducted to explore the existing literature. Firstly, the Covid-19 pandemic was explored in relation to the guidance for EPs, the consequences of Covid-19 on mental health, the challenges experienced by professionals and families throughout the pandemic, and the mitigating factors. This review was conducted as I wished to explore the wider context of this and other pandemics, and how far the Covid-19 pandemic can be considered to be a liminal space.

Secondly, liminality was explored as a concept, including definitions and liminality in relation to reflection, emotions, and learning. The liminality literature base is also explored in relation to the potential positive outcomes of encountering a liminal space.

Thirdly, a literature review around professional identity in general and the professional identity of EPs was conducted. This literature review was conducted due to the proposed impact of liminality on professional identity. The EP role is also considered, as it is conceptualised in the literature, to provide background to the factors considered to be supportive and challenging to EP practice, as this links to the concept of liminality. I also wished to explore the role of the EP as it is conceptualised in the literature to compare this to the experiences of EPs and trainee EPs as related to research question 1 of this study.

## **2.2. The Covid-19 pandemic**

### ***2.2.1. Literature search strategy – The Covid-19 pandemic***

Boolean search terms were utilised using the Psycinfo database. The following search terms were used: coronavirus OR Covid-19 AND (reflect\* OR identit\* OR mental health OR child\* OR teach\* OR chang\* OR school\* OR famil\* OR challeng\* OR opportunit\* OR remote OR psycholog\*). 740 papers were returned from this search and 26 were selected following a screening of the titles, as these bore relevance to the concepts considered in this research study. Several more relevant papers were found and included following a hand search of these 26 papers.

### ***2.2.2. The Covid-19 pandemic - overview***

In December 2019, there was a report of a series of cases of abnormal pneumonia in Wuhan, China. On the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) entitled this 'Coronavirus disease 2019' (Covid-19), a zoonotic disease, which shared similarities with the 2003 SARS outbreak (Chenneville and Schwartz-Mette, 2020). On the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, WHO announced Covid-19 as a global pandemic (Anand, Karade and Gitpta, 2020) and on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2020, a national lockdown in the United Kingdom (UK) was announced by the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson (Kim and Asbury, 2020). This included schools closing to all pupils, other than those who were considered to be vulnerable and for the children of keyworkers. Vulnerable children included those with education, health, and care plans (EHCPs). Keyworkers were workers who could not work from home and were considered essential, for example nurses and supermarket staff (Gov.uk<sup>2</sup>, 2020).

By March 2020, schools in 160 countries were closed, impacting 1.5 billion pupils around the world (The World Bank, 2020). On the 24<sup>th</sup> of May, the Prime Minister declared the gradual reopening of schools, with students in Reception, Years 1 and 6 being permitted to return from the 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2020 and those in Year 10 and Year 12 from the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 2020 (Prime Minister's Office, 2020). By the 20<sup>th</sup> of June 2020, there was confirmed to be more than 8 million cases of Covid-19 worldwide and almost 500,000 deaths as a result of the pandemic (O'Connor et al., 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic has been described as unique in terms of the level of danger it poses, as many individuals are asymptomatic when infected (O'Connor et al., 2020) and in terms of the strict lockdown measures needed to control the virus (Lusk, 2020).

### ***2.2.3. Guidance relating to EP practice during Covid-19***

On the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2020, the UK government introduced some temporary changes to the education, health, and care plan needs assessment (EHCPNA) processes, to afford all bodies involved more flexibility (Gov.uk<sup>1</sup>, 2020). This included suspending some of the previous deadlines for EHCPNAs and EHCPs until 25<sup>th</sup> September 2020.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP, 2020) released guidance relating to working remotely with CYP and families. This guidance included preparation for remote working, safeguarding, data retention, logistical technological issues, and caveats for psychological advice and information about the reliability and validity of conducting assessments remotely.

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the UK government released guidance for educational professionals in supporting vulnerable CYP during the pandemic, including identifying vulnerable CYP, deciding whether attendance at school was suitable, determining how to support vulnerable CYP's education and welfare, responding to safeguarding concerns, and dealing with other logistical concerns (Gov.uk<sup>2</sup>, 2020). Also, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, the British Psychological Society (BPS) released guidelines for psychologists in the UK regarding remote psychological assessments (BPS, 2020). This included guidance on conducting risk assessments, the impact on the individual, accessibility for remote assessment, privacy, maintaining confidentiality, and security.

#### ***2.2.4. Challenges during pandemics and epidemics***

##### *2.2.4.1. Pandemics, epidemics, and mental health*

Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007) propose four key negative emotions linked to a critical incident response: anger, sadness, fright, and anxiety. McAlonan et al. (2005) investigated the impact of the SARS epidemic on psychological wellbeing of participants in Hong Kong and found that almost 40% of the population experienced increased stress levels, 16% had traumatic levels of stress and the majority of the population felt helpless. It is worth noting there is a dearth of longitudinal studies investigating the impact of pandemics on mental health, meaning there is often no 'baseline' indication of psychological needs before a pandemic, which is a limitation of these two studies.

Functional emotion theory proposes the emotional reaction to a crisis is likely to be a key factor which affects an individual's cognitive and behavioural response (Kim and Niederdeppe, 2013). Sigurvinsdottir, Thorisdottir and Gylfason (2020) found, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, having an external locus of control was linked to greater symptoms of depression. However, it should be noted these findings were based on self-report. Vinkers et al. (2020) point out that stress and anxiety are expected reactions to a pandemic and these elevated levels of stress and anxiety are likely to lead to decreased concentration and productivity.

As can be seen in tables 1 and 2, there is a developing literature base regarding the mental health effects of Covid-19 specifically. Limitations of these studies include being limited to private households (Daly, Sutin and Robinson, 2020), having a proportionately low number of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) participants (Daly, Sutin and Robinson, 2020), studies being cross-sectional (Lahav, 2020), convenience sampling procedures (Lahav, 2020), disproportionately high responses from women and highly educated individuals (Fernandez et al. 2020), no comparison group or baseline data (Fernandez et al. 2020) and a lack of longitudinal data (Burhamah et al. 2020). Rajkumar (2020) points out there is a need to further explore the effect of Covid-19 on the mental health of more vulnerable groups, rather than the general population only.

**Table 1 – Studies from the UK investigating the impact of Covid-19 on mental health**

Study and location	Number of participants	Results
Daly, Sutin and Robinson (2020) UK	N=14,393	Mental health needs increased by 13.5% from 2017-2019 to April 2020. Risk factors were being female and a younger age (18-34 years). Mental health needs reduced between April and June 2020 but were still substantially higher than prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. Nearly 60% of the increase in mental health problems and more than 70% of the increase in the number of symptoms were maintained at the end of June 2020.
Pierce et al. (2020) UK	N=53,351	Mental health concerns in participants had reduced by April 2020 and was less than pre-covid-19 levels. Reductions were more noticeable in younger participants (aged 18-24), people with children and females.

**Table 2 – Studies from outside the UK investigating the impact of Covid-19 on mental health**

Study and location	Number of participants	Results
McGinty et al. (2020) USA	N=1,466	13% described significant distress, compared to 14.2% in April 2020. Risk factors included, being in a younger age group, lower income, and Hispanic participants.
Fernandez et al. (2020) Argentina	N=4,408	Higher symptoms of anxiety, depression, distress, obsession-compulsion, and hostility. Risk factors included preceding trauma, high anxiety regarding Covid-19 and neuroticism. Protective factors included being married, exercise, having a higher income, having higher levels of resilience, and having better coping skills.
Lahav (2020) Israel	N=976	Most participants were facing at least one psychiatric symptom. Risk factors included being younger, female, single, having a lower income, living alone, having had Covid-19, having a close friend or family member who was at a high-risk and having a negative perception of their own health.

		(NB – 793 participants had been exposed to previous traumatic events, e.g., war and distress related to Covid-19 was higher in those exposed to continuous traumatic stress).
Burhamah et al. (2020) Kuwait	N=4,132	Depressive symptoms in participants in this study was 30.13% and anxiety symptoms was 25.28%.
Ahmed et al. (2020) China	N=1,074	29% of participants in this study had anxiety symptoms, 37.1% had depressive symptoms and 32.1% had low mental well-being.
Wang et al. (2020) China	N=1,210	54% regarded the psychological effects of Covid-19 as 'moderate' or 'severe', 29% described 'moderate' to 'severe' anxiety symptoms and 17% described 'moderate' to 'severe' depressive symptoms.
Huang and Zhao (2020) China	N=7,236	35.1% reported generalised anxiety symptoms, 20.1% reported depressive symptoms and 18.2% poor sleep quality.
Mazza et al. (2020) Italy	N=2,766	Risk factors for increased levels of depression, anxiety, and stress included being female, having a negative affect, experiencing detachment, having an acquaintance infected, and having a history of medical problems.
Gonzalez - Sanguino et al. (2020) Spain	N=3,480	18.7% of participants reported depressive symptoms, 21.6% anxiety symptoms and 15.8% PTSD symptoms. Risk factors included being female, having prior mental health needs, having virus symptoms and having a relative with Covid-19. Protective factors included being older and having higher levels of economic stability.
Trougakos, Chawla and McCarthy (2020) Canada	N=503	Found that Covid-19 related anxiety led to a lack of psychological need fulfilment.
Tso and Park (2020) Hong Kong	N=29,202	Study with child participants aged 2-12. Risk factors included having special educational needs, having an acute/chronic disease, families with low income and single parent families. Protective factors included sufficient sleep, exercise, and reasonable restrictions on the use of electronics.

#### *2.2.4.2. Remote working*

During the Covid-19 pandemic, many professionals have had to transfer to exclusive home working (O'Connor et al., 2020), including EPs and trainee EPs. Some suggestions of the potential impact of exclusive home working on professionals include work-home boundaries becoming blurred, which might have a negative influence on happiness and lead to emotional exhaustion (Pluut and Wonders, 2020). Semuels (2020) argues that certain aspects of interaction are lost when communicating with co-workers remotely, and remote interaction cannot fully replace the functions of face-to-face interaction. They also point out the informal communication co-workers would usually have in an office are lost during this time, which is likely to lead to feelings of being less connected to their co-workers. Kim and Asbury (2020) found teachers experienced working exclusively from home to be at odds with their professional identity and core values. It should be noted that Kim and Asbury's study was conducted over a short time period and so did not have a longitudinal element, and also focussed only on teachers in mainstream schools.

During school closures, EPs and trainee EPs were working remotely with school staff, which is likely to have included remote consultation. Nolan and Moreland (2014) suggest there are many strategies which contribute to the change seen in successful consultation, including a judgement-free atmosphere and deep listening, through body language and non-verbal communication. It could be argued these strategies are difficult to replicate via a phone call. However, video calls make these strategies easier to replicate and there is evidence to suggest telepsychology and teleassessment can be as successful via video call, as they are in person (Song et al. 2020).

#### *2.2.4.3. School closures*

O'Connor et al. (2020) suggest lockdown presented many challenges to families. O'Hagan and Kingdom (2020) found that 67% of parents interviewed in their survey found home-schooling to be a challenge, due to time constraints. Challenges were also related to the home-school overlap, which caused distress in some children, particularly those with special educational needs (SEN). Gassman-Pines, Ananat and Fitz-Henley (2020) suggest these extra pressures are thought to be increased for vulnerable families and those who are in a single-carer family.

Duffield and O'Hare (2020) posit that EPs are well placed to support staff resilience through fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness in schools, by promoting help-seeking and by continuing to support development and learning during the pandemic. Kim and Asbury (2020) explored the impact of school closures on teaching staff and found the pandemic has had a negative influence on teacher feelings of autonomy and competence (Kim, Leary, and Asbury, 2020). These, according to Self-Determination Theory (SDT), are two of the three cornerstones of wellbeing (Deci and Ryan, 1985).

### ***2.2.5. Mitigating factors and opportunities during the pandemic***

#### *2.2.5.1. Covid-19 as an opportunity for reflection and change*

Covid-19 has led to innovative ways of working, resulting in well-established practices in many professions being reconsidered (Gibbs, 2020). Reflections can be wide-ranging, to include the full spectrum of working practices, from an individual's personal practice to the

wider systems in which they work (Kim and Asbury, 2020). The pandemic has also been an opportunity for professionals to consider the areas of their professional life. For example, Ellis, Steadman, and Mao (2020) found there was a raised awareness amongst teachers about the fragility of the historical practices they were engaged in, as well as the personal and emotional impacts of the role.

Tolsgaard et al. (2020) posit individuals have “sacrifices to make and choices to take” (p. 739) which may lead to changes in working practices, from which a ‘new normal’ could develop. Fiebig et al. (2020), take this concept further, suggesting the pandemic has presented an opportunity for us all to “re-examine and clarify our values” (p. 14) and to change our working practices to reflect this, possibly through utilising reflective practice as a tool to access these changes. It should be noted these two studies were theoretical in nature, rather than empirical, and are therefore not evidenced by empirical findings.

#### *2.2.5.2. Opportunities for relatedness*

A positive factor cited as an outcome of the Covid-19 pandemic, has been the levels of compassion and support shown between individuals (O’Connor et al., 2020). Disaster literature proposes that common experiences and a shared identity bring people together in times of crisis (Butler, 2020). Additionally, social connections are known to be critical for our general health and wellbeing, particularly during situations such as a pandemic (Nitschke et al., 2020). Social distancing measures have led to a lack of face-to-face contact with others, meaning individuals have had to find new and innovative ways of connecting. Nitschke et al. (2020) found higher levels of social connectedness throughout the initial lockdown period

was linked to lower perceived stress levels. They suggest social connectedness during the pandemic promotes levels of resilience in individuals, leading to greater perceived wellbeing.

#### *2.2.5.3. Self-care and self-compassion*

The helping professions have been recognised as being particularly at risk of burnout (Fiebig et al., 2020). Burnout is the experience of emotional fatigue, decreased personal achievement and depersonalisation, as a result of high levels of stress in the workplace (Maslach, 1998). There is increasing advocacy in the helping professions for self-care being a priority, with some suggesting that if we are to successfully care for others, we first need to ensure that we are caring sufficiently for ourselves (Fiebig et al., 2020). Self-care activities such as regular exercise and a healthy diet have been found to mitigate stress and depression (Carek, Laibstain and Carek, 2011).

Fiebig et al. (2020) suggest self-care is not only a set of behaviours, but is in fact a value, or a “chosen life direction” (p.8). They suggest self-care also necessitates we live consistently within our values across many areas of our lives. A crisis such as a pandemic is likely to result in higher levels of burnout, due to the mismatch between our values and the new ways of working required during the pandemic (Fiebig et al., 2020). Neff (2003) describes self-compassion as having three mechanisms: kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness. Self-compassion is described as a powerful tool that allows us to manage and adjust to new life experiences and helps us to develop and maintain high levels of resilience (Fiebig et al., 2020).

## **2.3. Liminality**

### ***2.3.1. Literature search strategy – Liminality***

Boolean search terms were utilised using the Psycinfo database. The following search terms were used: liminal\* AND (reflect\* OR space\* OR emoti\* OR learn\* OR positive\* OR opportunit\* OR disrupt\* OR chang\* OR process\*). 89 papers were returned from this search and 14 were selected following a screening of the titles, as these bore relevance to the concepts considered in this research study. Several more relevant papers were found and included following a hand search of these 14 papers.

### ***2.3.2. Liminality – overview***

Liminality, or a liminal space, is a theoretical construct which considers an in-between, transformational, or transitional state individuals may encounter for a variety of reasons, which leads to new ways of thinking and/or acting (Land, Rattray and Vivian, 2014). The term liminality comes from the Latin word 'limen', meaning 'threshold' (Rose et al., 2019).

Liminality began as a concept within anthropology (Van Gennep, 1960), studying tribal rituals such as initiations from boyhood to manhood. It is thought to occur when individuals enter a 'middle ground' between one state and another (Allan et al., 2015). The concept has commonly been explored in relation to positions involving education and work (Simpson, Sturges and Weight, 2010; Rantatalo and Lindberg, 2018). However, there are examples of liminal spaces being explored in a multitude of ways, for example Syrian children living at a refugee centre (Arvanitis, Yelland and Kiprianos, 2019), and an exploration of the transition of breast cancer survivors to explore their identity during the liminal space they experienced in remission (Wilson, 2019). As previously mentioned, liminality is a theoretical construct,

and it is worth mentioning that some of the literature regarding liminality is theoretical in nature, meaning it is not evidenced by empirical studies.

Liminality is a difficult term to define, as it has been used broadly to describe both physical and conceptual spaces (Shortt, 2015). Land, Rattray and Vivian (2014) suggest liminal spaces transpire when we encounter new forms of knowledge, also known as 'threshold concepts', and these spaces allow us to recontextualise previously held knowledge and explore new identities.

Söderlund and Borg (2018) suggest liminal spaces are where "traditional routines, norms and activities are suspended or renegotiated" (p. 891) and Rose et al. (2019) suggest it is in liminal spaces that "new ways of understanding, thinking and practicing are triggered" (p. 604). Liminal spaces are thought to lead to:

"...feelings of ambiguity, openness, disorientation, self-questioning, and indeterminacy" (Ladge, Clair and Greenberg, 2012, p. 1451).

During liminality individuals are in a 'free state' or a 'playful state' (Lorenzi and White, 2019), moving away from the pre-liminal space and towards the post-liminal state. Thomassen (2014) describes the liminal space as:

"...transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction." (p. 1)

During a liminal state, it is thought individuals can move from one identity or role to another (Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack, 2017). The concept of liminality is separated from

'limbo' by Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack (2017). Limbo is described as an undesirable state, that is not productive and does not result in change (Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack, 2017), whereas liminality is a process involving a transitional state. Like other transitional states, the liminal state can last for any period; just hours, or for longer periods of time, such as weeks, months, or years (Howard-Grenville et al. 2011). It is worth noting that there are instances within the EP role and EP practice which could be considered to be liminal spaces. For example, transitions within the role could be considered to be liminal spaces, such as moving to an area of specialism, moving to a new EPS, or moving to a new role within the existing EPS. Additionally, there are instances within the role that may support EPs to access the liminal space, such as supervision with peers or a line manager, and the use of professional reflection within the role.

Van Gennep (1960) suggested three discrete stages of liminality; the preliminal stage, which involves the individual disengaging from prior ways of working, or being, the liminal stage, which involves the individual transitioning to the new way of working, or being, and the post-liminal stage, which is when the new ways of working, or being, are integrated into the individual's identity. Other researchers have since agreed there are three distinct phases of liminality (Allan et al., 2015; Ladge, Clair and Greenberg, 2012). Land, Rattray, and Vivian (2014) suggest the liminality process involves the individual transitioning by "letting go of the learner's earlier mode of subjectivity" (p. 201), and that this occurs at numerous points in the liminal process.

Whilst the traditional view of liminality is that it is a temporary process, with clear and definable 'stages', more recently there has been a move towards the idea that liminality can be an ongoing state for some individuals (Loacker and Sullivan, 2016). Reed and Thomas (2019) argue that if an individual can master 'liminality competence', they can benefit from the freedom that liminality offers. Hart et al. (2017) suggest there are some contexts in which individuals have not 'passed through' the liminal process, but are within the liminal phase for some time, for example cancer patients who are in remission. However, it could be argued they will eventually pass through to the post-liminal stage once they are out of remission. Others argue long-term or permanent liminality is not possible, as individuals would not reach the post-liminal stage and it would therefore not qualify as liminality under the anthropological use of the term (Beech, 2011).

The Covid-19 pandemic has been described as a liminal space in several recent research papers. Bell (2021) explored the pandemic through an anthropological lens and suggests a liminal space is an apt way of understanding how individuals have moved through time and space during the pandemic. Cai et al. (2021) explored a supermarket worker's experiences during the pandemic and found:

"...the collapse of routines, defined roles, and structured relations during an organisational crisis (Powley, 2009) subjects Jay to *liminal* experiences..."

Liminality is suggested as having three distinct phases, and I will now describe how the three stages could relate to EP and trainee EP practice during the pandemic. The pre-liminal stage was the time EPs and trainee EPs were practicing prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The liminal period was and is still ongoing at the time of the data collection for this study. The post-

liminal period is debateable; considering the definitions provided in the literature, this will differ for all participants, and it may well take some longer than others to 'pass through' to the post-liminal phase. Others may well retreat back to the pre-liminal stage at which they were previously, if they do not wish to utilise the new 'concept thresholds' they have encountered and to amalgamate these into their new professional identity. I would argue that some may adapt to some concept thresholds and not to others, so some aspects of their identity may 'pass through' and change, whereas others may retreat into the pre-liminal phase.

### **2.3.3. Reflection and liminality**

Reflection is a key aspect of the EP role, which is often utilised through supervision practices (Carrington, 2004). Regarding its links to liminality, Rantatalo and Lindberg (2018) suggest there are several similarities between liminality and reflection. For example, they are both transformative processes that connect the past and the future and are both closely linked with unpredictability. Dyer and Taylor (2012) point out reflection is a complex term to define, as many researchers use other interchangeable terms to refer to the same process.

As Moon (1999) states:

“the following words can apparently be synonymous with reflection – reasoning, thinking, reviewing, problem solving, inquiry, reflective judgement, reflective thinking, critical reflection...” (p. viii)

Dyer and Taylor (2012) argue there should not be one single definition for reflection as it is a personal activity and largely dependent on the needs of the individual. Reflection is described by Dyer and Taylor as:

“a retrospective and critical practice ... where previous experience is brought to bear on new and unfamiliar situations. Reflection is a continuous process that, when used with intent,

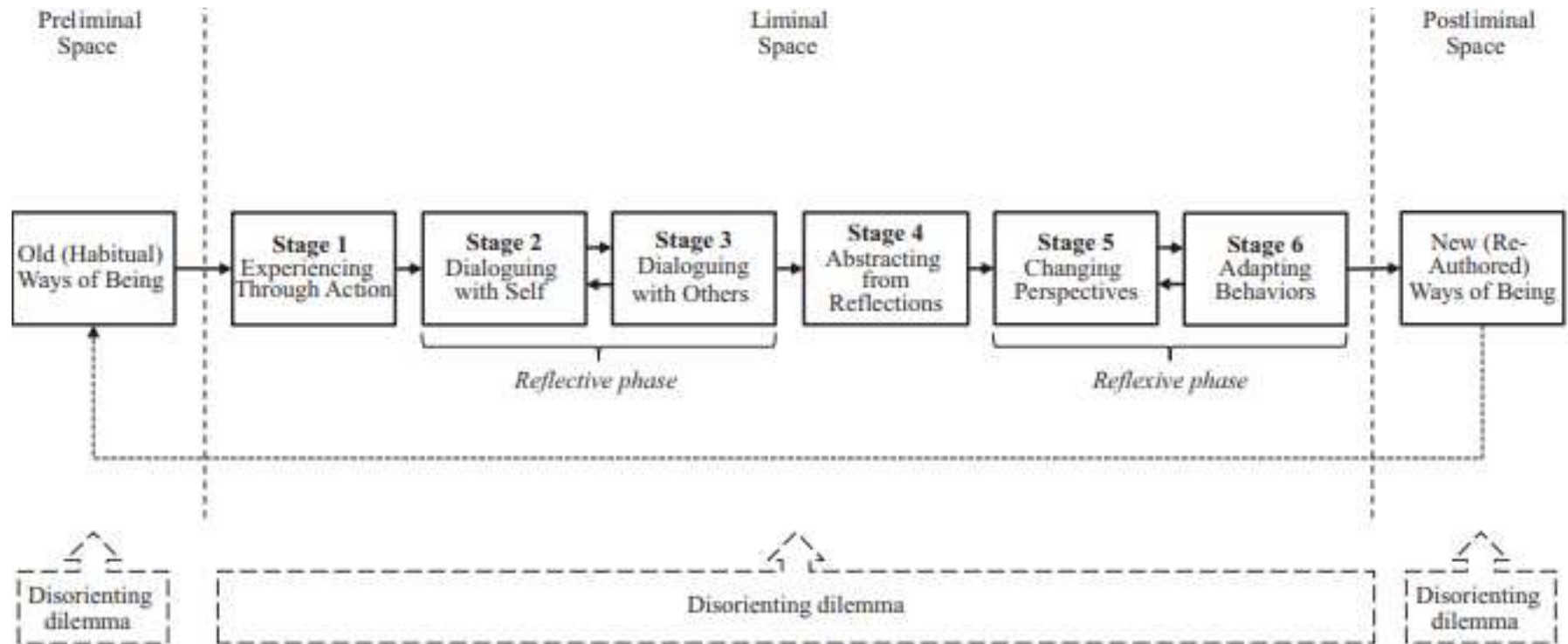
allows the practitioner to understand their actions better and analyse their practice for its effectiveness and for the values it represents..." (p. 4)

Therefore, by considering our practice in the past and the present, we can utilise this information to inform our practice in the future. Dyer and Taylor (2012) point out what is reflected on will vary from individual to individual for two reasons; firstly, every individual has different experiences on which to reflect and secondly every individual will have their own views about what is worth reflecting on. Schön's (1983, 1987) reflective model originally suggested there were two types of reflection. Reflection *in* action, considers the decision-making process we use whilst we are in the middle of acting. Reflection *on* action, occurs retrospectively, after we have acted. More recently, a third method of reflection has been considered by researchers, reflection *for* action, which considers future actions as a result of reflective practices (Moon, 1999).

Irving, Wright and Hibbert (2019) suggest, when there is time for reflection, experiential learning can take place because of exposure to a liminal space. Threshold concepts are considered by Meyer and Land (2006) to be vital in the liminal space. They describe threshold concepts as new ways of understanding and thinking, in a way that was previously unreachable. They posit reflection and questioning are tools that allow individuals to change threshold concepts into new knowledge, a notion which other researchers agree with (Rose et al., 2019). However, it is important to note Rose's findings were based on observations, which are subjective in nature. Enosh and Ben-Ari (2016) see reflection as imperative for utilising a liminal space productively; for them, reflection involves moving in and out of an experience, utilising the liminal space. Enosh and Ben-Ari suggest liminal spaces act as 'arenas' where experiences are altered into new knowledge. Beech (2011) posits new versions of an

individual's self can be trialled through reflective practices and self-questioning. However, Rantatalo and Lindberg (2018), despite agreeing liminality leads to reflection, argue liminality is a fragile state that is not easy to create. Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019) investigated the concept of liminal space with young people who were taking a 'gap-year' between attending college and university. They suggested the model in figure 1, to depict the liminal process:

Figure 1 – The six-stage model of informal and incidental learning as experienced under conditions of liminality (Johan, Sadler-Smith and Tribe (2019)



As shown in figure 1, Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019) suggest there is a 'pre-liminal' phase, which involves the 'old ways of being'. They suggest when the individual enters the liminal phase, they go through several proposed stages. Stages 2 and 3 involve a 'reflective phase' which assists individuals in making sense of their actions and experiences through dialoguing with themselves and with others.

There is then a process of 'abstracting from reflections', before the individual moves into the 'reflexive phase', which involves the creation of new perspectives. Transformative outcomes can result from this reflexivity phase, if "contradictions, doubts and dilemmas" (p. 404) are revealed. Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019) point out the 'new way of being' is not a finished version of oneself, but that this is a cyclical model, which can involve the individual retreating to the 'old ways of being' as situations change, and new liminalities are faced. It should be noted Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe's study was based on retrospective interviews, which has limitations in generalisability. Cook-Sather and Alter (2011) suggest individuals can move back to the former, pre-liminal state, but with new knowledge and experience to utilise. It is therefore suggested individuals do not pass neatly and directly through the liminal state but may move fluidly through different stages. Additionally, Puttick et al. (2020) suggest that whether the liminal space is experienced as such will depend on the subjective experience of each individual. It should be noted that liminality can also be understood and applicable to the individuals that EPs work with, for example parents, other professionals and CYP themselves. This could be considered not only throughout the pandemic, but also relating to usual times, with regard to CYP starting at a new school, or teaching staff being new to a role or school.

#### **2.3.4. Emotions and liminality**

Liminal spaces can cause emotional responses; Shinnars-Kennedy (2016) describe going through a liminal space as “an emotionally-laden event” (p. 257). This is thought to be due, at least in part, to the disturbance to the status-quo, the existing knowledge, and identities we hold. These disturbances can cause feelings of doubt (Hay and Samra-Fredericks, 2016), loss (Meyer and Land, 2006), uncertainty and anxiety (Hawkins and Edwards, 2015) for individuals.

More positive emotions can result from liminal spaces, such as excitement and expectation for the new opportunities presented to them (Beard, Clegg, and Smith, 2007). Irving, Wright and Hibbert (2019) point out, whilst negative emotions are common to the process of liminality, very strong negative emotions such as anger and panic may lead to individuals becoming ‘stuck’ within the liminal process. Irving, Wright and Hibbert (2019) also found various other emotions were associated with the liminal process, such as “worry, panic, surprise and regret” (p. 370).

Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019) found emotional responses could be seen in the pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal spaces. These researchers advocate for the need for emotions as mechanisms that help individuals to pass through the liminal space. Schulman (2005) agrees with this, suggesting a certain level of anxiety is needed to ensure learning is taking place in the liminal space, and an individual must have ‘something at stake’ (p. 18) to yield a positive outcome from the liminal space.

Rose et al. (2019) suggest conversations, reflections, and receiving feedback are crucial tools to help individuals to overcome negative emotional reactions and to support the learning process involved with liminality. Land, Rattray, and Vivian (2014) state there is a danger of individuals wanting to leave the liminal space before they have reaped the benefits of the process if they do not have a full understanding of the process of liminality. They argue there is therefore a need to educate individuals in the process, to allow them to experience the positive effects of the liminal space.

### ***2.3.5. Learning and liminality***

Learning is considered to be a crucial aspect to gaining new insights and changing an individual's actions as a result of the liminal space (Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe, 2019).

When threshold concepts are encountered by individuals, this can lead to the experience of a liminal space, due to a process of experiential learning (Meyer and Land, 2006). Land, Meyer, and Baillie (2010) suggest encountering threshold concepts leads to a liminal space, which leads to a change in identity. Land, Meyer, and Flanagan (2016) suggest, whilst in a liminal space, an individual's potential for learning is increased. These liminal spaces allow:

“for new and previously inaccessible ways of thinking and practicing” (p. 200).

Land, Meyer, and Flanagan also suggest the learning gained from a liminal space is typically irreversible and the individual would have to 'unlearn' these through significant effort (Felten, 2016). Heading and Loughlin (2018), on the other hand, argue the learnt information can be modified at a later date.

As well as acquiring this new knowledge, the liminal space is thought to be transformative to other areas on an individual's life, such as their self-perception and the ways in which they view and experience the world (Shinners-Kennedy, 2016). Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019) suggest the mechanism for learning in a liminal space does not simply involve ongoing refinement, but involves a more pervasive undoing and redoing process, after engaging with experiences that are new and unclear. It is thought being with and engaging in discourse with others who are in the liminal space (known as 'communitas') are key to learning through the liminal space (Morgan, 2012).

### ***2.3.6. Liminality as a positive experience***

Despite the difficult emotions liminality can cause, it is widely accepted that liminality also has positive implications for the individuals who experience it. It can encourage productivity and creativity (Vesala and Tuomivaara, 2018), lead to new relationships (Powley, 2009), closer relationships between communitas (Vesala and Tuomivaara, 2018) and lead to more positive emotions, such as freedom (Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack, 2017). Van de Wiele and Papacharissi (2021) suggest liminality provides opportunities for "...renewal, for seeing the world anew..." (p. 1143). Sankowska and Söderlund (2015) suggest the liminality process can lead to transformations in an individual's professional life but can also result in social and psychological transformations. Similarly, Thomassen (2014) describes a disruption to conventional social boundaries, and by going through a liminal space new social configurations and ways of understanding the world can emerge.

Hoyer and Steyaert (2015) found liminality can be useful in the healing process following the disruptive nature of liminality itself. New relationships can form as a result of a liminal period, due perhaps to previous social arrangements being temporarily postponed (Powley, 2009). Land, Rattray, and Vivian's (2014) study found some lecturers wanted to prolong the liminal space for their students, so their ideas did not become crystallised, but remained exploratory. Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) suggest whilst these benefits of liminality exist, professionals are sometimes not able to utilise them sufficiently, as the feelings of being uncomfortable can lead to individuals rushing back to what they are accustomed to: the pre-liminal space.

## **2.4. Professional identity and the EP role**

### ***2.4.1. Literature search strategy – professional identity***

Boolean search terms were utilised using the Psycinfo database. The following search terms were used: professional identit\* AND (educational psych\* OR reflect\* OR chang\* OR develop\*). 181 papers were returned from this search and 15 were selected following a screening of the titles, as these bore relevance to the concepts considered in this research study. Several more relevant papers were found and included following a hand search of these 15 papers.

### ***2.4.2. Search strategy – The EP role***

Boolean search terms were utilised using the Psycinfo database. The following search terms were used: educational psycholog\* AND (role OR duties OR job OR traded OR systemic OR

individual\* OR preventative\* OR reactive\* OR supervis\* OR facilitate\* OR wellbeing OR self-care OR relationship\* OR challeng\* OR time OR limit\* OR resource\* OR statutory OR perception\* OR connectedness). 190 papers were returned from this search and 14 were selected following a screening of the titles, as these bore relevance to the concepts considered in this research study. Several more relevant papers were found and included following a hand search of these 14 papers.

### **2.4.3. Professional identity overview**

Identity and the study of how identity develops has been studied in relation to many aspects of life experience, for example, race, culture, and gender (Marcia, 1966; Steensma et al., 2013). Identity has also been considered from many differing theoretical perspectives, which are complex and multi-faceted (for example, Erikson, 1958; Marcia, 1966; Breakwell, 1986).

Professional identity has been described by Morgan et al. (2012) as: “How professionals view themselves and the factors that influence this self-perception...” (p. 259). Adams et al. (2006) posit professional identity is related to how individuals “compare and differentiate themselves” (p. 56) from other groups of professionals. Most scholars agree professional identity tends to consist of internal and external elements (Ibarra, 1999). Examples of external elements would be the standards and expectations of the profession as a whole, whereas internal elements would be an individual’s own self-concept, their beliefs, values, and their individual perception of the role (Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide, 2014; Murray, 2013). Agreeing with this, Kelchtermans (2009) and Mackey (2007) put core values an

individual holds about what it means to be in their professional role at the centre of their professional identity.

Notman (2017) emphasises the influence of culture on professional identity, suggesting individuals may have different professional identities depending on the context in which they are working and whom they are working with. Kelchtermans (2009) suggests self-understanding is closely related to professional identity and this comprises of the following elements: “self-image, self-esteem, motivation, task perception and future perspective” (p.261). The first of these elements, self-image, describes the ways in which professionals see themselves, which includes their own self-perception and their perception of how others see them. Self-esteem relates to how well an individual feels they do their job, which also includes how others perceive them. Task perception concerns a professional’s perception of what their duties are and relates to their values within a profession. Job motivation can change throughout an individual’s professional career, due to internal and external factors; job motivation can be increased when personal identity is congruent with their professional identity (Osteen, 2011). Finally, future perspective relates to the changeable concept of how individuals see themselves professionally, moving forward (Engelbertink et al., 2020), which is one focus of this study.

