A CULTURAL-HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY ANALYSIS OF EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS' PRACTICE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 16-25 FIVE YEARS ON FROM THE SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITY CODE OF PRACTICE 0-25 (2015)

by

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ABSTRACT

This research explores the professional practices of educational psychologists within one local authority educational psychology service with young people aged 16-25. For the purpose of this study, the local authority educational psychology service will be called ‘Drewquay’. The analysis aims to explore the extent to which EPs’ work has been adapted to work with young people aged 16-25-years-old. Cultural-historical activity theory was used as a tool to collect data from 11 educational psychologists through virtual semi-structured interviews. Interviews were transcribed and analysed using Braun & Clarke’s (2013) model of thematic analysis.

The results show that the five core functions of an educational psychologist continue to be prevalent in the work of educational psychologists within the 16-25 age range, with a particular focus on engaging in assessment and consultation. Key differences occur in the outcome of educational psychologists’ work, whereby work with 16-25-year-olds focused on capturing the views and aspirations for hopes into adulthood. This influenced the choice of tools, with assessments focusing on functional skills that are deemed necessary for independence in adulthood. Supporting and constraining factors to educational psychologists’ work with young people are explored. Across the data set, contradictions are identified across different areas of educational psychologists’ work.

Results from this study indicates the kinds of work that educational psychologists may complete with young people aged 16-25, along with knowledge of tools that they may wish to use in practice. Within Drewquay educational psychology service, the results

will be disseminated, and in-service development will focus on addressing contradictions to collectively develop and create a new activity to move educational psychologists' work forward in this age range.

DEDICATION

To my parents, Amrik and Carolyn Mandair; you have never questioned the steps I've taken in wanting to follow my career. Your endless support, constant encouragement and unwavering love has led to where I am today, and I cannot write in enough words the gratitude and love I have towards you both (and for all of the food parcels over the years!).

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This research was proofread for spelling, punctuation, and grammar by Bethan Owen Proofreading.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABBREVIATION	FULL VERSION OF WORD OR PHRASE
BPS	British Psychological Society
C/YP	Children and/or young people
CHAT	Cultural-historical activity theory
CoP	Code of Practice
DfE	Department for Education
DES	Department for Education and Science
DoH	Department of Health
EHCP	Education Health and Care plan
EPs	Educational psychologists
EPS	Educational psychology service
FE	Further education
HCPC	Health Care and Professionals Council
LA	Local authority
NEET	Not in education, employment or training
SEN	Special educational needs
SEND	Special educational needs and disability
SEND CoP	Special educational needs and disability Code of Practice
TEP	Trainee educational psychologist
YP	Young people

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 1

1.1 Introduction to the thesis

This thesis comprises two volumes of work which were undertaken as partial fulfilment of the three year Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctorate training course at the University of Birmingham. Volume 1, as presented below, is an empirical, exploratory research study that examines the role and professional practices of educational psychologists (EPs), within a single English local authority (LA) educational psychology service (EPS) setting in relation to working with young people (YP) who are aged 16-25. Volume 2 comprises four professional practice reports that are an academic record of work that I have completed as part of my professional practice experience as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP).

1.2 Background to the research

1.2.1 Context as a trainee educational psychologist

Within Drewquay LA, where I undertook my supervised placement practice in years two and three of the training course, there had been a recent Local Area Review by Ofsted identifying that outcomes and provision for post-16 and post-19 YP were of concern within the LA. As a result, members of the EPS were working at strategic levels within the LA to support the improvement of outcomes for post-16 YP; I was interested in undertaking some research in this area in order to support this work.

1.2.2 Rationale for research

There are two key motives that have influenced my rationale for this research. On a personal level, prior to commencing the doctorate, I was a primary school teacher (2016-2018). It was a fulfilling role to see young pupils make progress in education, however upon joining the doctorate, I felt that my understanding and knowledge of progress was limited to that of the National Curriculum. Whilst an undergraduate student (2013-2016), I was a support worker for children and young people (C/YP) with autism spectrum disorder and I particularly enjoyed working with older YP. This experience provided me with a feeling that YP with additional special educational needs and disability (SEND) are at an increased risk of ending up not in education, employment or training (NEET). It is my hope that this research will illuminate and support the knowledge and practice of EPs when working with YP aged 16-25-years-old.

Use of terms

The age range '16-25-years-old' is a construct that has most commonly been referred to within the literature. In reality, there is no cut-off point in education at the age of 16 years, especially in the context of the raising of the school leaving age to 18 years. Papers included in the literature review (Chapter 2) may refer to more specific ages within this age range, however this study includes EPs' work across the entirety of the 16-25 age range and therefore, for simplicity, the term 16-25-years-old is used here to refer to all work with YP in this age range. Two additional terms are used, where the whole age range (0-25 years) with whom EPs may work with is referred to, the term children and young people (C/YP) is used; however, when referring specifically to

working with 16-25-year-olds, the term young people (YP) is used, as is consistent with the SEND CoP (Department for Education & Department of Health [DfE & DoH], 2015).

1.3 Summary of chapters

Volume 1 comprises six chapters. Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the thesis and specifically this volume of work. It documents the rationale for this work, the age ranges that EPs may work with and a summary of the following chapters. Finally, the research aim and questions are presented.

Chapter 2 provides a definition of the role of EPs and describes the five core functions of an EP provided by Fallon et al. (2010). The context in which EPs' work is explained, both in terms of policy and legislation and the move towards a traded mode of service delivery. Examples of EP practice are then examined with a specific focus on how EPs have worked with YP.

Chapter 3 documents my ontological and epistemological position and how this has influenced the research methodology and design. Cultural-historical activity theory (CHAT) is described and its use in this research explained.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed review of the interview data, transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Key themes and subthemes are identified under each of the seven nodes of the activity theory model. Finally, contradictions within the data are identified and discussed.

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the results for each of the research questions in this study. The findings from Chapter 4 are discussed in relation to pre-existing literature. Contradictions are explored to consider future implications for EPs' work with YP.

Chapter 6 provides a summary, including a critique of the strengths and limitations of this research and of activity theory, future research ideas, a summary of implications for EPs' practice and concluding comments.

1.4 The role of activity theory within this research

The activity theory model has been applied in different ways and can be used as a descriptive, analytical and organisational development tool (Leadbetter, 2017). Activity theory places significance on the subject within a broader context, examining historical, cultural and social influences on activity systems. Activity theory is often described as either CHAT or socio-cultural activity theory and is outlined in Chapter 3.

For this research, the activity theory model has been used as a tool to collect data from EPs through semi-structured interviews. Deductive thematic analysis is completed using the seven nodes of the activity theory model to identify themes and subthemes from the interviews.

1.5 Research aim and questions

The aim of this research is to capture some of the professional practices of EPs' work with YP aged 16-25 in one LA EPS five years on from the updated Code of Practice

(CoP; DfE & DoH, 2015). The findings will be shared with both Drewquay LA and the wider educational psychology community. The LA EPS that I am completing my two-year professional practice placement in was nationally recognised as an EPS that has leading post-16 practices when the CoP was updated. In this research, activity theory provides a model to guide semi-structured interviews. The research questions are as follows:

1. What are the professional practices of EPs working with YP aged 16-25?
2. What supports and constrains the professional practices of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds?
3. To what extent can the professional practices of EPs working with children aged 0-16 be extended to working with YP aged 16-25?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Chapter introduction

To understand the activity of EPs working with YP aged 16-25-years, this chapter first provides a definition of the role of an EP and an overview of the five core functions that are accepted as the work of EPs (Farrell et al., 2006; Fallon et al., 2010). The context in which EPs' work is presented and the significance of the requirement to contribute to the statutory assessment of C/YP's SEND for an Education Health and Care plan (EHCP) is considered. The influence of legislation on the work of EPs provides the context for how the SEND of YP over 16 years of age have been considered over time and explains why in the most recent SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) a change was made to include YP to the age of 25. This chapter moves on to examine examples of work that EPs have completed within the 16-25 age range before stating the research aim and questions.

2.2 Defining the role of an educational psychologist

EP practice is governed by the standards and ethics of practice as stipulated by the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC, 2016) and the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2018). In addition to standards of practice, the work of EPs is influenced by the legislative context set by the government of the day (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Fallon et al., 2010; Winward 2015) as further explored in section 2.4.

The work of EPs is varied and can be difficult to define. Fallon et al. (2010) suggest the following definition:

> *Educational psychologists are fundamentally scientist-practitioners who utilise, for the benefit of children and young people, psychological skills, knowledge and understanding through the functions of consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training, at organisational, group, and individual level across, education, community, and care settings with a variety of role partners* (p. 4)

This definition suggests that EPs have the capacity to work dynamically across a range of levels and settings to promote positive outcomes for C/YP from 0-25-years-old. Through the application of psychological theory and knowledge to existing problems and situations, EPs have the capacity to work directly with C/YP and with stakeholders, such as parents and school staff, or across different systems (Beaver, 2011) to promote change. An examination of the EP workforce in 2019 found the majority of EPs in England work in LAs for at least a portion of their work, while some work in private practice, voluntary/social sectors or are employed by schools, such as multi-academy trusts or special schools (Lyonette et al., 2019). The broadness of the role has led to questions about the unique contribution of EPs (Farrell et al., 2006; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009; Fallon et al., 2010; Rumble & Thomas, 2017). Birch et al. (2015) provides a historical perspective for the development of the educational psychology profession and suggest:

- the emphasis on psychological skills and knowledge that is held by EPs was seen to be, and continues to be, a unique characteristic of the profession;
- EPs continue to have a role within statutory assessment, which originates in the 1981 Education Act (Education Act, 1981);

- the scientist-practitioner characteristic of an EP may be observed in the work of Burt who considered all work, including at an individual level, to be a form of research (Parker, 2013)

Leadbetter (2011) completed a similar activity, mapping the historical changes to EP practice over time using activity theory to document the chronology of EPs' practice over a 100-year period (1913-2010).

To understand of the role of an EP within educational settings, Ashton and Roberts (2006) gathered views of the EP role from both special educational needs coordinators and EPs and found that they valued EPs' work that was based on individual assessment and advice giving (deemed as a more 'traditional' way of working by the authors), whereas EPs reflected and commented on the role of consultation, understanding interactions and working systemically. The need to EPs to complete psychological assessments was likely to have arose from assessment of a C/YP's SEN following the 1981 Education Act (Thomson, 1996 cited in Fallon et al., 2010). A limitation of Ashton and Robert's (2006) study is the sample size. Participants were only obtained from primary schools within a single LA and thus the views of secondary and post-16 educational settings may differ as results are only representative of how primary schools felt about one LA EPS. Furthermore, this study was published 15 years ago, and with the change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) views may now differ as cultural and historical influences impact on the role of the EPs.

2.3 Development of educational psychology practice

2.3.1 Educational psychologists' ways of working

A 2002 review of EP practice in Scotland defined five core functions of an EP: consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training (Scottish Executive Education Department, 2002). These functions have been adopted and applied to EP practice in England (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010). These five core functions have been generally accepted as a model for the ways in which EPs' work.

2.3.2 Consultation

While there is not a single universal definition of consultation, certain characteristics are agreed upon to form a 'consultation', namely the process of problem-solving between a consultant (in this context, an EP) and consultee, such as a parent/carer, teacher or school (Wagner, 2017; O'Farrell & Kinsella, 2018). Wagner defines consultation as a "*voluntary, collaborative, non-supervisory approach established to aid the functioning of a system and its inter-related systems* ..." (2000, p. 11). Wagner's (2000) work has been influential in the use of consultation in EP practice, though as identified by O'Farrell and Kinsella (2018), other models and approaches to consultation exist within educational psychology practice.

2.3.3 Assessment

Boyle and Lauchlan (2009) suggest that the purpose of an assessment is for EPs to gain an understanding of both the strengths and areas of difficulty for C/YP. This may involve observation, standardised or dynamic assessments, the use of checklists and questionnaires and discussions with key adults.

EPs are interested in the contextual factors that influence child development, thus completing direct work with C/YP may only comprise of one aspect of an EPs' assessment. Dunsmuir and Hardy (2016) describe C/YP's environment as playing a "*significant role not only in shaping and maintaining difficulties that may be experienced, but also in supporting positive change"* (p. 6) with interactions between environmental and individual factors being complex. Thus, assessment of psychological difficulties should always include an assessment of the interaction between an individual and systemic factors that relate to their environmental context (Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016).

2.3.4 Intervention

The BPS define intervention as "*attempts to make change to people in their behaviour, the systems around them or their interpersonal relationships, using methods derived from psychological knowledge and understanding of individuals and their world*" (Ball et al., 2004, p. 65). EPs will often not deliver the intervention themselves, more commonly advising on interventions that will be implemented by the staff working with C/YP (Robinson et al., 2018).

More recently, the role of EPs in the delivery of therapeutic interventions has been specifically highlighted within the literature. EPs' governing bodies such as the BPS have provided guidance on delivering therapeutic interventions (Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016). With a growing concern of mental health problems amongst school children, and interestingly a change in language in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) to include the need 'social, emotional and mental health' (p.85) it has been suggested that EPs

are well positioned to deliver mental health and therapeutic interventions to C/YP in an educational setting. Atkinson et al. (2014) identified a number of enablers and barriers that are specific to the delivery of therapeutic interventions by school psychologists. Three key components were derived from the data and cited as influencing the success of preventing of therapeutic intervention: the role of a school psychologist, training, practice and support and the context of the psychology service. School services recognised that school psychologists could offer therapeutic interventions, however the need to complete individual and statutory assessment work often took precedence in practice and impinged on the capacity to complete therapeutic interventions. Many psychologists were prepared and further trained to deliver therapeutic interventions but access to effective supervision on completion of these courses was sparse and led to concerns regarding the effectiveness of delivery without ongoing supervisory support (Atkinson et al., 2014).

2.3.5 Research

Skills in the design and implementation of research have long been held as an important part of the work of EPs. Gersch et al. (1990) viewed research skills and the use of evaluative methodologies as imperative for a LA EP in order to be an enabler of change (cited in MacKay et al., 2016). Frederickson et al. (1998, cited in Frederickson, 2013) predicted "'*the most important legacy will be the enormous expansion in research activity by educational psychologists*'" (p. 25). The move towards doctoral training programmes for EPs was, in part, influenced by the need for EPs to use research skills in order to engage in evidence-based practice (Fredrickson, 2013).

2.3.6 Training

EPs have a number of skills that place them as professionals who can, and should be, engaging in training others. Key skills associated with EPs as trainers include the specialist psychological knowledge and skills, and knowledge of the local context including schools, the local area and other services (Dutton, 2013).