#### ***2.4.4. Changes to professional identity***

Traditionally, once professional identity has formed, it has been viewed as unchangeable and internal. However, more recent views of identity tend to consider it to be changeable and impacted by wider culture (Harris, 2009; Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009; Baijaard, Meijer and

Verloop, 2004). Despite this, studies have shown professional identity can be resistant to change, due to the amount of time professionals have been immersed in their social and cultural contexts (Freidson, 2001).

Changes to professional identity have been found to occur when changes in working practices are imposed upon individuals and they view the changes as being beneficial (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009). Similar changes have been reported in situations where professionals have had to adapt to new working practices, such as new technology or a new role (Kyratsis et al., 2017). It is not always the case that changes to professional identity are imposed by radical changes to working practices. Binyamin (2018) suggests professional identity formation and change can occur when individuals actively take the time to reconsider their aspirations and their core values. Ibarra (1999) suggests when professionals have time to explore new ways of working, professional identity can consequently change as a result of this. Meaningful experiences which are subsequently reflected on have also been found to be fundamental in shaping professional identity (Flores and Day, 2006).

Professional identity is described by Holden et al. (2015) as being an active process which is changeable over time. Researchers generally agree professional identity formation (PIF) is a mixture of personal experience, beliefs, and the professional context an individual works within (Pillen, Beijaard and Brok, 2012). Wackerhausen (2009) emphasises PIF occurs to a much greater extent within practice, than within a classroom, through informal learning experiences. Supporting this notion, a study by Wood, Farmer, and Goodall (2016) explored the experiences of five professionals who had become university lecturers. They found the

institutional emphasis on knowledge gained from research, undervalues the knowledge gained from professional practice, citing the latter as a key component in PIF.

Social identity theory was developed by Turner and Brown (1978), who considered one facet of social identity theory to be work-related identity. According to this theory, work-related identity is thought to be developed through an individual's interactions with others, as well as through their experiences. Professional identity is therefore considered to be ongoing and constantly evolving through our changing relationships with those around us and through the stories individuals share with one another (Sfard and Prusak, 2005). Similarly, sociocultural theory suggests PIF occurs as a socio-historically positioned, interpersonal and changeable process (Solari, 2017). However, it emphasises the impact of broader culture on PIF to a larger extent than social identity theory (Skott, 2019).

Confidence in ones' professional identity has been found to increase with learning, skill development and duration of professional experience (Canrinus et al. 2012). In addition, being valued and providing a distinctive contribution has been found to have a valuable impact on PIF (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009). Canrinus et al. (2012) consider self-efficacy, job satisfaction, motivation, and occupational commitment to be factors indicative of professional identity. These researchers found relationships between colleagues are a major influence in promoting these factors. In a wider context, professional identity is strongly associated to relationships with an individual's professional group (Ryan and Carmichael, 2016; Armsby, 2013). Supportive working environments are thought to act as a buffer against any potential attrition of a professional's core values, which in turn is likely to reduce

the risks of burnout. Environments such as this also foster resilience, as professionals can work together in a trusting and respectful environment (Wald, 2015).

#### ***2.4.5. Professional identity and liminality***

Wackerhausen (2009) suggests professional identity encompasses many actions that are so deeply embedded, they feel “obvious, natural or self-evident” (p. 461) and we therefore do not consider these actions before undertaking them. There are several unique circumstances thought to lead to a re-evaluation of these ‘obvious’ actions, for example, the trauma associated with a global crisis. Situations such as this are thought to remove people from their everyday routines and create a liminal space in which they can reconsider and evaluate aspects of their professional identity, such as their core qualities and sense of purpose (Kim and Greene, 2011).

Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack (2017) posit, despite the majority of research suggesting liminality is an unlikeable experience, liminal spaces can, in fact, provide a sense of freedom which allows for new ways of understanding the world, increased creativity, the development of new knowledge and skills and new ways of working (Söderlund and Borg, 2018), which in turn can impact professional identity. Marcia (1966) agrees with this notion, noting that when we experience a major event or crisis, we are forced to halt our day to day thinking and instead, use the time to consider and reflect. This period allows us to explore our values and ideas and possibly to reconsider them. Trede, Macklin and Bridges (2012) note that reflection is a crucial skill for developing professional identity. They argue that

reflection allows professionals to associate new experiences with previously learnt knowledge and skills, which provides a deeper understanding of their professional identity.

#### **2.4.6. *The professional identity of EPs***

The question of what the EP role is, has been ongoing for several decades (Bradbury, 2006). Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) note that this continuous reflection is likely due to the EP role varying not only between countries, but between different LAs and between EPs. Fallon, Woods, and Rooney (2010) argue that ever changing political and social priorities result in the ongoing reflection on the EP role and that the preoccupation with what the EP role is, may suggest “an enduring under-confidence about professional identity and direction” (p. 2).

It could be argued that the differences in views between EPs in terms of what the EP role is, results in inevitable differences in practice (Burnham, 2013) and that EPs will adapt to their local context, which will change both the content and process of their working practices. Burnham (2013) found EPs utilised their own attributes, values and beliefs when describing their role, which was generally in place before training as an EP. The research found that, above all, the EPs interviewed were concerned with ‘creating positive change’. A Scottish review of the EP role (SEED, 2002) found that there were five core activities engaged in by EPs and three levels that these activities can take place at, as shown in table 3, below. As pointed out by Rumble and Thomas (2017), the extent to which EPs practice these five functions at the three levels will vary between, and within, EP services.

Norwich (2000) points out that the EP role is unavoidably a flexible one and Frederickson and Cline (2015) agree with this notion, positing that EPs are required to work in many different contexts and at many different levels within these contexts, as seen in table 3. Fallon, Woods, and Rooney (2010) argue that it would be unrealistic to expect EPs to become:

“effective scientist-practitioners across the whole range of functions and contexts available for them to work in” (p. 3).

Farrell et al. (2006) suggest that it is helpful for EPs to develop a specialism within their service to mediate this issue.

**Table 3 – Examples of the levels of work and core activities of EPs (Adapted from: Scottish Executive, 2002)**

Core functions					
Level	Consultation	Assessment	Intervention	Training	Research
<b>Child and family</b>	Casework-related interactions, support to contribute to education plans, parent discussions, reviews.	Assessment tools e.g. standardised and non-standardised, ascertaining extra needs in CYP.	Implementation of positive behaviour plans, therapy, small group support.	Discussions with CYP, working with parents to develop skills.	Individual case studies, small group intervention research.
<b>School or establishment</b>	Collaboration with staff, support to implement programmes for CYP, advice on policies, meetings to review progress.	Support to create and adapt assessment policies and procedures.	Support to create and develop preventative interventions, support to create and develop the curriculum.	Training for staff, sharing best practice based on evidence.	Supporting schools and other establishments to undertake and review research in pertinent areas.
<b>EA/Council</b>	Assistance with planning and strategy at a council level.	Supporting Local Authorities with assessment policy and procedure.	Support to develop authority level interventions.	Training for Local Authorities in areas pertinent areas related to educational psychology.	Supporting Local Authorities to undertake and review research in pertinent areas.

The SEN code of practice (DfE, 2015) had amendments which required EPs to work with young people up to the age of 25. An additional change in recent years was the move of many EP services to a traded or mixed-model way of working. For many LAs, this has increased the disparity in working practices between LAs (Lee and Woods, 2017). Trading has brought up several additional considerations for EP services; the concept of ethical trading (Lee and Woods, 2017), more pressure to communicate the distinctive role of EPs (Ashton and Roberts, 2006), measuring impact (Lee and Woods, 2017) and the challenge of marketing EP services (Bradbury, 2006).

Farrell et al. (2006) suggest that EPs' distinctive contribution is positioned in their psychological knowledge and having the skills to utilise this knowledge in practice. This is not a new notion, as Frederickson and Cline (2015) point out. The Summerfield Report (1968) suggested a very similar role for EPs, grounded in utilising psychological knowledge and applying this to educational contexts. Some authors have argued that the distinctive contribution of the EP is their ability to work as a scientist practitioner; that is, to utilise scientific values and procedures, such as hypothesis formulation and testing (Lane and Corrie, 2006). Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) found that, in their study of EPs' professional identity, distinctiveness was a major theme, with some stating that they were unsure of what their distinctive contribution should be. Others in this study stated that they had been challenged to reassess their distinctive role as a response to changes in their working context.

In recent years, there has been a move towards EPs taking account of the wider systems around the CYP and the ways in which these systems interact and change over time (Bronfenbrenner, 1995). Pellegrini (2009) suggests that the home and school environments are deeply intertwined, in that the events that happen in one can have a significant impact upon the other. EPs interviewed in Rumble and Thomas' (2017) study, stated that they often found themselves working at the individual and organisational levels, but less-so at the group level. EPs in this study also stated that they valued being able to work at a more systemic level:

“[B]y doing the systemic, preventative [work], we're impacting upon children who may actually never be classified as having SEND [and]...reducing the numbers that are on the SEND registers. If the systems are better and the preventative [work] is in place, you'll have less students who have SEND...” (Rumble and Thomas, 2017, p. 21).

However, it should be noted that this study took place in one context and so may lack generalisability.

The Code of Practice (DfE, 2015) emphasises the need to consider parents and carers to be equal partners and that parents should be consulted at every stage of the EHCP needs assessment process. Cairney (1996) suggests that working with parents and carers results in better outcomes for CYP. Additionally, Squires and Farrell (2007) found that EPs regard conversations with parents as being vital to problem formulation. EPs can also work with school staff in many ways, for example through training, supervision, utilising positive psychology frameworks (Gibbs and Miller, 2014) or problem-solving groups (Hanko, 2002).

Leadbetter (2000) argues that there are challenges to EP practice that can lead to feelings of frustration and powerlessness and, later, of indifference and cynicism. There is increasing involvement of EPs in statutory work, possibly to the detriment of working in more creative and diverse ways at the different levels of individuals, groups, and organisations (Bradbury, 2006). For example, a barrier to working more systemically might be the possible need for continuing involvement, which may be difficult to organise due to time constraints and the traded model of delivery many EPS now utilise (Pellegrini, 2009). Cameron (2006) posits that there is a danger of EPs:

“losing sight of the beliefs, hopes and aspirations with which they entered the profession” (p.290).

There are also challenges that EPs and trainee EPs face around the perceptions of what the EP role involves. Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) point out that the role as understood and described in the literature is often different to how schools see the EP role. Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) found that, of 115 head teachers interviewed, a major theme was that of EPs being expected to conduct individual assessments with CYP. Ashton and Roberts (2006) interviewed 28 SENCos and found that the majority saw the distinctive role of the EP as being for advice giving, EHCP needs assessments and individual assessment of CYP, although this study focussed only on mainstream primary schools. Farrell et al. (2006) found similar expectations of teaching staff. Interestingly, Thomson (1996) found that teaching staff often found the reports by EPs unhelpful when they were written following direct work with a CYP. Staff were more interested in receiving guidance or advice on what they could do to help these CYP. It should be noted that several of the studies cited in this section pre-date traded service delivery. This is likely to limit the relevance and applicability

of the research cited, as many services now use a traded or partially-traded model of delivery. For many LAs, traded models of delivery have increased the disparity in working practices between LAs (Lee and Woods, 2017). Trading has led to several additional considerations for EP services; such as the concept of ethical trading (Lee and Woods, 2017) and the importance of measuring impact when trading services (Lee and Woods, 2017).

A report from the DfE in 2011 noted that EPs have a role in utilising “more universal early intervention and preventative support” (Gov.uk<sup>3</sup>, 2011, p.5). An ongoing difficulty in providing preventative ways of working is the demand for statutory assessments within LAs (Frederickson and Cline, 2015), meaning that EP time is often taken up with these, arguably, more reactive ways of working. Additionally, despite the move to more systemic ways of working, some continue to view CYP’s needs through a deficit model. Bradbury (2006) found that EPs would like to see more focus in their role of providing preventative work at all levels.

Supervision is considered to be a key supportive factor to EP practice. Proctor (1986) suggests that there are three functions of supervision; formative (the process of educating and supporting the supervisee to develop skills), restorative (providing support and emotional outlet) and normative (the managerial aspect). There is a lack of research exploring the link between supervision and changes to practice, however, quality supervision should instil assurance in the supervisee, which ought to have a positive impact on practice (Osborne and Burton, 2014). Peer supervision is also thought to offer a highly supportive function, as supervisees can reassure and normalise emotions and concerns (Borders, 1991).

Continuous professional development (CPD) is considered to be a supportive factor for EPs. CPD consists of three main components: maintaining skills and knowledge, improving skills and knowledge, and developing personal and professional qualities (Friedman, 2012). Research by Armistead et al. (2013) found that 80% of EPs in their study viewed CPD as a professional responsibility and 70% reported that they enjoyed CPD activities. The authors of this study do note, however, that their study may have selection bias due to all participants being part of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), which is an association in the United States of America (USA) which provides CPD opportunities to its members. Friedman (2012) suggests that CPD can facilitate feelings of professional confidence, personal growth, increased morale, job satisfaction, autonomy, motivation, and relatedness to others. CPD can also contribute to the development of new skills and knowledge, and maintain previously learnt skills and knowledge (Friedman, 2012). EPs in Rumble and Thomas' (2017) study found that EPs valued having time for development, as this helped them to make links with professionals in other agencies. Armistead et al.'s (2013) found that barriers to EPs attending formal CPD events included not having enough time due to heavy workload, family responsibilities and difficulty finding suitable CPD events.

Ashton and Roberts (2006) found that EPs appreciated the ability to build up their relationship with their 'link schools' as this helped them to become part of the school community and allowed them to get to know the school well. EPs in Rumble and Thomas' (2017) study stated that they valued being provided with a substantial amount of time to

complete their work, as this allowed them to develop positive relationships with staff in schools and parents and carers. One participant explained:

“...I think they value the relationship. There are lots of opportunities for informal chats and little drop ins...” (Rumble and Thomas, 2017, p.21).

## 2.5. Summary of literature reviews and links to the current study

The literature reviews have considered the Covid-19 pandemic as the context for the current research study, as well as the challenges and mitigating factors created by the pandemic.

The challenges of the pandemic have led to changes in working practice and the possible creation of a liminal space. Liminality has been considered as a concept and the factors that lead to a liminal space, as have the challenges and opportunities created by a liminal space.

Finally, professional identity in general and as it relates to the EP role has been considered, in order to explore how a liminal space may lead to changes or realisations of participants concerning their professional identity and changes to their future practice. These literature reviews have provided a backdrop to which the aims of the study are orientated, as described in the introduction, and aims to answer the research questions detailed below:

**Table 4 – research questions of the current study**

RQ1	Were there changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs’ and trainee EPs’ during this period and, if so, in what ways?
RQ2	What were EPs’ and trainee EPs’ reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to practicing during this time?
RQ3	Do EPs’ and trainee EPs’ show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward and, if so, in what ways?

**Table 5 – purpose of research questions**

RQ1	The purpose of RQ1 was to explore how far there had been changes to the practices of EPs’ and trainee EPs’, as changes to working practices are one of the key qualities when encountering a liminal space.
RQ2	The purpose of RQ2 was to explore the challenges and opportunities experienced by EPs’ and trainee EPs’. This allowed exploration of how these challenges and opportunities led to plans for changes to future practice.

RQ3	The purpose of RQ3 was to explore whether there had been any reconsiderations to professional identity for participants. Additionally, a key aspect of encountering a liminal space is an intention to try new ways of working moving forward, or to continue with new ways of working trialled.
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## CHAPTER 3

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Introduction to the chapter

This chapter presents the research methodology and the justification for the choice of research methods and analysis used in this research project. I begin by considering the underlying research philosophy, before discussing my research questions and how my ontological and epistemological orientations led to my choice of methodology and analysis. I then discuss my data collection methods, participant recruitment, data collection, data analysis, my ethical reflections and the validity, and reliability of my methodology.

#### 3.2. Development of research design

##### 3.2.1. *Research philosophy*

The philosophical assumptions of the researcher must be reflected upon when conducting research projects (Bracken, 2010). These comprise a researcher's underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions. These philosophical assumptions then lead the researcher to their choice of methodology and research methods (Scotland, 2012). Scotland (2012) states that when engaging with any research project, the reader should be able to "trace back" (p. 10) from the research methods, through to the methodology, to the epistemological assumptions and finally to the ontological assumptions of the researcher.

### 3.2.1.1. *Ontology*

Ontology, put most simply, is the 'study of being' (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). It considers the nature and structure of being, and our beliefs concerning what exists (Runes, 1984). When considering social ontology, we must contemplate whether:

"...social entities can and should be considered objective entities that have a reality external to social actors, or whether they can and should be considered social constructions built up from the perceptions and actions of social actors..." (Bryman, 2008, p.28).

The former of these suppositions is referred to as realism, and the latter as relativism (Scotland, 2012). Relativists believe that there is not an objective 'truth', that reality is subjective and that different individuals will hold different perspectives (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Scotland (2012) posits that, from the view of the relativist:

"reality is constructed through the interaction between language and aspects of an independent world" (p. 11).

Therefore, one of the questions we need to ask is: are the phenomena considered within this project 'objective' phenomena (they are independent of us) or 'constructed' phenomena (they are constructed by us). There are four areas discussed within this research project. The first is that of pandemics generally, and within this the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic in terms of the virus could be considered as an objective phenomenon; the virus, despite being labelled by us as social actors, exists independently of us. The virus was labelled a 'pandemic' which is a constructed phenomenon; a virus must meet certain criteria to be labelled a pandemic and these criteria have been created by us. The concepts of professional identity, liminality, and the EP and trainee EP role are all constructed

phenomena that have been created by us as social actors to describe concepts that have been discussed, created, or observed.

#### *3.2.1.2. Epistemology*

Epistemology considers how knowledge is created, gained, and conveyed (Scotland, 2012). Generally, relativist ontological stances lend themselves to a subjectivist epistemology, whereas an ontological stance of idealism, lends itself to a positivist epistemology (Scotland, 2012). Keating and Della Porta (2008) state that these differences “should not be taken as hard categories but as positions on a spectrum” (p. 23).

Positivism suggests that “the world exists as an objective entity, outside of the mind of the observer... (it is) knowable in its entirety” (p. 23) and assumes “the researcher can be separated from the object of their research, and therefore observe it in a neutral way” (Keating and Della Porta, 2008, p. 23). Interpretivism, on the other hand, suggests that reality cannot be measured or quantified (Willis, 2007) and that the ‘truth’ is socially constructed by us as social actors (Pring, 2000). Schwandt (1994) suggests that the aim of interpretivist research is “to understand the complex world of lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it” (p. 221). Interpretivist research is very much context-dependent, and therefore the aim of interpretivist research is to understand the experiences of individuals in their specific context (McChesney and Aldridge, 2019).

Rather than being a dichotomy, ontology and epistemology can be understood as a spectrum. Between the two extremes of realism and relativism and between positivism and interpretivism is critical realism. Critical realism suggests that, although we can explore and research any phenomena, the vast majority of objective reality is unknowable to humans, and we therefore cannot rely on research methods to fully understand phenomena (Fletcher, 2017).

The underlying ontological assumptions of this research project lend themselves to a relativist ontological perspective and an interpretivist epistemological perspective. The project explores the real-world experiences of EPs' and trainee EPs' and considers socially constructed phenomena through exploring these experiences. My belief is that these phenomena are socially constructed, and that trying to claim an objective reality would not be in fitting with my personal and philosophical beliefs. Additionally, my research was focussed on the interpretations of my participants and of their personal experiences, which I felt lent itself well to a relativist ontology and interpretivist epistemology.

### 3.3. Research method

This research project aims to explore the experiences and reflections of EPs and trainee EPs, practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic. The data was collected using semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis was utilised, aiming to answer the research questions in table 6:

**Table 6 – research questions of the current study**

RQ1	Were there changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs and trainee EPs during this period and, if so, in what ways?
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RQ2	What were EPs and trainee EPs reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to practicing during this time?
RQ3	Do EPs and trainee EPs show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward and, if so, in what ways?

### ***3.3.1. Research design***

Research designs ensure that there is coherence and logic linking the data collected by the researcher and the conclusions drawn from the project (Rowley, 2002). The design of my research project is an exploratory case study design, with the case being the EP service in which I am on placement. An exploratory case study was chosen as the phenomena are considered within their real-life context, and as all eight participants were from one EP service it was appropriate that the case in question was the EPS. A strength of case study design is the exploration of phenomena within their real-life context (Rowley, 2002). Stake (1995) also suggest that this makes case study designs a useful tool to consider the complexity and nature of the case that is being explored. Additionally, case studies are considered to be particularly useful when exploring newly emerging phenomena, as they lend themselves to exploratory methods (Rowley, 2002).

The EPS in which I am placement is city-based and delivers a partially traded model of service delivery to schools and other educational establishments in the area. The service delivers both contributions to statutory assessments and traded delivery to educational settings that choose to buy in to the service. Additionally, the service undertakes project work, such as piloting new tools and services, and each EP has a specialist area for which they take the lead within the service. At the time of the interviews, the EPS employed one principal EP, three senior EPs, 14 main grade EPs and three trainee EPs.

### ***3.3.2. Participant recruitment***

All EPs and trainee EPs within my LA EP team were initially sent a questionnaire in May 2020 (see appendix 5). It is worth noting that the questionnaire was sent out 2 months after the start of the legally enforced restrictions. Therefore, the questionnaire is likely to have captured views at that point in time, and hence provided a snapshot in time. The participants may have had some time to process the changes to their working practices before they responded to the questions, which may have impacted their responses. The questionnaire aimed to gather participants' views and experiences regarding challenges and opportunities they had encountered practicing during the pandemic, the impact on their professional identity, and their plans for future practice. The questionnaire was intended to be utilised for a professional practice report (PPR), but I was able to gain ethical approval to use this data retrospectively, when I needed to change my Volume 1 topic as a result of the pandemic (see appendix 1). Nine EPs and two trainee EPs responded to the questionnaire and the data from these questionnaires was thematically analysed. This data was utilised to inform the interview schedule for my semi-structured interviews.

In June 2020, the eleven participants who had completed the questionnaire were emailed, to ask if they would be willing to engage in a semi-structured interview, to explore their experiences of practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic(see appendix 7). Six EPs and two trainee EPs responded to indicate that they would be prepared to take part, providing eight participants in total, all of whom had completed the questionnaire.

### 3.3.3. Participant demographics

The table below describes the demographics of the participants:

**Table 7 – Participant demographics**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Participant information</b>
Lisa	Gender: Female Role: Senior EP
Elizabeth	Gender: Female Role: EP
Sophie	Gender: Female Role: EP
Amy	Gender: Female Role: Senior EP
Rebecca	Gender: Female Role: EP
Alice	Gender: Female Role: Trainee EP
Julie	Gender: Female Role: EP
Jessica	Gender: Female Role: Trainee EP

### 3.3.4. Data collection

#### 3.3.4.1. Questionnaires

The questionnaire data was collected at the beginning of the school closures in April 2020.

The questionnaire was initially intended for another research project, however, due to Covid-19 and the limitations imposed by this, this questionnaire was utilised for my volume one research project. The questionnaire was sent out to every EP and trainee EP in the EPS and 11 participants completed the questionnaire.

The intended purpose of the questionnaire was to explore very similar phenomena to that explored by this research project. The questionnaire was developed to be exploratory and to further explore how participants were working during this period due to anecdotal

conversations that were taking place within the team around changes to working practices and the impacts of this. The topics covered in the questionnaire included the working practices participants had been involved in at the start of the restrictions, the challenges, and opportunities they had encountered. There were also questions exploring any changes to practice since the start of the restrictions and whether the restrictions had led participants to think differently about their role and future practice. The responses of the participants led to the creation of the interview schedule. The questionnaire responses had focussed on the practice of participants throughout this period, the challenges, and opportunities, which were all included in the interview schedule. However, participants had also considered deeper aspects of their professional identity and how this had been impacted by the restrictions, which led me to provide some focus to this in the interview schedule.

Open questions were used, making this an unstructured questionnaire (Bryman, 2008). This was very much an exploratory study and open-ended questions allowed participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings, and reflections in their own language (Siniscalco and Auriat, 2005). When creating the questionnaire, Siniscalco and Auriat's (2005) guidance was followed, for example, the use of simple language, avoiding lengthy questions, and avoiding double negatives (see appendix 5). The questionnaire comprised six questions open-ended questions and participant were advised that it would take around 10-20 minutes to complete.

The results of the questionnaire were utilised as prompts in the interviews and also helped to cement my research focus. The questionnaire responses were a useful aide memoir for participants in the interviews, as Siniscalco and Auriat (2005) point out, it can be difficult for participants to recall behaviours, thoughts, and feelings retrospectively. Some questions in the interview referenced the questionnaire, which allowed participants to consider whether their experiences and reflections had changed since the restrictions began. The questionnaire also allowed me to focus on whether this period had led participants to think about their professional identity and general working practices, something participants considered in their questionnaire responses.

#### *3.3.4.2. Interviews*

Interviews allow the researcher and participant to work in collaboration to uncover and interpret the participant's meaning-making of a particular topic (Schwandt, 2000).

The interviews were semi-structured in nature. Semi-structured interviews use open-ended questions, and the interview schedule is developed before the interview takes place (Knox and Burkard, 2009). The semi-structured interview is designed to elicit information about the phenomena to be explored, but also is flexible in that participants' responses can be explored in further detail and the ordering of questions can be varied (Knox and Burkard, 2009).

Turner (2010) points out that creating interview questions is one of the most important aspects of effective interview design. Semi-structured interviews tend to be focussed on the interviewee's point of view. Going 'off on a tangent' is often promoted, as this may provide

an understanding of what the participant sees as most important aspects of the phenomena being explored (Bryman, 2008). McNamara (2006) suggests five key considerations when creating interview questions; questions should be open-ended, neutral, asked one at a time, clearly worded and the researcher should be wary of utilising 'why' questions. It is also important that researchers are prepared with probes and prompts to further explore participants' responses (Turner, 2010).

McNamara's (2006) eight principles were utilised to ensure complete preparation.

McNamara (2006) suggests that the interview should have: as little distraction as possible, the interview purpose reiterated, the confidentiality terms restated, the interview format explained, the approximate length of interview restated, clear information regarding how to contact the researcher after the interview, the opportunity for the participant to ask questions and a method of recording the interview that does not rely on memory. There was difficulty in ensuring that the first criteria were met, as the interviews were conducted remotely over the phone, but otherwise all of these criteria were met.

McNamara (2006) suggests seven recommendations for conducting interviews. These are: checking that the Dictaphone is working before the interview, asking one question at a time, remaining neutral, encouraging responses with verbal prompts, providing transition between topics, and being careful to remain in control.

Interviews took place over the phone, due to social distancing restrictions. Social desirability bias has been found to be a difficulty with phone interviews, in comparison to

in-person interviews (Tourangeau and Yan, 2007). However, I chose to utilise phone interviews over video interviews, as phone interviews do give participants more anonymity than face to face interviews (Hill et al, 2005). Participants have been found to be more forthcoming in phone interviews (Brannen, 1988) and participants being able to see the researcher's non-verbal reactions to their responses may present potential response bias (Marcus and Crane, 1986), although it is important to note that bias can be created without body language. The interviews were up to one hour in length, depending on the amount of information the participants wished to share. Participants were offered a second interview to discuss topics not covered in the hour, this was not needed in this study, all interviews were 45 minutes to one hour. The interview schedule provided an outline for the interview itself and all topics list in the topic/issue column were discussed in every interview. However, as is appropriate with semi-structured interviews, the amount of time spent on different sections of the interview different between participants and probes and prompts were used to explore tangents. The interview schedule can be seen in appendix 4.

### ***3.3.5. Data analysis***

#### ***3.3.5.1. Thematic analysis overview***

This research project is based on an interpretivist methodology which employed thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse semi-structured interviews. The data from the questionnaire went through an initial coding process, before the decision was made to utilise the data from the questionnaire to inform my Volume 1 interview schedule. This allows for each participant to tell their story individually, with as few prior assumptions as possible. Additionally, thematic analysis allows for themes that are common across the data

set to be identified, but also for differences to be identified (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Once the data has been gathered, the researcher then engages in a subjective process of interpretation.

#### *3.3.5.2. Inductive and deductive approaches*

Thematic analysis can approach data sets inductively or deductively. An inductive approach involves the researcher engaging in a 'bottom up' method of analysis, utilising the data to identify codes and themes (Terry et al., 2017). A deductive approach is a 'top down' method of analysis, whereby the researcher utilises theories that already exist to provide a basis for the analysis (Terry et al., 2017). An inductive approach was used for this research project; however it should be noted that the researcher brings their own interpretations and biases to the thematic analysis process, linking to the ontological position of themselves as the researcher.

A major difference between the two approaches is that, using an inductive approach, the researcher will read and reread the data to familiarise themselves with it, and to look for any initial trends, prior to any analysis being conducted (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). Generally, inductive approaches, such as those used for this project, use a non-probabilistic sample of participants, as these studies are concerned with generating initial data (Guest, MacQueen and Namey, 2012). An inductive approach was chosen for this study as the Covid-19 pandemic is a novel situation, and the purpose of this project was exploratory in nature (Kim and Asbury, 2020). It is important to note however, that although my intention was to use a completely inductive approach for the thematic

analysis, I had the research questions and the use of liminality as a lens through which to make sense of the participants responses at the forefront of my mind during analysis. This could have affected my coding and my sense making of my data.

#### *3.3.5.3. 'Big Q' and 'small q' distinction*

Terry et al. (2017) suggest that there is a further broad distinction in thematic analysis, that of the small q and big Q approaches. Small q approaches are those that are more positivist in their analytical methods and tend to be concerned with determining reliability within coding. Big Q approaches are more qualitative and tend to have more theoretical freedom, giving flexibility for the researchers. Small q approaches tend to lend themselves to a more deductive approach, whereas big Q approaches lend themselves to a more inductive approach (Terry et al. 2017). Terry et al. (2017), make a further distinction between the two approaches by pointing out that in big Q approaches, the analysis is more creative, rather than technical, with the researcher bringing “their analytic skills and experiences and personal and conceptual standpoints” to the analysis (p.20). This research project utilised thematic analysis that was more fitting with ‘big Q’ approaches, as an inductive approach was used.

#### *3.3.5.4. Semantic or latent analysis*

Semantic coding describes the surface level, explicit meaning of the data, whereas in latent coding:

“the codes capture implicit meaning, such as ideas, meanings, concepts and assumptions which are not explicitly stated...” (p. 22 Terry et al., 2017)

Terry et al. (2017) suggest that the choice between semantic or latent analysis must fit with the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the researcher. More experiential and therefore positivist, realist assumptions tend to be a better fit for semantic analysis, whereas more experiential, constructionist and relativist assumptions lend themselves to latent coding. Joffe (2012) suggests that both semantic and latent approaches can be utilised concurrently in thematic analysis. When analysing a dataset, researchers are often analysing the semantic themes initially, but as the overall picture of the dataset becomes clearer, they may begin to look towards more latent meanings, which require interpretation from the researcher. The data in this research project was analysed for both semantic themes and latent themes.

#### *3.3.5.5. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phases*

Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase model was utilised for the thematic analysis. Terry et al. (2017) point out that despite having these six phases, the thematic analysis process is rarely a completely linear process and that the researcher will usually find themselves moving between the different phases throughout the process.

#### **Figure 2 – Braun and Clarke's (2006) six stage thematic analysis process**

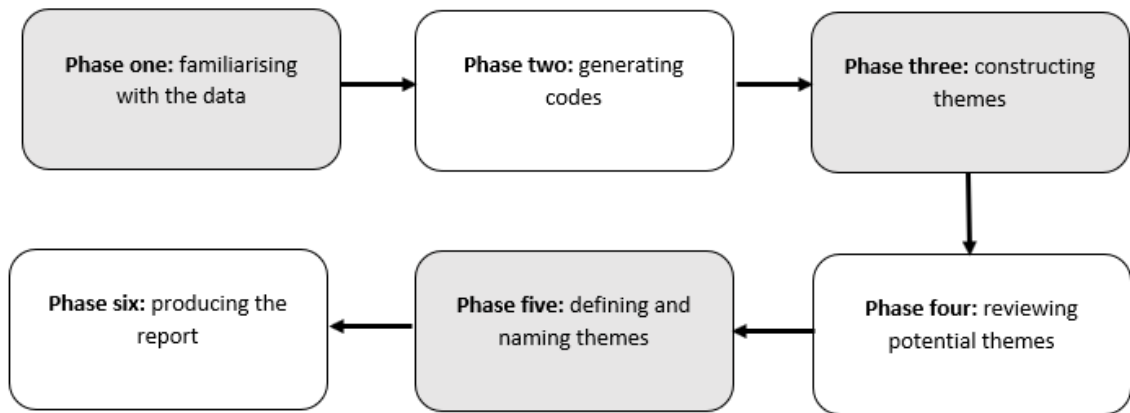


Table 8 details the processes engaged in throughout my data analysis:

**Table 8: Processes for thematic analysis in this project**

<p><b>Phase 1</b></p>	<p><b>Familiarising self with the data</b> - Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the importance of this stage of analysis, positing that it is the “bedrock for the rest of the analysis” (p87). They describe this process as getting to know the dataset deeply and completely which then aids deep engagement with the dataset. Alhojailan (2012) advocates for reading the dataset several times before and after identifying codes, as this permits the researcher to see the full picture and make initial connections within the dataset and this prevents the researcher from making any premature conclusions.</p>	<p>All eight interviews were transcribed from audio into a Microsoft Word document.</p> <p>The entire dataset was read once more without codes being assigned to the dataset.</p>
<p><b>Phase 2</b></p>	<p><b>Generating codes</b> - Phase two involves making notes, or ‘codes’ and highlighting these throughout the dataset. Coding should be open and inclusive and sometimes data may have more than one code, or no code at all, if they are not relevant to the research question/s. Codes are flexible and will be revised and refined throughout the analysis process, although it is important that a consistent approach is utilised when coding the data (Nowell et al. 2017).</p>	<p>The dataset was read through with initial codes being assigned to the dataset, using research questions as the basis for this code generation. Codes were made using the ‘comment’ function in Microsoft Word. Codes were both latent and semantic in nature.</p>
<p><b>Phase 3</b></p>	<p><b>Constructing themes</b> - See appendix 10 for the process of creating and refining the themes in this study. Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that the research question/s guide this process by allowing the researcher to decide what is and is not relevant in terms of the patterns of codes. Developing the themes involves a process of scrutinising the codes and “combining, clustering, or collapsing codes together...” (Terry et al., 2017, p. 27)</p> <p>The process involves finding a dominant concept that is shared amongst a range of codes, which allows the researcher to establish what a theme is about and then to decide whether certain codes do or do not fit into this theme. Terry et al. (2017) point out that, at this point, it is very unusual for themes to stay the same throughout the entire thematic analysis process. A “productive, iterative, reflective process of data-engagement” (p. 28) implies that it makes sense for themes to be treated as provisional at this stage. Nowell et al. (2017) advocate for the use of visual aids at this stage of analysis, such as thematic maps, to enable the researcher</p>	<p>Dominant concepts were utilised before a process of assigning codes to the relevant dominant concepts. A ‘miscellaneous’ theme was utilised for any codes that did not fit within the provisional themes. Provisional thematic maps were utilised as a visual aid for creating themes. An example of this from this research project would be the codes of ‘lowered focus and concentration’, ‘anxiety’, ‘changing mood’, ‘distress’, ‘trauma’ and ‘pressure’ being used within the theme ‘emotional impact’.</p>

	to explore relationships between provisional themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) also advocate for a 'miscellaneous' theme, which can be used to provisionally contain codes that do not fit into the current themes, as these themes may become important later in the analysis process.	
<b>Phase 4</b>	<b>Reviewing potential themes</b> – This allows the researcher to ensure that each theme fits with the coded data, the dataset as a whole and the research question/s. This reviewing process often leads to adjustment to themes and, sometimes, further analysis. Initially, this process involves ensuring that every code included in a provisional theme are clearly related to that theme and that each theme is distinctive. In this phase, the researcher also needs to check that the themes work well in relation to the dataset as a whole and so there is advocacy for going back to the whole dataset, rather than just the codes, to check this. Braun and Clarke (2006) also state that it is important to ensure that the themes are distinct but still relate to one another.	Themes were reviewed at this phase. Every code was checked to ensure that it was relevant to the theme. As a result of this process, several themes were collapsed into one another, some were discarded, and some were separated. The whole dataset was reread considering these themes to ensure coherence to the dataset. A process of ensuring distinctiveness and relatedness of the themes was engaged in.
<b>Phase 5</b>	<b>Defining and naming themes</b>	Themes were defined and named. Where provisional names had been assigned already, these were reconsidered to ensure that they represented the data coherently.
<b>Phase 6</b>	<b>Producing the report</b> - Terry et al. (2017) state that a key decision is whether to include quoted data extracts in the final report, or whether a more analytical focus is used to discuss the data. They suggest that many researchers choose to utilise both styles and that there is usually a mixture of these, utilising analytic commentary alongside quoted data extracts. Starks and Trinidad (2007) suggest that including data extracts from the dataset increase the trustworthiness of the process- and help to build a compelling explanation of the data and the conclusions and implications drawn from it.	The 'results' section of this thesis details the themes and data found using both quoted text from the dataset and an analytical focus to discuss the data.

### **3.4. Ethical considerations**

#### ***3.4.1. Ethical approval***

This research project was approved through the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Process (see appendix 1).

#### ***3.4.2. Informed consent***

EPs and trainee EPs within the service were sent an information sheet (see appendix 2) detailing the aims of the research project before recruitment. The information sheet was sent to all eleven participants who had previously completed the questionnaire. My aim was to recruit 6 to 8 participants, as I felt that this number would provide me with enough participant to gain a rich amount of data, however I felt that more than eight participants would have provided me with logistical difficulties in analysing the data. The participants were all from one EPS, as the EPS was the case I was interested in studying, as previously stated.

Once participants showed an interest in completing the questionnaires, a consent form (see appendix 6) was sent to those participants individually and once consent was received, they were sent the questionnaire (see appendix 5). The consent utilised opt-in consent, that is, it was only assumed that consent was given when the consent form was completed in full. All participants were assured that they could ask any questions before providing consent. Prior to each interview, informed verbal consent was sought again. The form can be seen in the appendix 3 and includes project details, the right to withdraw, the limitations to confidentiality, information about anonymity, information storage and audio

recording the interview. Participants were also informed that the recording of the interview could be stopped at any time.

#### ***3.4.3. Confidentiality and data storage***

The interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, then transferred onto a computer and password protected. The only individual who knew the password was me as the researcher. Once the interviews were transferred, these files were deleted immediately from the Dictaphone. Once my viva is completed, all recordings will be deleted from the computer. All names and other identifiable information were not transcribed. Electronic data were stored on an encrypted external hard drive to which only myself as the researcher could access. A back-up of the interviews was stored using an encrypted storage space on the University BEAR (Birmingham Environment for Academic Research) system.

#### ***3.4.4. Right to withdraw***

Participants were informed of their right to withdraw at the time of consent and were given my mobile phone number and email address as point of contact, should they have wished to withdraw from the study after the interviews had taken place. The participants were also reminded in the information sheets and consent forms that they could withdraw their data up until two weeks after the interview.

#### ***3.4.5. Wellbeing***

Participants were informed that they could stop the interview at any time. Participants were given the option to pause the interview for any reason at any point/s. Participants were

given my contact details so that they could contact me with any concerns following the interview.

### **3.5. Trustworthiness**

#### *3.5.1. External validity*

External validity relates to the generalisability of a research study (Nowell et al., 2017). A potential limitation of case studies often considered, is that the findings are not generalisable to other scenarios and settings (Gerring, 2007). Merriam and Tisdell (2015) posit that it is impossible to establish true generalisability in the social sciences, as human behaviour is always changing, and circumstances are never static. Case study research usually aims to be 'transferable'; that is, the results can be applied to, or relevant to, another context (Jean-Luc, 2011).

This research project, despite being a case study, is intended to provide conclusions and applications which could be useful if applied to EP practice in other services. Additionally, as Yin (2014) points out, case studies are not usually utilised to generalise to other populations but can be generalisable in a theoretical sense. For example, the developed ideas should have application beyond the participants of the study. Relating to this research project for example, the implications for EP practice could be applicable and utilised by other EPS', as opposed to only being applicable to the EPS in which I am on placement.

#### *3.5.2. Internal validity*

Internal validity relates to the consistency between the views of the participants and the researcher's subjective understanding of them (Nowell et al., 2017). Internal validity can be difficult to establish in qualitative research, as researchers are not manipulating variables as they might be in quantitative research (Bulmer, 1979). Hammersley (1992) points out that internal validity in qualitative research is determined by "our confidence in our knowledge, but not certainty of its truth" (p. 50). Bryman (2008) makes the case that the ecological validity of qualitative research tends to be easier to establish than in quantitative research, as the participant tends to be a part of the system or phenomena they are considering. In this study, internal validity was increased via exploration of the participants' views over time, through the initial questionnaires and the later semi-structured interviews. Internal validity was also enhanced during the analysis process, using checks of the codes and themes against the original dataset. However, it is accepted that in inductive thematic analysis, the researcher's subjective interpretation of the data is a key part of the analytical process.

Maxwell (2013) suggests that:

"Validity is never something that can be proved or taken for granted. Validity is also relative: It has to be assessed in relationship to the purposes and circumstances of the research, rather than being a context-independent property of methods or conclusions" (p. 121).

In terms of this research project, the purposes are to explore how the participants make sense of a phenomenon and reflect to consider their own current and future practice. As Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest, these thoughts and reflections will inevitably differ between participants depending upon innumerable factors. Therefore, internal validity is not something that can be 'proven' in this sense. As researchers, we can only take reasonable measures to ensure that data collection and analysis are as valid as possible.

### *3.5.3. Reliability*

Reliability refers to the replicability of research. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) point out that reliability is especially difficult to determine in the social sciences, as human behaviour is ever-changing, and therefore results from data will inevitably change when replicated.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) suggest that it is more important within qualitative research to ensure the results are consistent with the data that has been gathered, making them consistent and dependable within themselves. Reliability or dependability within qualitative research is determined by a well-documented research process (Nowell et al., 2017). To support the dependability of my results, an audit trail was kept throughout the data collection, analysis processes and my reflections.

### *3.5.4. Positionality*

Thomas (2013) posits that a researchers' positionality needs to be made explicit, so that their socio-cultural background is understood, as well as the potential impacts of this on their research. Research can be impacted by researcher/s and participant/s in many ways, not limited to our own thoughts, feelings, and perceptions (Bourke, 2014). The process of 'reflexivity' by the researcher aims to examine each step of the research process, looking for possible sources of bias, or other ways in which the researcher may have influenced the research process (Pillow, 2003). Although we can attempt to be as objective as possible, as researchers it is important that we acknowledge that we can never be completely free of subjectivities (Hall, 1990), but that in acknowledging our subjectivities and by being reflexive we can at least take account of this.

In this research study, my own identity, thoughts, feelings, and perceptions will have influenced the research process in innumerable ways. My choice of research project, methodology, resulting from my ontological and epistemological position, the interviews themselves and my choice of language during the interviews will have all been influenced by my positionality as a researcher. For example the assumption that every individual's reality is different may lead me to ask questions in a particular way, differently to a research with more relativist and positivist philosophical assumptions. My data analysis is likely to have been influenced by my positionality and another researcher would have formed different codes and themes during analysis and would have drawn different conclusions to those I have drawn from the results. In order to mitigate these subjectivities, I took several steps, including being as reflexive as possible throughout the process, having a peer check my interview schedule and peer checking of intercoder reliability.

## **CHAPTER 4**

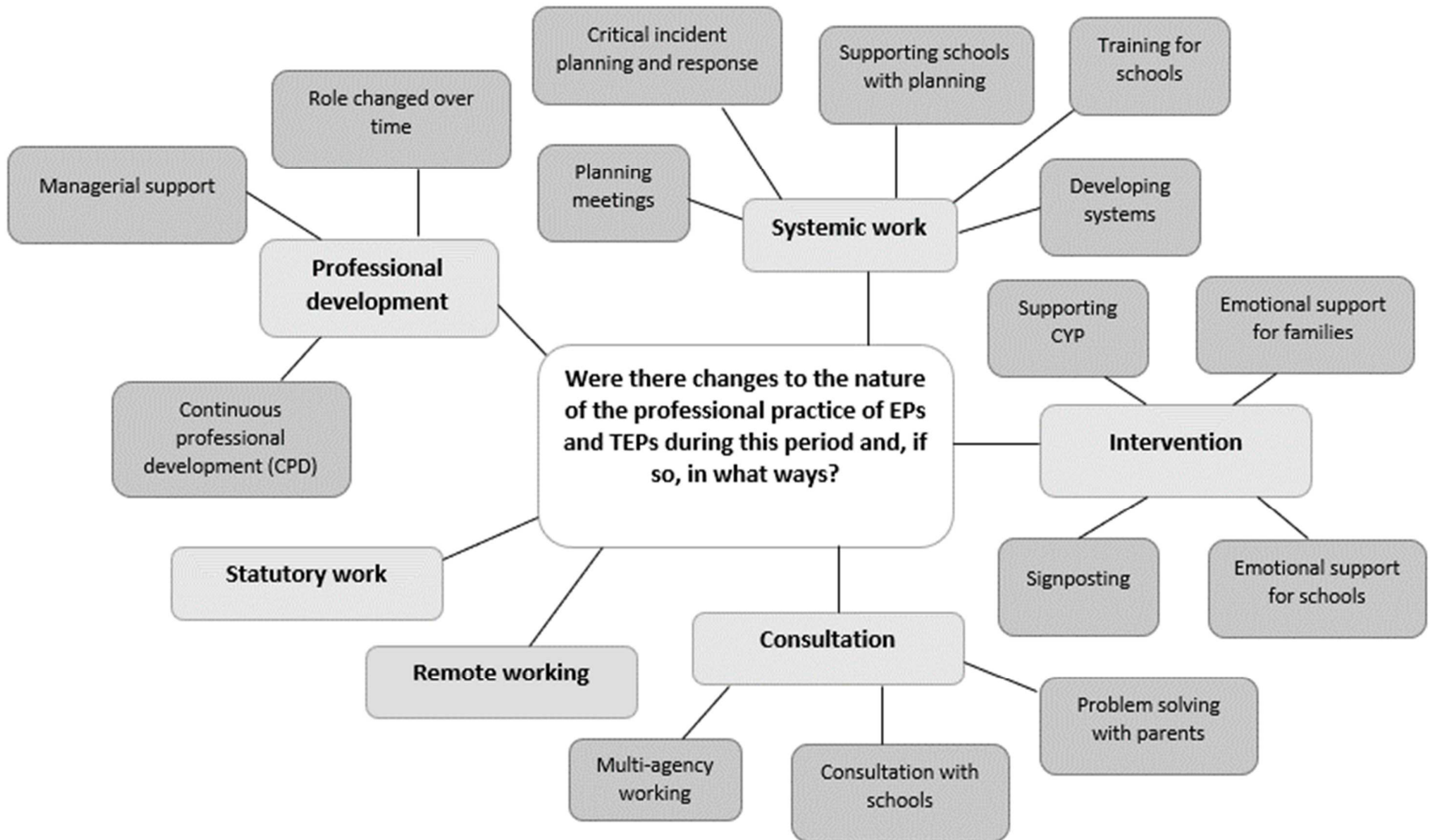
### **4. RESULTS**

#### **4.1. Introduction to the chapter**

This chapter summarises the findings from the interviews conducted and the subsequent thematic analysis. Each research question is presented, followed by a thematic map and superordinate and subordinate themes. Each subordinate theme is discussed with supporting quotes from the participants. The findings are discussed in relation to the literature discussed in chapter two.

**4.2. Were there changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs and trainee EPs during this period and, if so, in what ways?**

Figure 3 – Themes related to research question 1



#### 4.2.1. Superordinate theme – Professional development

##### 4.2.1.1. Sub-theme: Role changed over time

This theme captures participants' reflections on how their role changed throughout the period of March to July 2020. Lisa commented:

*"...there was a massive emphasis on the critical incident stuff, 'cause we just didn't know... what this was going to result in."*

Commenting on the volume of work, Alice said:

*"...it's definitely become... busier... but with work that's not just statutory work, so it's become a lot more varied... systemic work for the local authority."*

##### 4.2.1.2. Sub-theme: Managerial support

Both senior EPs commented that managerial supervision was a major aspect of their role during the period. Lisa felt that main grade EPs in the service were:

*"...looking to sort of management to say... what kind of approach are we going to take in all of this."*

Lisa also indicated the supportive aspect of her supervisory role:

*"...I think people needed us to kind of hold them..."*

Amy also emphasised her supervisory role during the restrictions:

*"... I did some statutory work, but mostly it was around supporting the team..."*

#### *4.2.1.3. Sub-theme: Continuous Professional Development (CPD)*

Five participants stated that they had accessed more CPD during the restrictions than they would usually have done. This included some trauma training that was accessed by the whole team. Sophie explained:

*“... I’ve made some recommendations based on the um, training we had around felt safety in schools...”*

Rebecca also stated that she would usually feel as though she didn’t have time for CPD, but that due to the restrictions, she was able to access webinars that she usually would not have done:

*“...usually in term time... I’m like oh I haven’t got space for that, delete, delete, delete, but actually I’ve found... I’ve been like tracking the webinars down...”*

Additionally, Alice stated:

*“I did have a lot of time to spend my evenings reading about, I don’t know... things like motivational interviewing, webinars, erm... and that was really nice because you don’t often get that in our job...”*

#### *4.2.2. Superordinate theme – Systemic work*

##### *4.2.2.1. Sub-theme: Critical incident planning and response*

Two participants noted that planning the critical incident response was a key part of their

role, particularly early on in the period. Amy spoke about planning the critical incident response as a senior EP:

*“...from a senior perspective... the fact that we were able to bounce things off each other and work together, rather than in isolation.”*

Sophie spoke about a particular critical incident she had experienced:

*“...a parent death in one of my secondary schools... I spoke to the SENCo... we generated some letters... I had feedback to say that they found it very helpful in the early stages just to have that reassurance... kind of validating their approach to it...”*

#### *4.2.2.2. Sub-theme: Supporting schools with planning*

Three interviewees spoke about supporting schools with planning their response to the limits imposed by the pandemic. Sophie spoke about some work she had conducted with one of her schools around an audit of staff wellbeing:

*“...the SENCo’s idea was just to collect as much information as she could, with the view to identifying staff who might not be in a position to help, um, students who had been bereaved or have experienced a lot of emotional difficulty...”*

Jessica talked about supporting her schools with concerns they had around their response to the restrictions:

*“...we actually did an erm... made an action plan for the approach and for general*

*transition... we wanted to develop an action plan more generally that would erm, support a range of children..."*

#### *4.2.2.3. Sub-theme: Training for schools*

Four interviewees stated that they conducted remote training for their schools. Elizabeth talked about training sessions she had conducted with teaching assistants in preparation for September, as well as some precision teaching training for staff. Sophie and Rebecca both spoke about some literacy training that they had delivered. Rebecca spoke about some of the challenges with this:

*"...it took a lot of planning, definitely, to try and think about how it was going to work erm, online... there's lots of modelling and it's very practical..."*

#### *4.2.2.4. Sub-theme: Planning meetings*

Four interviewees stated that they had conducted planning meetings with their schools in the summer term of 2020. Alice noted that these planning meetings:

*"...launched quite a lot of work that I've been doing in the summer term."*

Jessica's planning meeting with one school in particular focussed on supporting with statutory requests:

*"...the focus of that tended to be more around statutory work so erm, SENCo wanted support with some stage 1 requests..."*

The majority of interviewees who spoke about planning meetings, found that they were quite difficult to conduct, due to the ever-changing restrictions and regulations. Julie stated:

*“I think their (school staff’s) feeling is that come September when all kids go back, priorities might vastly change...”*

#### *4.2.2.5. Sub-theme: Developing systems*

Three interviewees spoke of systemic work that they were involved in for the LA during this period. Lisa talked about supporting the LA with their risk assessments for children with EHCPs, following a government initiative requiring this, alongside the other senior EPs. Both Alice and Jessica as trainee EPs, spoke about conducting a forcefield analysis with the senior members of the team. Alice commented that:

*“something really nice was getting together with the other trainees to just erm... have contact and plan that.”*

Jessica also spoke about the forcefield analysis and the benefits this had for her development as a trainee EP, allowing her to:

*“...practice those skills and honing those skills erm, in a way that was gonna benefit the EPS as well...”*

#### 4.2.3. Superordinate theme – Intervention

##### 4.2.3.1. Sub-theme: Signposting

Seven of the respondents talked about signposting and sending resources to schools, parents and carers, particularly during the beginning of the restrictions. Jessica stated that:

*“...a school asked... when I was sharing resources with individual parents... to share them with them as well...”*

Elizabeth also emphasised the offer of a follow-up conversation, to go through the resources, if deemed helpful:

*“...sending them resources... having a follow up conversation if it was felt that it was needed...”*

##### 4.2.3.2. Sub-theme: Supporting CYP

This theme encapsulates the ways that respondents had been supporting CYP. Two respondents spoke about assessing CYP remotely. Sophie stated:

*“(he was) anxious in the school environment but very comfortable at home... but interestingly, the most valuable part of it was just chatting to him...”*

Rebecca spoke about some ways that she has gained the views of CYP to inform her assessment:

*"I wrote them a letter with just some questions about school... then for one child... they couldn't print it off or whatever, we just went over it over the phone and parent kind of relayed it to the child, it kind of got there that way..."*

Amy stated that she had been sending information to parents or carers to share with their children:

*"(I've been) sending things to parents to share with the kids to try and prepare them..."*

#### *4.2.3.3. Sub-theme: Emotional support for families*

Four of the interviewees spoke about supporting families emotionally. Most of these comments were relating to parents and carers struggling with the pressure of home schooling. Lisa commented:

*"I have had a couple of chats with mums you know who are really anxious..."*

Julie spoke about one parent who was:

*"...putting a huge amount of pressure on herself to make sure they were doing all this schoolwork..."*

Both Elizabeth and Jessica talked about parents needing someone to listen and that they were well placed to provide this support. Elizabeth commented:

*"...just having somebody who is able to listen..."*

Jessica stated that she:

*“...ended up having weekly calls with for a for weeks and I think it’s that opportunity to offload more than anything.”*

#### *4.2.3.4. Sub-theme: Emotional support for schools*

Three interviewees spoke about providing emotional support to school staff. Elizabeth commented:

*“...[having] somebody to say, ‘it’s OK, you’re doing the best that you can.’”*

Julie spoke about the emotional support she provided to one SENCo in particular:

*“...so, I think she was just getting herself all stressed out about y’know doing it wrong and it being looked at by the local authority and that sort of thing... erm, so I spent quite a bit of time erm, kind of looking at that...”*

#### *4.2.4. Superordinate theme – Consultation*

##### *4.2.4.1. Sub-theme: Problem-solving with parents*

Five interviewees spoke about utilising problem-solving with parents, with the majority of these interviewees indicating that they were doing more of this work than they would in usual times. Rebecca spoke about a particular case, for which was useful to problem-solve with parents:

*“...developed some kind of obsessive behaviours, so like light switching, being scared to go outside, erm... so I had a couple of consultations with parents about that...”*

Jessica reported that it allowed her to work more consultatively with parents:

*"...spending like a longer amount of time talking with parents about what was going on and problem solving together..."*

Julie talked about the ongoing involvement that she was able to have with parents:

*"It was nice in the respect that actually I could speak to her every week so you kind of had that consistent involvement..."*

#### *4.2.4.2. Sub-theme: Consultation with schools*

All respondents noted that, initially they were facing a lack of contact from many schools.

Elizabeth noted that:

*"there was a long period of time where I'd not really heard from my schools..."*

Sophie indicated that schools were not initially able to take up offers of support:

*"I got very little take up, kind of lots of emails to say thank you very much and really appreciative...."*

Elizabeth spoke specifically about supporting schools with transition:

*"...a lot of transition work in relation to looking at plans... identifying the difference between um, the current setting and the setting... and how that changes."*

Alice spoke about completing 'Making Action Plans' (MAPs) as a consultation process with schools:

*“Yeah, so I’ve done a couple of MAPs, erm, making action plans...”*

Jessica also spoke about how her work felt more consultative during this period:

*“I suppose it felt like work at a more consultative and structured level... unpicking concerns...”*

#### *4.2.4.3. Sub-theme: Multi-agency working*

This theme encapsulates the multi-agency working completed by interviewees. Lisa mentioned that she had been working with lots of teams during this period:

*“Yeah, there was a meeting online with people from commissioning and that was all about kind of occupational therapy, sensory assessments, um... tribunal type stuff...”*

Elizabeth stated that she had been working with the Early Intervention Team and Sophie spoke about working with various professionals regarding a particular child:

*“...I suppose that’s been my big focus actually in June, I’ve been meeting with multi-professionals around this child and um, the care home doing some work with the staff there.”*

Rebecca spoke about having more conversations with SEND officers than she would have done in usual times:

*“...so, kind of co-production conversations with kind of, officers. I think I’ve had more of those in lockdown than I’ve had... the rest of the time which is quite interesting...”*

#### 4.2.5. Superordinate theme: Statutory work

All eight interviewees spoke about the statutory work that they had been involved in during this time. Lisa talked about the initial confusion concerning statutory work, as EPs waited for guidance:

*"...a lot of interim reports and that kind of thing... or even at one point we were thinking will we have to suspend the whole thing... we were waiting for quite a long time on guidance from the DfE..."*

Joint Assessment Meetings (JAMs) were discussed by several interviewees. Lisa stated that she had had positive experiences with conducting these meetings:

*"You know it means that we don't do all of the work on our own in isolation, it's sort of a joint collaborative thing. It always feels good."*

Alice talked about a similar way of working with regard to statutory advices that she had found useful:

*"...I spoke to mum over the phone and then I wrote up a draft of the EHC... then I sent my draft to school and then we got together on a Skype meeting to discuss the EHC basically and to try and think about recommendations together on Skype."*

Sophie had also attended a tribunal during this period and Julie made the point that the amount of statutory work had remained high throughout the period:

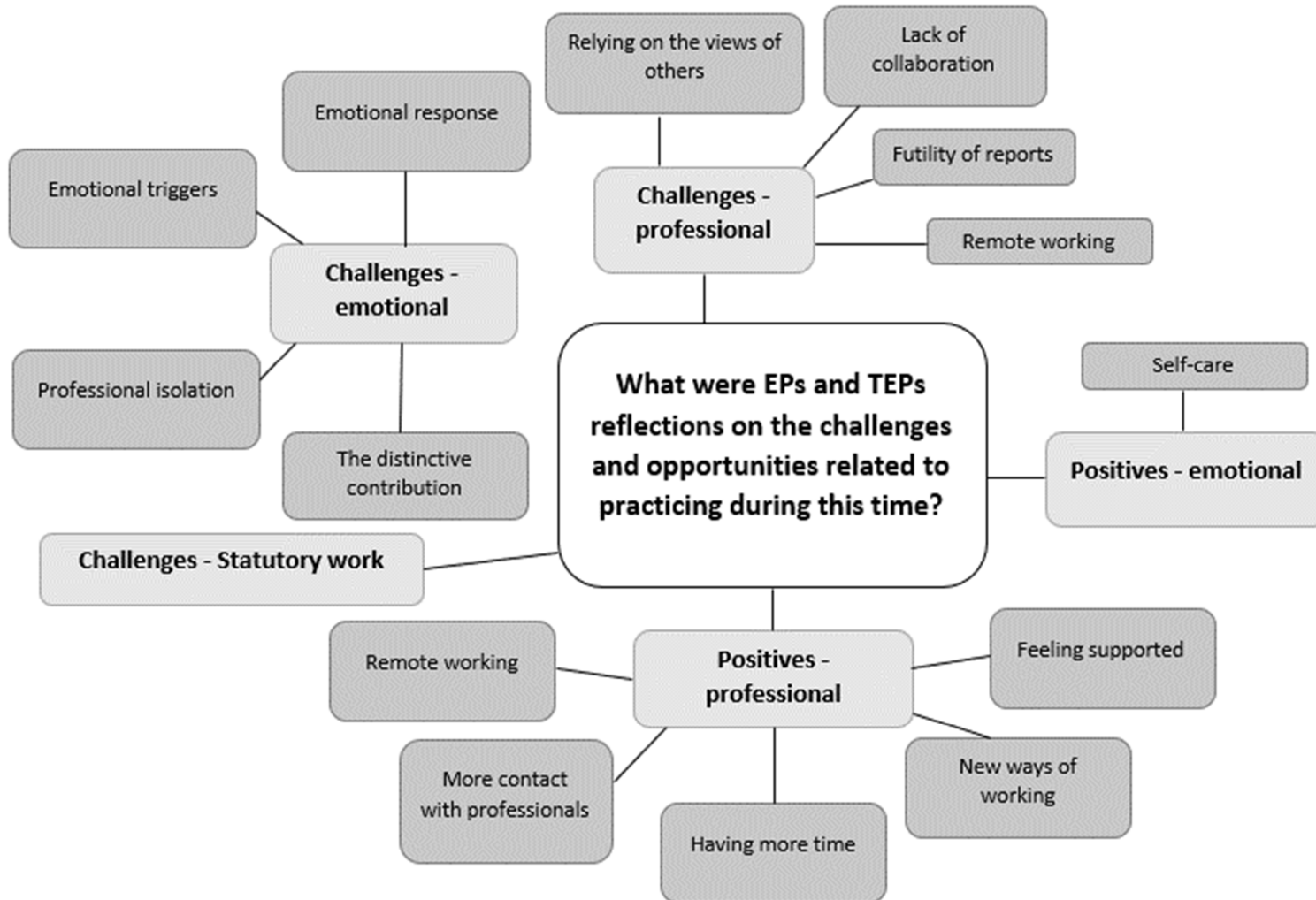
*"And then it's just sort of all come at... cos I was thinking oh maybe the statutory work will trail off over time, but it's really not has it?"*

#### *4.2.6. Remote working*

A major change to the ways in which participants were practicing during this period, was that they were all working exclusively remotely, from their homes. Participants spoke about this remote working involving new technology which they were either completely new to, or had not used much before, for example video conferencing software for team meetings, parent meetings, meetings with schools and multi-agency meetings. Three participants also spoke about delivering training remotely and the associated challenges that this presented.

#### **4.3. What were EPs and trainee EPs reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to practicing during this time?**

Figure 4 – Themes related to research question 2



#### 4.3.1. Superordinate theme – Challenges – emotional

##### 4.3.1.1. Sub-theme: Emotional response

The emotional response of participants was a key theme to come from the data collected. Five interviewees spoke about feeling overwhelmed, especially during the beginning of the period. Sophie explained:

*“...I just seem to remember April feeling very stressful. I wasn’t handing in advices on time, I couldn’t... I felt like I didn’t have capacity to do it...”*

Julie also spoke about the level of statutory work alongside the changes in her personal life being difficult to manage:

*“alongside trying to keep up with the statutory work, erm... it felt really, really challenging to begin with because it was just so new and we hadn’t kind of figured out how we were going to manage childcare...”*

Anxiety was a prominent emotional response, which is consistent with Jin, Pang and Cameron’s (2007) finding, that anxiety is a key emotion linked to a crisis response. Lisa described how her emotional response changed throughout the restrictions:

*“...making sure that there was enough food, all of that is really, really stressful and anxiety-provoking. Once it all calmed down... things felt sort of less stressful, I was less emotional, I was more kind of able to regulate...”*

Sophie also indicated that her emotional response changed throughout the period:

*“...I think it is a rollercoaster, I do think it goes up and down, especially as we’ve gone through the different stages of the pandemic.”*

Elizabeth spoke about the changes she experienced throughout her life and how these changes led to increased levels of anxiety, as well as the unknown:

*“...it completely puts everything that you know on its head... and going back into that situation, going back into schools... it is what makes that anxiety pop up again, you know, that’s now becoming the new unknown at the minute. Because you can’t visualise what that’s going to be like.”*

McAlonan et al. (2005) also found that, in response to the SARS outbreak, the majority of the population experienced feelings of helplessness. Vinkers et al. (2020) point out that elevated levels of stress and anxiety often leads to decreased concentration and productivity.

Elizabeth stated:

*“I think I remember trying to write a report, or write an advice and just not being able to get past a sentence of something (laughs)... it felt hard to be able to concentrate on that side of things when there was so much else that was sort of going on...”*

Two interviewees conceptualised the Covid-19 pandemic as a trauma. McAlonan et al. (2005) found that 16% of respondents in their study had experienced traumatic levels of stress in response to the SARS outbreak. Lisa described these feelings of trauma:

*“...it actually felt like we were being kind of... deeply traumatised by the whole thing... the way it was explained in the news and everything, it felt like this massive threat to humanity...”*

#### 4.3.1.2. Sub-theme: *The distinctive contribution*

This theme encapsulates the reflections two respondents made regarding their distinctive contribution during the restrictions. Lisa communicated a level of anxiety that she had around her role as an EP and related this to her feelings about the role more generally:

*“Because we didn't want to be forgotten you know, in all of this... we're a small service if you like... we often get overlooked in these sorts of things... and we're kind of like ' Hello, we're here!' and so I think a lot of that was done to be helpful but also to make us visible?”*

Similarly, Rebecca spoke about concerns regarding feeling ‘redundant’ during this period, and trying to forge a role for herself, whilst acknowledging the roles of other services. Adams et al. (2006) suggests that our professional identity is stronger related to how we “compare and differentiate” (p.56) ourselves from other professionals:

*“...I think I did feel a little bit like we should have a role in what was going on, but I didn't really know where we sat in terms of what we were doing. I felt a little bit... redundant in a way.”*

Seven interviewees spoke about anxiety specifically surrounding their role and their professional identity. Shinnars-Kennedy (2016) explain that liminal spaces can cause disruption around our existing knowledge and our professional identity. Lisa was concerned there might be a lack of work for the team:

*“I was thinking how are we going to fill our time, how can we justify still being paid?”*

#### 4.3.1.3. Sub-theme: Emotional triggers

The level of pressure some participants felt during this time was evident, with the level of work cited as a stressor. Sophie described:

*“...because if you’re a main grade EP, you’ve got more schools and more statutory work, so, the visits are going to be more. So, in order for me to fulfil my time allocation, I’d have to go into schools several times a week...”*

Having to work in new ways and the unknown aspect of this also contributed to the emotional response for some interviewees. Alice talked about this period being difficult emotionally due to the unknown:

*“...what am I preparing myself for? When am I preparing myself for it?”*

Liminal spaces are thought to cause feelings of uncertainty and anxiety for individuals (Hawkins and Edwards, 2015). Shinnars-Kennedy (2016) describes going through a liminal space as “an emotionally-laden event” (p. 257), due to the disturbance of the status-quo.