EPs can provide a menu of training opportunities and continuous professional development options to educational settings, parents and other professionals. Rumble and Thomas (2017) interviewed EPs within a multi-academy trust who provided training that may have arisen from consultation-based work, pre-existing or bespoke training according to the needs of the educational setting. While Rumble and Thomas offer a range of ways EPs have delivered work in their study, Winward (2015) found that schools were aware and valued the contribution EPs make to training, but funding restrains led schools to prioritising individual assessment over staff training.

The above sections have defined and described each core function; EPs can engage with a number of these functions when completing work. In addition, they can be delivered at three different levels: individual, group or strategically with an organisation (Cameron, 2006; Fallon et al., 2010).

2.4 The context and funding of educational psychologists' work

Within LA EPS', there are two common funding streams: the first comes from the LA, where EPs are required to complete statutory work that includes the assessment of C/YP's SEND and the contribution to project work. The second is commissioned

directly from schools and other organisations through a traded service model. The section that follows examines both contexts in which EPs' work. There are other areas where EPs have the capacity to work (Lyonette et al., 2019) however, this study gathers data from LA EPs who work within a model of service delivery as described above.

To understand how EP work has come to include working with YP aged 16-25, an examination of key education, SEND legislation and policy is presented below. The language used in historical SEND policy and legislation does not always reflect the current language used. When referring to policy and legislation prior to the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), the term special educational needs (SEN) is used. Following the most recent SEND CoP, the term SEND is used throughout the remainder of this research.

2.4.1 The statutory context

The current system for assessing the SEND of C/YP in England has its roots in the Warnock Report (Department of Education and Science [DES], 1978). In 1974, the Warnock Committee was set up to review the education policies and the support provided for the then-termed 'handicapped' children to produce the Warnock Report (Warnock, 2005). This report changed the language construction of those with disability, to describe children as having learning difficulties and the introduction of the term 'special educational needs' (SEN):

> *Our conclusion that up to one child in five is likely to need special educational provision in the course of his school career does not mean that up to one in five is likely to be handicapped in the traditional sense of the term… We refer to the group of children - up to one in five - who are likely to require some form of special educational provision at some time during their school career as 'children with special educational needs'* (DES, 1978, p. 41)

The report reconceptualised C/YP with SEN as having one or more of three broad categories of needs, however, this list if not exhaustive of the types of need C/YP may have:

- requiring additional equipment, resources, adaptions to the physical school environment or teaching;
- a modified curriculum; or
- focus dedicated to the social structure and emotional climate of an education setting.

The language used in the Warnock Report was translated into the 1981 Education Act and underpinned the statutory assessment of SEN (statementing) until the 2014 Children and Families Act (Norwich, 2019). The Warnock Report was the first to stipulate that EPs should have a statutory role when assessing the needs of children with SEN (p. 264). Changes included a focus on how the education system can make adaptions to include children with SEN, a consideration of the role of SEN schools as well as teacher education and training to ensure that children with SEN receive high-quality teaching (Lindsay et al., 2020) to ultimately promote the social model of

inclusion. Specialist provision was not favoured if C/YP could access mainstream provision.

The Warnock report (DES, 1978) went beyond focusing on children who were of statutory school age. The main recommendations (Law, 2019) from the report included "…*increased opportunities for young people with these problems (SEN) to continue their education after 16 at school or in further education*" (DES, 1978, p. 327). Increased opportunities to engage in good education provision beyond the age of 16 was seen as important for a successful transition into adulthood: "…*good provision will pay dividends by enabling many of these young people to achieve much greater independence in adult life… less dependence on support from their families, statutory services or voluntary organisations*" (DES, 1978, p. 328). Over 40 years ago, the Warnock Report proposed a role for EPs working with YP:

> …*educational psychologists may be expected to contribute significantly to the provision of continuing and further education for young people over 16 with special needs by working with them and their teachers in school and colleges, by developing programmes for individual pupils or students and by providing information to career officers and contributing to vocational guidance* (p. 265)

The 1978 Warnock report shows that considering the outcomes of YP aged 16 and over is not a novel consideration; however, at this time there was no statutory role or trading for EPs to provide a service for this age range.

2.4.2 1981 Education Act

Recommendations from the 1978 Warnock Report were introduced in the 1981 Education Act (Hannon, 1982). Statements of SEN were introduced with the aim of ensuring LA responsibility for C/YP with the most complex needs (Lamb, 2019). At this time, EPs became involved in the statutory assessment of SEN, which continues to be an aspect of EP work at present. Statements of SEN continued to be the basis of SEND framework and legislation for almost 40 years, until the introduction of the Children and Families Act (2014) where they were replaced by EHCPs.

2.4.3 SEN CoP 1994 and 2001

In 1994, the government published the first of three SEN(D) CoP (DfE, 1994; DfES, DfE & DoH, 2001; DfE & DoH, 2015). Within both the SEN CoP in 1994 and 2001, C/YP retained statements of their SEN.

In relation to the post-16 age group, if YP were to leave education and seek employment, their statement of SEN would cease as they no longer remained in the care of the then-term local education authority. Criticisms remained regarding the purpose of a statement of SEN once in post-16 education; the local education authority would continue the statement if a YP remained in school for post-16 education, but otherwise would consider ceasing the statement if a YP went into further education (FE). Statements of SEN could remain in place until a YP was 19 years old.

2.4.4 SEND CoP 2015

The Children and Families Act (2014) aimed to improve services for vulnerable C/YP and provide stronger support for families. As part of this, statements of SEN were removed and EHCPs were introduced as the new statutory document for C/YP with SEND. The aim of the plans was to better co-ordinate the needs of C/YP across education, health and social care into a single, statutory document. The SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) contains the law as written into the Children and Families Act (2014) and guidance on implementing it. The most recent SEND CoP made a number of changes which can be found in Table 1.

The practical changes made to the CoP may be driven by a perceived cultural shift when thinking about C/YP with SEND, namely that C/YP and their families should be at the centre of any decision making (Tutt & Williams, 2015). The person-centred approach to planning and supporting C/YP may represent this cultural shift.

A significant change to this CoP was the increase in the statutory age range to include 19-25-year-olds, which Sales and Vincent (2018) suggest was a noticeable strength of the updated CoP. Extending the CoP to work with YP until the age of 25 was a necessary change as a higher proportion of those YP with SEND were leaving education and becoming NEET than their peers without SEND.

Table 1. Changes made to the SEND CoP (2015 points summarised from pp. 13-14)

Changes to the SEND CoP (2014)
• Including ‘disability’ in the title to move from SEN to SEND • Increasing the age range to cover YP from 0-25 years old • A focus on gathering the views of C/YP, and parents, in decision making processes • Stronger emphasis on high aspirations and improving outcomes for C/YP • Collaborative planning between services to promote co-operation between education, health and social care services • Guidance on a Local Offer for C/YP with SEND • Guidance for education and training settings on taking a graduated approach to identify and support C/YP with SEN • The statement of SEND is replaced by Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) • Greater focus on transitions to adulthood • Guidance on supporting C/YP in the youth justice system • Guidance on the Mental Health Capacity Act (2005) and Equality Act (2010) • Further change was made to the categories of need, replacing ‘behavioural, social and emotional difficulties’ with ‘social, emotional and mental health needs’

While it is expected that YP with SEND will complete FE, similar to their peers without SEND, there is a recognition that the provision stated on their EHCP may continue to be required as YP move into different forms of education and training, such as apprenticeships, of which the LA has a responsibility as set out in the EHCP (DfE, 2017). In addition, the extension in age was intended to support the transition from child to adult services in the field of health and social care where the LA have a statutory duty to work together with education, health and social care for YP with an EHCP.

Another important concept for the change to the CoP was the idea of preparing for adulthood (DfE & DoH, 2015). For C/YP with EHCPs, explicit conversations and planning for the future must be included as part of EHCP reviews from Year 9 onwards (p. 125).

YP should be involved in the four areas of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda (Preparing for Adulthood, 2017):

- paid employment and higher education;
- independent living;
- community inclusion;
- health and wellbeing.

Bason (2018) suggests that when completing statutory assessments with YP, the focus of their assessment may be on adaptive behaviours that are important for the four areas of the Preparing for Adulthood agenda. The SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015)

suggests that assessment of functional behaviour skills should be completed earlier with an explicit focus on preparing for adulthood starting from 14-years-old/ year 9. This view would support the wishes of YP with SEND, who, as described above, aspire to gain careers and engage in other aspects of society similar to those without SEND.

2.4.5 The context of traded services

It is important to note that the statutory assessment of C/YP SEND is not the only way in which EPs work. In relation to the extended age range from the updated CoP, Atkinson et al. (2015) has argued that "*the extension of the role of EPs in working with young people up to the age of 25 represents one of the most significant developments the profession has ever experienced*" (p. 159).

Following budget cuts in education in 2010, EPSs needed to find alternative sources of income, resulting in many services adopting a traded model of service delivery where work was commissioned directly by schools and other settings (Buser, 2013). This places the responsibility on educational settings and other services to commission EP involvement (Lee & Woods, 2017). A traded model of service delivery is described in a workforce report on EPs by Lyonette et al. (2019) as "…*non-statutory services paid for by schools and other organisations"* (p. 4). This definition recognises that EPs' work may come from a number of settings, however much of the work drawn on in this study talks about EPs' work within FE settings.

The change in the SEND CoP may have accelerated the need for EPs' practice to expand to work with YP up to the age of 25 through the statutory assessment process,

however applying psychology through other practices, such as traded work, may not have developed as rapidly (Apter et al., 2018). Mackay (2009) suggests that applied psychology will dramatically change in response to working with an older age range, a sentiment later echoed by Arnold and Baker (2012) who suggest there is little precedent when working with this age group. The remainder of this chapter examines the development of EP practices, considering whether EPs require additional framework for the 16-25 age range as well as providing examples of current work with 16-25-year-olds. Supporting and constraining factors to EP work are explored and then considered when working with this age range before the research aim and questions are presented for this study.

2.5 Educational psychologists' work with 16-25-year-olds

2.5.1 Historic examples of work with FE providers

As early as 1989 Harrison and Hogg (1989) examined the approaches to service delivery in FE settings and the work EPs may conduct there. This focus came from the Warnock Report (1978) that identified 16-19-year-olds as a group of YP who required better SEND provision. Using Bender's (1979) four level model of service delivery (cited in Harrison & Hogg, 1989), Harrison and Hogg evaluated the work of one EP who was seconded to spend 21 days in an FE setting (both the EP and FE setting volunteered to participate in this work). Bender's (1979) model of service delivery is presented below:

- Level 1: working directly with individual students;
- Level 2: working with direct contact people;
- Level 3: staff training;

- Level 4: contributions to policy**.**

The authors evaluated the extent to which this model of EP working, which was deemed valuable in secondary schools, could be applied to FE settings. For the duration of this work, the EP was able to work at all four levels within a college setting. Findings include the need for EPs to understand differing factors and systems between FE providers and secondary schools; this knowledge is imperative to ensure EPs are working efficiently in FE providers. The authors concluded that there is a valid and important place for EPs' work in FE providers, however time and resources must be dedicated to allowing both EPs and FE settings to understand each other's roles and ways of working.

Prior to the change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) EPs would work with YP until the age of 19 through statutory assessment, although little has been written about the work of EPs with YP of this age through non-statutory work. Futcher and Carroll (1994) gathered the views of 12 EPs from different LAs enabling the authors to explore the ways in which EPs were working with YP until the age of 18 and develop a model of working. The views of five staff from four FE providers were sought through semi-structured interviews to explore their response to EP work proposals. Using Harrison and Hogg (1989) four-levels model, many of the EPs reported to be working at level one with FE providers and were completing individual assessment work with YP. One EP suggested that to work within an FE provider, an EP required specialist knowledge on the specific language and structures of an FE setting and this mirrors the conclusions from Harrison and Hogg's (1989) previous work. Following data collection

from EPs, Harrison and Hogg's four-level model of work was extended to five levels to include EPs 'lecturing to students' on mainstream courses such as psychology or early years, thus seeing the EP taking a teaching role within the setting. The work of EPs and how this was embedded within the four-level model can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Futcher and Carroll (1994) work of EPs within colleges four-level model (adapted from Harrison & Hogg, 1989)

Level of work	**Examples of work**
Level 1: contact with individual students	Assessments, such as literacy, numeracy, or behavioural
Level 2: working with direct contact people	Intervention, such as counselling support, study skills training, social skills training
Level 3: staff training	Supervision and support for college and FE counsellors, consultation with staff
Level 4: lectures to students (a proposed level by Futcher and Carroll)	With other professionals and parents
Level 5: contributions to policy	INSET training for college and FE staff

FE staff found the levels of working a useful tool to understand the scope and capacity of EP work within these settings. However, value by FE staff continued to be placed

on EPs completing individual assessment work and contribution to policy development was not welcomed.

The authors highlight the issue of funding as a barrier to EPs expanding their work into post-16 settings, and this leads to reflections on the EPS becoming a traded service, marketed specifically for FE providers and developing practices that are valuable to FE settings. While this study utilised the four-level model of EP practice by Harrison and Hogg (1989), elements of the updated five core functions of an EP (Fallon et al., 2010) can be observed, with references made to assessment, intervention, and consultation and training. This is further evidence of the concept of historicity, which will be further explored in Chapter 3, to illustrate that activities and activity systems are shaped over time and transformed through examining and adapting practice.

2.5.2 Recent examples of educational psychologists' practice with 16-25-year-olds

Table 3 presents an overview of research that has been published since the changes to the CoP in 2015 regarding EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. A systematic search was made on PsychInfo, using the terms 'educational psychology*', 'college OR further education' and '16-25'. A further Google search was conducted using the terms 'thesis', 'doctorate' and 'educational psychology*' to ensure the inclusion of doctorate theses that have published work within this age range.

Table 3. Examples of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds

Role and practice of EPs with 16-25-year-olds	
Theme	**Focus of work and reference**
Considerations	• Financial positions of colleges and FE settings (Keegan & Murphy, 2020) • Informed consent (Davis, 2018a) • Mental capacity (Davis, 2018b)
Therapeutic practices	• Using personal construct psychology to understand behaviour in 19-25-year-olds (Hymans, 2018) • EPs delivering psychological therapies (Atkinson & Martin, 2018) • Supporting post-16 pupils with learning difficulties through the use of human givens therapy (Attwood & Atkinson, 2020) • Cognitive behaviour therapy to improve low moods (Boden, 2020)
Gathering views	• Stakeholders in YP's education e.g. FE staff • Using narrative approaches (Hobbs, 2018) • Views of FE staff on support required (Bason, 2018)

	• YP's perspective of mental health support (Jago et al., 2020) • YP's perspective of support required prior to the school-to-work transition (Parry, 2020) • Using participatory research methods to gather views of 19-25-year-olds who returned to education (Borrett & Rowley, 2020)
Transition support	• Transition to FE for those with social, emotional and mental health needs (Edwards, 2017) • Systematic literature review of the role of EPs supporting transition to FE (Morris & Atkinson, 2018) • Transition from school to FE (Manning, 2018) • Transition to FE for girls with autism spectrum disorder (Park, 2018) • Transition to adulthood for YP with severe and profound medical and learning difficulties (Fayette & Bond, 2018) • Using person-centred planning at reviews for YP with SEND at post-16 transition reviews (Bason, 2020) • Making sense of relationships for YP with EHCPs to aid the transition to FE (Lawson & Parker, 2020)
Using assessment	• Implication of colleges' approach to assessing literacy difficulties on EP practice (Lyon, 2016)

	• Identifying literacy difficulties in higher education (Niolaki et al., 2020) • Collaborative assessment with YP (Kennedy et al., 2020)
Systemic work	• Implementing SEND reform in FE (Reid, 2016) • Working with FE providers to guide the post-16 offer by a LA EPS (Keegan & Murphy, 2018) • Preventing YP becoming NEET (Cockerill & Arnold, 2018) • Model of working with the 16-25 age range (Damali & Damali, 2018) • Multiagency working for the 16-25 age group (Selfe et al., 2018) • EPs working with universities (Squires, 2018)

2.5.3 Outcomes for 16-25-year-olds

EPs have a role to support the outcomes and aspirations for YP with SEND. These outcomes are similar to those of their peers without SEN with many valuing a job and aspiring to have a successful career (Mitchell, 1999), however a number of factors can make this difficult for YP with SEND. To note, since this research was published by Mitchell (1999) the school leaving age has risen in England from 16 to 18 years of age. However, as shown in Gaona et al.'s (2020) research, the focus for YP from the age of 16 continues to focus on education as opposed to supporting employment. Both YP and their parents feel opportunities for meaningful employment are sparse (Mitchell, 1999) which suggests that there is a lack of understanding and opportunity in society for YP with SEND to contribute to meaningful employment. In addition, the suitability of EHCPs for gaining employment may be questioned: a content analysis of 12 EHCPs of YP (16-years and older) with autism spectrum disorder revealed only half of the plans focused on independence and self-help skills, and language appeared either less committal (i.e. YP should be 'encouraged' to engage in self-help skills) or provision continued to refer to how YP will function within an education system (Gaona et al., 2020). This research, although only analysing a small number of specific EHCPs of a certain population of YP (those with autism spectrum disorder), begins to suggest that there is a disparity between the support professionals deem appropriate for YP in comparison to the support they may wish to seek to reach future aspirations in adulthood.

A high number of YP who are identified as having SEN continue to access FE. Research suggests that with previous statements of SEN, YP with SEND were likely

to remain in education for longer than those without (Coles et al., 2010), however, the research by Coles et al. refers to the previous statementing of SEN. While the current EHCP system aspires for a similar number of YP with SEND to complete education by the age of 19, as their peers, the EHCP opens the option for YP to continue in education "…*young people with Education, Health and Care plans may need longer in education or training to achieve their outcomes and make an effective transition into adulthood"* (DfE, 2017). Bason (2012) suggests that people may view educational settings as more inclusive of SEND, thus favouring YP remaining in these settings in comparison to the inclusivity of other aspects of society, such as employment or training centres. The support provided for YP with SEND in their transition to employment, and opportunities to gain employment, has been described as "*shrinking"* (Hunter et al., 2019, p. 135). FE providers need to deliver support that extends beyond education and employment to aid the holistic development of YP entering adulthood.

Bason (2018) proposes that FE providers should deliver a curriculum for YP with EHCPs that focuses on their transition to adulthood alongside the academic side of teaching. Interestingly, this proposition for practice appears to be in line with how college staff see their role and in one study college staff identified that FE providers should be settings that can foster independent life skills for YP alongside promoting academic learning (Keegan & Murphy, 2018).

Keeping YP with SEND in education may be deemed the desirable route as a way to safeguard their needs and promote inclusion. However, in reality, YP of this age range are at risk of being caught in the process of 'churning', "*characterised by the young*

people repeating years in college, or repeatedly taking courses at the same level (or even lower levels) and appearing not to make a positive progression" (Hewett et al., 2016, p.5). Although the research conducted by Hewett et al. (2016) focuses on YP with visual impairments, the authors note that the concept of 'churning' has been noted across other disciplines, and thus not specific to YP with visual impairments to suggest that it may be a wider concern for YP with SEND. While the longitudinal research conducted by Aston et al. (2005) includes YP with statements rather than EHCPs, this research illustrates that churning within education is not a recent concern for those with SEND, with evidence suggesting that a number of YP have experienced it following post-secondary school education. Considering the idea of churning in education and lack of opportunities for employment, funding and progression into adulthood, it may be argued that EHCPs should include securing successful training or supported internships for YP with SEND beyond education. Gabriel (2015) found that YP with SEND aspire to have successful careers, and through successful employment they can benefit from earning money, feeling a sense of success and develop good relationships with colleagues; all benefits which fit into the Preparing for Adulthood (2017) programme.

Underpinning the research described, there is the implication of two ways for EPs to support YP as they move into adulthood. Firstly, EPs may have a role in upskilling and training those, such as colleges or training providers, supporting YP with SEND. Secondly, EPs can promote the importance of having high aspirations for YP with SEND as they transition towards adulthood to ensure scenarios such as churning are not experienced. Aspirations, defined by Hart (2016) are "...*future orientated, driven by*

conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group's commitment towards a particular trajectory or end point" (p. 326). These are seen as dynamic, influenced by a sense of agency, length of aspiration and can be influenced by significant others such as parents/carers and teachers (Hart, 2004, cited in Hart, 2016), suggesting that aspirations are influenced by systems around YP (Hart, 2016). If aspirations are constructed in this way, the changes in the SEND CoP to focus on a successful transition into adulthood could be seen as a process that attempts to provide YP with SEND resources and provision to help reach aspirations for adulthood with success. The focus on early planning for adulthood is an imperative change brought with this updated CoP, as research has found a positive correlation for high aspirations at the age of 14 and positive educational and employment experiences between the ages of 16 to 20-years-old for YP with SEND (Gutman & Schoon, 2018). Key adults and school staff have a significant role in supporting YP to achieve their aspirations, many of which relate to achieving a certain career (St. Clair et al., 2013) as C/YP with SEND more commonly have lower aspirations for adulthood than those without SEND (Rojewski, 1999).

This section has summarised a number of desirable outcomes for YP aged 16-25-years-old; a focus on developing aspirations YPs' aspirations and having appropriate systems in place to support them, providing meaningful employment opportunities and ensuring that remaining in education is not chosen as the simple or most inclusive option are all areas of focus to consider when developing outcomes for YP.

2.5.4 Developing frameworks for working with 16-25-year-olds

Two frameworks have been proposed for working with 16-25-year-olds; there is limited evidence in the literature of these being applied in practice. Damali and Damali (2018) investigated EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds within a London borough. The model aimed to bridge the gap between working with YP up to the age of 18 to working with young adults up to the age of 25. Examining the skills, knowledge and good practices with 16-18-year-olds, the authors could examine which of these practices were applicable to young adults and consider which skills and knowledge EPs still needed. Many practices, such as person-centred and solution-focused approaches, needs-based assessments and applying the 'plan-do-review' cycle remained useful with this older age range, although the novelty of working with this older age range was deemed to require further investigation. Table 4 reports the seven identified themes and associated results from this case study working with 16-25-year-olds.

The findings from Damali and Damali's (2018) student suggest that some core functions of an EP, specifically consultation, assessment and intervention, can be extended to work with YP without the need to develop a new mode of working.

The findings of this study suggest that EPs focus more of their work with 16-25-year-olds around the four outcomes that are associated with preparing for adulthood: employment, community inclusion, independent living and health (Preparing for Adulthood, 2017) in comparison to children below the age of 16.

Table 4. Key themes identified from Damali and Damali (2018) questionnaire of EPs' work with 16-25 year olds

Theme	**Results**
Informed consent	• Where possible, the YP/adult should provide consent themselves • Challenge occurs when the YP has SEND; when the adult (such as parent) but not YP gives consent for EP involvement • Considering the Mental Health Capacity Act to guide consent; however many EPs feel they need further training on this
Referral	• In this case-study, most referrals come from EHCP assessments
Assessment	Tools purchased within the borough to work with 16-25-year-olds: • Weschler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS) • Weschler Individual Achievement Test 11 (WIAT 11) • Wellbeing resources • Resiliency Scales • Boxall Profile

	• Talking Mats
Functional skills assessment	• Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System 3 (ABAS-3)
Tools already reported to be used by EPs	• For cognition and learning: BAS-3, WISC-IV/V, WRIT and WRAT, dynamic assessment and non-standardised measures • Gathering views of YP: visual, tactile resources, personal construct approaches such as the ideal self and person-centred approaches such as a PATH or MAP, scaling and questionnaires • For social, emotional and mental health: The Vinelands, Beck Inventory and Resiliency Scales, non-standardised assessments and tools such as scaling
Consultation	• A model that continues to be used with the 16-25-year-old age range • Important to consider that while we triangulate and work with those who support YP/A, YP/A must, where possible, have their views heard and integrated into work
Outcomes and interventions	• Developing SMART outcomes

	• Linking outcomes to the Preparing for Adulthood framework. • Direct intervention with the YP/A, such as to support study skills. • Providing support for adults who help YP/A
Review	• Harder to complete with statutory work and may come through transition meetings and attendance at annual reviews
Rapport and interpersonal skills	• Ensuring YP have a clear understanding of an EP, their role and purpose of involvement. • Build rapport with stakeholders who work or support a YP (parents, teachers, other agencies)

The extension in age range that EPs can work with led Atkinson et al. (2015) to propose a new competency framework to inform the training of TEPs. The updated competencies have three overarching aims:

- to develop new knowledge in TEPs that are required to work with 16-25-year-olds;
- develop the psychological skills required to work with 16-25-year-olds;
- extend existing psychological knowledge to working with 16-25-year-olds.

Implications for training and updated competencies for working with YP aged 16-25 have been categorised by Atkinson et al. (2015) into six key sections: context, legislation, assessment, intervention and outcomes, development and transitions. These competencies include a number of core functions of the EP. However, on further inspection of the competency framework, it appears that explicit consideration is not given to gathering and including the views of YP. This framework recognises that practicing EPs have a number of transferable skills to working with YP aged 16-25, with many of the competencies remaining similar in language, such as "*able to select and use a broad range of psychological assessment methods, appropriate to the young person, environment and type of intervention that are likely to be required*" (p.10). However, a specific mention was made to the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and its significance when working with this age range. The authors suggest that this competency framework is not limited to the training of TEPs and can be applied to EPSs to support qualified EPs.

2.5.5 Educational psychologists' work with 19-25-year-olds

A newer area of practice for EPs is with YP aged 19-25-years-old, this being the extension age for YP to receive an EHCP. Newman (2020) reviewed eight papers on EPs' work with 19-25-year-olds where no consensus was found between the papers. Further exploration of the work of three EPs in their research found that while EPs were slowly starting to engage with this age group, recommendations were made by the author that support the suggestion by Atkinson et al. (2015) for further competencies and specific training to be included within the initial training of EPs. This research, however, does only gather the work of three EPs, thus representing the view of a small number of participants.

2.6 Supporting and constraining factors to educational psychologists' work

The move towards the traded model of service delivery has offered trading opportunity to engage in a range of other EP work, for example, therapeutic interventions with C/YP (Winward, 2015). However, there continues to be a number of identified constraints to EP practice.

The research by Futcher and Carroll (1994), although almost three decade old, identified four key constraints to EPs working within FE providers.

- Firstly, the knowledge of the role and work of EPs was limited;
- secondly, it was perceived that college and FE settings are self-sufficient in developing their own services and support for students; EPs require sensitivity when working with these educational settings to ensure their strengths are recognised and used within EP practice. This may suggest that the EP as an 'expert' model is not valued by college and FE settings;

- thirdly, differing attitudes within college and FE settings on YP with SEND may lead to different staff valuing the input of an EP, or not;
- finally, unlike primary and secondary schools where there is a SENCo, it may not always be clear who the EP contacts in a college or FE setting, due to staff having different responsibilities. An example of this is funding, whereby an EP may be better to contact the people responsible should staff training be needed as opposed to trying to organise it through the staff member they know best (but has no responsibility for funding).

Clarkson (2018) recognised that the traded model of service delivery may be a barrier to EPs working with this age range. Certainly in respect to working in colleges, LA EPs are not commissioned to carry out work that is not core or statutory, and thus relies on the settings commissioning EP work. This finding was mirrored in Morris' (2018) appreciative inquiry that examined EPs' work in supporting to the transition to post-16 educational settings alongside the understanding that FE settings have of EP practice as a further barrier to commissioning EP support.

There has been an increase for EPs to write statutory reports for C/YP (Crane, 2016). Lyonette et al. (2019) report that some Principle Educational Psychologists felt that the implication of EPs within the statutory assessment process of C/YP's SEND has been a factor in limiting the range of traded work and other services that EPs may provide. This finding is line with the increasing demand for statutory assessment, with 93% of LA Principal Educational Psychologists reporting that their services were experiencing more demand for statutory work than could be met within their service. This is directly

recorded by Crane (2016), who reported the impact of increased statutory work on other areas of EP practice, such as working preventatively or engaging in interventions.

2.7 The current research

2.7.1 Research aims

The research shared illustrates specific examples of practice that EPs have engaged in with 16-25-year-olds. To add to this existing knowledge of EP practice in this age group, the aim of this research is to describe the professional practices of EPs from a single local authority EPS. By exploring the range of practices from a number of EPs this research can provide a broader overview of how traditional EP practice has grown to accommodate working with 16-25-year-olds in one EPS. Following completion of the professional doctorate and commencing full-time employment, the results from this research will be used to inform the development of working with this age group within the EPS by engaging in development work research (see Chapter 3 for further information on activity theory).

2.7.2 Research questions

Prior to answering and discussing the research questions, deductive thematic analysis will present the key themes that have been identified for each node of the activity theory model. These themes will be presented and inform the answering and discussion of the subsequent research questions:

1. What are the professional practices of EPs working with YP aged 16-25?
2. What supports and constrains the professional practices of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds?
3. To what extent can the professional practices of EPs working with children aged 0-16 be extended to working with YP aged 16-25?