Elizabeth explains how this period changed the status-quo for her:

*“it was kind of something that was anticipated but... there’s not really anything that’s ever happened like this before, it completely changes everything that happens, everything you know, completely puts everything that you know on its head...”*

Julie spoke about feeling as though she was in ‘limbo’ during this period due to the unknown:

*“I’m thinking hopefully I will be able to start doing some bits in September but that could still change and then you’re kind of back to being in limbo again...”*

Working from home exclusively was cited as being emotionally challenging for some interviewees. Elizabeth spoke about this in some detail:

*“...because you’re at home all the time, being able to differentiate between what is work and what is home... it can be hard to... separate the two...”*

Alice spoke about the emotional impact that working exclusively from home had:

*“... because I’m working from home, sometimes you do carry it a little bit more because you haven’t got that physical distance from your laptop...”*

Four interviewees were anticipating that a future emotional adjustment would have to be made when the restrictions end. Julie considered this in her interview:

*“...you sort of think... we’ve got into such a routine now of the way it is... the thought now of having the mad rush in the morning... it’s just been y’know generally a slower pace erm, over the last few months and actually I have enjoyed that...”*

#### *4.3.1.4. Sub-theme: Professional isolation*

A challenge for five of the interviewees during this period was the professional isolation resulting from working exclusively from home. Lisa stated:

*“...the longer that goes on the more disconnected you perhaps are not being able to... interact with people face to face that feels like that’s become gradually more difficult...”*

Elizabeth talked about this impacting core aspects of her professional identity:

*“Not being able to um, I guess do the kind of work that you go into the profession to do which is the work with um, staff, the work with pupils, to work with parents...”*

Julie inferred that, for her, virtual meetings did not fully perform the same interpersonal functions that face to face meetings do:

*“...the team meetings. I know we’ve still been having those virtually and we’ve been having peer supervision virtually but ... it is just that seeing someone in person ...”*

#### *4.3.2. Superordinate theme – Challenges – professional*

##### *4.3.2.1. Sub-theme: Relying on the views of others*

Several interviewees spoke about the difficulty in having to rely on the views of other people during their assessments. For example, Amy expressed:

*“...it’s really difficult and you don’t feel like you’re erm, getting the rich information that you would have... going on other people’s views, rather than what you yourself have seen, that’s quite challenging.”*

Rebecca spoke about the difficulty in having to rely on the views of others in writing her psychological formulation:

*“I’ve been very reliant the whole way through on people telling me where I haven’t seen it for myself... so that’s a challenge I think when you’re trying to write... a psychological formulation...”*

#### 4.3.2.2. Sub-theme: Lack of collaboration

A challenge stated by three interviewees was that their work felt less collaborative during this period. Lisa stated:

*“It feels like it’s ‘do to’ rather than collaborative in some ways...”*

Rebecca felt that she was perceived as the ‘expert’, with staff looking to her for direction:

*“...I feel like they’re looking to me to tell them what to do, and I feel like trying to collaboratively problem-solve... they weren’t that receptive to that...”*

Jessica also commented on the challenges in involving CYP when working remotely:

*“...it almost feels like... I don’t know, the assessments being done to the child at the moment... rather than with the child...”*

#### 4.3.2.3. Sub-theme: Futility of reports

Four interviewees spoke about their perception that reports were not helpful for schools at this point in time, given the other priorities for school staff and families. Elizabeth stated:

*“Is this a priority because what are the schools going to be able to do with this report at this minute in time?”*

Sophie indicated that she struggled with working with unknown CYP during this period:

*“I’m just writing advices based on children I’ve never seen before in my life and I just question the value of it in a massive way.”*

Jessica spoke of the importance of feeling that her input was useful for schools:

*"I suppose that's something that I've had in the back of my head, during those meetings, that actually what can I take from that piece of work so it is useful..."*

#### *4.3.2.4. Sub-theme: Remote working*

Six interviewees spoke about the unique role of face-to-face interaction and the difficulties posed by working in an exclusively remote way. Lisa spoke about some of the interpersonal and conversational skills that she found more difficult to emulate remotely:

*"...you can talk over the top of each other...for me it's about the flow... I prefer to be in a room with people so that I can pick up on their...facial expressions, all that sort of non-verbal stuff that makes an interaction successful..."*

Alice also felt that there was something helpful about being able to see other people's facial expressions and body language when working face to face:

*"When you're in a room and you say something or if you challenge something... you can see how it lands, to know what you then need to say next..."*

Amy spoke about the difficulties in working remotely and the impact this had on her assessments:

*"I think you miss out on so much, not seeing them face to face, not being able to have that contact with parents, within the context of seeing the child, speaking to the staff..."*

*"...it's not something that we'll be able to do long term, I think it's definitely made me realise that we are not a remote service..."*

Julie also agreed that there was difficulty in building rapport over video:

*“...it’s just that... that ability to build rapport, which we all know is a core part of our job with parents and children, I suppose you just can’t do that in the same way. particularly in situations where... emotions are a bit more heightened...”*

Additionally, technological challenges were mentioned by most interviewees as being a major challenge during this period. Lisa stated that she had experienced technical difficulties in meetings:

*“I have... we’ve all experienced those meetings that we just can’t hear, we can’t... yeah that’s not been good.”*

Elizabeth spoke about internet issues interfering with her meetings:

*“...having to, um, work through or power through the um, the issues of internet ...”*

#### *4.3.3. Superordinate theme – Challenges – statutory work*

A challenge mentioned by all eight interviewees was conducting statutory work during the restrictions. Statutory work demand is often high within LAs (Frederickson and Cline, 2015), and the restrictions led to new challenges. Initially, ‘interim’ statutory reports were used where further assessment work would be needed. Julie stated:

*“...the primary area of need was cognition and learning... erm, so I think for that one I did say it was an interim advice because I felt there was a big gap...”*

Several interviewees spoke about not knowing the CYP and this being particularly challenging for statutory work. Elizabeth said:

*“...there was a lot of uncertainty for me around... um, what my advice would be and what would happen if the advice was turned down and so it felt very difficult to write an advice on a child who I’d not had any involvement in the past.”*

Additionally, Amy mentioned that statutory work felt less satisfying than usual:

*“...psych advices aren’t particularly satisfying anyway but it feels slightly less satisfying, you don’t feel like you’ve got enough information and having to make some quite big decision around... for children, on less information.”*

Julie spoke about statutory advices being easier when there was a consensus around the CYP’s needs:

*“sometimes there’s differing views about... even whether the child needs an EHCP... I think had that situation arisen I think I’d probably have found that a lot more challenging.”*

Jessica spoke about the difficulties in gaining the CYP’s voice for her statutory assessments:

*“I had made plans to speak with the child over the phone... then on the day he didn’t want to do it...”*

Jessica also talked about the difficulty faced in triangulating data for statutory assessments:

*“I suppose it’s the ability to triangulate the data, so for example in that example where I’ve had conflicting kind of levels in different documents...”*

#### 4.3.4. Superordinate theme – Positives – emotional

##### 4.3.4.1. Sub-theme: Self-care

Self-care has been cited in the pandemic literature as a way to mitigate the stress and mood changes associated with a crisis, which can relate to actions we take, but also broader ideas, such as living consistently with our values (Fiebig et al. 2020). Sophie spoke about the self-care routine she developed during this period:

*“I very quickly got into a walking routine... every single morning I go for an hour walk, um, and that’s really peaceful and so that’s something that I embedded quite quickly...”*

Amy spoke about connectedness with others as a way of promoting her wellbeing:

*“We have more contact with our friends now and I think that I do definitely, erm, and my family, I do definitely rely in terms of my emotional wellbeing on erm, on my friends and being able to spend time with them...”*

Rebecca considered the importance of taking care of ourselves before being in a position to help others:

*“...you’ve gotta put your own safety mask on first, before helping others. And I think... I always did that subconsciously but, that really resonated with me...”*

Self-compassion involves people showing kindness to themselves, and this was something considered by some interviewees. Lisa stated:

*“...not feeling guilty about not getting a full day’s work done and all that kind of stuff you know. Not putting too much pressure on myself to do everything all at once, that helped during that period of transition I think...”*

#### *4.3.5. Superordinate theme – Positives – professional*

##### *4.3.5.1. Sub-theme: Remote working*

Four interviewees had positive reflections about working remotely, despite the challenges previously stated. One positive cited by interviewees was that it has been easier to have multiagency meetings during this time, as explained by Elizabeth:

*“...it’s felt easier to be able to get people together, to be able to get professionals together. And it’s felt like it’s become more of a priority for lots of the people who are involved.”*

Julie agreed with this, reflecting on multiagency meetings before the restrictions were in place:

*“I know previously when I’ve tried to get quite a few members of staff in the room... you never get everyone that you’d fully like to get in a room.”*

Sophie agreed that it has been easier to arrange meetings during this period:

*“From the logistical side of things it’s been easier, and I suppose because it has been easier, maybe there’s been more take up and attendance...”*

Additionally, several interviewees spoke about the positive experiences they had with assessing CYP remotely. Sophie spoke about her positive experiences when assessing a young man:

*“... it was very helpful meeting him and I don’t know that I would’ve got much more in person, to be honest.”*

#### 4.3.5.2. Sub-theme: More contact with professionals

Six interviewees spoke about having more contact with other professionals during this time, which had been a positive change. Lisa stated:

*"I've probably had some more contact with SENCOs than I would usually have had at this time of the year... because we've offered some free work... (usually) you don't really have much contact with schools for weeks or months on end sometimes."*

Amy also spoke about having more contact with one school in particular:

*"...building on... the relationship with the secondary school that was I talking to you about earlier, I think that's been really positive..."*

Additionally, some interviewees spoke about having more contact with other professionals.

Elizabeth said:

*"...in a strange way, perhaps my relationship with external professionals... has developed, because there's been more of an opportunity to have conversations with them, where you wouldn't necessarily have been able to do that before..."*

Elizabeth also spoke about the impact this had on her professional practice:

*...it helps me to feel more confident... having spoken to people outside of... the team... the different... systems I guess that work from other teams, that I wouldn't have necessarily know before... It's enabled me to be able to develop some kind of relationship with those...*

#### 4.3.5.3. Sub-theme: Having more time

Having more time during this period was cited as a positive experience by five interviewees.

For Amy, this was an opportunity to catch up on work:

*"I was catching up on the reports that I hadn't written yet."*

Elizabeth spoke about having more time for conversations with school staff than she would usually have done:

*"...because there's been more of an opportunity to have conversations with them, where you wouldn't necessarily have been able to do that before, because you're in and out of schools..."*

Julie also spoke about having more time than usual for CPD activities:

*"Erm, it just seems to have been easier to sign up to those kinds of things and that's been really... you know I've really enjoyed that... that side of erm... perhaps having opportunities that wouldn't have necessarily presented themselves otherwise."*

Alice spoke about completing a forcefield analysis with senior members of the team during this time:

*"Erm... together and then it was great at the end of that, just to get together with erm, senior EPs and the principle EP to do the forcefield analysis. And it's just something that I hadn't really done before and then you maybe wouldn't necessarily get time to do..."*

#### 4.3.5.4. Sub-theme: New ways of working

In the literature, Rose et al. (2019) posited that liminal spaces provide opportunities for new ways of practicing and Vesala and Tuonivaara (2018) suggest that liminal spaces can lead to increased creativity.

One positive experience mentioned by all eight interviewees was using this period to trial new ways of working. Some interviewees spoke about the time they had had for reflection which led to new ways of working. Irving, Wright and Hibbert (2019) suggest that experiential learning takes place in the liminal space when there is time and space for adequate reflection. Enosh and Ben-Ari (2016) posit that moving in and out of an experience through periods of reflection can allow the liminal space to be used affectively, where experiences are changed into knowledge.

As a trainee EP, Jessica spoke about the opportunities that this period has presented in terms of trying new ways of working and the impact on her confidence:

*“I’ve had all these great opportunities to have university input continue and all this extra CPD but... I have had opportunities to practice some of my skills...”*

Lisa spoke about conducting transition meetings which was a new way of working for her:

*“...transition meeting have just been about particular children... and that’s felt really productive really, those meetings that we wouldn’t normally do...”*

Land, Rattray and Vivian (2014) suggest that, in liminal spaces, ‘threshold concepts’ are encountered as we encounter new forms of knowledge, allowing us to explore new

identities and ways of working. Elizabeth spoke about the situation providing opportunities for reconsidering the ways that she assesses CYP:

*“Can we assess a child through consultation? ...how else can we do that... which of those children can we assess in different ways, or how can I help you come to the same outcome in a different way?”*

As a trainee EP, Alice spoke about trying new ways of working suggested by her supervisor:

*“I guess it’s because my supervisor’s been trying new ways of doing things so she was like this works for me, so try it. So I gave it a go...”*

Alice also spoke about this time being an opportunity for growth:

*“...things that came up that I wouldn’t have necessarily known how to deal with previously, but that’s been a good opportunity for growth there...”*

Julie talked about the consistent involvement she had been able to have with some casework which had been a new, positive way of working:

*“...it was nice in the respect that actually I could speak to her every week so you kind of had that consistent involvement which we all know is really difficult to organise with diaries when you’re trying to do it in person, doing those weekly meetings...”*

Jessica spoke about being able to move from ‘information gathering’ with parents to trying a more collaborative way of working:

*“...it felt like it moved from an information gathering... to more of a problem-solving... and like collaborative experience with parents... I guess it’s been really nice to... follow the*

*parent's lead for the conversation and build relationships with parents, being able to... build skills there. "*

Jessica also felt that this time had led schools to change their priorities which led to new ways of working:

*"I think that has been because of this change in school priorities... which I think has led to new types of work. ...I do feel like this period has done is allowed them to see that actually they can work in different ways to the same, or... a greater effect, the usefulness... doing the systemic work with them, they realised that actually this is really powerful..."*

#### *4.3.5.5. Sub-theme: Feeling supported*

Feeling supported by the wider team and by their supervisor was a positive experience expressed by seven interviewees. Supervision is thought to lead to a deeper reflection on practice (Scaife, 2010), and so may lend itself well to exploring the liminal space. Sophie expressed that she felt well supported during the initial adjustment period:

*"I think in March there was a bit of a... grace period around, sort of, it's ok, we know you're not working at full capacity at the moment..."*

Amy spoke about the support she received from the senior EPs and how helpful this was:

*"I definitely felt supported in particular by X and X, I think... X's understanding of my needs in terms of my statutory work has been really good... we work with psychologists as well, so they have an understanding about your emotional and workload needs..."*

Alice also spoke about the support she received from her supervisor:

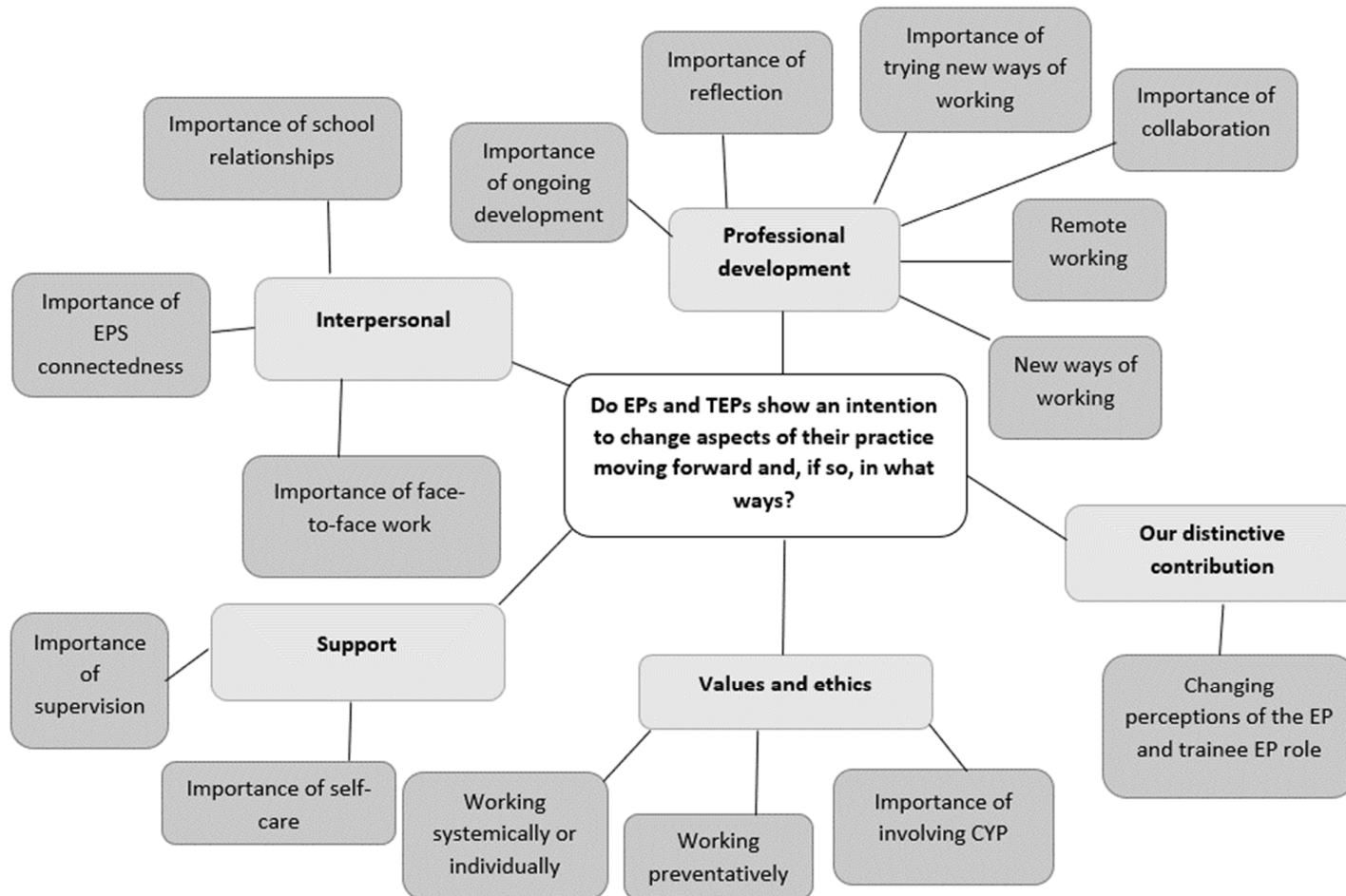
*"I think it's just reassurance, knowing that there's someone there to talk to erm... my supervisor's very good at just sort of, putting things aside and chatting if I need to chat..."*

As a trainee EP, Jessica also spoke about the supportive function of supervision during this time:

*"I'm aware that as a trainee EP you have different kind of pressures kind of to a fully-qualified EP, but I do think that some perhaps more supervision and more time with team could've mitigated it further almost."*

**4.4. Do EPs and trainee EPs show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward and, if so, in what ways?**

Figure 5 – Themes related to research question 3



#### 4.4.1. Superordinate theme – Professional development

##### 4.4.1.1. Sub-theme: Importance of reflecting

Interviewees indicated that they had used this time to reflect, in the three ways suggested by Schön (1983, 1987) and Moon (1999) and that they wished to continue utilising reflection moving forward. The literature concerning liminal spaces and reflection cites reflection as a key aspect of utilising the liminal space effectively (Enosh and Ben-Ari, 2016). Marcia (1966) posits that this time allows us to explore of values and ideas and possibly reconsider them. Interviewees indicated that this period had led to them reflecting on their practice and to consider reflection as a key aspect of their role which facilitates ongoing professional identity formation. Jessica spoke about this time helping her to realise the importance of reflection time:

*“I do think the reflection time’s really important as well...”*

Rebecca spoke about wondering if it was ok to stop and reflect:

*“...it was hard wasn’t it to kind of think... is it OK just to press pause and take a step EP back and think about what we’re going to be doing?”*

Sophie spoke about how she had used this time to reflect on her role and her priorities:

*“It’s allowed me to take time out mentally from driving around everywhere and really just considering where my priorities lie... I love being creative and I love being a practitioner and I think that gets lost in the bureaucracy of the statutory process...”*

#### 4.4.1.2. Sub-theme: Importance of collaboration

The literature surrounding the EP role considers collaboration between stakeholders to be a key part of the EP role. This is also echoed in statutory guidance, for example in the Code of Practice (DfE, 2015). EPs in Rumble and Thomas' (2017) study stated that collaboration and relationships were important to their role and Squires and Farrell (2007) found that collaboration with parents was considered to be vital to problem formulation. Pellegrini (2009) points out that the home and school environments are deeply intertwined and therefore implies the importance of collaboration.

In this study, seven participants indicated that would like to continue with collaborative ways of working moving forward, some indicating that they wished to use collaboration more than they were in the pre-liminal space. Lisa spoke about the importance of collaborating with parents:

*"...interestingly, when you actually speak to the parents, that has led me down a slightly different path and it's been so important to speak to parents and carers."*

As a trainee EP, Alice also indicated that she had been collaborating more with parents than she would usually have during this time:

*"I've had a few... opportunities for sort of, learning, erm, so new things, like the parent work is completely new for me..."*

Elizabeth compared the level of collaboration she had been involved in during this period in comparison to usual times:

*“...being able to have the time to have those multi-agency meetings which is something again that I wasn’t necessarily doing a lot of, because you’re going into schools, you’re working with individuals and then you come out. Being able to have that multi-agency work feels like it becomes... the outcome is more positive because there’s more...”*

Sophie spoke about how she would like to work more with other professionals moving forward:

*“I can see how paving the way forward... how it is an opportunity, multi-professional working...”*

Alice had tried a new way of working by collaborating more with parents and carers in her statutory work and had found this to be successful:

*“...it’s kind of nice to know that they’ve looked at it and they’re happy with it before it gets sent off ... I just felt like they were happy with it and it just felt very collaborative...”*

Jessica spoke about some of the barriers to working more collaboratively:

*“...I guess the difficulty there is obviously being in a traded service, obviously y’know you’re directed by school aren’t you... so I would really like to work more collaboratively with parents ... I almost feel like this way has almost been more beneficial for parents as well...”*

#### *4.4.1.3. Sub-theme: Remote working*

Three interviewees spoke about ways they were going to work remotely going forward. Lisa stated:

*"I'm thinking maybe planning meetings at a minimum, I could offer those remotely in future... We could be recording ourselves talking through PowerPoint slides, uploading that, and letting schools access that training."*

Sophie talked about her plans for remote consultation moving forward:

*"...it's made me see... made me appreciate that we can do a lot of work remotely... because of our consultative, more, um, birds-eye-view, the way that we are positioned."*

Rebecca talked about future remote working for certain types of work:

*"I mean I guess with our virtual schoolwork, if we're doing erm, cases out of area, I can imagine perhaps utilising it... Yeah so perhaps it's a good tool to have in our toolbox definitely."*

#### *4.4.1.4. Sub-theme: Importance of trying new ways of working*

Five interviewees spoke about this period helping them to see the importance of trying new ways of working and their intention to continue trying more new ways of working. The literature suggests that liminal spaces provide a sense of freedom that allows individuals to develop new understandings of the world and develop new knowledge, skills, and ways of working (Söderlund and Borg, 2018), which also contributes to professional identity formation. During liminality individuals are in a free and playful state (Lorenzi and White, 2019). Lisa spoke about trying a new way of gathering information that she plans to use moving forward:

*“That is something that we wouldn’t normally necessarily get involved in in the same way you know... I think SENCos have found it super helpful, so it’s something to think about you know, for next year, doing a bit more of that.”*

Elizabeth also spoke about becoming more involved in transition meetings moving forward, as a result of being involved in these during this period:

*“I guess the transition side of things, it’s not necessarily something that I would have always been involved in, especially for early years cases, to the extent that I have been this year...”*

Alice tried a new way of working which involved sending parents her statutory advices to discuss:

*“... and then I sent my draft to school and then we got together erm, on a Skype meeting to discuss the EHC basically and to try and think about recommendations together on Skype.”*

#### *4.4.1.5. Sub-theme: Importance of ongoing development*

Four interviewees spoke about the importance of CPD in relation to their professional development and identity and indicated their hope to continue with higher levels of CPD. Armistead et al.’s (2013) study found that most EPs found CPD to be enjoyable and Friedman (2012) discusses many benefits to regular CPD opportunities, such as confidence, growth, morale, job satisfaction and relatedness to others. EPs in Rumble and Thomas’ (2017) valued having time for CPD and to link with other professionals.

Alice also stated that having more time for CPD activities had been very positive:

*“...my biggest positive experience is having the time... maybe not so much now, but at the start, I did have a lot of time to spend my evenings reading about... things like motivational interviewing, webinars... and that was really nice because you don’t often get that erm, in our job ...”*

Jessica agreed that she had more time for CPD activities during this period:

*“I received training, so I did quite a lot of CPD stuff, there seemed to be a lot of stuff going on, erm, through different companies... I was doing around two webinars a week, which was really nice...”*

#### *4.4.2. Superordinate theme – Support*

##### *4.4.2.1. Sub-theme: Importance of self-care*

Fiebig et al. (2020) suggest that crises such as a pandemic can result in higher rates of ‘burnout’. Five interviewees spoke about practicing self-care during the pandemic and the impact of this, and some talked about the importance of self-care in usual times as well, moving forward. Elizabeth spoke about giving herself permission to practice self-care during this time:

*“...being ok with that and having that time out and having that time to be able to be away from it...”*

Amy spoke about the importance of her friends and family for her self-care:

*“We have more contact with our friends now and I think that... I do definitely rely in terms of my emotional wellbeing on erm, on my friends and being able to spend time with them...”*

Alice talked about taking breaks in usual times as well as the pandemic being important for her wellbeing:

*"...erm... taking regular breaks, erm... yeah I try... I mean I try to always have a lunch break..."*

Julie cited the support from her supervisor to practice self-care and to prioritise this:

*"X had always just very much been very much, y'know you work what you can and don't feel under pressure or too stressed... so that made it a lot easier..."*

Rebecca indicated the importance of self-care in usual times, as well as during the pandemic:

*"...you've gotta put your own safety mask on first, before helping others. And I think... I think I always did that subconsciously but, that really resonated with me and I thought yeah actually, that is so important."*

#### *4.4.2.2. Sub-theme: Importance of managerial supervision*

Supervision was explicitly considered by the majority of interviewees as an important aspect of their role. They indicated that a high level of supervision was something they would like to continue with in the post-liminal phase. Osbourne and Burton (2014) suggest that supervision should inspire assurance in the supervisee, which should have a positive impact on practice. Alice spoke about supervision easing her anxiety during this time:

*"...we were waiting for guidance to come out... but supervision was helpful there, just to ease the anxiety."*

She also spoke about the importance and function of supervision for her in usual times:

*"I think it's just reassurance, knowing that there's someone there to talk to... my supervisor's very good at just sort of, putting things aside and chatting if I need to chat..."*

Julie talked about the support she received from the senior EPs being very supportive during this time. She indicated the importance of the supervisor having empathy and supporting their supervisees:

*"... y'know our seniors are fantastic in that I don't ever feel that if I was feeling under a huge amount of pressure that I couldn't go to them..."*

#### *4.4.3. Superordinate theme – Interpersonal*

##### *4.4.3.1. Sub-theme: Importance of working face-to-face*

Six interviewees spoke about how this period of remote working had made them realise the importance of working face to face in certain situations, and their intention to continue with face to face working for those situations, when they were able to. Lisa spoke about how her views about this changed over time:

*"...at one point I was sort of thinking, wow we could do much more, but you know you're missing and losing a lot of human contact that's the way we all operate..."*

Alice spoke about some of the interpersonal skills that are lost in remote working:

*"When you're in a room and you say something or if you challenge something... you can see how it lands better, to know what you then need to say next, if you need to mitigate that in any way... you have no idea really, how things are landing..."*

Amy talked about some of the challenges she had faced in working exclusively remotely:

*"I think you miss out on so much, not seeing them face to face, not being able to have that contact with parents, within the context of seeing the child, speaking to the staff... I think you have to ask more questions because... you can't make assumptions..."*

Amy also spoke about her feelings about remote working moving forward:

*"...it's not something that we'll be able to do long term, I think it's definitely made me realise that we are not a remote service..."*

Julie spoke about remote working in relation to her professional identity:

*"...it still doesn't feel like... I personally still feel like I'm not able to do the job that I love doing because it's not... that's not how I would ever kind of envisage practicing as an EP."*

#### *4.4.3.2. Sub-theme: Importance of EPS connectedness*

In addition to more formal, managerial supervision, five participants spoke about the increased amount of informal peer supervision and connectedness within the EPS and their intention to continue with this. The literature surrounding the EP role refers to the importance of peer supervision, which is thought to offer a highly supportive function (Borders, 1991).

Lisa spoke about new members of the team and the function of the relationship between the EPS from her point of view:

*"...they weren't with us very long before all of this happened so the chances to build that team cohesion and relationship and that sense of being supported and just having a friendly face, I think that has really reinforced and exemplified the need for that even more... "*

Sophie talked about how this time had made her appreciate the importance of formal and informal connectivity within the EPS:

*"...it's been really supportive, and probably more than I realise sometimes, I think if I were to go... say if I wasn't in a team, if I was locuming... I think I'd really miss the team and that element of connectivity and just, both the formal connectivity of emails, peer supervision, but also the WhatsApp group... feeling that human element of a team..."*

Rebecca talked about the supportive role of peer supervision for her:

*"I think just checking out ideas, erm, like, reassurance, I think sometimes that acknowledgement that everyone is finding things hard..."*

#### *4.4.3.3. Sub-theme: Importance of school relationships*

Four interviewees commented that this period had made them reflect on the importance of their relationship with schools and their intention to continue to build upon these relationships. Amy talked about how this time had made her reflect on the importance of the contact with her schools:

*"I think it's definitely made me realise that... it's the human contact, it's the contact with the family and with the school, particularly with the school..."*

Rebecca spoke about the importance of relationships and knowing the systems within her schools:

*“...you kind of know the systems, you know the staff, you kind of know how they support kids with SEND, whereas when you’re doing it with, erm, a different school, they don’t know you, you don’t know them, you kind of have to go right back to the beginning...”*

Rebecca also spoke about being able to challenge, as well as support schools that she has a relationship with:

*“Whereas, with schools I have a relationship with, I feel I could ask those difficult questions...”*

#### *4.4.4. Superordinate theme: Values and ethics*

##### *4.4.4.1. Sub-theme: Importance of involving the CYP*

Some interviewees had found it difficult to work in a person-centred way during this period, which led to them reflecting on the importance of involving the CYP in their assessment in a meaningful way. Rebecca spoke about the difficulties she had experienced and why interaction with the CYP was important for her:

*“...when I’m writing a report, I like that I’ve had some interaction with the child because it just helps me kind of formulate...I like to find out... if there’s a problem from their perspective, because otherwise you only get it from school... but actually, sometimes it can be really enlightening just for them to say, like, it’s because of this...”*

Jessica spoke about the difficulties that she was experiencing during this period with assessing CYP without meeting them:

*“But it almost feels like... I don’t know, the assessments being done to the child at the moment, when it’s written in this way, rather than with the child, so I guess that feels really challenging...”*

#### *4.4.4.2. Sub-theme: Working preventatively*

Four interviewees found that they were working more reactively, rather than preventatively during this period, which made them reflect on their views about this. The participants who spoke about preventative working indicated that they wanted to work more preventatively in the post-liminal phase. The literature suggests that the high demand for statutory assessments often leads EPs to working more reactively (Frederickson and Cline, 2015). Bradbury (2006) found that EPs in their study would like to be involved in a more preventative level of work.

Elizabeth indicated that she would like to work more preventatively:

*“...if the focus is still on those plans, then it’s always going to be that individual work that’s seen as being more beneficial, whereas, actually we should be at more at the preventative state before getting to that...”*

Sophie suggested that, going forward, she would like to question her schools more in terms of the type of work she takes on:

*“...not always jumping to direct assessment, but having more of a graduated approach to work... it’s made me realise that I do need to question my schools sometimes, in terms of... how I work and I will be going forward, definitely.”*

Jessica spoke about how one school had allowed her to work preventatively through working with CYP and families they envisioned would struggle with the unique circumstances:

*“...one school who had got me working with parents asked me to continue with this, but I think that perhaps it felt... at a preventative level in some respects, they had the children they thought were going to struggle...”*

#### *4.4.4.3. Sub-theme: Working systemically or individually*

Four interviewees spoke about working more systemically during this period and this leading them to thinking about practicing more systemically moving forward, with those who considered this indicated that they wished to work more systemically moving forward. The literature indicates that EPs can work systemically with schools and families in a myriad of ways, such as problem-solving groups (Hanko, 2002). The impact of systemic working has also been shown to be good, with Miller (2003) finding a positive impact on teaching staff's self-efficacy and Gibbs and Miller (2014) showing the positive, indirect impact of systemic working on CYP. Lisa spoke about systemic working during this period and her thoughts moving forward:

*“I've always kind of thought that working systemically is kind of the best way of working... it feels like the most productive way of working and it's just made me realise that even more...”*

However, Lisa also spoke about the importance of individual casework in some circumstances:

*“...that we do need to kind of look into... in a personalised way. One size doesn’t fit all. So I think... that’s probably reaffirmed that bit for me, because sometimes I think I, um, minimise the importance of that... feeling like I always kind of need to do systemic work.”*

Elizabeth spoke about how this period had made her reflect on working systemically:

*“...because you’re working at um, the system level rather than at the individual level... it feels more effective and more collaborative than trying to just focus on individuals or trying to target the individuals. Because it’s less ‘within child’...”*

Alice spoke about trying to get her schools to work more systemically moving forward:

*“...I’m really going to try that a bit more... it’s how I persuade my schools to take on more of that approach, when things go back to normal...”*

Julie also indicated that this period had made her realise that she could work more systemically:

*“I think this has kind of made me realise that actually... the need for that direct work perhaps even less ... I am quite hopeful that when we go back to schools it might be a bit more kind of systemic.”*

#### *4.4.4.4. Sub-theme: Reviewing work and measuring impact*

Two interviewees spoke about the importance of reviewing their work and measuring their impact and their intention to review their work and measure their impact more moving forward. The literature indicates that EPs value being able to have a substantial amount of time to complete their work and also to have ongoing involvement with CYP and families so

they could measure and maintain their impact (Rumble and Thomas, 2017). In the present study, Julie spoke about measuring her impact and why this was important to her:

*“...it’s important for us as well to measure the impact... so we had a couple of meetings about that, erm... last week we had a meeting with all the education officers...”*

Jessica also spoke about the importance of measuring impact for her:

*“I suppose something else that would probably be important... is how do we measure our impact, how do we know what we’ve done has made a difference...”*

#### *4.4.4.5. Sub-theme: Changing perceptions of the EP and trainee EP role*

The literature concerning the EP role suggests that the EP role is understood and conceptualised in a myriad of ways. Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) found that many headteachers understood a major part of the EP role to be conducting individual assessments for CYP. Ashton and Roberts (2006) found that SENCos saw the EP’s role as providing advice for EHCP assessments. Four interviewees stated that this period had made them reconsider how their role is seen. Sophie spoke about challenging her schools more in terms of the CYP they were asking her to work with:

*“I’ve basically asked the schools to rethink those children, asking themselves the question, what value does direct work bring? ...I don’t want to just assess these children for the sake of it... when they haven’t followed a graduated response to thinking about what those needs are...”*

Elizabeth hoped that views may change as a result of this period:

*"I think that's something that could you know, that's something that could be a really powerful outcome of this whole thing, is that it changes how we work and how our role is seen... um because we can't work with all of the individuals who are finding it difficult, so, how else can we work?"*

Julie also hoped there might be a shift in the type of work she is involved in:

*"I'm quite hopeful but then, there might initially be more of a shift towards... maybe working slightly differently in that school's priorities might have changed... I think for me it's the positive change that can kind of be bought about through consultation and I'm hoping that schools can perhaps realise that..."*

As a trainee EP, Jessica was also hopeful that the EP role may be conceptualised differently by her schools, moving forward:

*"Yeah, and I guess it's about... what is the EP role and y'know feeling like sometimes we're constrained because what we can offer is different to what the schools understand. So I feel that a reflection on how this may impact the EP role... hopefully, schools may have seen those different ways of working and the different skills that we've got, the different things that we can offer..."*

## CHAPTER 5

### 5. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction to the chapter

In this chapter, the findings of the study will be considered in relation to the wider literature and the research questions. Throughout this chapter, the concept of a liminal space is used as a lens through which to explore and understand the participant's experiences. There will then be a consideration of the implications of the study for EPs and trainee EPs, followed by limitations of the current study, directions for future research and final concluding comments.

#### 5.2. Discussion of research questions

##### **5.2.1. RQ1 - Were there changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs' and trainee EPs' during this period and, if so, in what ways?**

Throughout my discussion I will be making sense of my data through the lens of 'liminality', rather than understanding liminality as a construct that is under investigation explicitly.

EPs' and trainee EPs' had been involved in both existing ways of working, most of which were adapted for remote use, and new ways of working that were specific to this period.

Norwich (2000) points out the EP role is unavoidably a flexible one, and this appears to have been the case for participants in this study.