Contradictions will be identified either within (primary contradictions) or between (secondary contradictions) the seven nodes of the activity theory model. The identification of contradictions can be used as the driving force to promote the development of new objects of work.

2.8 Chapter summary

This chapter provides an overview on the definition and role of an EP using the five core functions as presented by Fallon et al., (2010) as a model for EP practice. Previous legislative documents have a historical focus on outcomes for YP with SEN, with a suggestion made that EPs could support YP in their transition to adulthood; however, it was only in the most recent SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) where statutory involvement with YP until the age of 25 was included. While statutory work is one way in which EPs' work, the move towards a traded model of service delivery explains how EPs currently work with educational settings, which may include post-16 settings such as FE providers and higher education. A literature review of historic and current EP work with 16-25-year-olds was presented before the research aim and questions in this study were presented.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH DESIGN AND MEDTHODOLOGY

3.1 Chapter introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the research methodology and design that was employed in this study. Firstly, I outline my ontological and epistemological stance, and that of activity theory. Moving on to the research design, I will describe the nature of qualitative and exploratory research before describing the recruitment process and sample of EPs that participated in this study. An outline of the procedure and data collection process is provided, including the ethical considerations in undertaking this research. Finally I describe the data analysis process, with an explanation of how activity theory has been used as a framework to structure my results and a description of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) is provided.

3.2 Philosophical stance, research paradigm and design

3.2.1 Positionality

As a researcher in the field of social sciences and trainee psychological practitioner, my view of the world is influenced by the work that I engage in. Recognising my position is important to help reflect on my own philosophical stance. By examining my epistemological and ontological position, I am able to consider how I use activity theory as a tool to gather and analyse data and reflect on why I feel it is the most appropriate tool to structure this research (Chapman et al., 2005; Thomas, 2017).

3.2.2 Ontological and epistemological stance

Ontology refers to the 'theory of being a being' or the nature of knowing our reality (Delanty & Strydom, 2003) and is concerned with the nature of reality (Cohen et al., 2018). Ontological thinking can be categorised into two broad approaches: realism and relativism (Levers, 2013). Realism suggests that regardless of the human mind and experience, there is a reality, or truth, that does exist. In comparison, relativism is concerned with understanding the subjective nature of reality and values the principle of multiple truths (Leavers, 2013).

Epistemology is concerned with how knowledge is created and what exists (Cohen et al., 2018). Peim (2018) defines epistemology as the theory of knowledge. This paper adopts a subjectivist perspective on the creation of knowledge, that being knowledge is driven by the value that people experience and how people's knowledge is translated through their use of language (Levers, 2013).

Table 5 summarises the different ontological and epistemological stances in line with differing paradigms. The overall paradigm applied to this research is from an interpretivist perspective, a paradigm with a relativist ontology and subjective epistemology (Lever, 2013). Benolieli (1996) defined interpretivism as knowledge being a consequence of a number of circumstances, such as historical and cultural, that a person experiences in order to shape and provide meaning to their own reality.

The central focus of activity theory is to understand human behaviour (Leadbetter, 2017). Adopting an interpretivist perspective requires a methodology that allows for co-

construction of a reality, and for the purpose of this research an activity as defined by Engeström (1987). Aligning with an interpretivist perspective, this research utilises an activity theory model and through the use of semi-structured interviews seeks to understand the realities of practice as experienced by EPs; for them to explain their practice, and the influences on it, is central to this research and the interpretivist paradigm (Guest et al., 2012). Adopting a positivist approach to examining EP practice in this research would *"…negates the role of human agency or trivialise it to such an extent that it becomes meaningless"* (Bracken, 2010, p. 3).

Table 5. Ontological and epistemological stances as adapted from Gray (2013, p. 35) and Lever (2013).

Paradigms	Positivism (typically, a scientific view used commonly in natural sciences)	Interpretivism
Ontology	Critical Realist	Relativism
Epistemology	Objectivism	Subjectivism
Commonly used research methods	Research gathering quantitative data (surveys, experiments, structured observations)	Research gathering qualitative data (interviews, unstructured observations).

3.2.3 Exploratory research

This study has an exploratory design. Stebbins (2001) proposes four distinct types of exploratory research (summarised in Table 6). These are the ideas that exploration aims to study, examine, analyse, or investigate something (Stebbins, 2001). Exploratory research is more commonly aligned with the social sciences and a qualitative approach (Stebbins, 2001), however that does not mean it is an approach that is exclusive to the social sciences. Concerned with content and less so hypothesis testing (Guest et al., 2012), exploratory research often includes using opening ended questions, inductive analysis (no pre-determined codes or themes to guide), codes derived from data and purposeful sampling (Guest et al., 2012). This study will employ exploration for discovery to detail the key features in the activity of EPs work with 16-25-years-olds.

Table 6. Four types of exploratory research (Stebbins, 2001)

Type of exploration	**Description**
Investigation exploration	The inquisitive process to examination and investigation
Innovation exploration	Test or experiment to produce an outcome
Exploration for discovery	Describe everything of possible importance of significance under the area of study
Limited exploration	Systematic searching based on the researcher's interests and goals

3.2.4 Qualitative research

Qualitative research may be defined as "*a naturalistic approach that seeks to understand phenomena in context-specific settings*" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 600). Words become the data (Braun & Clarke, 2013) and the researcher's role is to not attempt to manipulate the phenomena being explored (Patton, 2002), but rather understand meanings that are being made by individual within their contexts (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

3.2.5 Validity in qualitative research

Exploratory research, underpinned by qualitative data analysis and driven by interpretivist values, can lead to questions about the validity of findings. Smith (2009) provides a framework to consider the validity of research; he recognises that not all points will be applicable as the nature of qualitative research is broad, rather, key criteria may be used to consider how to increase validity within a study (Barbour & Barbour, 2003).

- Triangulation: a challenging concept in qualitative research as an interpretivist values differing perspectives on a phenomenon. However, one form of triangulation within qualitative research is to gather data from a range of people. In this study, the views of multiple EPs are collected.
- Comparing researcher's coding: through the use of supervision and reflexive diary accounts, I can consider how I interpret and code my data. Whilst this is one attempt to increase validity of qualitative research, Braun & Clarke (2006) highlight that thematic analysis relies on and values the individual perspective

of the researcher to interpret data, providing the researcher is explicit about their positionality.

- Disconfirming case analysis: qualitative analysis is often an inductive process, developing themes from the data. Disconfirming case analysis allows the researcher to examine the data for evidence that disproves the hypothesis, developing themes or patterns identified. During the data analysis, identified disconfirming themes or patterns that are noticed may be commented on.
- A paper trail: I have kept a research diary that documents the steps, decisions and my positionality throughout this research. An explicit trail of the steps of the analysis will be included within the appendices of this study.

"*Qualitative, inductive and hence exploratory research sets out to explain limited segments of reality"* (Reiter, 2017, p. 143). This quotation and description of the purpose of research aligns closely with the intention of this research, whereby the aim is to examine the practice of EPs within a single LA EPS. The focus on EPs within a single service limits the generalisability of these results as practice is undeniably influenced by the social-cultural influences and tools available to them. Therefore, the results of this study are not aimed at being a generalised observation of all EP practice; this would neglect to consider the systems that EPs work within. In line with the exploratory nature of the research, these results should be read by others as an interpreted reality of practice within a single service.

3.3 Cultural-historical activity theory

The next section is an introduction to CHAT. The origins of CHAT are briefly described prior to explaining the significance of Engeström on the development of CHAT into three generations of a framework (Leadbetter, 2017). In this research, the second-generation CHAT framework is used as a tool to collect data and as a structure for deductive thematic analysis.

3.3.1 Defining cultural-historical activity theory

An 'activity' is system in which a human (subject) acts upon something (object) in order to produce an (outcome) and to do this, the subject employs the use of artefacts and tools in order to work on the activity (Leadbetter, 2017). Later development by Engeström (1987), as illustrated in Figure 3 includes three additional nodes: rules, community and division of labour. While recognising the importance of artefacts and tools to mediate human activity, the expansion of the triangular framework to include these three nodes allows for further representation of the historical, social and cultural factors that may impact an activity (Leadbetter, 2017). Nardi (1996) describes activity theory as focusing on

> ...*practice, which obviates the need to distinguish 'applied' from 'pure' science—understanding everyday practice in the real world is the very objective of scientific practice. Activity theory is a powerful and clarifying descriptive tool rather than a strongly predictive theory. The object of activity theory is to understand the unity of consciousness and activity* (p. 4)

suggesting that the way in which the theory is applied is dynamic and fits with an interpretivist approach, as employed in this study.

3.3.2 Origins of the theory

Activity theory has theoretical origins that can be traced back to the work of German philosophers, the writings of Karl Marx and Soviet psychologists L. S. Vygotsky (Daniels, 2015; Leadbetter, 2017) as well as Luria and Leont'ev (Smidt, 20013). In Russia at this time, Vygotsky and colleagues were concerned about the impact of social and cultural factors on theories of learning and development. Their understanding of learning and development moved away from traditional behaviourist perspectives that were predominant in the West at this time (Tusting & Barton, 2003). Social-cultural theories and the development of activity theory have been extended by different academics and applied to a number of disciplines (Leadbetter, 2017). Engeström has been instrumental in the development and application of activity theory and his work has led to the development of three generations of the framework (Leadbetter, 2017).

3.3.3 Key principles of CHAT

To further make sense of and understand the complexity of activity theory, Engeström proposed a set of five key principles (Engeström, 1999). Recent research continues to emphasise the importance of activity theory and the examination of contradictions as an analytic tool to drive change within organisations (Kamanga & Alexander, 2021). Table 7 summarises these principles and how they relate to current research. Further discussion is provided on points three to five, and their relation to this research.

3.3.3 (i) Historicity

Historicity recognises that activity systems evolve and transform over periods of time (Engeström, 1999). As described by Leadbetter (2017) "*Activity Theory is also described by many as Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT), since the historicity of any Activity System is important as it can provide valuable information about how it came to be functioning in a particular way"* (p. 266). Historicity can be analysed in two ways. Firstly, as the history of objects that have been worked on over time (for this research it refers to the practice of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds), and how historical practices have shaped and influenced the current object. Secondly, as a wider history that has influenced action and objects currently taking place. For this research, I describe historicity in Chapter 2 as the legislative context which has shaped and influenced the need for EPs to work with 16-25-year-olds over the past 50 years.

3.3.3 (ii) Contradictions

Contradictions are tensions that occur within or between activity systems and can be a used as a source of change and development. For this research contradictions will be explored within a single activity system (the practice of EPs with 16-25-year-olds within one EPS). Contradictions can be categorised into four categories (Figure 1). Primary contradictions are observed within a single node, secondary contradictions are observed between two nodes, tertiary contradictions are observed between the object/motive of a central activity system and the object/motive of a more culturally advanced activity system and quaternary contradictions occur between activity systems as a result of "*neighbour activities*" (Engeström, 2015, p. 71). As neighbouring

activity systems were not included within this research, the analysis of quaternary contradictions will not be included.

Activity theory has three different ways that it can be applied: as a descriptive tool, analytical tool and tool for organisational change (Leadbetter, 2017). This research will use second generation activity theory as a descriptive tool, with data from interviews analysed under the seven nodes of the activity theory model. Contradictions are identified within the data set.

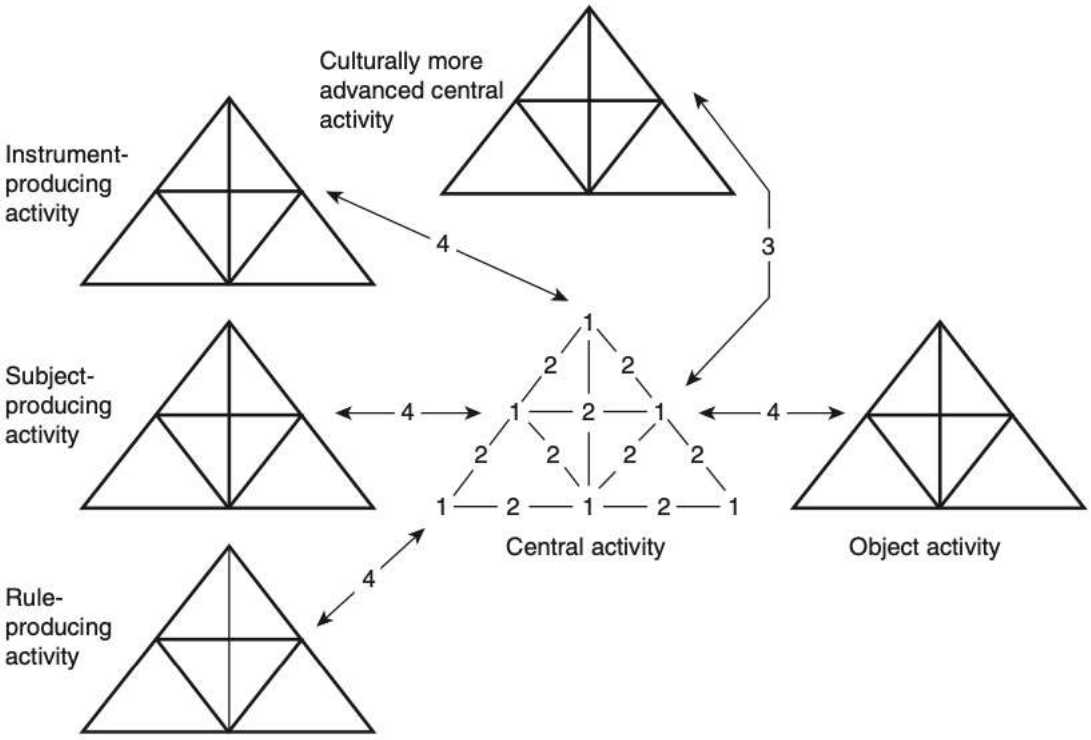


Figure 1. Four levels of contradictions, taken from Engeström (2015, p. 71).

3.3.3 (iii) Transformation of practice

This research will identify contradictions and tensions within the current activity system and, while it has not been in the scope of this research to hold development work research with the participants, following completion of the doctorate I have secured a position as a main grade EP and outcomes and contradictions that have been identified from this research will be shared with the EPS to inform future service development.

3.3.4 Development of the activity theory model

Engeström (1999) devised three generations of activity theory model. The first generation is a simple triangular model that examines how artefacts mediate what is being acted upon by the subject (see Figure 2).