The rapid changes to the guidance concerning EP practice seems to have led to a change in practice throughout the period of March 2020 to July 2020 (Gov.uk<sup>1</sup>, 2020; Gov.uk<sup>2</sup>, 2020;

BPS<sup>1</sup>, 2020). Out of the five core activities of EPs suggested by the Scottish Executive (2002), four were discussed by participants, with research alone not mentioned. However, it is worth noting that the two trainee EPs will have been involved in research during this period, although it was not explicitly mentioned by them. The majority of these activities were conducted at each of the three levels suggested by the Scottish Executive: the child and family level, the school or establishment level and the LA level. This suggests that, on the whole, the core activities participants were engaged in were not dissimilar to usual practices. However there are some significant differences to the focus of the participants and to the ways in which these activities were conducted, due to the restrictions. For example, an increase in remote working was cited as a major difference to usual ways of working.

Participants were working exclusively remotely during this period which led to traditional ways of working being suspended. One participant spoke about feeling as though she was in limbo during this time. This was interesting, given the distinction made between limbo and a liminal space by Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack (2017), but that may signify that, at this point, the period felt undesirable and unproductive. Another participant spoke about the status-quo changing during this period:

“...completely changes everything that happens, everything you know, completely puts everything that you know on its head”.

Participants reported that they experienced new ways of working, as well as new ways of understanding and thinking about their role (Rose et al., 2019). Additionally, Vesala and Tuonivaara (2018) suggest that increased creativity can be an outcome of encountering a liminal space. Lorenzi and White (2019) describe a free and playful state, which allows

individuals to develop new understandings (Söderlund and Borg, 2018). Similarly, Land, Rattray, and Vivian (2014) suggest that liminal spaces allow individuals to explore new identities and ways of working.

Several participants spoke about trialling new ways of working. For example, one interviewee spoke about trialling new assessment methods. One of the trainee EPs spoke about the period allowing her to develop confidence by trialling new ways of working. Another participant talked about attending transition meetings, which she would not usually have been involved with. Some participants spoke about the priorities of schools appearing to change during this period, which had been conducive to new ways of working, and one participant hoped that these changes would continue after the restrictions ended. One participant felt her schools had been allowing her to work more systemically, allowing them to see the power of systemic work. Several participants also spoke about a 'new normal', suggesting a period of adjustment to the liminal space.

***5.2.2. RQ2 - What were EPs' and trainee EPs' reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to practicing during this time?***

***5.2.2.1. Increased reflection***

Irving, Wright and Hibbert (2019) suggest that reflection is a tool that allows individuals to transform threshold concepts into new knowledge. Enosh and Ben-Ari (2016) also see reflection as a tool that supports individuals to use the liminal space effectively by

permitting them to move in and out of an experience, thereby changing experiences into knowledge.

Kim and Asbury (2020) found that the reflections of teachers in their study ranged from their own practice to the wider systems in which they work. The reflections that participants spoke about covered the three types of reflection posited by Schön (1983, 1987) and Moon (1999): reflection *in* action, *on* action and *for* action. The majority of participants in this study agreed that this period had led to an increased amount of reflection, which had led to deeper consideration of their professional identity and their plans for their practice moving forward. One participant spoke about giving herself permission to take this time out to reflect on deeper issues, which may be suggestive of the workload of participants being a barrier to dedicating time and space for reflection in everyday practice.

#### 5.2.2.2. Challenges

Anxiety, overwhelm and uncertainty were prominent features for participants. These emotions as described by participants related to personal issues (ensuring there was enough food and looking after family) and professional issues (a lack of focus and concentration, the changing guidance, the workload during this time and the changes to working life). It therefore seems likely that the emotional response of participants was due to a combination of the pandemic itself and going through a liminal space, relating to the concerns about changes to practice.

The majority of interviewees spoke about feeling overwhelmed, especially during the beginning of the period. Some interviewees also indicated that their emotional response changed throughout the period. Vinkers et al. (2020) point out that common responses to a situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic are elevated levels of stress and anxiety and that this often leads to decreased concentration and productivity in individuals. The majority of interviewees stated that lowered concentration and productivity was something that affected them during this time. Some interviewees described the Covid-19 pandemic as a trauma (McAlonan et al., 2005).

Some participants communicated a level of anxiety around their role and related this to their feelings about the role more generally, including concerns that the EPS, as a small team, might be forgotten, for example one participant stated: "...because we didn't want to be forgotten, you know, in all of this...". Another EP spoke about feeling redundant during this period, and trying to forge a role for herself, whilst acknowledging the roles of other services. The majority of interviewees spoke about anxiety specifically surrounding their role and their professional identity. This links to the idea suggested by Wackerhausen (2009), that professional identity is deeply embedded and usually unquestioned, until a crisis such as this leads to professionals reflecting on their professional identity. This may also give insight into one of the core aspects of some participants' professional identity, suggesting that feeling as though they have a purpose, and having a clear role, is important.

Some interviewees spoke about professional isolation, with one EP speaking about this impacting core aspects of her professional identity, suggesting that working directly with staff, pupils and families was crucial for her. Some interviewees spoke about the difficulty in having to rely on the views of other people during their casework and statutory assessments. This might suggest a deeper ontological assumption made by some participants as, in their ordinary practice, they are able to see things as they 'really are', and also links to the notion commented on above about feeling redundant or forgotten. It might also suggest that a potentially powerful aspect of the EP and trainee EP role is being able to support schools in finding out about a CYP's strengths and needs.

A challenge stated by several interviewees was that their work felt less collaborative during this period. One trainee EP felt that she was being perceived as the 'expert', with school staff looking to her for direction. This participant also commented on the challenges in involving CYP when working remotely, which may provide some insight into the importance of collaboration for this participant. Several interviewees spoke about their perception that reports were not helpful for schools at this point in time, given the other priorities for school staff and families, again suggesting that feeling useful and having an impact were core aspects of some participants' professional identity.

Land et al. (2010) suggest that when threshold concepts are encountered, these can lead to a liminal space, and that because this space is uncomfortable, shifts in an individual's identity can occur. Professional identity encompasses several areas, including but not limited

to, how professionals view themselves (Morgan et al., 2012), how professionals “compare and differentiate themselves” (Adams et al., 2006, p. 56) from other professionals, and an individual’s self-concept, beliefs, and values (Moss, Gibson and Dollarhide, 2014; Kelchtermans, 2009).

Several participants indicated that this period had made them consider ideas that they might not usually, including ideas that relate to their professional identity. For example, one EP spoke at length about her priorities and the reflections she had made regarding whether the role was allowing her to utilise the skills that she values. This was due partly to her perception of the bureaucracy involved in the statutory processes. Another participant also made considerations about what makes the role worthwhile for her, as these qualities were missing due to the restrictions created by the pandemic. A challenge was also identified concerning participants wanting to forge a role for themselves during the pandemic, suggesting that the distinctiveness of their role was important to them (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 2009; Adams et al., 2006).

#### *5.2.2.3. Opportunities*

Several participants spoke about having more contact with other professionals during this time, including staff in their schools, wider teams inside and outside of the LA and within the EPS itself. Several participants also indicated they had developed better connections within pre-existing relationships during this time.

Self-care has been cited as a way to mitigate the stress and mood changes associated to a crisis, which can relate to actions we take, but also broader ideas in usual times, such as living consistently within our values (Fiebig et al. 2020). One participant spoke about the self-care routine she developed during this period. Others spoke about connectedness with others as a way of promoting their wellbeing, and the importance of taking care of ourselves before being in a position to support others. Self-compassion involves people showing kindness to themselves, and this was something considered by some interviewees, both during the restrictions and in usual times.

Bamber, Allen-Collinson and McCormack (2017) suggest that liminal spaces can construct more positive emotions, such as freedom and Vesala and Tuonivaara (2018) suggest that liminal spaces encourage productivity and creativity. Additionally, Van de Wiele and Papacharissi (2021) suggest that liminality provides opportunities for “...renewal, for seeing the world anew...” (p. 1143). One EP spoke about conducting transition meetings which was a new way of working for her. Several participants suggested that it had been easier to have multiagency meetings during this time. Another participant spoke about being able to move from ‘information gathering’ with parents, to trying a more collaborative way of working, which might entail more ‘problem-solving’ and explorative ways of working with parents. This links to Thomassen’s (2014) description of the liminal space leading to a disruption in conventional social boundaries, and that by going through a liminal space new social configurations and ways of understanding the world can emerge.

Participants felt this time had led schools to change their priorities which led to new ways of working. This was thought of as being a positive aspect of the experience for the majority of participants, perhaps suggesting that the participants in this study feel that schools priorities would benefit from change. Several interviewees spoke about the positive experiences they had with assessing CYP remotely, which was interesting due to the previously explored challenge relating to gaining pupil voice via remote means. This may suggest that the perceived success of working remotely with CYP depends on several factors. For example, how the CYP feels about speaking with the EP or trainee EP remotely, how comfortable the EP or trainee EP is with this way of working and the strengths and needs of the CYP specifically.

Support from line managers and regular supervision was cited as a positive experience during this time. Supervision is thought to lead to deeper reflections on practice (Scaife, 2010), and so may lend itself well to exploring the liminal space. Additionally, several participants spoke about the opportunity to catch up on work. They spoke about having more time for conversations with school staff than they would usually have done, and others suggested that they have more time to complete CPD activities than they would usually have done. These opportunities may suggest the participants do not usually feel as though they have the time to complete these activities.

Ibarra and Obodaru (2016) suggest the opportunities presented by the liminal space are often difficult for professionals to access, due to the negative feelings associated with the

liminal space, which can lead to professionals rushing back to the pre-liminal space. In this circumstance, going back to the pre-liminal space could be argued as being unfeasible for these participants; they were required to work in these new ways and therefore needed to persevere through the liminal space and perhaps, as a result, were able to reap the benefits.

***5.2.3. RQ3 - Do EPs and trainee EPs show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward and, if so, in what ways?***

This research question considers the extent to which the third form of reflection posited by Moon (1999), reflection *for* action, is utilised by participants, whereby future actions are impacted through a reflective process. The three phases of the liminal space, as suggested by Van Gennep (1960), include a pre-liminal, liminal, and post-liminal phase, with the post-liminal phase involving the new ways of working being integrated into the individual's identity.

Assuming liminality as the lens through which to understand participants' experiences and reflections, it is unclear and debateable as to when participants will have entered the post-liminal state, as this is likely to vary for participants. Some may retreat to the pre-liminal space if they chose not to utilise the concept thresholds they have encountered, and others may choose to amalgamate these into their professional identity. As pointed out by Johan, Sadler-Smith, and Tribe (2019), the process may not be linear for many participants. As suggested by Cook-Sather and Alter (2011), some may move back to the pre-liminal state but with new knowledge and expertise, also leading to changes in their professional identity. It

seems likely that all participants will have gained new knowledge and experience from practicing during this period (Land, Meyer, and Flanagan, 2016; Felten, 2016), but that the extent to which they utilise this is likely to differ between participants.

Gaskell and Leadbetter (2009) suggest that changes to professional identity are more likely to occur when new working practices are seen as being beneficial. This may suggest that the opportunities presented to participants during this period are more likely to lead to changes in practice and to professional identity. Binyamin (2018) also suggests that professional identity can change when individuals take the time to reflect on their aspirations and core values, which is a key component of encountering the liminal space. In this study, all participants spoke about changing some aspect/s of their practice moving forward, which would have an impact on professional identity as described in the literature, some to a greater extent than others.

Regarding changing their future practice, the majority of interviewees spoke about the importance of collaboration with schools and parents and suggested that this was something they would like to do more of moving forward. Spring, Rumble and Thomas (2017) and Squires and Farrell (2007) found that collaboration with parents was considered to be vital to problem formulation. Additionally, as a result of some participants feeling unable to involve the CYP in a meaningful way, they reflected on the importance of ensuring that CYP were involved in their assessment processes moving forward, in a meaningful rather than

tokenistic way. Participants in this study seemed to feel that working collaboratively was important to them for both ethical and practical reasons.

Trying new ways of working moving forwards appeared to be important to several participants and was something they stated they would like to continue. This appeared to give participants a chance to work more creatively. Being able to develop skills and understanding through accessing CPD was stated by many participants to be important and an aspect of the experience that they wanted to carry forward. This is consistent with the wider literature concerning the EP role, which suggests that EPs find CPD to be enjoyable (Armistead et al., 2013) and an experience which allows for confidence, growth, morale, job satisfaction and relatedness to others (Friedman, 2012).

Several participants spoke about the wish to work more preventatively and the perceived barriers to this. This has also been indicated in the literature as being important to EPs, with the indication being that EPs would like to work more preventatively (Bradbury, 2006). The reasons for this seemed to centre around a perception that preventative work is more effective. Some interviewees suggested, when they had worked preventatively in the past and during this period, this had been well-received by schools. Several participants indicated that they would like to work more preventatively moving forward and one participant spoke about how she might do this through questioning her schools.

Working systemically was discussed by participants, as this is something many participants had been doing more of during this period. The majority of participants suggested they saw working systemically at a school or LA level to be more effective than working at an individual level, which is also echoed in the literature (Miller, 2003; Gibbs and Miller, 2014). One participant spoke at length about why it was important for her to work systemically, the main reason being the number of CYP positively impacted. Several interviewees stated that this period had made them realise they could work more systemically moving forward. One participant spoke about her plans to work more systemically moving forward. Interestingly, one participant spoke about her view that, in addition to systemic work, she felt that it is important to acknowledge that there is a place for individualised working and that, in some cases, this is the preferable way of working for her.

An increase in the perceived need for self-care during this period led several interviewees to reflect on the importance of this during everyday practice and a desire to remember and emphasise the importance of this moving forward. Respondents spoke about the importance of giving themselves permission to practice self-care and to ensure that they are practicing self-care in the everyday, for example taking lunchbreaks and ensuring regular exercise. Managerial supervision was an important supportive factor discussed by interviewees, both in the context of the pandemic and in usual times. Participants discussed the value of this period in allowing them to reflect on the importance of peer supervision and general connectivity with the team, and to continue this moving forward.

School relationships were discussed as being important for practice, which is supported by the wider literature (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). Participants reflected on the importance of knowing the systems within their schools, and that having a close relationship with schools allowed EPs and trainee EPs to challenge practice more easily. This suggests that having their own patch of schools to develop a close working relationship with was important to participants moving forward.

One aspect that participants did not generally feel they wanted to carry forward into their future practice was remote working. Some participants spoke about the value of this for certain CYP, but on the whole, the majority of participants felt the role was not one that could be successfully completed remotely. Specifically, the interpersonal skills that were felt to be lost during remote working alongside the juxtaposition this created with some participants professional identity, meant that whilst most participants could envision themselves providing some aspects of their role remotely, they felt the majority of their role would still need to be conducted in person.

Several interviewees indicated the importance of feeling useful and as though they are having a positive impact. Reviewing work and measuring impact were brought up by some interviewees as an important part of the role for them, as well as the difficulties with this in terms of providing a 'one-off' piece of casework with a CYP, which interviewees suggested was not conducive to reviewing their impact. The majority of respondents spoke about anxiety at the beginning of the restrictions as they were unsure of what they could do to

help and wanted to feel useful, suggesting that the 'distinctive contribution' (Gaskell and Leadbetter, 1999) was important for them and their professional identity. Moving forward, participants indicated that they would like to review their work, measure their impact, and provide ongoing support to CYP.

The way that the EP role is seen to those outside the profession was considered to be important to the majority of interviewees. The wider literature suggests this is an ongoing issue, with some studies suggesting that school staff see the EP role as being limited to one-off CYP assessments or to provide advice for an EHCP assessment (Boyle and Lauchlan, 2009; Ashton and Roberts, 2006). Some interviewees stated they hoped that views of the EP role may change following this period, as schools have seen the more systemic ways that participants can practice. Other participants had plans to speak more with their schools about the different ways that they can work, as well as proving the impact of this work through being given the opportunities to work in these ways.

### **5.3. Implications for EPs and trainee EPs**

During this period, the participants in this study reflected on many of the core practices of their role, what was working and not working for them and the challenges and opportunities that this period presented. The majority of reflections made by participants involved practices that they were already engaged with in the pre-liminal space but would like to do more of moving forward.

Aspects that could be carried forward into future working and potential barriers can be seen in table 9.

**Table 9: Suggested implications and potential barriers linked to these implications**

<b>Suggested implication</b>	<b>Potential barrier/s</b>
Working more collaboratively with schools and parents, for example through problem-solving methods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EPs and trainee EPs being perceived as the 'expert', which makes collaborative working more difficult.</li> </ul>
Ensuring that CYP are involved in the assessment process, including the CYP's voice being used meaningfully and not in a tokenistic way.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A lack of knowledge about how to involve CYP in a meaningful way.</li> <li>• A perceived lack of time to be able to build a relationship with a CYP and gain their views in a more meaningful way.</li> <li>• The CYP may not want to engage with the EP or trainee EP.</li> </ul>
Being able to try new ways of working moving forwards and working creatively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perceived lack of time and resources, falling back into 'old' and well-known ways of working that are more comfortable.</li> <li>• The level of statutory work may make it more difficult to work creatively.</li> <li>• Schools buying in time may be more directive about the ways in which their time is used.</li> </ul>
More opportunities to develop skills, understanding and experiences through CPD.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perceived lack of time.</li> <li>• Not knowing where to access CPD opportunities.</li> </ul>
Increasing levels of preventative practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools, families, and other agencies wanting EPs and trainee EPs to work on more 'reactive' situations.</li> <li>• The level of statutory work, which tends to be more 'reactive' work.</li> </ul>
Increasing levels of systemic practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools, families, and other agencies having a fixed and/or historic view that EPs and trainee EPs work at the individual level.</li> </ul>
Increased levels of, and emphasis on, professional self-care.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perceived lack of time and resources.</li> <li>• The amount of work and demands on time may make it difficult for EPs and trainee EPs to prioritise their self-care.</li> </ul>
Remote working when appropriate, for example	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Schools and/or families wanting EPs and trainee EPs to come into school and see the CYP in person.</li> </ul>

with some groups of CYP such as those who are highly anxious.	
More opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with schools.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perceived lack of time and resources, time may not be allocated to building the relationship.</li> <li>• The level of statutory work may lead to 'one-off' visits in lots of different schools, which may not lend itself well to building a relationship.</li> <li>• An EP or trainee EP's 'patch' of schools moving or changing, making it more difficult to build and sustain the relationship.</li> </ul>
Ensuring that casework is reviewed, and impact is measured.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A perceived lack of time and resources.</li> <li>• Schools who buy in to the traded service may not want to utilise their time for reviews or measuring impact.</li> <li>• Difficulties associated with measuring impact.</li> </ul>
Clearly communicating the EP and trainee EP role to stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The EP and trainee EP role can be difficult to define succinctly.</li> <li>• Schools who buy in to the traded service may not want to utilise their time for this, especially if they already feel they know what the EP and trainee EP roles are.</li> </ul>

#### 5.4. Limitations of the current study

It is of great importance that the interpretation of the findings of this study are considered in conjunction with the study's limitations. Firstly, due to the small sample size, the fact that participants were all from one LA and were all female, the findings of this study may not be generalisable. There were issues discussed that were LA specific, and therefore these may not be generalisable. The subjective nature of thematic analysis makes it important to consider my positionality as a researcher, and to acknowledge that another researcher would have coded for themes differently to myself and may have drawn different conclusions. The findings of this study therefore represent my interpretation of the views of the participants. It must also be noted that I had a professional relationship with all participants in this study, and so there is a possibility that the participants' responses were

impacted by this. Additionally, the interviews were conducted at one point in time, it is therefore unknown whether experiences and reflections of participants did, or will have, an impact on future practice. It should also be acknowledged that the interviews took place in July 2020 and this timing may have impacted the responses of participants; the study only provides information regarding the early stages of the restrictions and changes to practice. Finally, there is a potential limitation to be considered with regard to the use of audio interviews which took place over the telephone, rather than video interviews. Despite audio interviews providing information about the content of the participants' responses, more information may have been gleaned from the participants' facial expressions or gestures, which may have led to different questions being asked, or to a different line of enquiry being pursued.

### **5.5. Future research**

In terms of future directions for research linked to this study, it would be interesting to explore the practice of EPs' and trainee EPs' following the legally enforced restrictions. This could explore the EPs' and trainee EPs' practice after the restrictions compared to before, to see if there has been any lasting impact of encountering the liminal space created by the pandemic. It would also be interesting to explore EP and trainee EP thoughts about practicing during the pandemic in retrospect, to see if there are any further insights to be gained from practicing during this time. A longitudinal study would also be interesting to conduct, to explore the perceptions of EPs' and trainee EPs' throughout the restrictions, and beyond. Finally, this study utilised the theoretical concept of liminality as a lens, through which to develop an understanding of the participants' experiences and reflections. Future

research could more explicitly posit the question of whether a liminal space was indeed created and experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic, and if liminal spaces could be created purposefully in the future, for the benefit of EP practice.

### **5.6. Concluding comments**

This study offers a unique insight into the practice of EPs and trainee EPs through the lens of liminality during the pandemic and legally enforced restrictions. This study aimed to explore the new ways that EPs and trainee EPs had been practising throughout the beginning of the pandemic and to explore the challenges and opportunities that EPs and trainee EPs experienced during this time. Through this, participants' professional identity, made explicit through the liminal experience, reflections on and changes to professional identity and participants' plans for future practice were explored.

The findings of the study suggested that the way EPs and trainee EPs were practicing during this time led to them reflect on their practice pre-restrictions, during the restrictions and post-restrictions. This also led participants to explicitly consider their professional identity and their plans for future practice. The implications of this study include ways of ensuring that those activities that are deemed supportive to professional identity and the role in general are maintained or increased. Participants' intended changes to future practice differed, but common themes included educating others further on the EP and trainee EP role to ensure that the ways in which EPs and trainee EPs are practicing is optimised for all stakeholders. Limitations of this study have been identified as well as possible directions for

future research, such as exploring the practice of EPs and trainee EPs following the return to their usual ways of working.

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Appendix 1

Application for ethical review (AER)



Application for Ethics Review Form

Section 1: Basic Project Details

**Project Title:** A qualitative exploration of educational psychologists' experiences regarding their practice, the emotional impact during the Covid-19 pandemic and their views regarding future practice.

**Is this project a:**

- University of Birmingham Staff Research project
  - University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project
  - Other (Please specify below)
- [Click or tap here to enter text.](#)

**Details of the Principal Investigator or Lead Supervisor (for PGR student projects):**

Title: [Redacted]  
First name: [Redacted]  
Last name: [Redacted]  
Position held: University tutor  
School/Department School of Education

Telephone: [Redacted]  
Email address: [Redacted]

**Details of any Co-Investigators or Co-Supervisors (for PGR student projects):**

Title: [Redacted]  
First name: [Redacted]  
Last name: [Redacted]  
Position held: University tutor  
School/Department School of Education

Telephone: [Redacted]

Email address: [REDACTED]

**Details of the student for PGR student projects:**

Title: Miss

First name: Sarah

Last name: Sanders

Course of study: Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology

Email address: [REDACTED]

**Project start and end dates:**

Estimated start date of project: 01/07/2020

Estimated end date of project: 01/09/2021

**Funding:**

Sources of funding: N/A

## Section 2: 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. Please do not provide extensive academic background material or references.*

***Purpose***

There are several purposes to my proposed research project. Firstly, I would like to explore how EPs and TEPs in my Local Authority are currently working in response to the legally enforced restrictions and moving forward. Secondly, I wish to explore the emotional impact for EPs and TEPs (trainee educational psychologists) since the legally enforced restrictions were introduced. Thirdly, I would like to explore how EPs and TEPs feel their role may change once schools reopen to all children and whether this period has made them reflect on their own practice. Finally, I wish to explore what, if any, support EPs and TEPs envision school staff, CYP and families may need from the EPS moving forward.

***Rationale***

*The Covid-19 pandemic*

The Covid-19 pandemic is a scenario which has resulted in school closures for most pupils. This situation is highly novel, making this an area of research with very little research base, particularly in relation to the work of EPs and TEPs during a pandemic such as this. Despite this being a highly novel area of research at the current time, I believe that there are many important insights to be gained from EP and TEP practice which could be relevant to other areas of their practice and I hope that exploring these will help to inform both practices and policies. I also hope, given that my data collection will take place in the midst of school restrictions and restrictions on face to face contact,

that this research will allow me to gain an important snapshot in time of EP views, experiences, and practices during the midst of the pandemic and school closures.

#### *How EPs and TEPs are currently practicing*

*I am interested in exploring how EPs and TEPs are currently practicing, during the legally enforced restrictions. I am hoping to utilise semi-structured interviews to explore how EPs and TEPs have been practicing and how this has changed and developed over time. I am interested to see the challenges EPs and TEPs may have faced in their practice during this time in order to consider more widely, the aspects of their role that rely on face to face contact and working with others directly. I believe that these restrictions have produced a unique opportunity to explore this. I am also interested to explore any positive aspects of practicing as an EP or TEP during this time. It is unknown as to when my interviews will be conducted, but since schools are planning a gradual reintegration for many children over the summer term, I am also interested to explore how EPs will practice during this period, in terms of remotely and possibly directly supporting CYP, families and school staff.*

#### *Working with school staff*

School staff are likely to need support and guidance for themselves throughout this scenario and EPs and TEPs are well placed to provide this. The BPS (2020) have released some guidance for psychologists supporting healthcare staff during the pandemic; much of this guidance is also relevant to how EPs can support school staff. The guidance suggests that communication, physical safety, peer support, normalising psychological reactions and using a graduated response are all helpful ways of supporting staff during this time. Duffield and O'Hare (2020) also suggest that EPs are well placed to support staff resilience through fostering a sense of belonging and connectedness at all levels in school, promoting help-seeking and by continuing to support development and learning. I am interested to explore the support, if any, that EPs provide to school staff and the perceived effectiveness and importance of this type of support.

#### *Emotional impact on EPs and TEPs*

*I plan to explore the emotional impact on EPs and TEPs during this period, beginning with when the legally enforced restriction began, up until the interviews take place. I am interested in what mitigating factors (if any) support/ed EPs and TEPs during this time. This is an important consideration moving forward; it is widely accepted that the adults who support children must first feel regulated themselves before they are able to support others effectively. I hope that this will also suggest good practice for emotional support for EPs and TEPs moving forward more generally, which could contribute to policy and practice. There is a fair amount of research exploring the emotional impact of a pandemic for adults, for example, Coombs' Situational crisis communication theory (1995) categorised different types of crisis, considering whether a crisis was unintentional or intentional and whether a crisis has an internal or external locus of control. A situation such as the Covid-19 pandemic would be classified as a crisis which was unintentional and has an external locus of control, which may result in an emotional response such as feelings of helplessness and anxiety.*

#### *Transition*

Transitioning from being exclusively at home to re-attending school is likely to be anxiety-provoking for many students, particularly those who are vulnerable (Shepherd and Roker, 2005). EPs are well placed to support CYP and those around them with this transition back into school and I am interested to explore how EPs and TEPs are supporting CYP with this transition. I hope that this will lead to recommendations for policy and practice for EPs and TEPs supporting CYP more generally with a transition, particularly transitions after traumatic life events.

### *Bereavement*

Given the unfortunate situation of school staff, CYP and families experiencing bereavement because of the pandemic, EPs are likely to be called upon for critical incident support. Farrell et al. (2006) posit that a critical incident response is an important aspect of EP services and should be offered by all services. As pointed out by Stevenson et al. (2009), during a pandemic there is often cancellation of events that are usually supportive of the grieving process, such as funerals. This may complicate the grieving process and therefore the impact of bereavement may be greater than in usual circumstances. I hope that this research project will explore best practice for EPs and TEPs involvement in bereavement and critical incident support for CYP, parents and school staff and that this can be utilised more generally into policy and practice for EPs and TEPs providing critical incident and bereavement support.

### *Research questions:*

- RQ1 – How do EPs and TEPs report the legally enforced restrictions necessitated by the pandemic have affected the way they practice?
- RQ2 – What emotional impact, if any, do EPs and TEPs report they have experienced in response to the changing circumstances?
- RQ3 - What, if any, support do EPs envision school staff, children, young people, and families may need from the EPS moving forward, in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic?

### *Expected outcomes:*

*This research will have several expected outcomes.* I am interested in finding out how this scenario has affected EP practice over time. I hope that this will lead to an understanding of what works for young people, school staff and families during a transition and during a traumatic world event. I hope that this will also contribute to knowledge around what works best for whom, from the EP's point of view, contributing to guidance and EP practice more widely, in scenarios where crises and/or traumatic events may be encountered. Despite the responses coming from only one local authority, I hope that the themes found will be relevant and of interest to other educational psychology services.

I am interested in exploring the emotional impact for EPs and TEPs during this period. I hope that this will lead to an understanding of what support EPs and TEPs may need during a period such as this and have implications more generally for policy and practice. I am also interested to explore how EPs feel their role may change moving forward in terms of the type of work they might be involved in, and how they feel CYP, school staff and families will be best supported during the pandemic, including after schools reopen. I hope that this will lead into practice and policies for educational psychology services during and following the pandemic.

*Additionally, I hope that my findings will be shared within the teams working within Children's Services within Derby City Council, allowing these practitioners to reflect upon and inform their practice. It will help members of this team to see what practice is being engaged in, the emotional impact for us as professionals and ways that we can support all parties moving forward. Finally, I hope that the research will provide a novel understanding of the experiences of EPs and TEPs, during a scenario such as this.*

## Section 3: Conduct and location of Project

### *Conduct of project*

*Please give a description of the research methodology that will be used. If more than one methodology or phase will be involved, please separate these out clearly and refer to them consistently throughout the rest of this form.*

My research is based on an interpretivist methodology which will employ thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) to analyse semi-structured interviews. I plan to use semi-structured interviews to allow me to gain a rich and detailed understanding of the experiences of EPs and TEPs in Derby City during the legally enforced restrictions. Interviews are a way for the researcher and participant to work in collaboration to uncover and interpret the participant's meaning-making of a particular topic. A semi-structured interview comprises of the use of an interview schedule which is created by the researcher and provides a list of fairly specific topics to be covered (Bryman, 2001), my interview schedule can be found in my appendices. In comparison to structured interviews, a semi-structured interview tends to be much more focussed on the interviewee's point of view and going 'off on a tangent' is often promoted as this may provide an understanding into what the participant sees as most important (Bryman, 2001). I hope that the use of semi-structured interviews will allow me to gain rich and detailed responses from participants. I also hope to use a previously conducted questionnaire by gaining retrospective consent – please see section 11 for more details regarding this request.

Once the data has been gathered, the researcher then engages in a subjective process of interpretation. This involves the researcher transcribing the interviews verbatim before coding for themes. I plan to use the six stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006) when analysing my data.

I plan to conduct one pilot interview with an EP or TEP within my service. Through these pilot interviews, I hope to uncover any potential weaknesses within my interview schedule and to make any necessary adjustments before data collection occurs. The interviews will be up to 1 hour in length, depending on the amount of information the EPs and TEPs wish to share. If the EPs and TEPs need longer than this, then we can arrange for a second interview to discuss the topics not covered in the hour. Participants will be given the opportunity to choose the location, day, and time of their interview. Participants will be advised on appropriate locations from which they are interviewed to help maintain privacy. As the researcher, I will be alone in the recording venue during the interview to respect the confidentiality of the participant. These interviews will be audio recorded and then analysed using the six stages suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), to find themes within the data.

### **Geographic location of project**

*State the geographic locations where the project and all associated fieldwork will be carried out. If the project will involve travel to areas which may be considered unsafe, either in the UK or overseas, please ensure that the risks of this (or any other non-trivial health and safety risks associated with the research) are addressed by a documented health and safety risk assessment, as described in section 10 of this form.*

The research will take place remotely via telephone conversations, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

## Section 4: Research Participants and Recruitment

### Does the project involve human participants?

*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).*

Yes   
No

*If you have answered NO please go on to Section 8 of this form. If you have answered YES please complete the rest of this section and then continue on to section 5.*

### Who will the participants be?

*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.*

My research project aims to investigate the experiences of 6 to 8 participants. I have chosen this number of participants as this amount will provide me with a rich insight, whilst being realistic within my timeframe. This number of participants will allow me to explore a range of EP's and TEP's experiences, whilst still being realistic within my timeframe. The sample will be a purposive sample from the educational psychology service in Derby City local authority. This research project will be open to all EPs and TEPs within Derby City. If more than 8 chose to participate, I will allocate each possible participant with a number and use a random number generator to select the 6-8 participants.

### How will the participants be recruited?

*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). Please ensure that you attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s), or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.*

I will send the information sheet to the email address of my educational psychology service, which includes all EPs and TEPs currently employed or on placement within the service. In this information sheet (please see attached information sheet in the appendices), I will describe the purposes of the research. I will ask any EPs or TEPs who are interested to respond to me via email. If more than 8 EPs or TEPs are interested in partaking in the research, I will assign the potential participants with numbers and use a random number generator to narrow the responses down to 6-8 participants. It is worth noting that, given I am on placement within the educational psychology service, I already have

a relationship with every EP and TEP within the service.

## Section 5: Consent

### **What process will be used to obtain consent?**

*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 under the age of 16 it would usually be necessary to obtain parental consent and the process for this should be described in full, including whether parental consent will be opt-in or opt-out.*

Consent will be gained directly from EPs and TEPs. Consent forms will be provided alongside the information sheets for EPs and TEPs. Consent will be opt-in consent, that is, it will only be assumed that consent has been given when the consent form has been completed in full by the EP or TEP. The consent form can be seen in the appendices and will require an electronic signature. I will email out the information sheet to the EP service and ask them to reply if they are interested in participating. EPs and TEPs will be told they can ask questions regarding the project before consent is given, and throughout the project. I will ensure that participants have a chance to pre-read the consent form. Prior to the start of each interview, informed verbal consent will be sought once again, and the consent form will be reiterated to ensure that the participant has understood each element of the form. The form can be seen in the appendices and involves project details, right to withdraw at any time, limitations to confidentiality, anonymity, information storage and audio recording the interview. Participants will be informed that the recording of the interview can be stopped at any time on request and that they can withdraw at any time from the research.

*Please be aware that if the project involves over 16s who lack capacity to consent, separate approval will be required from the Health Research Authority (HRA) in line with the Mental Capacity Act.*

*Please 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.*

*Note: Guidance from Legal Services on wording relating to the Data Protection Act 2018 can be accessed at.*

### **Use of deception?**

*Will the participants be deceived in any way about the purpose of the study?*

Yes   
No

*If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and the nature of any explanation/debrief will be provided to the participants after the study has taken place.*

N/A

## Section 6: Participant compensation, withdrawal, and feedback to participants

### What, if any, feedback will be provided to participants?

*Explain any feedback/ information that will be provided to the participants after participation in the research (e.g. a more complete description of the purpose of the research, or access to the results of the research).*

Feedback will be provided to all participants through written feedback and through an oral presentation for any EPs or TEPs who wish to attend. This feedback will involve a reiteration of the project aims and also an overview of the main findings of the project, anonymised so that no individuals are identifiable from the data.