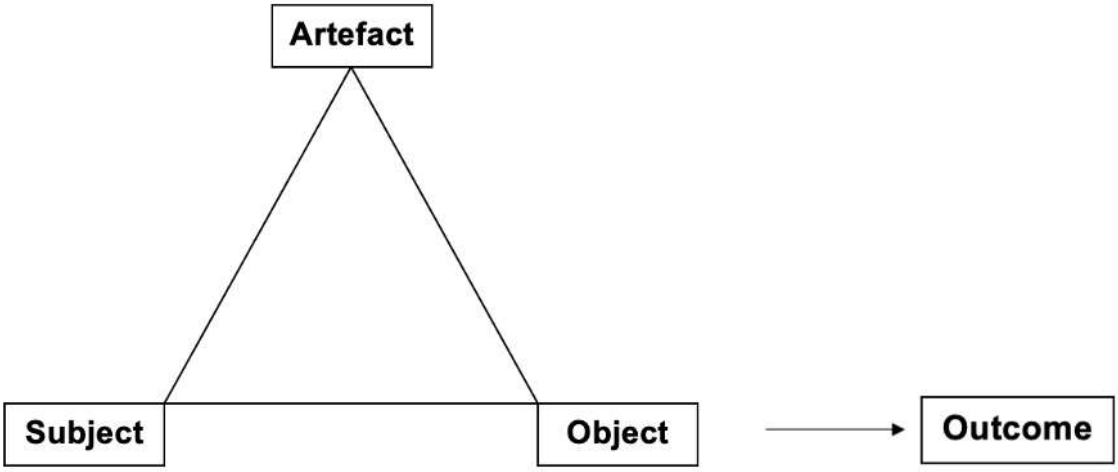


Figure 2. First-generation activity theory model (adapted from Engeström, 1999, p. 110).

Table 7. Set of key principles and how they are applied to the current research (summarised from Leadbetter, 2017, pp. 258-259)

Key Principles	**Applicability to the current research**
The prime unit of analysis is "*a collective, artefact-mediated and object-orientated Activity System, seen in its network relations to other Activity Systems"*	This is the overall activity system; for this research the activity is EP practice with YP 16-25-years-old
Activity Systems are multi-voiced; people have differing viewpoints, interests and traditions	The activity system described is not a single voice, rather it is the voice of multiple (11) EPs within a single service
Historicity highlights that activity systems are constantly evolving over long periods of time; historical knowledge can transform understanding to impact on current activity systems.	EPs working with YP aged 16-25 has been influenced by the development of legislation (seen Chapter 2) and the subsequent impact this has on educational psychology practice and the model of service delivery (moving towards a traded service model)

The examination of contradictions within activity systems is central understanding "s*ources of tension, disturbance and eventually change and development".*	The analysis of contradictions can be used as a tool to examine current practices
Transformation is a key facet of activity theory. The examination of contradictions may lead to the formation of new practices to form new objectives (there is often no single definition of 'object' and is reflective of a person's intention that motivates an activity (Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy, 1999)	The analysis of current practices, and identification of tensions and contradictions, may lead to new practices (contradictions are identified from the data set, however the development of new practices are not shared as part of this research).

Table 8. Description of the activity theory nodes (adapted from Engeström, 1987 and Leadbetter, 2017)

Activity Theory Node	**Facilitating question***	**Description of Node**
Subject	Whose perspective?	The view of the subject can arise from the individual, group or dyad that is taking action
Object	What are people working on?	This is what is being worked on, acted upon or the focus on activity; often hard to define and there is likely to be a lack of clarity as each voice within a system will understand the object differently depending on personal motives
Outcome	To achieve what?	What is hoped to be achieved
Rules	What supports and contains the work?	Rules support or constrain and activity or work and are either explicit or implicit to the activity system
Community	Who else is involved?	Others involved within the activity system who are working on the same object
Division of labour	How is the work shared?	The allocation of work to those within an activity system, including role expectation, who does what, how is the work shared out and why
Mediating tools or artefacts	What is being used?	The mediation that takes place between the subject-object to achieve an outcome. Tools are either:

		- concrete (such as physical objects like an object, instrument or resource); abstract (such as language, processes and frameworks)

This research utilises the second-generation activity theory model (see Figure 3) following on from the first generation framework which was deemed to have a simplified view of activity by focusing on an individual's behaviour rather than that of a collective group (Engeström, 1987). Table 8 provides a description of each of the nodes, which developed from four (in the first-generation framework) to seven.

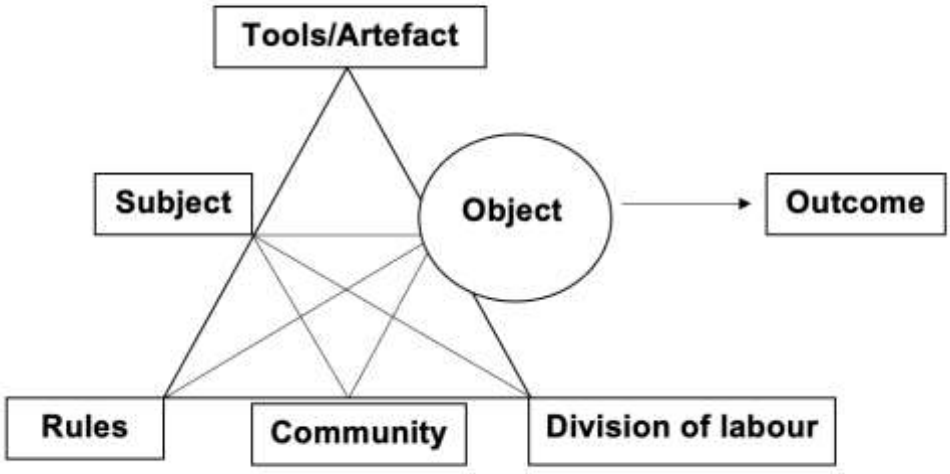


Figure 3. Second generation activity theory (adapted from Engeström, 1987, p. 78).

The second-generation framework from Engeström places an emphasis on outcomes relating to wider historical, cultural, social and contextual factors, not just the impact of mediating artefacts (Leadbetter, 2017). With this generation of activity theory, the

object becomes an increasingly equivocal aspect of the framework as object-orientated actions are subject to change as a result of an individual's interpretation, motives, surprise, interpretation, sense making and potential for change (Engeström, 1999).

A third-generation framework was devised to recognise that activity systems do not occur in isolation from other activity systems (see Figure 4). However, this framework was not applicable within this research as only one activity system was explored within this research.

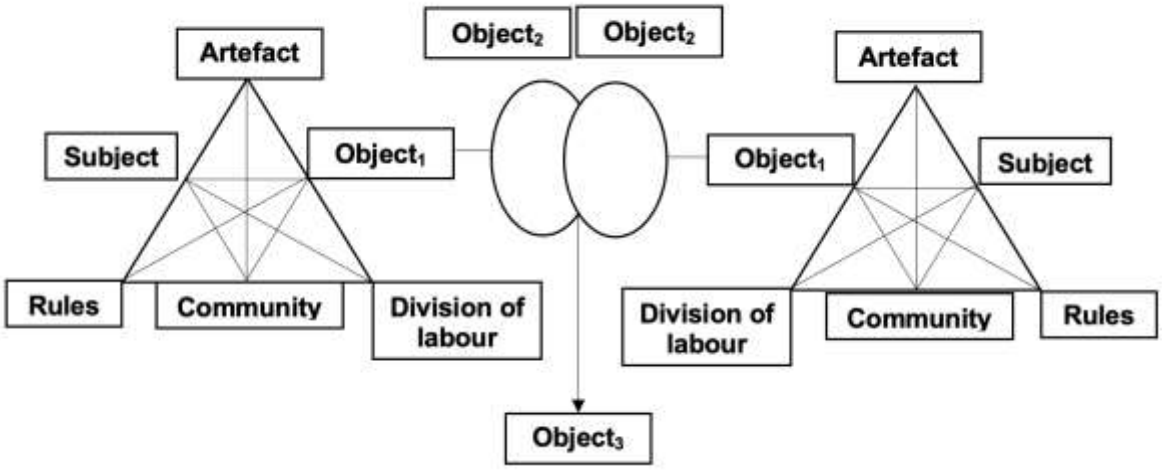


Figure 4. Third generation activity theory (adapted from Engeström, 2001, p. 136).

3.3.5 Rationale and application of CHAT in this research

Activity theory has strong theoretical roots and practical applications, in particular within EP practice (Leadbetter, 2005). Activity theory allows for the consideration of historical, social and cultural influences on human action, in this research the professional practice of EPs with 16-25-year-olds. The interactionist aspect of this model identifies activities to be analysed and worked upon through the identification of

contradictions and the implementation of expansive learning. Action research was considered a possible alternative to understanding the practices of EPs; however, I felt this approach neglected to consider historicity and the contribution that statutory regulations play in expanding the role of EPs to work with YP. In addition, action research focuses on making changes at a local level (Cohen et al., 2018) and may neglect to consider further mediating influences on EP practice, particularly those that arise from rules which are considered to either support or constrain an activity system (Leadbetter, 2017). A characteristic of action research is that it is "*undertaken directly in situ"* (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 443) and further highlights that wider cultural and historical factors may be overlooked as a result of focusing on immediate intervention and change.

After examining the different aspects of activity theory, it was deemed a suitable framework to aid collection of data for this research. In this research, it is utilised in two ways as a descriptive tool to aid the data collection process and as an analytical tool to understand and identify contradictions arising from data. Value placed on historicity and examining contradictions from participants are strengths of this approach. This research will allow knowledge and practice to be shared amongst the EPs within the EPS who participated in this research, and the examination of contradictions will provide a basis for new practices in the service to be developed (Yamazumi, 2006) representing how activity theory may be used to promote organisational development.

The activity theory model can be used as a data collection tool (Nardi, 1996) and is a recognised tool within educational psychology practice (Leadbetter, 2017). As a tool,

the activity theory model can be used to develop an understanding of the situations and systems that influence an activity (Leadbetter, 2017). Examples of applying activity theory to researching EP practice include working with parents (Soan, 2012), EPs working with other professionals (Herriotts-Smith, 2013), bilingual EPs and practice (Krause, 2018) and is also deemed an appropriate tool to aid interviews (Hasan and Kazlauskas, 2014). It does not typically acknowledge the significance of language and methods to understand and analyse language within activity theory are underdeveloped (Leadbetter, 2017). For this reason, it was felt thematic analysis would be the most appropriate method due to its theoretically flexible nature, unlike other methods such as interpretative phenomenological analysis, narrative or discourse analysis that align with a constructivist epistemology and have a stronger focus on the significance of individual words and language.

3.4 Participants, method and data collection:

3.4.1 The educational psychology service

Drewquay EPS is a LA EPS that services an urban setting within the West Midlands. At the time of data collection, Drewquay comprised 22 EPs, with 11 participating in this research, thus having a 50% response rate. Drewquay EPS currently works on a hybrid model of service delivery which is half funded through the LA and half funded through trading, predominantly with educational settings. Drewquay EPS has good links with different services within the LA which has opened up opportunities for EPs to engage in a range of project-based work. The service is currently trading with a range of educational settings, including primary and secondary schools, specialist provisions and FE providers.

3.4.2 Recruitment and sampling

Convenience sampling was used to recruit EPs from the LA EPS. Convenience sampling often includes recruiting participants from a single organisation. This form of sampling does not aim to create a representative group and thus this does not aim to create generalisable results (Cohen et al., 2018), rather its aim is to explore for discovery of the work within a specific setting. In this research, it is used to examine the practices of EPs within one LA. This is particularly pertinent to consider as activity theory focuses on how an individual or group execute work based on the historical, cultural and social influences within their context and environment. Should this study be conducted with a group of EPs in a different LA, it would be expected that results may differ based on the historical and cultural influences within their differing context. Participation was on a voluntary basis and there were no rewards or monetary incentives provided.

3.4.3 Participants

All EPs (22 in total) within my placement LA were made aware of the research that I was conducting through a whole service team meeting and an initial invitation to participate email (Appendix 1). Following the team meeting, I invited all 22 EPs to participate in my research if they met the following inclusion criteria:

- participated in at least three pieces of work with YP between the ages of 16 and 25 whilst being an employee at the educational psychology service.

Of the 22 EPs in the EPS, 11 EPs (50%) responded to my request and signed consent forms (Appendix 6) to participate in this research. Of those 11 EPs, the data of one EP was used to pilot the interview schedule. See Table 9 for participant characteristics of the final sample.

Table 9. Characteristics of EPs involved in this research

Demographic information	
Characteristic	**Data collected**
Number of EPs	11 of 22 EPs within the service
Gender	9 female 2 male
Role within service	8 main grade EPs 3 senior EPs
Number of years qualified	2-20
Number of years in the service* *including time as a TEP prior to qualifying as an EP and gaining employment within the service.	2.5-16

3.4.4 Pilot interview

A pilot interview was held to practice the semi-structured interview and gather feedback on the pre-interview guidance sent to participants.

Piloting is an important phase to increase the quality of research (Malmqvist et al., 2019) with a specific focus on increasing the reliability and validity of research (Gudmundsdottir & Brock-Utne, 2010; Cohen et al., 2018). It was deemed inappropriate to pilot this study with an EP who was not employed by my LA EPS placement service due setting specific considerations that influence EP practice, thus the semi-structured interview was piloted within the study itself and the data collected is included within the final analysis (Robson, 2011). Following a pilot interview, I was able to reflect on the semi-structured interview questions, the use of activity theory as a tool to aid the interview and conducting the research virtually via Microsoft Teams due to Covid-19 restrictions. For this research, it was important to pilot the interview schedule to consider language used, clarity of questions and receive feedback on the accessibility of the activity theory model as a tool to aid the semi-structured interviews. The EP who participated in the pilot study provided consent for their data to be analysed within the final data set.

Feedback and general considerations to be made following the pilot interview include:

- provide pre-interview guidance to the participant a week prior to the interview that provides further detail of the study, including an explanation of the activity theory model and a visual of each node with prompts;
- share the activity theory model on the screen for both interviewer and participant to refer to;
- I felt conscious of how the participant could view me; I explain my set up of having the interview schedule to my left, the participant central to me and taking notes from the interview on my right;

- taking notes on an A3 blank activity theory node helped me to note points of interest, areas to ask follow-up questions and consider themes that I may later identify;
- On a personal level, I had not completed qualitative research prior to engaging in this study, and this provided me with an opportunity to work with an EP and receive feedback on my interview style.