### What arrangements will be in place for participant withdrawal?

*Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project, 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.*

Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw at the time of consent and participants will have my contact details should they wish to withdraw from the study after the interviews have taken place. The EPs and TEPs will also be reminded in letters and consent forms that they can withdraw up until two weeks after the interview.

*Please confirm the specific date/timescale to be used as the deadline for participant withdrawal and ensure that this is consistently stated across all participant documentation. This is considered preferable to allowing participants to 'withdraw at any time' as presumably there will be a point beyond which it will not be possible to remove their data from the study (e.g. because analysis has started, the findings have been published, etc).*

Data can be withdrawn up until two weeks after the interview.

### What arrangements will be in place for participant compensation?

*Will participants receive compensation for participation?*

Yes   
No

*If yes, please provide further information about the nature and value of any compensation and clarify whether it will be financial or non-financial.*

N/A

*If participants choose to withdraw, how will you deal with compensation?*

N/A

## Section 7: Confidentiality/anonymity

**Will the identity of the participants be known to the researcher?**

*Will participants be truly anonymous (i.e. their identity will not be known to the researcher)?*

Yes   
No

**In what format will data be stored?**

*Will participants' data be stored in identifiable format, or will it be anonymised or pseudo-anonymised (i.e. an assigned ID code or number will be used instead of the participant's name and a key will kept allowing the researcher to identify a participant's data)?*

The interviews will be audio recorded on a Dictaphone. These files will then be transferred onto a computer and the files will be password protected, with a password only I, the researcher, know. Once the interviews have been transferred, these files will then be deleted immediately from the Dictaphone. Once my viva is completed, all recordings will be deleted from the computer. All names and other identifiable information will be coded. Any paper documents will be securely stored at the University of Birmingham, to which I alone will have access.

The University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research indicates that all interview data should be stored and retained for 10 years. Once this time has passed, all data will be destroyed, which will involve paper documents being shredded and computer files being deleted.

**Will participants' data be treated as confidential?**

*Will participants' data be treated as confidential (i.e. they will not be identified in any outputs from the study and their identity will not be disclosed to any third party)?*

Yes   
No

*If you have answered no to the question above, meaning that participants' data will not be treated as confidential (i.e. their data and/or identities may be revealed in the research outputs or otherwise to third parties), please provide further information and justification for this:*

N/A

## Section 8: Storage, access, and disposal of data

**How and where will the data (both paper and electronic) be stored, what arrangements will be in place to keep it secure and who will have access to it?**

*Please note that for long-term storage, data should usually be held on a secure University of Birmingham IT system, for example BEAR (see <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/it/teams/infrastructure/research/bear/index.aspx>).*

Paper data will be stored in a locket cabinet at the University of Birmingham, to which the researcher alone will have access. Electronic data will be stored on an encrypted external hard drive (e.g. Ironkey), to which the researcher alone will be able to access. I will store a back-up of the interviews using encrypted storage space on the University BEAR system.

#### **Data retention and disposal**

*The University usually requires data to be held for a minimum of 10 years to allow for verification. Will you retain your data for at least 10 years?*

Yes

No

*If data will be held for less than 10 years, please provide further justification:*

N/A

*What arrangements will be in place for the secure disposal of data?*

All data will be disposed of once the 10 year timeframe has elapsed. This will involve all paper files being shredded and all electronic files being deleted.

## **Section 9: Other approvals required**

**Are you aware of any other national or local approvals required to carry out this research?**

*E.g. clearance from the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), Local Authority approval for work involving Social Care, local ethics/governance approvals if the work will be carried out overseas, or approval from NOMS or HMPPS for work involving police or prisons? If so, please provide further details:*

N/A

**For projects involving NHS staff, is approval from the Health Research Authority (HRA) needed in addition to University ethics approval?**

*If your project will involve NHS staff, please go to the HRA decision tool at <http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/> to establish whether the NHS would consider your project to be*

research, thus requiring HRA approval in addition to University ethics approval. Is HRA approval required?

Yes

No

Please include a print out of the HRA decision tool outcome with your application.

## Section 10: Risks and benefits/significance

### Benefits/significance of the research

*Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research*

I hope that there will be several benefits to the EPs and TEPs who partake in my research project. I feel that it will generally be of benefit to EPs and TEP as being able to talk about these potentially difficult times could be a source of offloading and therefore have a positive impact for them emotionally. I also hope that the project will give those who participate a chance to reflect and consider the time they have been practicing throughout the legally enforced restrictions.

I hope that the project will lead to an understanding of what works for young people, school staff and families during a transition and during a traumatic world event and what works best for who, from the EP's point of view, contributing to guidance and EP practice more widely, in scenarios where crises may be encountered. I also hope that my project will lead to an understanding of what support EPs and TEPs may need during a period such as this and have implications more generally for policy and practice.

*My findings will be shared with the educational psychology service and wider Children's Services within Derby City Council, allowing these practitioners to reflect upon and inform their practice. It will help members of this team to see what practice is being engaged in, the emotional impact for us as professionals and ways that we can support all parties moving forward. Finally, I hope that this research will provide an understanding of the experiences of EPs and TEPs and provide us with a novel understanding of their experiences, during such a scenario such as this.*

### Risks of the research

*Outline any potential risks (including risks to research staff, research participants, other individuals not involved in the research, 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.) **Please ensure that you include any risks relating to overseas travel and working in overseas locations as part of the study, particularly if the work will involve travel to/working in areas considered unsafe and/or subject to travel warnings from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (see <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice>).** Please also be aware that the University insurer, UMAL, offers access to RiskMonitor Traveller, a service which provides 24/7/365 security advice for all travellers and you are advised to make use of this service (see <https://umal.co.uk/travel/pre-travel-advice/>).*

***The outlining of the risks in this section does not circumvent the need to carry out and document a detailed Health and Safety risk assessment where appropriate – see below.***

Considering the current social distancing guidelines, participants may feel more anxious than usual and have less of a support network. Therefore, I will ensure that I signpost alternative/additional support that they can access. Upsetting conversations may occur during the interviews, for example many individuals have experienced a bereavement because of the pandemic, which may occur in conversation, particularly in responses relating to research question 2. Participants are informed that throughout the process that interviews can be stopped at any time and the recording will also be stopped at this time.

Safeguarding procedures will also be followed should there be any significant risks to the EPs or TEPs themselves or to others communicated during, before or after the interviews are conducted. Safeguarding procedures will also be followed if an individual becomes upset or distressed at any point during the interview. This will involve utilising the safeguarding procedure of the local authority. Gentle questioning will be used throughout the interviews to minimise the risk of distress and I have read around interviewing individuals on potentially distressing topics and feel confident to conduct these interviews.

EPs and TEPs will be made aware that if they do not have to answer any question they do not want to. They will also be informed that they are able to take breaks at any point during the interview. After the interview has been conducted there will be a conversation with each participant in which they will be debriefed and will be able to ask any questions that they have. Participants will also be given my contact details and those of my supervisor, should they have any questions or concerns after the interview.

There is also a risk that, since I already have a relationship with all the EPs and TEPs in my service, they may feel that they must take part and feel pressurised to do so. I will ensure that they know that partaking is entirely voluntary throughout the process. There is also a chance that the EPs may feel pressured to answer in a particular way, which is why it is so important that they are aware of the confidentiality and anonymity that will be in place throughout the data collection process, with the caveat of following safeguarding procedures if I am concerned about them or someone else.

#### **University Health & Safety (H&S) risk assessment**

*For projects of more than minimal H&S risk it is essential that a H&S risk assessment is carried out and signed off in accordance with the process in place within your School/College and you must provide a copy of this with your application. The risk may be non-trivial because of travel to, or working in, a potentially unsafe location, or because of the nature of research that will be carried out there. It could also involve (irrespective of location) H&S risks to research participants, or other individuals not involved directly in the research. Further information about the risk assessment process for research can be found at <https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/hr/wellbeing/worksafe/policy/Research-Risk-Assessment-and-Mitigation-Plans-RAMPs.aspx>.*

Please note that travel to (or through) 'FCO Red zones' requires approval by the University's Research Travel Approval Panel, and will only be approved in exceptional circumstances where sufficient mitigation of risk can be demonstrated.

## Section 11: Any other issues

**Does the research raise any ethical issues not dealt with elsewhere in this form?**

*If yes, please provide further information:*

I have had to change my Volume one topic, because of the Covid-19 pandemic. I am starting a new application for ethical approval for the new topic I have chosen. I had previously gathered some data from educational psychologists in my placement service, via questionnaire, for one of my professional practice reports (PPRs). I had provided EPs with a consent form which they signed, so they gave their fully informed consent for this data to be used for my PPR. The consent form included an information sheet describing the purpose of the PPR, an offer to answer any questions or concerns, informing that quotations from the questionnaire responses may be included in my thesis, confidentiality and anonymity, data storage details and data withdrawal procedures. As the participants are educational psychologists who have conducted their own PhD research before, please be assured that they are fully aware of ethical requirements such as these. This data would be very useful to include in my Volume one research, as it provides a snapshot of the initial views of EPs following the closures of schools, which may be difficult for EPs to recall retrospectively, with the same level of accuracy. This is therefore data which I would not be able to obtain as reliably as I did in March 2020. As can be seen above, I plan to gather more data from phone semi-structured interviews once my application has been approved. Please could you advise as to whether I would be able to include this previous data in my research if I gain retrospective consent from all EPs to use this data for my Volume one research, instead of for the professional practice report? Please note that the retrospective consent form would be sent to the EPs via email, alongside an initial email explaining the project and the retrospective consent.

I have included a copy of the consent form and the questionnaire previously sent out and returned by EPs in March 2020 in my appendices. I have also included a proposed retrospective consent form for questionnaire for EPs who filled in the questionnaire back in March 2020, to ask if they are happy to consent for their data to be used for my Volume one research project, rather than for a PPR. I have explained in this consent form that their data from the questionnaire could not be withdrawn if they do choose to consent to this. Please also note that all EPs used an electronic signature to show that they consented.

**Do you wish to provide any other information about this research not already provided, or to seek the opinion of the Ethics Committee on any particular issue?**

*If yes, please provide further information:*

Yes, please see the paragraph above.

## Section 12: Peer review

Has your project received scientific peer review?

Yes

No

*If yes, please provide further details about the source of the review (e.g. independent peer review as part of the funding process or peer review from supervisors for PGR student projects):*

N/A

## Section 13: Nominate an expert reviewer

*For certain types of project, including those of an interventional nature or those involving significant risks, it may be helpful (and you may be asked) to nominate an expert reviewer for your project. 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.*

Title: Click or tap here to enter text.

First name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Last name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Email address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Phone number: Click or tap here to enter text.

*Brief explanation of reasons for nominating and/or nominee's suitability:*

N/A

## Section 14: Document checklist

*Please check that the following documents, where applicable, are attached to your application:*

Recruitment advertisement

Participant information sheet

Consent form

Questionnaire

Interview/focus group topic guide

*Please proof-read study documentation and ensure that it is appropriate for the intended audience before submission.*

## Section 15: Applicant declaration

*Please read the statements below and tick the boxes to indicate your agreement:*

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.

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 (<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/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.

**Please now save your completed form and email a copy to the Research Ethics Officer, at [aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk](mailto:aer-ethics@contacts.bham.ac.uk). As noted above, please do not submit a paper copy**

## Appendix 2

### Information sheet for EPs/trainee EPs

Dear educational psychology team,

I am writing to you regarding my volume one research project for my PhD. I am hoping to explore the experiences and reflections of practising educational psychologists and trainee educational psychologists during the Covid-19 pandemic.

There are several purposes to my proposed research project. Firstly, I would like to explore how EPs and TEPs (trainee educational psychologists) in Derby LA are currently working in response to the legally enforced restrictions and moving forward. Secondly, I wish to explore the emotional impact for EPs and TEPs since the legally enforced restrictions were introduced. Thirdly, I would like to explore how EPs and TEPs feel their role may change once schools reopen to all children and whether this period has made them reflect on their own practice. Finally, I wish to explore what, if any, support EPs and TEPs envision school staff, CYP and families may need from the EPS moving forward.

My research will involve semi-structured interviews with between 6 and 8 EPs and/or TEPs. These interviews will be conducted over the phone, considering the current Covid-19 restrictions on face to face contact. The interviews are expected to last around an hour but may be longer or shorter depending on the amount of information you wish to share. If the interview needs to last longer than an hour, then I will contact you to arrange a further interview. The interview will take place on a day and at a time that is convenient to you. The interviews will include prompts using the responses previously provided in the questionnaire sent out to the EPS.

This report will form part of my doctoral thesis and will be written up as a formal report. It should be noted that all geographical locations, school names and participant names will be anonymous, and confidentiality will be maintained. Confidentiality will only be breached should I have concerns about yourself or somebody else, in which case the safeguarding process of Derby City Council would be followed. During the interviews, we may touch on topics that you find upsetting. You are free to stop the interview at any point and I will stop recording our conversation. You will also be free to take a break at any point during the interview, or to stop the interview for the day to rearrange. This project has been ethically approved by The University of Birmingham Ethics Committee. Further information regarding data withdrawal, recording of interviews and other ethical considerations can be found in the consent form.

If you would be interested in taking part in this project, then please contact me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]. Please note that if more than 8 EPs and/or TEPs which to partake in the research project, I will assign each potential participant with a number and use a random number generator to select participants. Once the participants have been selected, I will then send the consent form to those who will be partaking in the research project.

If you have any questions regarding the project, please feel free to contact me at [REDACTED] or on [REDACTED]

My supervisor is [REDACTED] and he can be contacted [REDACTED]

Finally, I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and I hope to hear from you soon.

Yours faithfully,  
Sarah Sanders  
Trainee Educational Psychologist  
University of Birmingham

**Appendix 3**  
**Consent form for EPs/TEPs**

- I have read the information sheet provided by Sarah Sanders (trainee educational psychologist) for her Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate based at the University of Birmingham.
- I am aware that I can ask Sarah any questions related to this research project, either by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]
- I understand that my phone interview/s will be recorded on an external recording device.
- I understand that the recording of the interview can be stopped at any time on request and that I can withdraw from the research at any time during the interview. I understand that I can withdraw my data up to two weeks after the phone interview has taken place by contacting Sarah using the details above.
- I am aware that anonymised quotations from my responses may be included in Sarah's thesis.
- I am aware that all data gathered will be confidential unless Sarah has reason to become concerned about me or someone else.
- I understand that the data collected will be stored in agreement with the Data Protection Act (2003).

Participant name:

Participant Signature:

Date:

**Appendix 4**

**Interview schedule for telephone interviews**

<b>Topic/issue</b>	<b>Main questions</b>	<b>Prompts</b>	<b>Probes</b>
Introductions and consent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Explain the purpose of the study.</li> <li>▪ Make sure that the participant has read the information sheet and ask if they have any questions.</li> <li>▪ Make sure the participant knows that they do not need to answer every question and remind them about their right to withdraw. Ensure the participant knows that there are no right or wrong answers and that they can be completely honest.</li> <li>▪ Go through the consent form and gain verbal consent.</li> <li>▪ Turn on Dictaphone for audio recording.</li> <li>▪ Warm-up questions.</li> </ul>		
Practice at the start of the restrictions	In March 2020 you completed a questionnaire and wrote about how you were practicing at the time. Do you mind discussing this in more detail?	*Go through questionnaire response and probe*	<p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Why was that important to you?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?</p>
Practice during the spring term	During the spring term, through April and May 2020, what can you remember about the types of work you were engaging in at this stage?	<p>Were you working with school staff over the phone?</p> <p>Did you engage in any consultation?</p> <p>Were you working with families?</p> <p>Did you support children and young people? Directly or indirectly?</p> <p>Were you completing statutory or traded reports?</p> <p>Were you involved in any systemic work? If so what kinds?</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Why was that important to you?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?</p>
Practice during the summer term	During the spring term, through June and July 2020,	Some children went back to school during this period – did this change your practice?	Can you tell me more about that?

	<p>what can you remember about the types of work you were engaging in at this stage?</p>	<p>Were you working with school staff over the phone?</p> <p>Did you engage in any consultation?</p> <p>Were you working with families?</p> <p>Did you support children and young people? Directly or indirectly?</p> <p>Were you completing statutory or traded reports?</p> <p>Were you involved in any systemic work? If so what kinds?</p>	<p>Why was that important to you?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?</p>
<p>Challenges throughout practicing during this time</p>	<p>Considering the period from March 2020 to the present day, what, if any, challenges do you feel you have faced in working in this way?</p>	<p>How did it feel to work remotely?</p> <p>What aspects were difficult?</p> <p>How were your motivation levels?</p> <p>How was it to write statutory reports?</p> <p>How was it to use remote consultation?</p> <p>Were there any practical difficulties that affected your practice during this time?</p> <p>Have any of these challenges made you reflect on your role more generally?</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Why was that important to you?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?</p>
<p>Opportunities in practicing during this time</p>	<p>Considering the period from March 2020 to the present day, what, if any, positive experiences do you feel you have had in</p>	<p>What positive experiences have you had whilst practicing during this time?</p> <p>Have you been engaging in any new ways of working?</p>	<p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Why was that important to you?</p> <p>Is there anything else you would</p>

	working in this way?	Has it been easy/difficult to connect with the wider team during this time?  Have you been working with other agencies during this time?	like to tell me about that?
Emotional impact initially	In March 2020 you completed a questionnaire and wrote about the emotional impact this had on you at the time. Do you mind discussing this in more detail? What has the ongoing emotional impact been like for you as an EP/TEP?	*Go through questionnaire response and probe*  How has the emotional impact changed over time?  Has anything mitigated the emotional impact? If so, what?  Do you think the emotional impact has impacted your practice? If so if what way/s?	Can you tell me more about that?  Why was that important to you?  Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?
Reflections on EP role and future impact of these reflections	Has this period made you reflect on your role as an EP and if so how?	Has this period made you reflect on your future practice in any way?  Which aspects of the role have you reflected on?  Will you make any changes to your practice as an EP/TEP, moving forward?  *Go through questionnaire response and probe*	Can you tell me more about that?  Why was that important to you?  Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?
Role for EPs and TEPs moving forward	What kind of support do you envision yourself providing to schools, children, young people, and families before September?	What kinds of general support do you see yourself providing during this period?  Do you think you will be providing training during this period?	Can you tell me more about that?  Why was that important to you?  Is there anything else you would like to tell me about that?

		<p>Do you think you will be providing consultation during this period?</p> <p>Do you think you will be involved in systemic work during this period?</p> <p>Do you think you will be involved in assessment work during this period?</p>	
--	--	--	--

## **Appendix 5**

### **Questionnaire sent to EPs/TEPs in March 2020**

1. In what ways have you been working with schools, parents, children, and colleagues since you began working remotely?
2. So far, how has it felt to work remotely as an EP/TEP in terms of your working practices and emotional adjustment?
3. What, if any, challenges have you faced so far since working remotely in terms of your working practices and emotional adjustment?
4. What, if any, positive experiences have you had since working remotely?
5. Has your practice changed since you first started working remotely? If so, how? How does this experience feel?
6. So far, has working remotely made you think any differently about how you work as an EP? If so in what way/s?

Appendix 6

**Consent form for questionnaire sent to EPs/TEPs in March 2020**

I have read the information given in the email sent by Sarah Sanders (Trainee Educational Psychologist) for her Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate based at the University of Birmingham.

I am aware that I can ask Sarah any questions related to this research project, either by email [redacted] or by phone at [redacted]

I am aware that extracts from my questionnaire responses and interview responses may be included in Sarah's thesis. I am aware that all data gathered will be confidential unless Sarah has reason to become concerned about me or someone else. I understand that the data collected will be stored in agreement with the Data Protection Act (2003).

I understand that I can withdraw my data up to one month after the phone interview has taken place by contacting Sarah.

Participant name:

Participant signature:


Date:

**Appendix 7**  
**Initial email to EPs/TEPs**

Dear educational psychology team,

I am conducting my volume one research for my doctorate studies into the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the practice of educational psychologists (EPs) at Derby City Council. I have attached an information sheet explaining the project in more detail, as well as two consent forms. The project is open to EPs in the service who previously completed the questionnaire regarding practicing during the Covid-19 pandemic, in March 2020.

Unfortunately, I am not able to recruit EPs who did not take part in this questionnaire. If you completed this questionnaire, I am hoping to gain retrospective consent to use this data in my volume one research project. This is entirely voluntary; if you are happy to take part in the phone interview, please complete both consent forms. One consent form indicates that you are happy to partake in the interviews and the other indicates that you are happy for your previous responses from the questionnaire to be used in my volume one research project.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by return email, or by phone at 

Many thanks for your time,

Sarah Sanders

**Appendix 8**

**Retrospective consent form for questionnaire sent to EPs/TEPs in March 2020**

I give permission for my questionnaire response from March 2020 to be utilised for Sarah's Volume one research project. I am aware that extracts from my questionnaire responses may be included in Sarah's Volume One research project write up.

I am aware that I can ask Sarah any questions related to this, either by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]

I understand that, should I agree to this, my data from the questionnaire can no longer be withdrawn.

Participant name:

Participant Signature:

Date:

## Appendix 9

### Example transcript with initial notes

I: So, the first kind of, section is about how you've been practicing, um, from March 2020 you actually completed the questionnaire...
P: Mm-hm.
I: And I just had a quick look at your responses from then, and it looked as if you were mainly working with parents over the phone...
P: Mm-hm.
I: So, it was really early on, I think it'd only been a week or two, erm...
P: Yeah.
I: So, you spoke to three different parents, one with an anxious child, erm, one who had a erm... oh sorry I thought it was a child who was deaf, but it was a deaf parent by the looks of it...
P: A deaf parent, yep.
I: Yeah, ah ok, so she had some concerns over Covid-19 and her son's response to that. And then, something about a statutory assessment. So you had quite a lot of contact with parents around that time...
P: Mm-hm.
I: And it looks as though you were signposting as well, so BPS guidance, I know there was a lot coming out around then... erm, and that looks like in those couple of weeks that was kind of the main, erm, sort of jobs that you were doing.
P: Yep.
I: Have you got any kind of, reflections about that time? I don't know if you can really remember it now...
P: Yeah, in terms of the job, or just in general?
I: Yeah, kind of either really, just general reflections on how it was to work during that time, erm, sort of, yeah just general reflections really.
P: Erm, I think it was quite overwhelming for everybody. It was for me. Erm, I... found in the first few weeks and in the run-up to lockdown as well, there was just so much information coming from all angles...
I: Yeah.
P: Erm, and erm, because I had to then reduce my hours because of childcare, erm, I did find it quite difficult to get on top of things and sort of prioritise, particularly with emails because there was just so much stuff to get through...
I: Yeah.
P: So, um, so one of the things that erm, that helped in terms of that was to... to erm... remove EPnet from my emails because there was just so much information going through. I think it was useful but for me it wasn't... I couldn't really... it wasn't useful for me to process that, in addition to everything else that was going on. Erm I think that was... that was challenging. Erm...
I: Can you remember how it was kind of moving from working directly to that initial kind of working with parents over the phone? I don't know if you can remember, erm, how that kind of... how you found that – whether it was a big shift or whether it felt quite familiar?
P: Erm, I don't know I have done some consultation with parents over the phone before...
I: OK.
P: Erm, so it felt OK... but erm... but then er... I suppose in those early days, any involvement I'd already seen the child or already done some work with the child, so that

- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Overwhelming at the start
- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Overload of information from different places
- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Childcare – reduction in hours
- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Overwhelmed with volume of work
- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Removing emails – self-care?
- SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Consultation with parents not a new way of working

<p>felt a little easier. Gradually as we've been working with children that we don't know, that we haven't seen, that's become a bit more difficult.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Easier when knew the child</p>
<p>I: Yep.</p>	
<p>P: Erm... but yeah I think... I do find talking over the phone... it's got its... it's got its erm... The benefits are that you can... for me anyway is that while I'm talking to parents I can type whilst I'm talking to them, erm and then that means that it is a bit easier then to transfer that into a report, rather than having handwritten notes. And then I can also access resources which I might not be able to do when I'm speaking with parents face to face.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) More difficult to work with unknown children</p>
<p>I: Yeah, definitely.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Benefit of speaking over phone</p>
<p>P: So to some extent, that's a benefit. I guess I can also go back and look at the child's reports I can look at other people who have been involved, so that's a benefit. But then... I think you miss out on so much, not seeing them face to face, not being able to have that contact with parents, within the context of seeing the child, speaking to the staff, erm... I think you have to ask more questions because it... erm... nothing is really... you can't make assumptions about - erm... about the child in as much as you can when you've seen them and you've had contact with them...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Benefit of speaking over phone</p>
<p>I: Absolutely, that's awesome. Can you keep that in mind for the challenges bit XXX? Because that's a really good point, can we talk about that more then? That would be awesome, that's brilliant.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Missing out on information by working remotely</p>
<p>P: Yeah, mm-hm.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Difficult to not see the child in context</p>
<p>I: Erm, I'll try and keep that in mind as well so that we don't forget. Brilliant, so that was kind of that March, kind of time, when schools were closing for the majority of pupils. And then we moved into the kind of April, May time, so that was around Easter... before Easter and just after Easter... I don't know if you can remember... you might find it quite difficult... what you were doing around that time that was perhaps different to what you were doing initially?</p>	
<p>P: Yeah, I think, some... erm, hmmm I have nothing in my diary so that's not helpful (laughs)</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Became easier in April/May</p>
<p>I: (laughs) that's funny.</p>	
<p>P: But I think April to May, April and May were erm... in some ways easier for me...</p>	
<p>I: OK...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Work and home life blurring</p>
<p>P: Because we had the... I mean at that point it felt like I had... there was a lot of work to do, but erm... because of the childcare it's difficult for me to, particularly in that April to May to separate my work life from my home life, because I think in April and May there was definitely more of a focus, particularly in my mind that I needed to prioritise erm, the home schooling side...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Home schooling - personal</p>
<p>I: Yep. Definitely, yeah.</p>	
<p>P: And fortunately I had the benefit of erm, of erm being able to work as and when I could and had the support of the local authority and from the principle so that I could erm... just work ... 4 to 5 hours a day... and because we had erm... the structure of schooling in the morning that I was doing with XXX, erm... I was able to do that and then work in the afternoons and do a bit of work in the morning, erm...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Support from LA important</p>
<p>I: Brilliant, yep.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Flexibility from LA</p>
<p>P: And also another thing that made it easier at that point was that erm... My other half wasn't working at all, because he works for himself and it's quite... he's a tree surgeon so he works in people's gardens and in the early days of lockdown that wasn't happening at</p>	

<p>all, so it meant that we were sharing the childcare a lot more. I would do the mornings; he would do the afternoons. So, we had a structure then and I was doing... so in terms of the EP work, erm... there was, I think my focus was erm, supporting the members of staff that I supervise, in particular supervising the trainee that I work with...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Created a routine</p>
<p>I: Yep.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Supervising others was a priority</p>
<p>P: Erm, and in supporting the service with critical incident... that kind of work... erm, getting the processes in place, for understanding what we were going to do in lockdown.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Critical incident response</p>
<p>I: Mm-hm, definitely, yeah.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Statutory work</p>
<p>P: So there was some statutory work involved, I did some statutory work, but mostly it was around supporting the team, setting up those processes and erm, responding to emails. It was less schoolwork in that time I think.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Parent work</p>
<p>I: Yeah.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Statutory work</p>
<p>P: Erm, obviously there was the Easter holidays in there, bank holidays, so there was less time in schools, erm... so there was still some parent contact, there was still some school contact around the statutory work we were doing. Oh and also I was catching up on the reports that I hadn't written yet. Oh and also we were starting off the annual review stuff around then too weren't we?</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Statutory work</p>
<p>I: Yeah, the annual review audit.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Annual review audit.</p>
<p>P: Yeah, so we were doing that ... So I was sorting out the processes mainly in April and May around erm, how we were going to review the annual review stuff, annual; review audits. Erm...</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Getting things organised</p>
<p>I: Yeah</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Emotion - uncertainty</p>
<p>P: Yeah and a lot of admin stuff. There was a lot of admin work that we were doing then, trying to get things ready, I think the uncertainty about whether schools would be able to open had an impact on that. Yeah there was quite a lot of stuff we were doing there, mostly on a service, systemic level, sorting out the processes for things.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Organising processes – LA level</p>
<p>I: Yeah definitely.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Unknown for everyone - took pressure off</p>
<p>P: erm... so yeah there's national, international (inaudible) around those was quiet, made things difficult, but then also erm... in a way because we didn't have any definite answers on... there weren't any good examples of, y'know, no one was doing anything perfectly at that point and not that we are now, but erm... but it did... it kind of took the pressure off a little bit. I think everybody was trying their best. I think because we were working, in particular working with XX (senior) and XX (senior) and then with the support from XX (EP) around the critical incidents, that erm... er... from a senior's perspective, that did make it a bit easier. The fact that we were able to bounce things off each other and work together, rather than in isolation.</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working with the wider team helped.</p>
<p>I: Definitely yeah, I can definitely see how that would be the case. Brilliant, OK, so that was yep... April May so if we just move forward through our kind of imaginary timeline, through to June and July so, basically up until present day, through June. Have things sort of changed much since that April May period would you say, in terms of the sorts of work you've been doing?</p>	<p>SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Lack of routine in June – challenging</p>
<p>P: Erm, yes again, so my home life has affected that as well because, my other half has started to work more...</p>	
<p>I: OK.</p>	
<p>P: So... we've had to erm, er... prioritised, erm... I've been working full days whilst he's been having full days with XX and we don't have that structure that we had before so that's been a bit of a challenge.</p>	

I: Yep	
P: Erm and also there has been the prospect of some children starting back at school, erm... that didn't happen with us, so that made it more difficult as well.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Home life challenging with children not restarting school
I: Yeah definitely, the flooding the, er... I heard all about the flooding.	
P: Yeah (laughs) the flooding and the school said that they were only having keyworker kids and year 6s in and XX is in the foundation stage as well so, that did make it challenge...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Pressure decreased - personal
I: Yeah.	
P: I think the erm... erm... at that point, definitely from June, the ... I've felt less pressure in terms of home schooling because I've felt like I've done... being an EP has been helpful in terms of know interventions for kids, so that just... that helped earlier on in March April May time and so we were only really focussing on literacy and doing some of the schoolwork that's been set by the school...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Childcare
I: Mm-hm.	
P: Erm but then, so some... in terms of my work... I think from, in June it's... even though I have been... I don't have to work quite as much, because I've got childcare, erm, which is good (inaudible) workload (laughs)...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Level of work
I: Yeah, yeah (laughs)	
P: It has been quite challenging and by June, I definitely felt the sort of, snowballing of things to do... things that are going on. And erm, in the last few weeks I've been less on top of the emails and I think also less on top of the... the support for staff that I supervise as well because things have been getting quite a lot.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Overwhelmed
I: Yeah, definitely.	
P: But in terms of that I've engaged in from June... end of May, June, I've been doing a lot more work with schools...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Work in schools increased
I: OK.	
P: ...so doing more erm, consultation work with schools, erm, in particular with my secondary school which has felt quite useful around their process, I've been doing some systemic work with them...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Consultation - schools
I: OK, can I ask you a bit more about that XX whilst we're on that, is that OK?	
P: Yeah of course, yeah. So my secondary school erm, their SENCo there has really struggled with erm, the... with anything to do with statutory work and she hasn't felt like she's had much support in the past from the Local Authority around what to do...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Supporting schools with statutory processes
I: Mm-hm.	
P: Erm, she became SENCo a couple of years ago and at the same time she had a new EP who had just come out of training and the two of them found that quite difficult...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Lack of perceived support from LA with statutory processes
I: Yeah.	
P: So when I started, I started with her I think in er, April 2019, erm, she'd just really struggled with all of the processes around statutory, around annual reviews, around requesting EHCPs, around responding to stage 2s or stage 1s, she's really struggled with that. And she has found that... and also on top of that, the pressures within her school of having to teach and having to support erm, those with special needs and before lockdown I was doing some more supervision work with her, so I was meeting with her once a month and doing a couple of hours of emotional support and also organisational support...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Emotional support and support with processes
I: Yeah.	