3.4.5 Interview procedure

Prior to Covid-19, it was intended that the interviews would be conducted face-to-face with participants in a private office room at the EPS. Due to participants working from home, interviews were held via Microsoft Teams. Online interviews can take multiple forms, including text-based chat, a combination of text and visuals, audio only or audio and visual interviewing (Cohen et al., 2018). This research utilises audio and visual online interviewing through Microsoft Teams, meaning that it was synchronous in nature: the researcher and interviewer were in contact with each other at the same time (James & Busher, 2009). The researcher and participant orally shared responses, whilst having a shared screen that had the activity theory model on. All bar one interview had no connectivity issues. Although this was not the initial method of data collection, online interviewing is not a novel approach to collecting data (Cohen et al., 2018) and with increased availability and use of smartphones, remote interviewing techniques are becoming increasingly popular. Despite the absence of physical proximity between the researcher and interview, online interviewing continues to allow for meaningful and rich data to be collected (James & Busher, 2009). Table 10 documents the advantages and disadvantages of online interviewing.

Table 10. Advantages and disadvantages of online interviewing (James & Busher, 2009; Cohen et al., 2018)

Online Interviewing	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Flexibility in terms of location and agreed time of interview	Presumes participant has internet access and access to appropriate technology
Anonymity can be ensured through using audio-only interviews	Researchers are advised to use common programmes, such as Skype
Potential power differentials can be reduced (James, 2016)	Susceptible to technology problems
Can recruit participants from a broader location as this method does not rely on researcher/participant being present in the same location	Reduced social contact, lack of non-verbal body language and distance between researcher and participant that may influence rapport building
Allows for asynchronous data collection, such as text-based data collection like emailing or messaging, subsequently reducing the need for transcription	

Semi-structured interviews provide a combined structure of pre-written questions, prompts and issues to address while allowing for flexibility to follow-up answers as necessary (Thomas, 2017). The interview loosely followed the seven nodes of the second-generation activity theory model (see Figure 3). In the pre-interview guidance

sent to participants, the activity theory model included a number of prompts under each node for them to consider prior to the interview (see Appendix 2). A separate interview schedule was created that included a list of points based on the activity theory model prompts and previous literature (see Appendix 3 for interview schedule). A semi-structured interview provides the researcher with an element of structure through the use of pre-written questions whilst not restricting the direction of the interview (Thomas, 2017), allowing for the participant and researcher to co-create a mutual understanding of the topic being addressed.

One week prior to the interview, participants were sent pre-interview guidance (see Appendix 2). This guidance briefly outlined the research and provided several prompts that participants may have wished to consider prior to the interview.

An overview of the activity theory model, used as a data collection tool, was provided to ensure all participants were aware of the tool and prepared for me to reference it within the interview. At the start of the interview, a brief recap of the activity theory model was provided, and the framework was shared on a joint screen using Microsoft Teams. Participants were asked to confirm that they continued to consent to this research and were informed that they could withdraw at any point with no consequence. Interviews took place via Microsoft Teams on a one-to-one basis and ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour and 40 minutes in length. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital recording device.

Semi-structured interviews were deemed to be an appropriate method of data collection to address the research questions and utilise the activity theory model as a tool, primarily due to the flexible nature of them. Furthermore, this approach to data collection presumes that participants are "*experiential experts*" (Smith, 2009, p. 59) and encourages researchers to allow maximum opportunity for participants to share their views. Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews are summarised in Table 11.

Table 11. Advantages and disadvantages of semi-structured interviews (Smith, 2009)

Semi-structured interviews	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Facilitates rapport building and opportunity to be empathetic to participants	Less control by the researcher due to the flexible nature of data collection
Allows for greater flexibility	Interviews can take longer
Opportunity to investigate novel or unexpected points raised by participants	May be harder to analyse, depending on unexpected points raised by participants
Richer data is often produced	

Appendix 4 presents a research overview timeline for this study which summarises the different steps of the research and corresponding dates.

3.4.6 Data storage

Data was recorded using a separate recording device. I had considered recording interviews using the Microsoft Teams record function, however I decided this was not appropriate due to using my work laptop and concerns regarding confidentiality of data. Interview files were transferred to a password protected memory stick and saved in line with University of Birmingham Data Regulations and Code of Practice for Data.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical consent was gained following completion of the University of Birmingham's Application to Ethical Review (Appendix 5) form. Ethical consent was written with consideration of the University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research (2020), the British Education Research Association Ethical Guidelines for Education Research (2018) and the British Psychological Society Code of Ethical Practice (2018). Prior to completing the AER form, consent was gained from the Principal Educational Psychologist at the EPS as they were deemed the gatekeeper to presenting my research proposal to the EPS (Wilkinson, 2009). Ethical considerations are particularly pertinent to interviews as they have a degree of interpersonal interaction and power must be considered between the interviewer and participant (Cohen et al., 2018). See Table 12. On ethical considerations and how they were addressed.

Table 12. Ethical considerations within this research (Economic and Social Research Council, 2018)

Ethical consideration	**Addressed within this research**
Voluntary participation	All participation was voluntary, and participants did not receive an incentive or reward for their time. All members of the EPS were provided with a single email that invited them to participate within my study. Participants were expecting this email following a team meeting where I, as a researcher, shared my research topic, following ethical approval of the AER form and Principal Educational Psychologist. The invitation email included a document that detailed my research, inclusion criteria and a signed consent form (see Appendix 6). Potential participants were invited to ask further questions prior to signing the consent form. Before starting all interviews, it was verbally confirmed with the participant that they consented to continuing with the research. Participants had the right to withdraw consent at any point during the research and for up to 10 working days after the interview were conducted with no penalty or inclusion of their data.

Mitigate risk of harm to participants	There is no harm anticipated to the participants by taking part in this research. Should harm have been assessed by the research ethics committee at the University of Birmingham, changes would have been made to the identified areas of concern within the research. Should participants have additional questions or concerns, the supervising tutor's details are included within the consent form.
Research should maximise the benefit for individuals	Once the research is completed, it is expected that I will share the results with the whole EPS through a team meeting. To protect identity, ensure anonymity and confidentiality of participants, I will be analysing the data as a whole, rather than commenting on each individual participant interview. Where individual responses are highlighted and quotes taken, these will be to illustrate an identified theme or subtheme; they will not be accompanied with identifiable characteristics.
Anonymity and confidentiality	The identity of participants will only be available to me as the researcher and interviewer. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, participants will be assigned and referred to as

	a number. If participants refer to other members of the service, names will be omitted during transcription. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality of C/YP, identifiable data such as name, age and school will also be omitted from transcription.
Evaluation of research proposal	To ensure standards of integrity in research are met and quality and transparency guaranteed, this research has been approved by the University of Birmingham's Ethics Committee (see Appendix 5 for the AER form).
Independence of research ethics committee maintained	The Research Ethics Committee at the University of Birmingham are a body of academics working independently from the course in which I am obtaining my degree to ensure their feedback regarding my AER is impartial and there are no conflict of interests.

3.6 Approach to data analysis: thematic analysis

Thematic analysis allows for the identification of themes and patterns to make meaning across a data set in order to answer a research question (Braun & Clarke, 2013) This method of data analysis has been described as *"…accessible and theoretically flexible to analysing qualitative data"* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77). The flexible nature of thematic analysis allows it to be compatible with an exploratory study (Guest et al., 2012). Unlike differing pattern-based analytic methods to analyse qualitative data, thematic analysis has the capability of being guided by an existing theory or theoretical conceptions, researchers' positionality, epistemology and ontology of the research. In comparison, other analytic methods, such as interpretative phenomenological analysis or discourse analysis, are driven by determined theoretical bases, epistemological and ontological views. For this reason, thematic analysis was chosen to analyse the interview data gathered in this research.

For this study, Braun and Clarke's (2013) seven phase model to thematic analysis was used (see Table 13 for the seven phase model). Whilst commonly accepted that this method of data analysis was coined thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2013) within the field of psychology and social science research, other variations of thematic analysis exist (Guest et al., 2012). Unlike other variations, Braun and Clarke's version of thematic analysis is not driven by a pre-existing theory or framework, thus making it appropriate to use as this research utilises the activity theory model as a tool for data collection. Braun and Clarke (2013) focus on themes being developed based on coding and analysis of the data, and simply not "emerging" from the data. A 'theme' is defined as "*a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within data*" (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, p. 79). A ‘code’ is “*a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why you think a particular bit of data may be useful*” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 207). The process of thematic analysis is neither sequential or linear, with researchers being required to review and evaluate the identification and making of themes from initial codes (Braun et al., 2016.) See Table 14 for the advantages and disadvantages of using thematic analysis.

A computer-based data analysis software, such as NVivo, was not used as it was felt it created a distance between the researcher and data: “*qualitative analysis is an interpretative process driven by what the analyst sees in, and makes of, the data*” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 220). The first stage of data analysis started during the interview process, as key points were hand-written on an activity theory model for each participant allowing for familiarisation of data, prior to the transcription process. Braun and Clarke (2013) refer to inductive and deductive analysis. Analysing data and developing themes and subthemes independent of prior theory or literature (although undoubtedly driven by the researcher’s standpoint and prior knowledge) is inductive analysis. However, this research will use, deductive analysis, driven by the activity theory model and pre-existing literature, to analyse the data. .

3.7 Chapter summary

This chapter provided an overview of the research method, methodology and data analysis used. Chapter 4 will provide the findings, as analysed using thematic analysis and presented under each of the seven nodes of the activity theory model.

Table 13. Seven-step phase of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

Phase	**Description of phase**	**Description of own process**
1. Transcription	Transcription of data from (audio) recording	All audio recordings were transcribed between the period August-December 2020. Appendix 7 has an excerpt from participant 2's interview
2. Reading and familiarisation; taking note of items of potential interest	Immersion in the data to become increasingly familiar with the data; reading and re-reading, and listening, of data in order to 'notice' the data (take note of noticing's). "Read the data as data": actively beginning to analyse and critically think about what the data is saying,	Transcriptions were re-read alongside audio recordings in March 2020 prior to commencing data analysis. Appendix 8 has an example of notes of noticing as jotted on an A3 version of the activity theory model (Appendix 8)

	and the meaning being made by the participant	
3. Coding – complete; across entire dataset	Coding: *"identifying aspects of the data that relate to your research question"* (Braun and Clarke, 2013, p. 206) Selective coding: selecting data based on what you are looking for or the focus of your research questions Complete coding: making meaning of everything that has been said in order to code all data that is	Deductive thematic analysis has been used to code data under the seven nodes of the activity theory model (Appendix 9)

	deemed relevant to the research question	
4. Searching for themes	Search for patterns in codes to generate broader themes and subthemes in the data	Moving codes into potential themes whereby codes that were more commonly identified across data sets were developed into main themes and then subthemes from there were more reflective of individual work.
5. Reviewing themes – creating 'thematic maps'	Evaluating whether the identified theme fits within the coded data by evaluating a theme alongside coded data; alongside the whole data set and removing themes that are not deemed related to the above	Looking to see whether a theme name could clearly explain the data that makes it up. Moving of themes to be under the most appropriate node. For example, was 'consultation' a tool or an object

6. Defining and naming themes	Name and define themes, explaining what is unique about each theme in order to tell a story through the analysis	Names provided for themes and subthemes. Overarching theme also identified and labelled to encompass what the data under a node was going to include
7. Writing – final analysis	Final stage of analysis: to write up the identified themes, using the results/findings section to tell a story that relates to research questions, theory and previous literature. Use extracts and examples from the original data to illustrate themes	Write up of results in Chapter 4 of this volume of work. Results examined through the Voce Viva process Results shared with Drewquay EPS as part of in-service development of practice

Table 14. Advantages and disadvantages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2013)

Thematic analysis	
Advantages	**Disadvantages**
Theoretically flexible in terms of framework, research questions, methods, data collection and sample size	Described as lacking substance unlike theoretically driven approaches e.g. discourse analysis, IPA and GT
Suitable for researchers new to the field of qualitative research due to its accessibility	Limited interpretative power if not used within an existing theoretical framework
Relatively quick and easy to learn in comparison to other methods of qualitative analysis	Lack of guidance for higher level analysis, beyond looking for themes within data
Results derived from using TA can be made more accessible to a range of audiences	The voice of individuals can be lost due to often analysing data sets as a whole
Can usefully summarise key themes and points from large data sets	Cannot make claims about the effects of language use unlike other theoretically driven data analysis methods, such as DA or IPA

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1 Chapter introduction

Chapter 4 presents the findings for the 11 EPs who participated in this study. The findings represent the key themes and subthemes across the whole data set of the 11 EPs who work within an activity system. Deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) presents the key themes and subthemes as identified under each node of the activity theory model: subject, object, outcome, rules, community, division of labour and tools. Figure 5 presents a summary of the key themes for all nodes of the activity theory model. Finally, the chapter examines both primary and secondary contradictions that have been identified across the data set (see Chapter 3 for further details on contradictions). The findings will then be used to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the professional practices of EPs working with YP aged 16-25?
2. What supports and constrains the professional practices of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds?
3. To what extent can the professional practices of EPs working with children aged 0-16 be extended to working with YP aged 16-25?

Figure 6 presents the hierarchy in which findings are presented.

Figure 5. Themes and subthemes identified for each node of the activity theory model

Tools:
Concrete (documentation) – policy, guidance, preparing for adulthood framework and consent
Concrete (resources used with YP) – functional behaviour, cognitive, attainment/ ability, mental health, standardised tools, and visual aids
Abstract – psychological approaches, theoretical frameworks, information gathering, and language tools
Choice of tools – EP preference and presenting needs of YP.