P: ...helping her out with the erm, with understanding how to prioritise her paperwork and what... and what to do with annual reviews and so on...and so, erm, as a result of our planning meeting, we have been... she's found it particularly helpful to do the education, health and care plan requests collaboratively. That's one of the things we've been trying to do more of... the kids in the school have pretty high needs and it's quite a big school, but they only have eight children with plans and for a big secondary school that's not very much.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Support with statutory processes
I: Oh, no it is not it	
P: And erm, so she has a target of trying to get... of trying to increase that so that they can give the support to these children that they need. So, erm, she's also really struggled with the outcomes and provision section that the SENCOs have to complete in the EHC request...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) SENCO has found the support helpful
I: Mm-hm.	
P: Erm, and... so that's something that we've been working on. So this last month we've written... we've... together erm, so we've sometimes invited other professionals into the skype meetings, so she and I have done three EHC requests together. Erm, for kids that I've already seen, erm and erm, we have... I think from a, erm... it's kind of following the joint assessment meeting process as well, because we're able to put together the strengths and difficulties and the outcomes and provisions within that, so it's going to make the writing of that a lot easier for me.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Important of person-centred support
I: Brilliant	
P: Yeah, erm, and she's said that's how she'd like to continue to work. I think it might drop off as she gets used to it... erm, as she gets more of an understanding about erm, what to include in there, what she doesn't need to include in there. Erm, but erm, yeah I think so it's been nice to have a bit more of a focus on... it's been nice to be able to be able to do something collaboratively with her...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Collaborative working with SENCO
I: Mm-hm.	
P: Erm, and erm, and she's also sharing her vision for the kids with SEND there, erm and we're kind of working together to think about how we can erm, get that support in place with those kids with EHCPs and if more kids get EHCPs so that's been quite nice.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) JAM process
I: Aw, that sounds lovely OK. Aw, that sounds like a really valuable piece of work. Erm, have you been doing many kind of transition meetings or anything like that?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Supporting process for EP
P: Erm, I've not been doing too many, I've got one in for this week, which will be quite late, but no I haven't had any... any for my primary schools. I mean one of my challenges... so I've got two junior schools...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) SENCO wants to continue working in this way
I: Yep.	
P: Erm, and one of the junior schools... well actually they've both, both now got their SENCOs on maternity leave at the same time. One of them will be ending for maternity leave in September and the other one went on maternity leave in April and won't be coming back, will be being replaced as SENCO. Yeah that school don't have a SENCO at the moment, so it's been quite difficult to get anything done. So I think that's been a bit challenging, erm, particularly, well even more challenging remotely...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Empowering SENCO
I: Mmm.	
P: But erm, so yeah I haven't been doing too many transition meetings, the one that I've got planned is for a different primary school that I no longer work with but I have worked with before to my secondary school, but yeah talked about concerns around a child who's moving up.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Collaborative working
	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Vision of SENCO
	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Not many transition meetings
	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Change in members of staff
	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) A few seconds. Importance of consistency in staff

Reply Reso

I: Mm-hm, brilliant ok. Erm, so in terms of... I suppose one thing is in terms of supporting children, sort of, direct remote work with children at all, any kind of assessments or anything like that?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) No direct work with CYP at this point
P: No, I've not done any direct work with kids...	
I: No	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Some CYP reluctant to engage with remote work
P: Yeah, I've suggested it... I've had quite a few reluctant... kids who are quite reluctant to engage recently...	
I: Yeah.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Different ways of working remotely with CYP
P: Erm, but erm, I've tried to sort of... suggesting would they be willing to email or or do some text messages or anything like that, but they haven't really, erm... and like sending erm, sending things to parents to share with the kids to try and prepare them... but I haven't done any direct work with them.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Statutory work and systemic work
I: So it sounds like most of what you've been doing has been quite systemic really, throughout the period...	
P: Mmm, apart from statutory work	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Flexibility
I: Yeah, yep, how have you found that?	
P: Erm, well, apart from... fortunately it's XX (senior EP) who as you know gives out the statutory works, she didn't give me any that had deadlines for July...	
I: Ah, yeah, yep.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Support from EPS in terms of workload
P: So she's been erm, she's been helpful there in terms of my workload, but still it's been quite challenging, having to complete the work... I've had a few that I know but not very many, erm, that's also, it's... so what I was saying before about how my work feels like it's snowballing a little bit, it's definitely around that statutory work.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Workload – statutory assessments
I: Yeah, yep.	
P: It's difficult to really get into the statutory work, I find... I found before lockdown if I was doing statutory work, I'd have a full day of, of admin... a full day working from home and I could erm, get through it in one day and that seemed to work. And now, like I was saying with emails, I'm not on top of my emails either so when I do try to sit down and do some work there's a lot of kind of distractions and stuff coming in...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Challenges relating to statutory work
I: Yeah, absolutely. It sounds like things are really, really busy at the moment.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working from home - distractions
P: (laughs) yeah, so some of the things... I've been trying to work a bit differently with the statutory work, particularly for kids I haven't known very well...	
I: OK.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working in new ways - statutory
P: So, erm, just getting staff and parents to do, erm, to share what they can with me, so erm, I've got some staff to complete the autism education trust progression framework.	
I: Oh yeah, yep.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) New ways of working
P: To get a bit more information and I've shared the Vineland adaptive behaviour with a couple of parents now and I'm just waiting to hear back from them...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) New ways of working
I: Ok, ok.	
P: and those are with kids who I've not been involved with and when (inaudible) information...because the (inaudible) will give me information around the speech and language, erm, speech, language and communication needs, social emotional and mental health and the learning, erm, so that's quite useful in terms of getting any information out	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working with other professionals
I: Yeah, definitely	

P: Yeah, it's still, I still don't feel like... I mean psych <u>advices</u> aren't particularly satisfying anyway but it feels slightly less satisfying, you don't feel like you've got enough <u>information</u> and having to make some quite <u>big</u> decision around... for children, on less information.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Statutory work not satisfying in usual times
I: Yeah, yeah definitely. Erm, so the next bit is about <u>challenges</u> and I suppose that leads into that really. So that's something that's been quite challenging, sort of not knowing the children when you're writing statutory <u>advices</u> then?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Lack of information – statutory challenge
P: Yeah, the lack of <u>involvement</u> with children, because that's so central to what we do usually, erm, the, the difficulty erm, with er, I was just talking to XX(TEP) about this in <u>supervision</u> and usually if I go and do an assessment then I'm a school for three plus hours, and while I'm there all I'm thinking about is the <u>child</u> and you get quite involved in it, you sort of, sometimes it's quite difficult to then switch off from that child and see another child because you're so involved in thinking about what works for this child and their difficulties, trying to get information from as many people as you can and it's very involving when you're <u>there</u> ...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Responsibility of decisions SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Lack of involvement with children - challenge
I: Mm-hm, definitely.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Usual times – importance of involvement with CYP
P: Erm, and then you... and then now you're having to do that in an hour's conversation, it's really difficult and you don't feel like you're erm, getting the rich <u>information</u> that you would have going on other <u>people's</u> views, rather than what you yourself have seen, that's quite challenging.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Usual times- more in depth work with the CYP
I: Yeah, definitely.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Information from others in usual times
P: Erm, the talking to parents... I do it through skype or over the phone and you can get some information and it obviously makes your report better if you speak to parents in whatever way you <u>can</u> . Erm, it's difficult to... you miss so much, erm, speaking to people over the phone. Erm, it's not happened through <u>lockdown</u> but I've had conversations with parents where I've missed <u>cues</u> that I definitely wouldn't have missed if I was speaking to them face to face and I've made them a bit annoyed and I've just missed those non-verbal things which I probably wouldn't have missed if I'd spoken to them face to face, or worked with them face to face.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Getting less rich information
I: Yeah, definitely.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Relying on other people's views
P: Erm, yeah, I mean er, I can't talk about challenges at this time without talking about the, erm, the erm <u>childcare</u> ...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Information from parents - important
I: Definitely yeah.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Difficulty of remote working
P: It's just... it's been really, really difficult. I think erm, yeah, I don't feel like I can sit down and do a proper piece of work. Also I feel like I'm <u>working</u> harder than usual. Erm, and I think it was particularly the case at the beginning, because there was just so much to do, nothing... nowhere you could go, like the playground, erm... I couldn't... you know, my parents couldn't help out, it's been absolutely huge.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Childcare – personal challenges
I: Yeah.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working harder – high workload
P: And I think... in April and May I don't think I really sort of, appreciated how difficult it was, I think we were all kind of just getting on with it and I think probably the prospect of, <u>know</u> , thinking that the schools might start at some point was making it easier but... erm...	
I: Yeah, yeah absolutely.	
P: It was... yeah... erm, and I've had... more recently I've had some days where XXX has taken XXX out for the whole day and I have worked like 12 or 13 hours and I've thought actually this is, even though I've worked quite a long time, I've had one of the easiest days	

I've had over the last few months because I've not had to do five different things at the same time, all I've had to do is work.	
I: And that just shows the impact of it?	
P: Yeah.	
I: ...the fact that that's easier, erm... yeah that's tough.	
P: Yeah, yeah that's... it's just definitely shown how... I mean, fortunately most of the people... fortunately people in our sort of world, and parents that I talk to, can appreciate...can... are accommodating to when my child (inaudible) (laughs)	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Understanding has been helpful
I: (laughs) that's adorable.	
P: (laughs) or whatever. Yeah, so, erm, but... in terms of trying to sit down and... and get on with a report it's been really challenging.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Getting on with work - challenging
I: Yeah	
P: Yeah, it's been difficult.	
I: OK, that's really useful. And that actually ties in, I didn't have to quote your questionnaire because that was the main thing came through there was the childcare...	
P: (laughs) OK.	
I: ... so I was going to bring that up if you didn't so yeah that ties in with that nicely. OK Fab, that's awesome. Erm, positive experiences, erm	
P: Yeah.	
I: is there anything that has been really positive during this experience? Anything that you've kind of felt <del>you know</del> , oh actually that's something that really gone well or, or anything...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Relationship building with secondary school – suggests the importance of school relationships
P: Erm, I think, erm, the building on the work and the relationship with the secondary school that was I talking to you about earlier, I think that's been really positive...	
I: Brilliant.	
P: Erm, I've felt... I have felt [useful] and I've... I feel like, erm, the school in particular, the SENCo has had the time to reflect more and be able to give... before lockdown a month before lockdown she was considering taking sick leave so that she could get on with her paperwork...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Feeling useful – important, positive
I: Oh my goodness.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Emotional and practical support for a <del>senco</del>
P: She's had more time to kind of plan things that she wouldn't have and erm, we've also had erm, had the time to be able to, just take two hours and just go through all the things that we need to... that we need to erm, that we need to. And then also the fact that, erm, we're working on the systemic support and the supervision support that she has needed, I think that's been really useful.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Systemic support and supervision for school staff
I: Brilliant, OK.	
P: I think personally in terms of positive experiences I have certainly tried to erm, appreciate the positive things about it, erm, in terms of family life, as much as possible, just, erm, consciously value the time that I don't think we'd have been able to have, a five year old is challenging in a lot of way but is also fantastic in a lot of ways...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Personal positive aspects
I: Yep.	
P: So, being able to erm, spend more time with him and learn more about him and also erm, help, I think erm, we read a lot of stories together now which I think has been really helpful for him and also has just been really enjoyable, being able to spend more time outside has been really nice and that kind of thing, so I think that's been a big positive...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Time for home - important
I: lovely.	

P: Erm, yeah. Other positive experiences, erm...	
I: One thing that you mentioned in your questionnaire, just as a prompt...	
P: Mm-hm.	
I: Is the support from colleagues and line managers and kind of closeness with the team, I don't know if you still feel that that's the case?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Supported by EPS
P: Yes, I think definitely I felt... I definitely felt supported in particular by XX and XX (senior EPs) I think they're... XX's understanding of my needs in terms of my statutory work has been really good, really helpful and erm... we work with psychologists as well so they have an understanding about your emotional and workload needs, so I think... I've mostly felt supported by the two of them and felt like I've been able to... erm, we've been able to work together well and they've been understanding of me not being able to do as much as they have, which has been really invaluable.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Understanding of emotion needs
I: Aww, that's nice. OK that's fab, thanks XXX. Erm, so that's kind of, that's the biggest section you'll be glad to know (laughs)...	
P: Mm-hm	
I: So the next bit is about kind of the emotional impact, erm, so this isn't kind of split up into different times, this is just generally and thinking about whether it's changed over time, erm, but also thinking about the impact... if there has been an emotional impact, the sort of impact that's had upon your working practice and also what's kind of mitigated that emotional impact, which might link to things we've already spoke about. So sorry, that was quite a lot of questions at once, but basically it's about how the emotional impact has been from March to present day.	
P: Is that the impact on me?	
I: Yep, yeah on yourself.	
P: Yeah, erm, I don't know.	
I: Yeah it's... shall I read what you put in your questionnaire?	
P: Erm... yeah go on then.	
I: Yeah ok, so basically you said, you were a bit overwhelmed by the volume of emails which is something that you've mentioned already, erm, so we're already set up as homeworkers which is positive, erm and, er and the support that you received from your line manager and colleagues, which is also something that you already mentioned. So it might be that we've covered most of this one, because we have spoken about the emotional impact already, yeah mainly feeling overwhelmed...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Overwhelmed
P: Yeah, I think feeling overwhelmed is something that continued and erm, but I don't know... I've kind of thought back recently about what it'd be like if I had to go back to March now, or if we had to go back to April now and the way we were feeling then, erm, and it definitely feels easier now... Erm, I think that's probably related to the easing of lockdown...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Easier now – adaptation?
I: Mm-hm.	
P: We have more contact with our friends now and I think that I do definitely, erm, and my family, I do definitely rely in terms of my emotional wellbeing on erm, on my friends and being able to spend time with them...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) More contact with friends mitigates emotional impact
I: Yep, yep.	
P: Erm, erm... I think that's made it easier, erm, I think... erm...erm... I don't know. We've definitely adjusted, we're sort of coming out of adjustment now as lockdown eases...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Adjustment
I: Yeah.	

P: So we've definitely, erm, in March April May we were adjusting to a very different life in terms of home and work...
I: Mm-hm, yep.
P: Erm, but as we've got used to it and as we've erm, (inaudible) those processes and ... erm, within work, it has felt easier, so I... so having clarity within, within work about what our expectations are, having some clear roles that we need to do, that has erm, lessened the emotional impact. Erm, and also being... feeling freer around the pandemic and erm, relaxing of erm, relaxing of the lockdown has helped as well, making the erm, (inaudible) work easier. Erm, I think earlier on as well in that March April May time, it was just er, well March April it was fairly all-consuming and if you looked at the news, if you looked at any social media it was all pandemic related.
I: Mm-hm, yeah.
P: Erm, and that seems to have eased a lot. I think, erm, I think the... as far as the pandemic, I feel like within that, around May and June was the black lives matter movement as well, I think that has socially and internationally had a big impact on, on things. And I think within our... I think, will hopefully have an impact on things moving forward. So yeah, as well as the pandemic there's also been that which I think has had a big impact and will hopefully have an impact, I'm hoping it's not something that... I think that... within the educational psychology world I think it's something that erm, that needs to be worked on and I think... it's something that I've noticed in services that I've worked at, institutions that I've been trained at that there are cases of discrimination within the world of psychology and within educational psychology. So, it's something that we need to address as well.
I: Absolutely, that's really interesting, I hadn't thought about that.
P: Yeah, but internationally there's been the pandemic and then there's the black lives matter movement which have really had an impact on everyone. I don't know if we hadn't been in a pandemic, whether it would've been erm, quite... had such an effect.
I: Yeah, mm-hm definitely, that's really interesting. Hmm. OK fab that's awesome. OK so the, the next... well there's two more bits really so the reflections on the EP role. So basically I think we've covered quite a lot of this as we've gone through, kind of informally, but it's basically to do with whether the period has made you reflect on your role as an EP more broadly. So whether there's anything that you've been doing during the pandemic, that either made you think I don't want to be doing that, or that's something I want to do more of?
P: Erm, I mean I think it is... to some extent it has obviously been possible for us to do assessments...
I: Yeah.
P: I don't want to be... I don't want to... it's not something that we'll be able to do long term, I think it's definitely made me realise that we are not a remote service and that it's the human contact, it's the contact with the family and with the school, particularly with the school, I mean you don't... you... I think... I'm getting a new school in September and I've not been at that school before and to try and do anything remotely with people I've not spoken to before in a setting that I don't know what it looks like (laughs), teachers that I don't know, is obviously really difficult...
I: Absolutely.
P: So I think, it's made it clear that we do need to .... How important that contact is...
I: Yep.

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Adjustment

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Adjustment

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Relaxing of lockdown helped

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Previously all consuming

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
BLM

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
Long term do not want to be working remotely

SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT)  
School relationships

P: But... I'm not sure if that's something that's necessarily going to be appreciated by people who aren't psychologists.	
I: Mm-hm.	
P: But erm, but in terms of my reflections, erm... I don't know.	
I: Well I think the one that you just made was a brilliant reflection in terms of... <u>cause</u> I think also it's about what it's made you value, you know this whole experience, what it's made you value about being an EP and any realisations and it sounds like what you've realised is that that interpersonal interaction in real life is actually a really important thing. Out of interest, what do you think it is about... this might be a hard question to answer, but what do you think it is about that interpersonal interaction that's so important? I suppose it's probably lots of different things but...	
P: Yeah well I think the (inaudible) was really important in that and talking to parents, that can be erm, there are so many things that you miss if you're just talking to them over the <u>phone</u> ...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Non verbal cues
I: Yeah you mentioned that didn't you...	
P: Yeah, you can really get the wrong end of the stick and erm, er, or miss things, or erm, not ask the right questions and, erm...and also I feel like.. I <u>duuuu</u> . I think I sound quite <u>posh</u> and I think for a parent I could be quite intimidating (laughs) I feel like when I meet somebody I feel like I can make them more at ease and they might be more willing to share things, or want to discuss things or want to take on.... Or be able to erm, I don't know, think about solutions erm, work through those processes one to one, rather than when you've got this faceless posh woman with a strange name (laughs) just talking to you over the <u>phone</u> .	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Importance of face to face contact
I: (laughs) yeah, yeah. Absolutely.	
P: and then, some of the benefits I was talking about before about being able to type, being able to look things up... in a way it's a benefit but also, it's... you're not completely in that conversation either, you're being distracted by other things, erm... and erm... so I think that... the interpersonal side of it is really important. I think being able to see the child... I think it's made me realise how important the <u>observation</u> is... because you can get so much information from half hour, hour observation of a child, that you're just not going to be able to get from talking to people about them. I know many services are consultation based and of course interpersonal skills would be really important there, when you're doing consultation, but for me I really value seeing the child and erm, being able to see them interact rather than just taking other people's word for it.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Distracted
I: Definitely	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Realised the importance of observation
P: Yep.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Being able to see for yourself - important
I: Yeah, lovely that's great. Erm, fab, and the very last bit XXX is about sort of your role as you see it moving forward, so from September. So I don't know if you've had any planning meetings yet, with any of your schools?	
P: Yep, yep.	
I: What sort of things have they sort of prioritised erm, for you moving forward in September?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Training
P: Erm, well with the schools I've had planning meetings in I've got some erm, some possible <u>training</u> booked in for September and then some casework in for other schools. We've put dates in but then we've also put in the caveat of, y'know we don't know what's going to happen in September, whether your school is going to... and schools don't want anyone in until after October half term, erm... I think training potentially if erm, if our erm,	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Unknown

er, online resources improve, we could do online. But erm, so far I've got training booked in and erm, a bit of casework. It's fairly similar to "normal".	
I: OK.	
P: But also, I have thought about... so one of the things I really wanted to do before lockdown one of the things... (inaudible) personal construct psychology and doing things around like the ideal self and ideal school. And so I really wanted to do, erm, ideal school using Lego, as a resource from research from someone at the University of XX, a few years ago, erm...and I really wanted to put together an ideal school pack with Lego, but then er, from September, all of those practical... all of those resources that kids are going to touch... it's going to be unrealistic... so I've been thinking about what <u>can we actually</u> do with them?	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) New ways of working - PCP
I: Mm-hm.	
P: Like all my dynamic assessment stuff that we do is with little toys and stuff...	
I: Yeah, yeah absolutely.	
P: Erm, well I suppose you could do some of the bits by just pointing at it... I don't really want to do just standardised assessments...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Less standardised assessments - new ways of working
I: No, no.	
P: Erm, I suppose erm, yeah and talking based, just pure-talking based assessment erm, usually that, I like to have a medium in between that we're sharing, that we're working on... so that's going to be a challenge.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Social distancing challenge
I: I know that's really tough.	
P: Yep. I think as long as we're still able to do the... I don't know if we're able to be in a setting it will make things a lot easier. If we're able to see the child, even if it's just a remote observation, an observation from a distance or whatever, seeing them in the playground or seeing them in the classroom, that would make things a lot... that would change things.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Importance of observation
I: Yeah, absolutely.	
P: But yeah, it is going to be erm, a bit of a learning curve, but it's something that everybody in the country is going to be doing and it's just something that we're just going to have to get on with and erm, I think as a team it will be important for us to work together and make sure that everybody... that people's concerns and people's ideas are all shared so that we're able to... not just as a team but also more, nationally, or at least locally with other EPS's around here...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Learning curve for everyone
I: Yeah that's true, share best practice and that kind of thing. Brilliant, that sounds good.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Collaboration
P: But yeah, I'm not worrying about it too much because I think we'll just have to get on with it when it happens and I don't think we can talk too much about planning, because it could all change...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Working with other EPS'
I: Yeah	
P: Yeah, I think educational psychologists are quite good at being adaptable and as a team I think that we're quite good at erm, supporting each other and working through that together and able to support our schools in a useful way...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Unknown
I: Yeah definitely that's so important. Is there anything else X that we've not... that you wanted to talk about at all, or does that cover it...	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) EPS supporting each other
P: Yeah I think I've waffled quite a bit...	
I: No not at all, no it's really useful.	SS Sarah Sanders (Ap. Ed. and Child Psy. D. FT) Feeling useful

**Appendix 10**  
**Thematic analysis – 1**

**RQ1 – How does the type of work EPs and TEPs have been involved with compare to the role as described in the wider literature?**

Signposting/sending resources

36, 117, 849/850, 900, 1969/1970, 2488, 3249-3251, 3268-3271, 3751, 4392-4394, 4478-4480,

Critical incident planning

38, 47/48/49, 51/52, 54-55, 2044/2045, 2073-2075,

Critical incident response

1375/1376, 1378-1381, 1383,

Parental support from EPS

40, 547/548, 887, 889/890, 896-897, 918/919, 1059-1061, 1345, 1350, 1369-1371, 1495/1496, 1547/1548, 1554-1558, 1957/1958, 1962/1963, 1965-1967, 2052, 2545, 2586-2589, 3262-3265, 3438-3441, 3757/3758, 3809/3810, 3812-3814, 3825/3826, 3828-3834, 3855-3859, 3907-3908, 4399-4400, 4407-4413, 4440-4444, 4446-4452, 4455-4459, 4474, 4474/4475, 4505-4512

Reassurance to schools

893/894, 903/904, 1385-1387, 3249-3251,

Parental support from schools

191/192, 4440-4444,

Telephone communication

42, 846, 887, 1053-1057, 1347, 1957/1958, 2485,

Peer supervision

42, 4401/4402,

Managerial supervision

42, 102-103, 106, 2041/2042, 2047/2048, 3084, 4401,

Free work with schools/EPs supporting schools

152, 160/161, 193/194/195, 210, 212, 889-891, 896-898, 900/901, 1075/1076, 1345, 1347, 1369-1371, 1378-1381, 1383, 1385-1387, 1402-1404 (all of wellbeing audit), 2106/2107, 2488-2493, 2645/2646, 4407-4413, 4440-4444, 4463-4468,

Traded work with schools

230-231, 234, 1494, 2109/2110, 2112-2114, 2119-2124, 2126-2131, 2133-2135, 2137-2142, 2145-2148, 3074, 3095-2098, 3253-3255, 3257, 3754, 3905-3908, 3914-3918, 3969-3971,

Role changed over time

45, 47/48, 58, 80, 85, 128/129, 216-218, 890/891, 1002-1006, 3125-3127, 3214-3217,

Senior management role

54/55, 95-96, 106, 107, 109, 220-221, 2047-2049, 2068-2075,

Statutory work - covid

69/70, 72/73, 78, 80, 82/83, 216, 216-218, 868-870, 927, 935, 1353, 1454/1455, 1465/1466, 1475, 1501, 1505/1506, 2047-2049, 2052-2053, 2196/2197, 2519/2520, 2538, 2542, 2603/2604, 2669/2670, 3070, 3095-3098, 3107/3108, 3165/3166, 3284-3286, 3473/3474, 3757/3758, 3795/3796, 3893-3894, 3902/3906, 4421-4423, 4497-4501,

Statutory work in usual times

105/106/107, 216, 777-780, 1664-1667, 1677-1682,

Duty and level of responsibility

105/106/107, 109, 1663-1664,

Government guidance

73/74, 76, 78, 121/122/123, 131, 1168/1167, 3184/3185,

Role description

82/83, 105/106/107, 125/126, 143/144

Making do

83, 88, 866,

Remote working

85, 87 (planning), 87 (challenges), 88 (planning), 102/103 (challenges), 498/499, 846/847, 857/858, 969,

Collaboration

87, 98/99, 107, 109-110, 179/180, 226-228, 784/785, 795-797

Multi-agency working

169/170, 173/174, 183/184, 210, 226-228, 957/958, 971/972, 1002-1006, 1105-1109, 1116, 1498/1499, 2665, 2677/2678, 3429/3430,

Video conferencing

87, 88/89

Parents as resource

88, 1515/1516, 2199-2200, 2202/2203,

Transition

91/92, 109-110, 203-204, 210, 213/21, 955, 957-958, 960-965, 987-990, 1489-1492, 1543-1545, 1548-1552, 2155-2157, 2165-2167, 2608-2613, 3259-3260, 4012-4014, 4516-4519, 4521/4522, 4525-4531, 4533-4540,

Planning/communicating the EP role re: covid

91/92, 99, 101-102, 107, 841, 846/847, 1360/1361, 4392-4394,

School planning

155/156, 183/184, 1417-1421, 1423-1427, 1438, 1554-1558, 4525-4531, 4533-4540,

EPS wellbeing

98, 101/102/103, 106, 179-180

Schools overwhelmed

117, 120/121, 125, 126, 131, 160/161, 188/189, 221/222, 863/864, 912/913, 946-948, 1347, 1356, 2506-2508, 3129-3130, 3133-3136, 3910-3912, 3914-3918, 3987-3989, 4412/4413,

Ensuring visibility of EPS

137/138, 140, 142/143, 146/147/148, 2501-2503,

Utilising psychology re: covid

143/144

Systemic planning of EPS

166/167 (N), 169/170 (N), 173/174/175/176 (N), 178/179 (N), 182 (N), 226-228 ©, 1473 (N), 2044/2045 ©, 2053/2054 (N), 2063/2064 ©, 4232-4235,

Training

182 (N), 1021-1023, 1494/1495, 2595/2596, 2598-1600,

Working systemically in schools

183/184, 221-222, 234, 522/525, 1402-1404, 1410/1411, 1413-1415, 1417-1421, 1423-1427, 1429/1430, 1432/1433, 2109/2110, 2112-2114, 2119-2124, 2126-2131, 2133-2135, 2137-2142, 2145-2148, 2150-2152, 4525-4531, 4548-4552,

Parental pressure/struggles

189-191, 886/887, 896-897, 1061, 3812-3814, 3817-3822, 3825/3826, 3828-3834, 4455-4461,

EPS finances

212

EPS supporting LA

216/217/218, 220

More contact with schools

403/404, 651, 886/887,

School pressures

746-749, 898/894, 912/913, 1077/1078, 1347, 1402-1404, 1413-1415, 1417-1421, 3133-3136, 3249-3251, 3910-3912, 3914-3918,

Information overload (EPs)

860, 1070-1072, 1978-1980, 2190-2194, 2495/2496,

Catching up

868-870

Planning meetings

1236, 3253-3255, 3641/3642, 3987-3989, 3999-4001, 4544-4546, 4548-4552,

Consultation

1345, 2109/2110, 2202/2203, 2537/2538, 2586-2589, 4505-4512,

School staff wellbeing

1402-1404, 1410/1411, 1413-1415, 1417-1421, 1423-1427, 1429/1430, 1432/1433,

CPD

1429/1430, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 3416-3421, 3423/3424, 3862/3863, 3867-3869, 3871/3872, 3876-3878, 3880-3882, 4486-4488, 4697-4701,

Supporting CYP

1495/1496, 1498/1499, 1522-1524, 1554-1558, 2586-2589, 3078/3079, 3081/3082,

Remote assessment

1505/1506, 1508, 1510-1512, 1514-1520, 1522-1524, 2199-2200, 2202-2203, 2205-2208,

Schools coping well

1560/1561, 1567,

Admin

2061/2062,

Child voice

2569-2571, 2573-2575,

Systemic work – LA level

3215-3217, 3219-3221, 4560-4564, 4566/4567,

Specialisms

3920, 3922-3924, 3926-3929, 4572-4577,

**RQ2 - What, if any, reflections do EPs and TEPs have about working in these ways?**

Difficulty adjusting

1742,

Lowered focus and concentration

245-247, 413, 1067/1068, 1145, 1195/1196, 1203/1204, 1450-1452, 1752, 1800-1802, 2190-2194, 2242-2245, 2262/2263, 2522/2523,

Anxiety

246, 260, 368, 389, 415, 433, 1147/1148, 1151-1153, 1163, 1393/1394, 1459-1461, 1465/1466, 1608-1612, 1616/1617, 1743/1744, 1794-1798, 1804, 1811-1812, 1824-1826, 3185/3186, 3463-3467, 3682, 3723/3724, 3768-3770, 4845/4846,

Changing mood

415, 1767-1768,

Distress

246, 260, 433, 1389-1391, 1459-1461, 3469/3470,

Trauma

430, 1744/1745, 1759-1760,

Pressure

1468-1471, 1608-1612, 3469/3470, 3768-3770, 3772-3776, 40044,

Lack of communication with colleagues/isolation

246, 262, 265, 266 (EPS), 1037 (EPS), 2728-2730 (EPS), 2848/2849, 2854, 4048-4050, 4165-4169, 4812, 4813/4814,  
Lack of communication with schools  
266-267, 884/885, 1032, 1353, 1364/1365, 1369, 1406/1407, 1441-1444, 1478/1479, 1541-1543, 2693/2694, 3201, 4396/4397, 4415,  
Inability to do direct work/assessment with CYP  
2175-2177, 2217/2218, 2949-2951, 4110-4112,  
Difficulty sustaining relationships  
247, 262, 265, 501-506, 513/514, 2159-2163,  
Worry about EP role/unknown  
249, 270-271, 278, 285, 314, 368, 389, 1147/1148, 1616/1617, 1771-1774, 1776/1777, 2501-2503, 2775/2776, 2780-2785, 2958/2959, 3092/3093, 3133-3136, 3731/3732, 3734-3736, 4259-4263, 4818-4820, 4832-4841,  
Catastrophising  
285, 389, 430/431, 446/447, 1608-1612, 1619, 3463-3467, 3469/3470, 3768-3770,  
Technology/logistics  
251, 288, 290, 291, 300, 1037/1038, 1526/1527, 1598/1599, 2545/2546, 2559-2561, 2696, 2712/2713, 2715/2716, 2721-2725, 2734/2735, 2737, 3588-3591, 3935/3936, 4038, 4681-4684, 4686-4688,  
Worsening over time  
265, 267-268, 363  
Inability to visit schools  
266-267, 1143, 2170, 2217/2218, 4838-4841,  
Lack of F2F interaction  
267-268, 273, 1029, 1143, 1145/1146, 1645/1646, 2008-2012, 2159-2163, 2217/2218, 2563-1565,  
Unique role of F2F interaction/positives of video over phone  
307, 344—346, 348-350, 495/496, 497-499, 501-506, 513-516, 518/519, 1054-1057, 1061-1063, 2214-2216, 2225-2227, 2231-2237, 2375-2380, 2405-2413, 2550/2551, 2563-1565, 2598-1600, 2790-2794, 3299-3303, 3314-3316, 3319-3320, 3322-3325, 3330/3331, 3333-3337, 3348-3351, 3353-3355, 3363-3369, 3848-3850, 3852-2854, 4165-4169, 4179-4186, 4190/4191, 4195-4198, 4247/4248, 4657-4661, 4663-4673,  
Futility of report writing  
310, 1072/1073, 1081-1083, 1198-1201, 1659/1660, 4596/4597, 4603-4606, 4608-4615, 4617-4624,  
Remote consultation  
344, 2225-2227, 2906-2909,  
High workload  
363, 368, 1457, 1465/1466, 1468-1471, 1644-1648, 1678, 2101-2104, 2185-2188, 3469/3470, 3768-3770,  
The unknown/uncertainty  
47/48/49, 51/52, 54-55, 128/129, 135, 143, 155, 439/440, 446/447, 489, 491, 862-864, 1144, 1151-1153, 1162-1164, 1365-1367, 1390/1391, 1563-1565, 1598, 1630-1632, 1779-1782, 1784-1790, 1800-1802, 2062/2063, 2068-2072, 2460/2461, 2501-2503,  
Looking ahead to future emotional impact/'new normal'  
440, 442-444, 469, 476/477, 480, 1155-1157, 1162-1164, 1168-1171, 1563-1565, 1824-1826, 4289-4296, 4298/4299,  
Containing other people  
470-473, 2103/2104,  
Digital miscommunication  
501-506, 513, 2231-2237, 2394/2395, 2397-2403, 2669/2670, 2698, 2700/2702,  
Lack of collaboration/more directive

518/519, 2906-2909, 4663-4673,  
Not knowing the child/parents/school  
897-898, 910-914 (daunting for parent), 930-933, 1659/1660, 2186, 2553/2554, 2751-2756, 2758-2765, 2790-2794, 4047/4048, 4095-4099, 4514-4519,  
Less desirable work  
1031/1032, 1034/1035, 1664-1671, 2211-2213,  
Home/work/uni blurring  
1042-1046, 2027-2030, 3507/3508, 3548/3549, 3551-3553, 4784/4785, 4788-4790, 4792-4794, 4796-4800,  
Overwhelmed  
1146, 1155, 1203/1204, 1978-1980, 2101-2104, 2328-2331, 2351/2352, 2495/2496, 3469/3470, 3768-3770,  
Wanting to help  
1363, 2501-2503, 2505-2508, 2775/2776,  
'Back to normal' expectation  
1454-1455, 1653/1654, 1656/1657, 1715-1717, 1800-1802, 1804-1806, 1824-1826,  
Lack of strategy/clarity/communication  
1680-1682, 1779-1782, 1784-1790, 1817-1818, 1817-1818, 1828-1831, 1833-1835, 1837-1839,  
Childcare/home schooling  
2027-2030, 2083/2084, 2086/2087, 2092-2095, 2097-2099, 2242-2245, 2247-2249, 2251-2254, 2258-2260, 3768-3770, 3795/3796, 4032/4033, 4058-4060, 4062-4069, 4252-4254,  
Changes in staff  
2159-2163, 4476/4477,  
Difficult to get enough info for assessment  
2211-2213, 2669/2670, 2790-2794, 3045-3049, 3114/3115, 4123-4128, 4636-4639, 4641-4645,  
University work  
3379-3381, 3383-3386, 3388-3390, 3478,  
New challenges – statutory work  
69/70, 72/73, 102/103, 930-933, 937/938, 1659/1660, 2185-2188, 2190-2194, 3045-3049, 3175-3178, 3180-3182, 4047/4048, 4083-4085, 4095-4099, 4110-4112, 4123-4128, 4514-4519, 4617-4624, 4647-4651,  
Confidence lessening  
4836/4837,

### **Positives**

Adjustment/transition  
255-258, 260, 298, 310, 314, 384, 418, 420, 429-435, 437, 446/447, 476/477, 857/856, 884, 1155-1157, 1159-1160, 1630-1632, 1747-1750, 1759-1764, 1769-1771, 2025, 2037-2042, 2328-2331, 2341, 2343/2344, 2346-2352, 2871, 4071-4074, 4101, 4259-4263, 4265-4267, 4269/4270, 4276-4281, 4657-4661, 4776-4780,  
Remote working  
274, 298, 325, 1052/1053, 1514-1520, 1522-1524, 1719/1720, 2001-2005, 2007/2008, 2199/2200, 2202/2203,  
Making do  
305, 391  
The 'known'  
314, 423/424/425, 1183, 1627/1628, 2346-2348,  
Staying connected/relationships  
357, 403/404, 459/460, 464/463, 465, 563/564, 1122-1125, 1183, 1701/1702, 1753, 1819/1820, 2072-2075, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3490-3493, 3541/3542, 4805-4808,

Feeling 'caught up'

360, 1089/1090, 2053, 2800-2803, 4218-4222,

Routine

378, 383, 391, 2037-2042,

Relationships with schools

406, 2275/2276,

Regulating

435

Resilience

465, 481, 484/485, 1761-1764, 2463-2465,

Confidence increased

1113, 1721/1722, 3233-3236,

Self-care/wellbeing

452-454, 456-459, 1133, 1135-1137, 1185-1188, 1190, 1450-1452, 1761-1764, 1766/1767, 1986-1989, 2287-2290, 2292-2295, 2333-2335, 2346-2352, 2855-2857, 2930-2932, 3185/3186,

Learning from this experience

480/481

Optimism

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Grace period

1450-1452,

Not knowing the child/parents

919-922, 1996-1999,

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1090/1091, 1098-1099, 2807-2809, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 2822/2823, 3227/3228, 3416-3421, 3880-3882, 4218-4222, 4705-4708,