Outcome:
Outcomes for YP

- Gathering views
- Planning for independence
- Developing functional skills

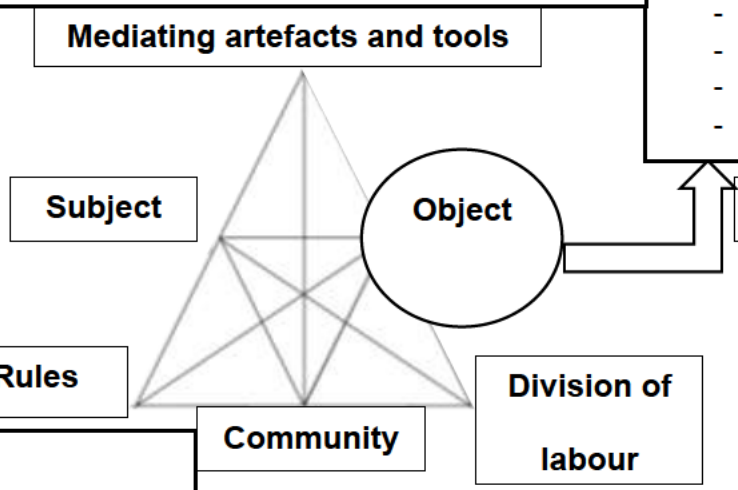
Outcomes for EPs

- advocate for YP
- producing tools for stakeholders
- upskilling others to work with YP
- boundary of the EP role
- co-constructing outcomes

Subject:
Qualified EP

- Main grade or Senior EP
- EP's specialist interests

Experience prior to the doctorate CPD



Rules:
Supporting factors:

- EP knowledge
- Traded context
- Legislative context

Constraining factors:

- EP knowledge
- FE providers' knowledge of the EP
- Traded context
- Legislative context
- Society's aspirations for YP

Community:
Other services

- Educational settings
- NHS
- LA services
- Social care
- Charities

Inclusion of stakeholders' views

- Parents as advocates
- Working using person-centred approaches

Division of labour:
Statutory

- Capacity
- Link EP with educational setting
- Historic involvement with YP

Traded

- From FE providers
- Other commissioned work

Senior/ specialist allocation time

Object:
Five functions of an EP

- Assessment, consultation, intervention, training, and research

Funding of work

- Statutory or traded

Strategic work

- Work within the LA
- Developing a traded offer

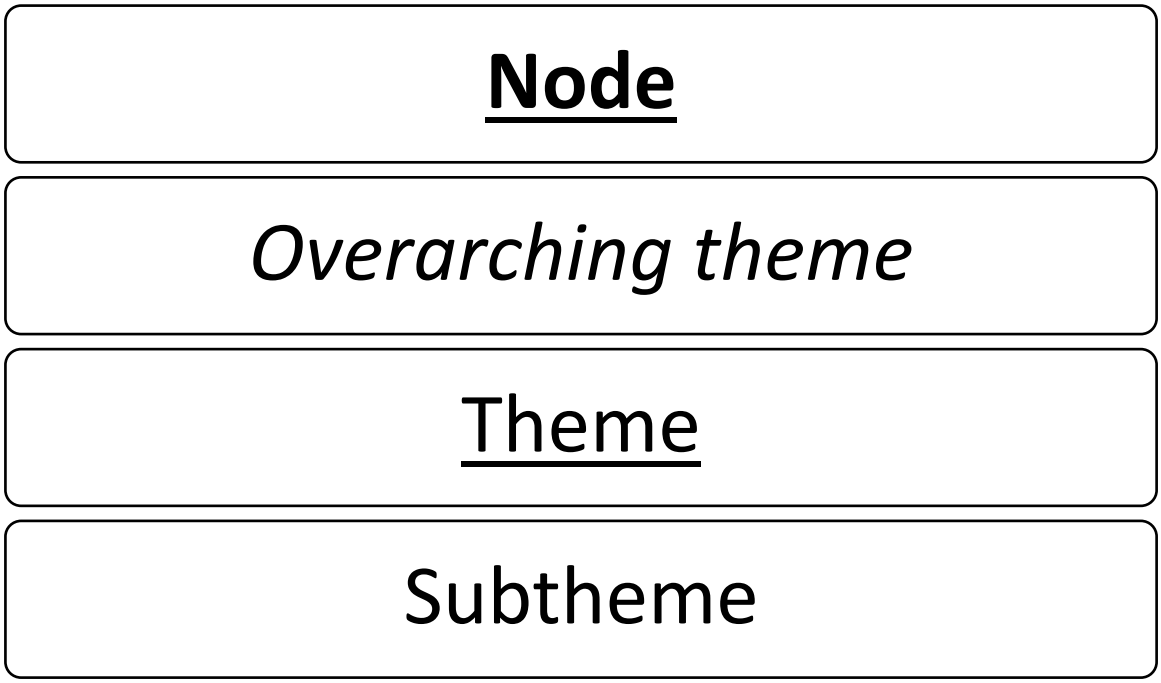


Figure 6. A visual of how findings are presented in sections 4.2.1-4.2.7.

4.2 Findings as presented under the activity theory nodes

Section 4.2.1-4.2.7 present the key themes and subthemes under each of the nodes of the second-generation activity theory model. Notes for each participant were taken at the time of interviewing, audio-recordings were transcribed and data was coded through the process of thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2013). For the following sections, a description of the node is presented with a thematic map and description of the findings accompanied by key quotations.

4.2.1 Subject

The subject is the perspective of the individual, dyad or group who is the focus of the analysis of an activity system (Engeström, 1987).

This is the perspective of 11 EPs from Drewquay EPS. However, their differing responsibilities and professional experience prior to the doctorate were seen as factors which influence the work that they have completed within this activity system. Figure 7.1 presents the key themes and subthemes for the ‘subject’ node.

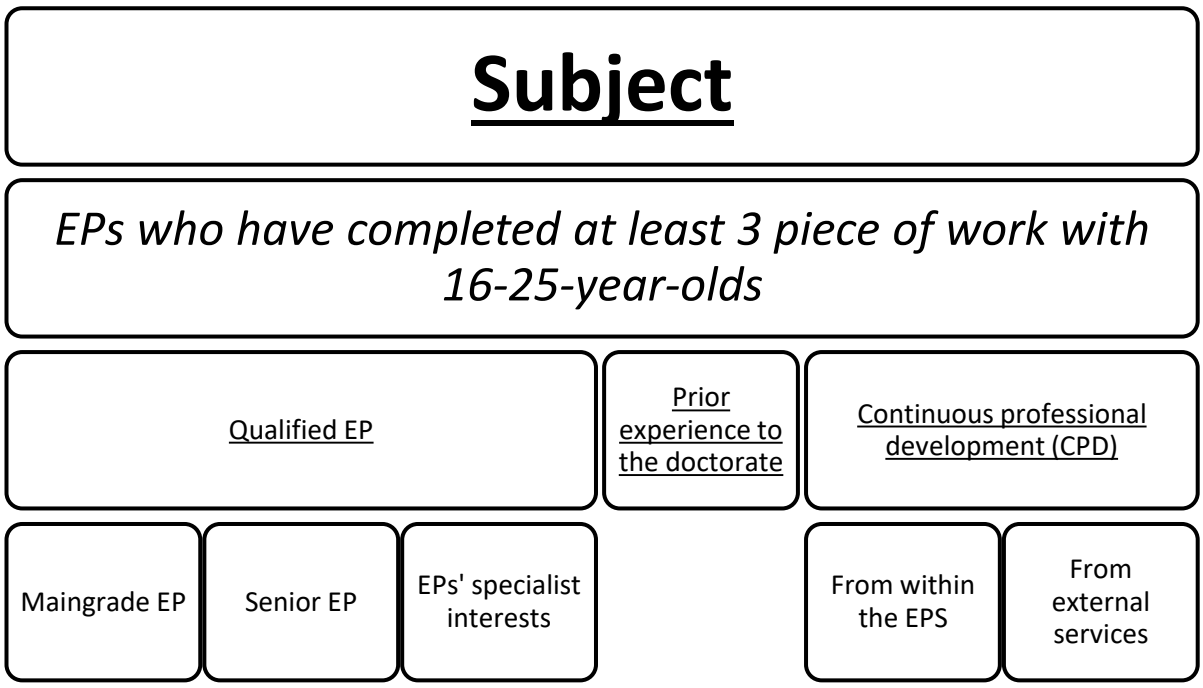


Figure 7.1 Themes and subthemes identified for the ‘subject’ node.

Gathering the views of multiple EPs within the EPS provides the key principle of ‘multi-voicedness’ within the activity system, and may reveal differing points of views, interests and motives. The themes identified under ‘subject’ represent that the work of EPs within this study have been directly influenced as a result of the position the individual may hold within the service or experience gained prior to training as an EP. For example, participant 2 felt that her experience prior to joining the doctorate had influenced senior members within the EPS to choose her to lead on developing a traded offer for FE providers, alongside a senior EP (participant 5).

Experience prior to the doctorate

Participant 2: *"… going back to previous jobs, I worked at… a local authority alternative provision for post-16 kids who just can't do mainstream… I came in a quite unique position as I came in from a college background… so that's kind of how I got swept up in the post-16 stuff because they knew I worked in a college and at that time no one else kind of came from colleges.*"

Participant 5: *"… the then-head of service was keen to do that and she gave me half a day of senior time to be able to focus on that (the development of a traded offer with college and FE settings) …Participant 2 had experience in the area of 16-25 so I supervised her and she had half a day of time, too.*"

Gaining the perspectives of EPs within differing contexts demonstrates how different voices (the principle of multi-voicedness) comprise within an activity system. The identified themes here are shared to provide an overall understanding of factors within the activity system which may influence an individual's objects of work that have been undertaken within the 16-25 age range; however, it is not within the scope of this research to further analyse the role that the 'subject' has on an activity system.

4.2.2 Object

The object is what is being worked on within an activity system; this can be difficult to define as the object depends on the goals and motives of individuals (Engeström, 1987). Figure 7.2 presents the key themes and subthemes for the 'object' node.

There was consistency amongst the participants that the five core functions identified by Fallon et al. (2010) are still relevant when working in a post-16 context. All participants said that most of their work was completed in the statutory context. Within this, work consultation and assessment were the two most common practices that were identified as the focus of EPs' work with this age range.

Assessment

Participant 3: "…*that is probably most of the work is, working in assessment… assessing what their needs are."*

Participant 11: "…*the main thing for that being very holistic in our assessment. Making sure that we look at the context, the environment."*

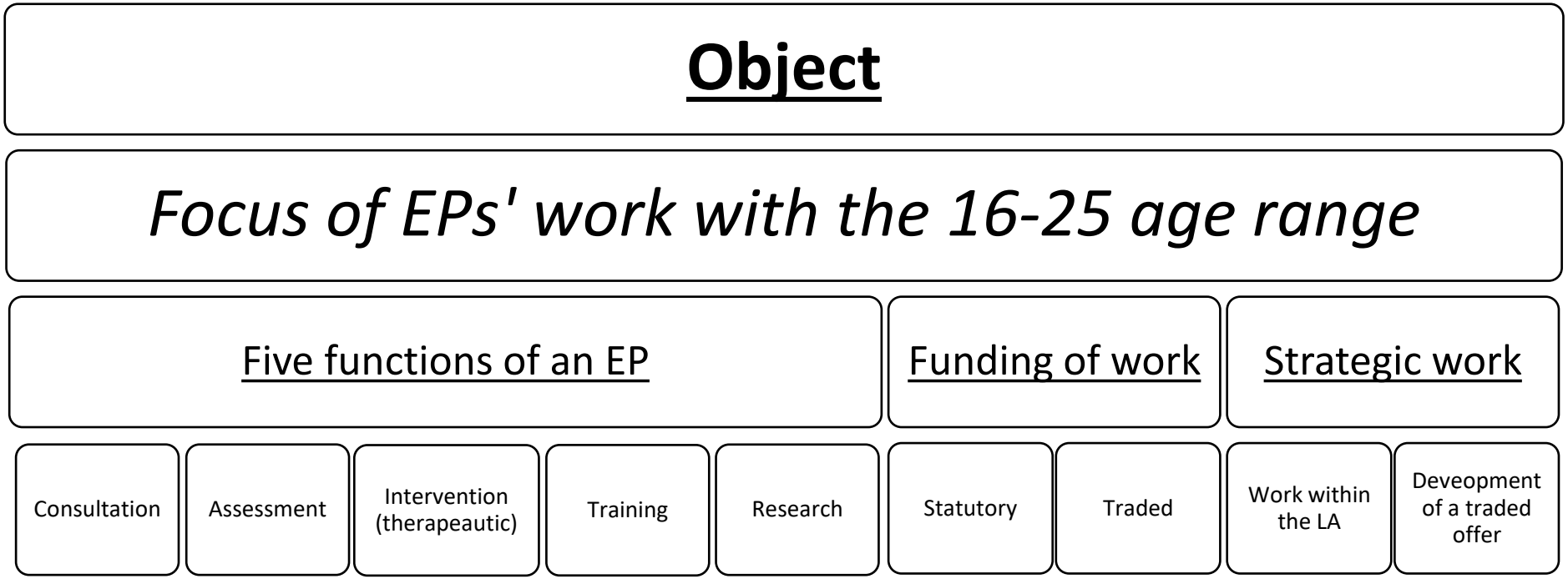


Figure 7.2 Themes and subthemes identified for the ‘object’ node.

Consultation

Participant 1*: "One of the key things around consultation I find I do more of with the 16 to 25 age group than I do with younger students I work with is including the individual for who the assessment is for in the consultations with other stakeholders"*

Participant 9: *"I think primarily consultation is my main mode of working really."*

Opportunities to engage in intervention, training and research varied across participants and, where participants did engage in these three functions, it was as a result of work being commissioned through traded routes, such as from FE providers. Participants who referred to providing intervention support to a young person in post-16 educational settings most commonly referred to providing therapeutic support.

Intervention

Participant 3: "…*the one that's in my mind is a is a kind of a therapeutic piece of work with a young person who was at a local college who was really struggling with their mental health and had problems with anxiety and depression*."

Participant 7: "*I was allocated some work in a sixth form college sector and early all of that work was therapeutic… it seems that what they wanted was something a bit more specialist that they could have from the psychologist and so those are the kind of cases they were referring, so that was very much one to one therapy, but it was a very strange way to do any therapy really in that you negotiated through the member of staff on how many sessions a young person would have because they control the time*."

Participant 10: "… *the work that I did, as I say, a vast majority of it has been therapeutic interventions."*

<u>Training</u>

Participant 2: *"it's… about looking at how we can help in upskilling them to feel more confident in dealing with mental health issues of YP."*

Participant 9: *"… the main goal of that is to kind of shift people's thinking, so giving them the science and the research and then translating that into, you know what you might need to do, just really been trying to get people to consider it from the child point of view."*

Participant 10: *"…we just did quite a bit of training early on… mental health focus and also things like ADHD and ASD as well."*

Research

Participant 5: "*We constructed a sort of semi-structured interview scheduled to go off and ask for providers what they might find useful in terms of support from us."*

Using the five functions of an EP (Fallon et al., 2010) to represent the activity of EPs suggests that there is a congruity in the work EPs are doing with C/YP across all age ranges. This finding is shared by participants who reflected that much of the focus of their work does not change when working with an older age range, particularly when reference is made to the assessment of C/YP's needs.

Congruity between work before and after the age of 16

Participant 3: "*I guess it's probably easier to talk about in that [statutory work] and I've done more of those cases, and in those cases, work is similar to children under 16-years-old has been about assessing the needs of YP*."

Participant 3: "*You know whether they are post-16 or younger, you have to do that [assess what their needs are] because you know that that's what quality assessment is."*

Participant 5: "…*we had existing tools that could be extended to the 16-25 age range, but I didn't see a big difference in the actual work that we were doing with post-16 YP*."

Participant 6 "*I'm keeping in mind when I'm doing an assessment … I'm thinking about systems and that doesn't differ across age ranges*."