Feeling useful

318, 387, 1365, 2278-2280, 2282-2285,

More contact with other professionals

397-401, 1096-1099, 1101-1103, 1113/1114, 1122-1125, 1580-1584, 2665, 2677/2678, 2687/2688, 2833/2834, 2839-2841, 3529, 4202-4208,

Transition meetings

703, 2625/2626, 2629/2630,

Ease of writing stat advices

804-809, 1529-1533,

Easier to get people together

1002-1006, 1096-1099, 1573-1575, 1579/1580, 3928/3929, 3931-3933, 4202-4208, 4211-4214,

Continuous Professional Development

1090,

Reflections on role

1105-1109, 1116, 1689-1694, 1969-1698, 1721/1722, 2629/2630, 2784/2785, 2930-2932,

More knowledge about different systems

1118-1120,

Support/supervision from manager/peers

1183, 1185-1188, 1619-1625, 1715-1717, 2182-2183, 2185, 2258-2260, 2302-2307, 2855, 3185/3186, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 4035/4036,

Caveats

1529-1533, 3117/3118,

Informal peer supervision

1702/1703, 2072-2075, 3541/3542,

Locus of control

1794-1798,

Flexible working

2032-2035, 2182-2183,

Systemic working with schools

2282-2285, 4738-4752,

New ways of working

3227/3228, 3241-3244, 3284-3286, 3429/3430, 3438-3441, 3443-3445, 3854-3859, 4738-4752, 4754-4757,

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Planning meetings

617, 1883/1884, 3000,

Anxious children

619/620, 3707-3709, 3711-3713, 4307/4310, 4315-4320,

EBSA

619/620, 675-677, 1307/1308,

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622, 669-671, 689-692, 695-698, 1230/1231, 1883, 4315-4320, 4953-4957,

Training

624, 646, 1303-1305, 1893/1894, 2422-2426, 3588-3591, 4232-4235,

Assessments

624/625, 646/647, 1305/1306,

Annual reviews

625/626, 633-645

Unknown

647/648, 656, 658-660, 686/687, 716-717, 1237, 1313-1317, 1563-1565, 1784-1790, 1794-1798, 3022-3025, 3667, 4340-4342,

Concern re: delivering all sessions

655/656, 723/724,

Statutory work

658-660, 1905-1907, 4947-4953,

CYP who may be particularly affected

683-687, 1306-1308, 3002-3005, 3022-3025, 3696/3698, 3700/3701,

Impact on usual working practices

717-721, 1314/1315, 2429-2435, 2442-2444,

Busy periods/backlog

721-724, 741/742

Traded vs. statutory

731/732, 734-738, 754-758

Schools needing our support

737/738, 746-749

Staff wellbeing

1853-1855, 5001-5003,

Consultation

1883, 1917/1918, 4319/4320,

Co-production meetings

1912/1913,

Recovery curriculum vs. getting back to normal

3028-3034, 3039-3042,

SEMH

4959-4967,

**Reflections on EP role/future working**

Remote working

325, 495/496, 1585-1587, 1703, 1732, 3233-3236,

Importance of working face to face

511/512, 2008-2012, 2211-2213, 2217-2223, 2225-2227, 2231-2237, 2375-2380, 2382, 2394/2395, 2397-2403, 2405-2413, 2449-2452, 2550/2551, 2559-2561, 2740/2741, 2901-2904, 2906-2909, 3333-3337, 3348-3351, 3353-3355, 3363-3369, 3588-3591, 3852-3854, 4165-4169, 4179-4186, 4647-4651, 4657-4661, 4663-4673,

Remote training

333

Technology

335, 3016-3018, 3233-3236,

Working creatively

335, 1246, 1322-1326, 1664-1671, 1689-1694, 1853-1855, 2196/2197, 2199-2200, 3233-3236, 3438-3441, 4087-4093, 4149-4155, 4718-4724, 4726-4729,

Self-care

456/457, 555/556, 2287-2290, 2292-2295, 2333-2335, 2346-2352, 2855-2857, 2930-2932, 3504/3505, 3507/3508, 3512-3514, 3516/3517, 4062-4069,

Working systemically

522-525, 539-541, 1228/1229, 1245/1246, 1248-1251, 1259-1262, 1264/1265, 1268-1274, 1322-1326, 1721/1722, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1853-1855, 1853-1863, 1865/1866, 1897-1899, 1934-1938, 1942/1943, 2145-2148, 3569-3570, 3576/3577, 3579/3580, 4119/4120, 4322/4323, 4328-4333, 4351-4359, 4361-4364, 4377/4378, 4505-4512, 4884-4887,

Reflecting on type of EP I want to be

1689-1694, 1969-1968, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1732-1734, 4265-4267, 4726-4729,

Child voice/child-centred

2967-2969, 2974, 2976-2982, 4149-4155, 4636-4639, 4641-4645,

Importance of individualised work

527-531, 533, 535-537, 544-548, 550-552, 820-821, 4889-4891,

Changes to thinking

535-537, 539-541, 544-548, 550-552, 795-797, 1279/1280, 1689-1694, 1696-1698, 1721/1722, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1732-1734, 2354-2362, 2629/2630, 4726-4729, 4926-4934,

Importance of EPS relationships

555-557, 563-566, 577/578, 1707/1713, 2728-2730, 2732-2735, 2893/2894, 2896-2899, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 3490-3493, 3529, 4165-4169,

Informal peer supervision

577/578, 582-584, 586-587, 1037, 1707/1713, 2072-2075, 2302-2307, 2732-2735, 2740/2741, 2855-2857, 2861-2865, 2884-2888, 3529, 3541/3542, 4048-4050, 4171-4174, 4805-4808,

Importance of feeling supported

560-561, 577/578, 1684/1685, 1707/1713, 1804-1806, 1828-1831, 2302-2307, 2454-2458, 2454-2458, 2728-2730, 2732-2735, 2855-2857, 2861-2865, 2896-2899, 3438-3441, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 3541/3542, 3548/3549, 3772-3776, 4035/4036, 4062-4069, 4805-4808,

CPD

589-590, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 3416-3421, 3423/3424, 3862/3863, 3867-3869, 3871/3872, 3876-3878, 3880-3882, 486-4488, 4697-4701,

Transition meetings

705-708, 979-982, 998-1000, 1230/1231, 1244-1246, 2608-2613, 2939-2940,

JAMs

783-785, 795-797, 1585-1587, 2140-2142, 2683, 3288-3289,

Importance of collaboration

812-814, 1262, 1268-1271, 1585-1587, 2008-2012, 2072-2075, 2140-2142, 2148, 2211-2213,  
2629/2630, 6634/2635, 2677/2678, 2687/2688, 2839-2841, 2901-2904, 2944/2945, 3294-3296,  
3609-3618, 3521-3623, 3625-3627, 3958-3961, 4087-4093, 4137-4140, 4142/4143, 4572-4577, 4647-  
4651, 4718-4724, 4856-4860, 4862-4868, 4872-4874, 4884-4887, 4893-4896,

Similar focus for schools

1220-1222, 1224-1226, 1228/1229, 1925-1928, 1930-1932, 1934-1938,

How EP role is seen

1245, 1248-1251, 1261/1262, 1281-1286, 4738-4752, 4754-4757, 4904-4913,

Working preventatively

1249-1251, 4505-4512,

Effective working

1261/1262,

Bureaucracy

1692-1694,

Too much statutory work

1692/1694, 1851, 2211-2213, 2603/2604, 3473/3474

Importance of school relationships

2275/2276, 2383, 1553/2554, 2751-2756, 2758-2765, 2901-2904, 2941, 4425-4428, 4499-4501,  
4977-4981,

Importance of working as a team

2454-2458, 2463-1465, 2728-2730, 2896-2899,

Importance of feeling useful

2501-2503, 2505-2508, 4875-4882, 4990-4994,

Importance for being adaptable/flexible

2949-2951, 3145/3146, 3661/3662,

Parental work

3438-3441, 3443-3445,

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Finances

708/709, 726-729

Need more staff

740-742

Workload

760-762

Not knowing the child well

981/982, 2672-2675,

Time

999, 1910, 2817-2820, 2822/2823, 3002-3005,

Capacity

999, 1909-1913, 3002-3005, 3931-3933, 4211-4214,

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1220-1222, 1224-1226, 1228/1229, 1248-1251, 1281-1286, 1925-1928, 1930-1932, 1934-1938,  
2384/2385, 2426/2427, 3579/3580, 4351-4359, 4369-4375, 4856-4860,

Level of statutory work

1689-1694, 1909/1910, 3473/3474,

LA prioritising other types of work

1854/1855,

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2622/2623,

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Parental support from schools	191/192
Telephone communication	42, 846, 887, 1053-1057, 1347, 1957/1958, 2485,
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Traded work with schools	230-231, 234, 1494, 2109/2110, 2112-2114, 2119-2124, 2126-2131, 2133-2135, 2137-2142, 2145-2148, 3074, 3095-2098, 3253-3255, 3257, 3754, 3905-3908, 3914-3918, 3969-3971,
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Senior management role	54/55, 95-96, 106, 107, 109, 220-221, 2047-2049, 2068-2075,
Statutory work - covid	69/70, 72/73, 78, 80, 82/83, 216, 216-218, 868-870, 927, 935, 1353, 1454/1455, 1465/1466, 1475, 1501, 1505/1506, 2047-2049, 2052-2053, 2196/2197, 2519/2520, 2538, 2542, 2603/2604, 2669/2670, 3070, 3095-3098, 3107/3108, 3165/3166, 3284-3286, 3473/3474, 3757/3758, 3795/3796, 3893-3894, 3902/3906,
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Making do	83, 88, 866,
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Planning/communicating the EP role re: covid	91/92, 99, 101-102, 107, 841, 846/847, 1360/1361,
School planning	155/156, 183/184, 1417-1421, 1423-1427, 1438, 1554-1558,
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Catching up	868-870
Planning meetings	1236, 3253-3255, 3641/3642, 3987-3989, 3999-4001,
Consultation	1345, 2109/2110, 2202/2203, 2537/2538, 2586-2589,

School staff wellbeing	1402-1404, 1410/1411, 1413-1415, 1417-1421, 1423-1427, 1429/1430, 1432/1433,
CPD	1429/1430, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 3416-3421, 3423/3424, 3862/3863, 3867-3869, 3871/3872, 3876-3878, 3880-3882,
Supporting CYP	1495/1496, 1498/1499, 1522-1524, 1554-1558, 2586-2589, 3078/3079, 3081/3082,
Remote assessment	1505/1506, 1508, 1510-1512, 1514-1520, 1522-1524, 2199-2200, 2202-2203, 2205-2208,
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Lowered focus and concentration	245-247, 413, 1067/1068, 1145, 1195/1196, 1203/1204, 1450-1452, 1752, 1800-1802, 2190-2194, 2242-2245, 2262/2263, 2522/2523,
Anxiety	246, 260, 368, 389, 415, 433, 1147/1148, 1151-1153, 1163, 1393/1394, 1459-1461, 1465/1466, 1608-1612, 1616/1617, 1743/1744, 1794-1798, 1804, 1811-1812, 1824-1826, 3185/3186, 3463-3467, 3682, 3723/3724, 3768-3770,
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Pressure	1468-1471, 1608-1612, 3469/3470, 3768-3770, 3772-3776, 40044,
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Inability to do direct work/assessment with CYP	2175-2177, 2217/2218, 2949-2951, 4110-4112,
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Less desirable work	1031/1032, 1034/1035, 1664-1671, 2211-2213,
Home/work blurring	1042-1046, 2027-2030, 3507/3508, 3548/3549, 3551-3553,
Overwhelmed	1146, 1155, 1203/1204, 1978-1980, 2101-2104, 2328-2331, 2351/2352, 2495/2496, 3469/3470, 3768-3770,
Wanting to help	1363, 2501-2503, 2505-2508, 2775/2776,

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Lack of strategy/clarity/communication	1680-1682, 1779-1782, 1784-1790, 1817-1818, 1817-1818, 1828-1831, 1833-1835, 1837-1839,
Childcare/home schooling	2027-2030, 2083/2084, 2086/2087, 2092-2095, 2097-2099, 2242-2245, 2247-2249, 2251-2254, 2258-2260, 3768-3770, 3795/3796, 4032/4033, 4058-4060, 4062-4069, 4252-4254,
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Difficult to get enough info for assessment	2211-2213, 2669/2670, 2790-2794, 3045-3049, 3114/3115, 4123-4128,
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The 'known'	314, 423/424/425, 1183, 1627/1628, 2346-2348,
Staying connected/relationships	357, 403/404, 459/460, 464/463, 465, 563/564, 1122-1125, 1183, 1701/1702, 1753, 1819/1820, 2072-2075, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3490-3493, 3541/3542,
Feeling 'caught up'	360, 1089/1090, 2053, 2800-2803, 4218-4222,
Routine	378, 383, 391, 2037-2042,
Relationships with schools	406, 2275/2276,
Regulating	435
Resilience	465, 481, 484/485, 1761-1764, 2463-2465,
Confidence increased	1113, 1721/1722, 3233-3236,
Self-care/wellbeing	452-454, 456-459, 1133, 1135-1137, 1185-1188, 1190, 1450-1452, 1761-1764, 1766/1767, 1986-1989, 2287-2290, 2292-2295, 2333-2335, 2346-2352, 2855-2857, 2930-2932, 3185/3186,
Learning from this experience	480/481

Optimism	491
Grace period	1450-1452,
Not knowing the child/parents	919-922, 1996-1999,
Meaningful work	1008
More time	1090/1091, 1098-1099, 2807-2809, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 2822/2823, 3227/3228, 3416-3421, 3880-3882, 4218-4222,
Feeling useful	318, 387, 1365, 2278-2280, 2282-2285,
More contact with other professionals	397-401, 1096-1099, 1101-1103, 1113/1114, 1122-1125, 1580-1584, 2665, 2677/2678, 2687/2688, 2833/2834, 2839-2841, 3529, 4202-4208,
Transition meetings	703, 2625/2626, 2629/2630,
Ease of writing stat advices	804-809, 1529-1533,
Easier to get people together	1002-1006, 1096-1099, 1573-1575, 1579/1580, 3928/3929, 3931-3933, 4202-4208, 4211-4214,
Continuous Professional Development	1090,
Reflections on role	1105-1109, 1116, 1689-1694, 1969-1698, 1721/1722, 2629/2630, 2784/2785, 2930-2932,
More knowledge about different systems	1118-1120,
Support/supervision from manager/peers	1183, 1185-1188, 1619-1625, 1715-1717, 2182-2183, 2185, 2258-2260, 2302-2307, 2855, 3185/3186, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 4035/4036,
Caveats	1529-1533, 3117/3118,
Informal peer supervision	1702/1703, 2072-2075, 3541/3542,
Locus of control	1794-1798,
Flexible working	2032-2035, 2182-2183,
Systemic working with schools	2282-2285,
New ways of working	3227/3228, 3241-3244, 3284-3286, 3429/3430, 3438-3441, 3443-3445, 3854-3859,

### **RQ3**

Remote working	325, 495/496, 1585-1587, 1703, 1732, 3233-3236,
Importance of working face to face	511/512, 2008-2012, 2211-2213, 2217-2223, 2225-2227, 2231-2237, 2375-2380, 2382, 2394/2395, 2397-2403, 2405-2413, 2449-2452, 2550/2551, 2559-2561, 2740/2741, 2901-2904, 2906-2909, 3333-3337, 3348-3351, 3353-3355, 3363-3369, 3588-3591, 3852-3854, 4165-4169, 4179-4186,
Remote training	333
Technology	335, 3016-3018, 3233-3236,

Working creatively	335, 1246, 1322-1326, 1664-1671, 1689-1694, 1853-1855, 2196/2197, 2199-2200, 3233-3236, 3438-3441, 4087-4093, 4149-4155,
Self-care	456/457, 555/556, 2287-2290, 2292-2295, 2333-2335, 2346-2352, 2855-2857, 2930-2932, 3504/3505, 3507/3508, 3512-3514, 3516/3517, 4062-4069,
Working systemically	522-525, 539-541, 1228/1229, 1245/1246, 1248-1251, 1259-1262, 1264/1265, 1268-1274, 1322-1326, 1721/1722, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1853-1855, 1853-1863, 1865/1866, 1897-1899, 1934-1938, 1942/1943, 2145-2148, 3569-3570, 3576/3577, 3579/3580, 4119/4120, 4322/4323, 4328-4333, 4351-4359, 4361-4364, 4377/4378,
Reflecting on type of EP I want to be	1689-1694, 1969-1698, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1732-1734, 4265-4267,
Child voice/child-centred	2967-2969, 2974, 2976-2982, 4149-4155,
Importance of individualised work	527-531, 533, 535-537, 544-548, 550-552, 820-821
Changes to thinking	535-537, 539-541, 544-548, 550-552, 795-797, 1279/1280, 1689-1694, 1696-1698, 1721/1722, 1724/1725, 1727-1729, 1732-1734, 2354-2362, 2629/2630,
Importance of EPS relationships	555-557, 563-566, 577/578, 1707/1713, 2728-2730, 2732-2735, 2893/2894, 2896-2899, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 3490-3493, 3529, 4165-4169,
Informal peer supervision	577/578, 582-584, 586-587, 1037, 1707/1713, 2072-2075, 2302-2307, 2732-2735, 2740/2741, 2855-2857, 2861-2865, 2884-2888, 3529, 3541/3542, 4048-4050, 4171-4174,
Importance of feeling supported	560-561, 577/578, 1684/1685, 1707/1713, 1804-1806, 1828-1831, 2302-2307, 2454-2458, 2454-2458, 2728-2730, 2732-2735, 2855-2857, 2861-2865, 2896-2899, 3438-3441, 3454-3457, 3484/3485, 3487/3488, 3541/3542, 3548/3549, 3772-3776, 4035/4036, 4062-4069,
CPD	589-590, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 3416-3421, 3423/3424, 3862/3863, 3867-3869, 3871/3872, 3876-3878, 3880-3882,
Transition meetings	705-708, 979-982, 998-1000, 1230/1231, 1244-1246, 2608-2613, 2939-2940,
JAMs	783-785, 795-797, 1585-1587, 2140-2142, 2683, 3288-3289,
Importance of collaboration	812-814, 1262, 1268-1271, 1585-1587, 2008-2012, 2072-2075, 2140-2142, 2148, 2211-2213, 2629/2630, 6634/2635, 2677/2678, 2687/2688, 2839-2841, 2901-2904, 2944/2945, 3294-3296, 3609-3618, 3521-3623, 3625-3627, 3958-3961, 4087-4093, 4137-4140, 4142/4143,
Similar focus for schools	1220-1222, 1224-1226, 1228/1229, 1925-1928, 1930-1932, 1934-1938,
How EP role is seen	1245, 1248-1251, 1261/1262, 1281-1286,
Working preventatively	1249-1251,

Effective working	1261/1262,
Bureaucracy	1692-1694,
Too much statutory work	1692/1694, 1851, 2211-2213, 2603/2604, 3473/3474,
Importance of school relationships	2275/2276, 2383, 1553/2554, 2751-2756, 2758-2765, 2901-2904, 2941,
Importance of working as a team	2454-2458, 2463-1465, 2728-2730, 2896-2899,
Importance of feeling useful	2501-2503, 2505-2508,
Importance for being adaptable/flexible	2949-2951, 3145/3146, 3661/3662,
Parental work	3438-3441, 3443-3445,
Reviewing work	3839-3841, 3950-3956, 3958-3961, 4351-4359,

**Appendix 12**  
**Thematic analysis – 3**

RQ1 – What new ways of working have EPs and trainee EPs been involved in since the legally enforced restrictions?

Signposting/sending resources to schools	2488, 900, 4478-4480
Critical incident planning and response	47-52, 2044, 2073, 1375/1376, 1378-1381, 1383
Emotional support for families	189-191, 547/548, 889/890, 896-897, 1059-1061, 3812-3814, 3828-3834, 4449-4452, 4455-4459
Problem solving with parents	1547/1548, 1554-1558, 2586-2589, 3264/3265, 3809/3810 (ongoing), 3855-3859 (ongoing), 4510-4512
Emotional support for schools	893/894, 903/904, 1385-1387, 1402-1404, 1560/1561, 3908, 3914-3918
Supporting schools with planning	155/156, 1417, 4525-4531, 4533-4540
Consultation for schools (inc. transition)	193-195, 213/21, 234, 403/404, 900/901, 955, 960-965, 1489-1492, 2109/2110, 2112-2114, 2165-2167, 2488-2493, 2608-2613, 2643, 3253-3255, 3257, 3754, 3969-3971, 4505-4512, 4525-4531
Training for schools	1021-1023, 1494, 2595/2596, 2598-1600
Planning meetings with schools	1236, 3253-3255, 3999-4001, 4548-4552
Role changed over time	47/48, 98/99, 3214-3217
Managerial support and collaboration	95-96, 106-107, 179/180, 2047-2049
Statutory work	69/70, 72/73, 795-797, 935, 1465/1466, 1501, 2196/2197, 2603/2604, 3095-3098, 3107/3108, 3284-3286, 3893-3894, 4497-4501
Multi-agency working	173/174, 226, 957/958, 1498/1499, 2677/2678
The 'distinctive contribution'	140, 142/143, 146-148, 2501-2503
CPD	1429/1430, 2813-2815, 3416-3421, 3880-3882, 4486-4488
Supporting CYP	1505/1506, 1522-1524, 2175-2177, 2569-2571, 2573-2575, 3078/3079
Developing systems	220-221, 3215-3217, 3219-3221, 4560-4564, 4566/456

RQ2 - What, if any, reflections do EPs and TEPs have about working in these ways?

Challenges

Lowered focus and concentration	1195/1196, 2242-2245, 2522/2523
Anxiety	415, 433, 1151-1153, 1163, 1767-1768, 1804, 1811-1812, 3682
Trauma and distress	430, 3469/3470, 1759-1760
Pressure	1824-1826, 3768-3770, 3772-3776
Overwhelmed	1203/1204, 1457, 1465/1466, 1468-1471, 1645/1646, 2101-2104, 2242-2245, 2251-2254, 2495/2496, 3768-3770, 4058-4060, 4062-4069
Home/work/uni blurring	1042-1046, 2027-2030, 3507/3508, 3548/3549, 4792-4794
The unknown	135, 314, 446/447, 862-864, 1151-1153, 1563-1565, 1776/1777, 2068-2072, 2460/2461, 3133-3136, 3734-3736, 4259-4263, 4832-4841
Looking ahead to future emotional impact	442-444, 480, 1155-1157, 4289-4296
Professional isolation	266, 513/514, 1032, 1037, 2728-2730, 4165-4169, 4812
Lack of communication from schools	884/885, 1364/1365, 1478/1479, 3201, 4415,
Schools overwhelmed	118, 746-749, 863/864, 2506-2508, 3249-3251, 3910-3912, 4412/4413
Unique role of F2F interaction	300, 307, 344—346, 348-350, 501-506, 1054-1057, 2008-2012, 2231-2237, 2375-2380, 2397-2403, 2550/2551, 2598-1600, 3299-3303, 3330/3331, 3333-3337, 3348-3351, 3852-2854, 4179-4186, 4190/4191, 4195-4198, 4657-4661, 4663-4673
Technology/logistics	290, 1038, 1526/1527, 2559-2561, 2734/2735, 4681-4684
Relying on the views of others	2218-2224, 2225-2227, 2790-2794, 2949-2951, 2553/2554, 2751-2756, 2758-2765
Lack of collaboration/more directive	518/519, 2906-2909, 4641-4645, 4663-4673
Not knowing how to help	1363, 2501-2503, 2775/2776
Statutory work	72/73, 102/103, 930-933, 1659/1660, 2211-2213, 3045-3049, 3114/3115, 4095-4099, 4123-4128, 4617-4624, 4636-4639, 4647-4651
Worry about the EP role	278, 368, 1616/1617, 1771-1774, 2501-2503, 2780-2785, 3092/3093

Futility of reports	1072/1073, 1198-1201, 1659/1660, 4608-4615, 4617-4624
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#### Positives

Adjustment	255-258, 384, 420, 446/447, 1155-1157, 1630-1632, 1747-1750, 1769-1771, 2341, 2346-2352, 2871, 4101, 4259-4263, 4276-4281, 4657-4661
Self-care/wellbeing	456-459, 1135-1137, 1185-1188, 1761-1764, 1766/1767, 2287-2290, 2333-2335, 2930-2932
The 'known'	423-425, 1627/1628, 2346-2348
Resilience	465, 484/485, 491, 1761-1764, 1794-1798, 2463-2465,
Remote working	1002-1006, 1514-1520, 1522-1524, 1573-1575, 1580-1584, 1719/1720, 2007/2008, 2199/2200, 2202/2203, 3931-3933
More contact with other professionals	397-401, 403-406, 1096-1099, 1101-1103, 1113-1125 2275/2276, 2687/2688
Having more time e.g. CPD	1098-1099, 2053, 2807-2809, 2813-2815, 2817-2820, 2822/2823, 3880-3882, 4218-4222, 3227/3228, 3416-3421
Feeling useful	318, 2278-2280
New ways of working	703, 1322-1326, 2196/2197, 2629/2630, 3227/3228, 3233-3236, 3284-3286, 3438-3441, 3854-3859, 4149-4155, 4718-4724, 4738-4752, 4726-4729
Feeling supported	1450-1452, 1619-1625, 2302-2307, 2855, 3484/3485, 4805-4808

RQ3 - Has practicing during this time led EPs and TEPs to reflect on their practice in more usual times, and based on these reflections, have EPs and TEPs reflected on how they wish to practice in the future?

Importance of working face to face	511/512, 2008-2012, 2217-2237, 2375-2380, 2405-2413, 2740/2741, 2901-2904, 3348-3355, 3588-3591, 4179-4186, 4265-4267, 4657-4673
Importance of person-centred practice	820-821, 2967-2974, 2976-2982, 4149-4155, 4636-4639, 4641-4645
Importance of self-care	1190, 2333-2335, 2930-2932, 3512-3514, 4062-4069
Importance of reflecting	1689-1694, 2354-2362, 2784/2785, 4926-4934
Importance of EPs connectedness	560-566, 1707/1713, 2884-2888, 2896-2899, 3490-3493, 4165-4169, 4171-4174
Importance of managerial supervision	3185/3186, 3484/3485, 3772-3776
Importance of CPD	2813-2815, 3416-3421, 3867-3869, 4486-4488

Importance of collaboration between stakeholders	812-814, 1268-1271, 1585-1587, 2140-2142, 2634/2635, 3294-3296, 3438-3441, 3443-3445, 4647-4651, 4718-4724, 4856-4860
Importance of school relationships	1105-1109, 2383, 2751-2756, 2758-2765, 4499-4501, 4977-4981
Importance of feeling useful	2501-2503, 4875-4882,
Remote working	333, 325, 1585-1587, 1696-1698, 1732, 3016-3018
Working systemically or individually	522-541, 544-552, 1228/1229, 1259-1265, 3576/3577, 4119/4120, 4328-4333
Helping to change perceptions of how the EP role is seen	1245/1246, 1721/1722, 1853-1855, 1934-1943, 4322/4323, 4351-4359, 4884-4887, 4904-4913
Informal peer supervision	577/578, 589-590, 1037, 2072-2075, 2732-2735, 2893/2894, 3487/3488, 3542/3543, 4805-4808
New ways of working	705-708, 783-785, 979-982, 1585-1587, 2608-2613, 3288-3289
Working preventatively	1249-1251, 1724-1729, 3661/3662, 4505-4512,
Reviewing work and measuring impact	3950-3956, 3958-3961, 4351-4359, 4990-4994

**Appendix 13**  
Development of themes – 1

Research question	Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	
RQ1 - What types of work have EPs and TEPs been involved in since the legally enforced restrictions?	Statutory work		
		Professional development	Role changed over time
			Managerial support and collaboration
			The 'distinctive contribution'
			CPD
	Systemic work		Critical incident planning and response
			Supporting schools with planning
			Training for schools
			Planning meetings
			Developing systems
	Intervention		Signposting/sending resources to schools
			Supporting CYP
			Emotional support for families
			Emotional support for schools
	Consultation		Problem solving with parents
		Consultation for schools (inc. transition)	
		Planning meetings with schools	
		Multi-agency working	
RQ2 - What challenges and positive experiences did EPs and TEPs report during this period?	Challenges - emotional	Emotional response (anxiety, lowered focus, trauma, and distress and overwhelmed)	
		Emotional triggers (pressure, the unknown, looking ahead, home/work blurring)	
		Professional isolation	
		Not knowing how to help/Worry about EP role	
	Challenges - Professional	Unique role of F2F interaction	
		technology and logistics	
		Relying on the views of others	

		schools overwhelmed and lack of comm with schools
		Lack of collaboration/more directive
		Futility of reports
	Challenges - statutory	
	Positives - emotional	Adjustment
		Self-care/wellbeing
		The known
		Resilience
	Positives - professional	Remote working
		More contact with other professionals
		Having more time
		Feeling useful
		New ways of working
		Feeling supported
RQ3 - Has practicing during this time led EPs and TEPs to reflect on their practice in more usual times, and based on these reflections, have EPs and TEPs reflected on how they wish to practice in the future?	Professional development	Importance of reflecting
		Importance of CPD
		Importance of collaboration between stakeholders
		Remote working
		New ways of working (transition and JAMs)
	Support	Importance of self-care
		Importance of managerial supervision
	Interpersonal	Importance of working face to face
		Importance of EPs connectedness
		Importance of school relationships
		Informal peer supervision
	Values and ethics	Importance of person-centred practice
		Working preventatively
		Working systemically or individually
	Seeing the value	Helping to change perceptions of how the EP role is seen

		Importance of feeling useful
		Reviewing work and measuring impact

**Appendix 14**  
**Development of themes – 2**

Research question	Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme
Research question 1	Supporting the LA	Multi-agency work
		Senior EP role e.g. Critical incident response and critical incident planning
	Supporting CYP	Remote assessment
		Child voice
	Supporting families	Consultation/ Transition
		Emotional support
	Supporting schools	Signposting/sending resources/Planning/communicating EP role
		Free work and traded work i.e. consultation/systemic work/training/transition/Planning meetings
		Emotional support
	Planning	Systemic planning of EPS
	Self-care and self-development	EP wellbeing e.g. Information overload
		CPD
		Peer supervision and managerial supervision
	New ways of working	Remote working/assessment
		Statutory work e.g. Government guidance/Changes to role over time
Research question 2	Challenges - emotional	Emotional response e.g. changing mood/Overwhelm/distress/anxiety/the unknown/Home/work blurring
		Future emotional impact
	Challenges - interpersonal	Lack of communication with colleagues/schools
		Lack of face to face interaction/Difficulty sustaining relationships/Digital miscommunication
	Challenges - professional	Inability to visit schools and remote consultation/Technology and logistics/Childcare/home schooling
		Less desirable work/Statutory work/Futility of report writing

	Mitigating factors - emotional	Adjustment/Resilience/the 'known'
		Self-care/Routine
	Mitigating factors - interpersonal	More contact with other professionals
		Relationships with school/colleagues
	Mitigating factors - professional	New ways of working/Flexible working/remote working/Feeling 'caught up'
		Reflections on role
Research question 3	Professional	CPD
		Importance of face to face working
		Importance of feeling useful
	Relationships	Importance of working as a team
		Importance of collaboration
		Self-care
		EPS relationships
		Informal peer supervision
		Importance of feeling supported
		School relationships
	Practicalities	JAMs
		Remote working
		Transition meetings
		Ongoing involvement
	Values	Individualised working
		Child-centred practice
		Working creatively
		Working systemically
		The type of EP I want to be
		Changes to thinking
		Working preventatively

**Appendix 15**  
**Development of themes – 3**

Research question	Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	
RQ1	Professional development	Role changed over time	
		Managerial support	
			The 'distinctive contribution'
			Continuous professional development (CPD)
		Systemic work	Critical incident planning and response
			Supporting schools with planning
			Training for schools
			Planning meetings
			Developing systems
		Intervention	Signposting
			Supporting CYP
			Emotional support for families
			Emotional support for schools
		Consultation	Problem-solving with parents
			Consultation with schools
			Multiagency working
		Statutory work	Statutory work
RQ2	Challenges - emotional	Emotional response	
		The distinctive contribution	
		Emotional triggers	
			Professional isolation
		Challenges - professional	Relying on the views of others
			Lack of collaboration
			Perceived futility of reports
		Challenges – statutory work	Statutory work
	Positives – emotional	Adjustment	

		Self-care
		Resilience
	Positives - professional	Remote working
		More contact with professionals
		Having more time
		New ways of working
		Feeling supported
RQ3	Professional development	Importance of reflecting
		Importance of CPD
		Importance of collaboration
		Remote working
		New ways of working
	Our distinctive contribution	Changing perceptions of the EP and TEP role
		Importance of feeling useful
		Reviewing work and measuring impact
	Values and ethics	Importance of person-centred practice
		Working preventatively
		Working systemically or individually
	Support	Importance of self-care
		Importance of supervision
	Interpersonal	Importance of face-to-face work
		Importance of EPS connectedness
		Importance of school relationships
		Informal peer supervision

Development of themes – 4

Research question	Superordinate theme	Subordinate theme	
Were there changes to the nature of the professional practice of EPs and trainee EPs during this period and, if so, in what ways?	Professional development	Role changed over time	
		Managerial support	
		Continuous professional development (CPD)	
	Systemic work	Critical incident planning and response	
		Supporting schools with planning	
		Training for schools	
		Planning meetings	
		Developing systems	
		Intervention	
	Intervention	Signposting	
		Supporting CYP	
		Emotional support for families	
		Emotional support for schools	
		Problem-solving with parents	
		Consultation	
	Consultation	Consultation with schools	
		Multiagency working	
Statutory work			
Remote working			
What were EPs and trainee EPs reflections on the challenges and opportunities related to practicing during this time?		Challenges - emotional	Emotional response
			The distinctive contribution
	Emotional triggers		
	Challenges - professional	Professional isolation	
		Relying on the views of others	
		Lack of collaboration	
		Futility of reports	
	Challenges – statutory work	Remote working	
		Statutory work	

	Positives – emotional	Self-care
	Positives - professional	Remote working
		More contact with professionals
		Having more time
		New ways of working
		Feeling supported
Do EPs and trainee EPs show an intention to change aspects of their practice moving forward and, if so, in what ways?	Professional development	Importance of reflection
		Importance of ongoing development
		Importance of trying new ways of working
		Importance of collaboration
		Remote working
		New ways of working
	Our distinctive contribution	Changing perceptions of the EP and TEP role
	Values and ethics	Importance of involving CYP
		Working preventatively
		Working systemically or individually
	Support	Importance of self-care
		Importance of supervision
		Importance of face-to-face work
	Interpersonal	Importance of EPS connectedness
		Importance of school relationships