Participant 10: *"…in a school you get more referrals that are linked to academic outcomes because it's more at the forefront of the mind of the educators…but the vast majority, all of them, the referrals we get (from college) are for young people, struggling with their mental health."*

4.2.3 Outcome

The outcome is what individuals hope to achieve within an activity system (Engeström, 1987), or the work that is being done with 16-25-year-olds in this research. Figure 7.3 presents the key themes and subthemes for the 'outcome' node. Unlike other figures that present the key themes and subthemes under a node of the activity theory model, all of the outcomes here are to benefit the YP. While they have been separated into 'outcomes for YP' and 'outcomes for EPs', the arrows below explain how a subtheme identified as an outcome for YP directly influenced how this research understands the outcomes of work for EPs.

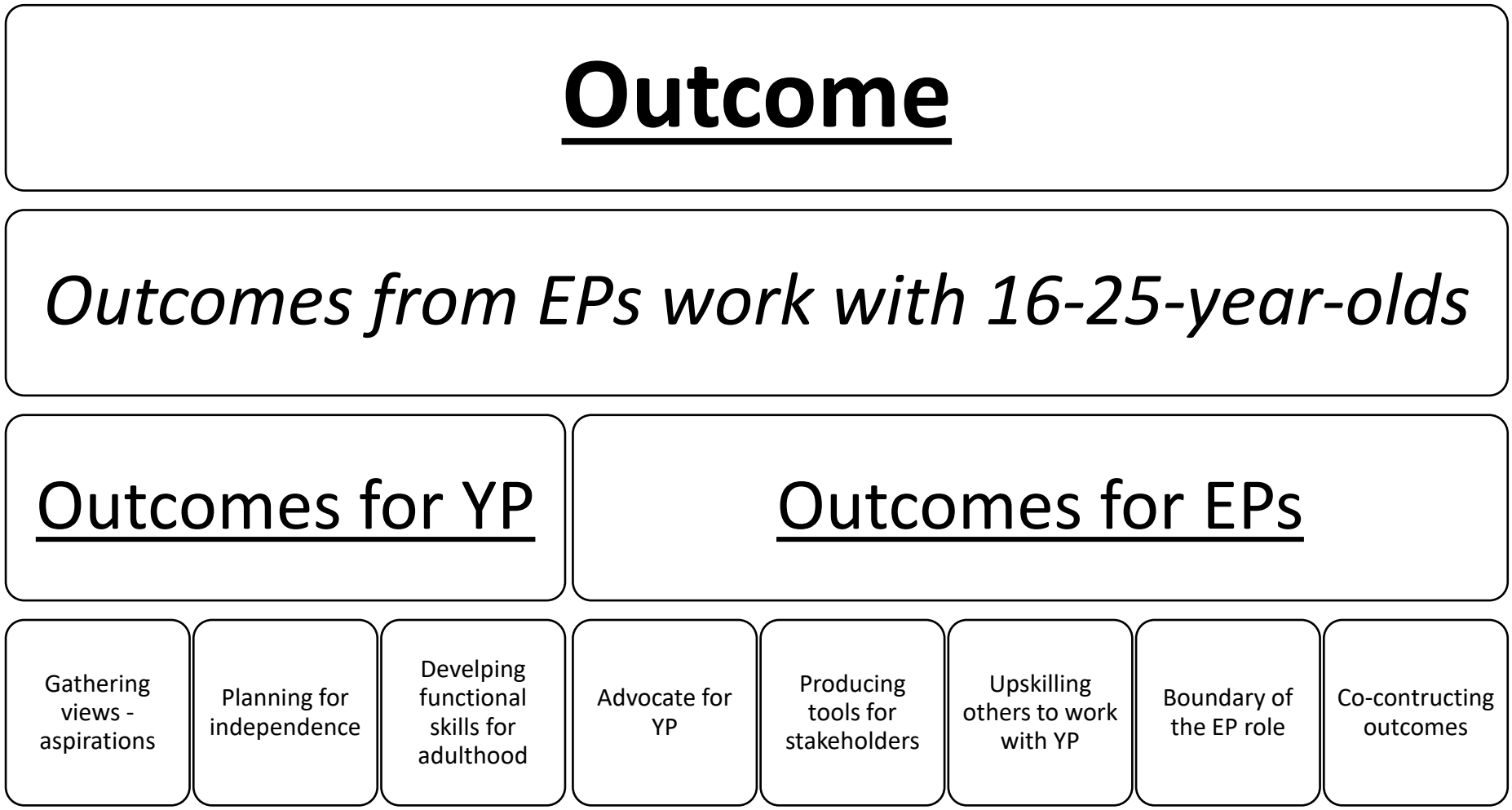


Figure 7.3 Themes and subthemes identified for the ‘outcome’ node.

For many of the EPs, they hoped that following their work YP felt their views were gathered and listened to. Once EPs have knowledge of YP's aspirations, they feel that part of their responsibility is to act as an advocate for them. The term 'aspirations' commonly arose when EPs spoke about the importance of gathering views as a key outcome to their work with 16-25-year-olds.

Gathering views

Participant 3: *"… it comes down to the values of our profession making sure that targets are SMART and kind of, to being as close to the YP's aspiration as possible."*

Participant 11: *"I think a key outcome, for me, is that they feel they're heard and listened to and that… we come back to the aspirations and what does the young person want for the future."*

Advocate for YP

Participant 1: *"… we are not going to be there to, if necessary, advocate for that YP to kind of try to hold up their voice."*

Participant 5: *"I would hope for our profession as EPs we are able to be advocates for YP."*

Participant 9: *"…I feel like a bit of an advocate for them."*

There is a recognition that the tools EPs use, many of which were referred to as statutory assessments and reports, are produced for a purpose. One purpose is to share the needs, outcomes and provision for YP. However, EPs felt that FE providers requested reports for the additional funding that was associated with a YP being provided with an EHCP.

Producing tools for stakeholders

Participant 2: *"… so the EHCP then needs to come in to provide the funding to hold the kids for a couple more years."*

Participant 7: *"… at the heart of them all, it's about the college needing to access more funding, that's why the colleges is asking for statutory assessments, so they don't want advice on how to manage the young person's needs, they just want a piece of paper that allows them to access more funding, and so that's what my work is about."*

The final subtheme identified as an outcome for YP is supporting YP to develop functional skills for adulthood. This focus on functional skills can be found in tools, whereby EPs talk about using assessments of functional (see Section 4.2.7 for findings on tools used). In order to support the development of functional skills, EPs see a role in upskilling stakeholders, such as educators and parents.

Developing functional skills for adulthood

Participant 9: "…*functioning in adult life is a common theme, there are, you know, functional literacy and numeracy skills, self-care and independent living skills, and the other thing you know for some of our kids is being able to access and engaged in social aspect to the community healthily."*

Upskilling others to work with YP

Participant 10: "it's about, you know, working with the adults around the young person to look at the support they get at college to, you know, what can we do differently, what can we do more of?"

From a statutory perspective, the SEND CoP states that professionals should be supporting C/YP at the earliest possibility in preparing for adulthood, but particularly once a child is in Year 9 (aged 14). While the SEND CoP recognises the importance of preparing for adulthood, EPs suggest that the four outcomes as stated in the SEND

CoP, communication and interaction, cognition and learning, social, emotional and mental health and physical and sensory, may not always be suitable when working with YP aged 16-25. The outcome of EPs' work are more in line with functioning in adulthood. EPs have questioned if the outcomes that they are producing to support YP fall within their remit of work.

Boundaries of the EP role

Participant 3: *"…it might be our remit or under a different name, a lot of these YP want to develop their relationship skills whether it is friendship or more and are we involved in that?"*

Participant 9: *"I often struggle with; is how much does it tip into health? For example, the last young person that I worked with you know developmentally she was quite young but she had got a long-term boyfriend and I was in a bit of a dilemma about, you know how much of this is education."*

EPs hope to co-construct outcomes with YP to make them as meaningful as possible.

Co-constructing outcomes

Participant 8: "it can't all be an education focus; it has to be a life focused… and that's why I'm an advocate of the co-production of any plan. Participant 9: *"I mean, in an ideal world, we'd be able to sit down and construct the outcomes together."*

4.2.4 Rules

Rules refer to the factors that both support and constrain the object within an activity system (Engeström, 1987). Three themes were identified as both supporting and constraining EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds: EP knowledge, traded context and legislative context. An additional theme, FE providers' knowledge of the EP role, was a specific constraint to professional practice with 16-25-year-olds. Table 15 documents how the same theme can be both a supportive and constraining factor to practice through illustrative quotes.

4.2.4 (i) EP knowledge

The immediate CPD opportunities that Drewquay EPS provided EPs with following the extension in the age range within the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), and subsequent ongoing CPD opportunities, are supportive factors to practice.

Support: EP knowledge

Participant 1: *"… a senior EP really drove forward the light of the changes that came around following the code of practice in the service… there was lots of peer support, and then we had two EPs… taking the lead with driving up the development in our service forward so it was like we had experts within the team for support as well."*

However, some EPs continue to feel the limited opportunities to engage with FE providers beyond completing statutory assessment may impact EPs' confidence when working with 16-25-year-olds. This particularly relates to EPs' confidence of using standardised assessments (tools) to mediate work and knowledge of the transition age from child to adult services (community).

Constraint: EP knowledge

Participant 1: "*I think transition into adult services is still an area that I need I need to work on…"*

Participant 11: *"I think it's an area that continues to develop… knowing what tools and support networks are out there in terms of making sure that I am doing the*

absolute best for that young person is still an area that is developing and there's lots of opportunity to learn more about."

Table 15. Key themes that both support and constrain EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds

Rules		
Themes	**Supportive factor**	**Constraining factor**
EP knowledge	CPD from within Drewquay EPS provided knowledge to EPs and prepared them for the extension in age as a result of the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015)	EP's confidence working with 16-25-year-olds EPs' knowledge of the structures in FE providers
Traded context	Provides the opportunities for EPs to work with a number of services, including FE providers that support YP	Within Drewquay EPS, this is currently limited to a single FE provider
Legislative context	Opened up the opportunity for EPs to work with YP up to the age of 25-years-old	Statutory work has a number of constraints, including the type of work/report that may be produced, time constraints and reduced opportunities to follow-up work
FE providers' knowledge of the EP role		FE providers do not have a comprehensive understanding of the EP role and may only see us as working within the field of assessment (for the purpose of statutory work) or providing therapeutic intervention
Society's aspirations for YP		Society's aspirations for YP may limit YP's opportunities to gain meaningful education and employment

4.2.4 (ii) Traded context

Drewquay EPS has a hybrid model of service delivery, whereby the service is part funded by the LA and part funded by trading with educational settings. Operating a traded model of service delivery with educational settings, including FE providers, is recognised as the initial step to expanding the age range in which EPs' work with.

Support: Traded context

Participant 3: *"… as a service, I think we have a good traded model."*

Participant 4: *"I suppose the fact that we're traded, you know… colleges can buy into our service."*

While FE providers can buy EP hours, the buy-back from FE providers has been limited and currently only one FE provider has bought EP hours. This limits the opportunities for EPs to engage in both statutory work and traded work with the 16-25 age range.

Constraint: Traded context

Participant 5: "*We found very quickly that the people who were very interested in having support from educational psychologists were rarely the budget holders his who dealt with the budgets in the provision*."

Participant 11: *"I've definitely seen a shift in the increase of, you know, being involved in more statutory cases in that age range rather than more day-to-day EP work or traded work."*

4.2.4 (iii) Legislative context

Constraints associated with the legislative context relate to the reports that EPs produce and time constraints in which EPs must complete their work within. The work that contributes to this is often focused on EPs completing assessments and consultation (object) in order to produce a report (outcomes) and, as participant 6 reflects, writing reports for this purpose is a specific process which is dictated by a number of factors.

Constraint: Legislative context

Participant 1: *"a statutory assessment it is constrained by statutory deadlines; we've got six weeks."*

Participant 6: *"… we are told exactly what report format to use, we all use the same one… we use the same one across the age range we could have one that's for early years and primary or secondary and post-16 and could we then tailor a bit more to that age range."*

4.2.4 (iiii) FE providers' knowledge of the EP role

FE providers' knowledge of the EP role was identified as constraining factor to EPs engaging in more opportunities to work with FE providers.

Constraint: FE providers' knowledge of the EP role

Participant 4: *"… it's just you know that growing knowledge and awareness for colleges that we have skills… that they can use."*

Participant 7: *"… we kind of are positioned into the assessment model and advice-giving model… rather than being seen as problem solvers and people who can help."*

4.2.4 (iiii) Society's aspirations for YP

Central to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds is gathering and advocating for YP's wishes and aspirations for adulthood, however it was felt that society did not provide support

in helping YP with SEND into meaningful education or employment which constrained the remit and impact of EPs' work.

Constraint: Society's aspirations for YP

Participant 3: "*I think that that would be useful for further integrating young people with special educational needs and disabilities in our society in supporting them in work in supporting them in work, in independent living and supporting you know, of course, supporting their learning, but I think also you know supporting them is a way of supporting them to meet their potential with learning, working and living*."

4.2.5 Community

This section examines others who may be involved within the activity (Engeström, 1987). EPs referred to a range of different stakeholders within this section, as shown in Figure 7.4, which are the key themes and subthemes for the 'community' node.

All EPs spoke about working with others when completing work with the 16-25 age range. This demonstrates how EPs work across a number of systems. There were a range of people and professionals who made up a community; almost all EPs spoke about working with parents/carers and educational settings. However, the inclusion of other stakeholders, such as those from NHS or social care, varied depending on the needs of the YP and focus of work.

Working using person-centred approaches

Participant 1: "*I'm pretty much guided by the young person in terms of who the stakeholders are that I need to contact*."

Participants reflected on the importance of including parents as part of their work, and while recognising that it is important to put YP's wishes at the centre of their work, for many of these YP, a parent/carer has had the role as an advocate and EPs felt where possible it was important to consider their views, too.

Parents as advocates

Participant 1: "*I mean, it must be incredibly challenging for the parents who have had to advocate for your child, and some of the discourses that you hear from them, some parents that, just their vocabulary. They use the word 'fight'. They felt it has been a fight to get everything for their child… and quickly, in front of their eyes, their child is becoming a young adult… must be pretty scary for parents."*

Question and answer from participant 5:

SM: "*Did you ever find yourself having to have these conversations with parents where you almost kind of containing them a little bit in terms of actually you know how we develop an independent adult here?"*

Participant 5: "*I think I think that's a very sensitive area to parents. Parents of children with additional needs, are lifelong responsibility that we can't begin to understand. The weight of that must just be immense and very often YP have got significant additional needs (inaudible). You and me, we're well intentioned and have the idea about autonomy and people being part of decision making and all those things are important, but we need to be extremely respectful*."

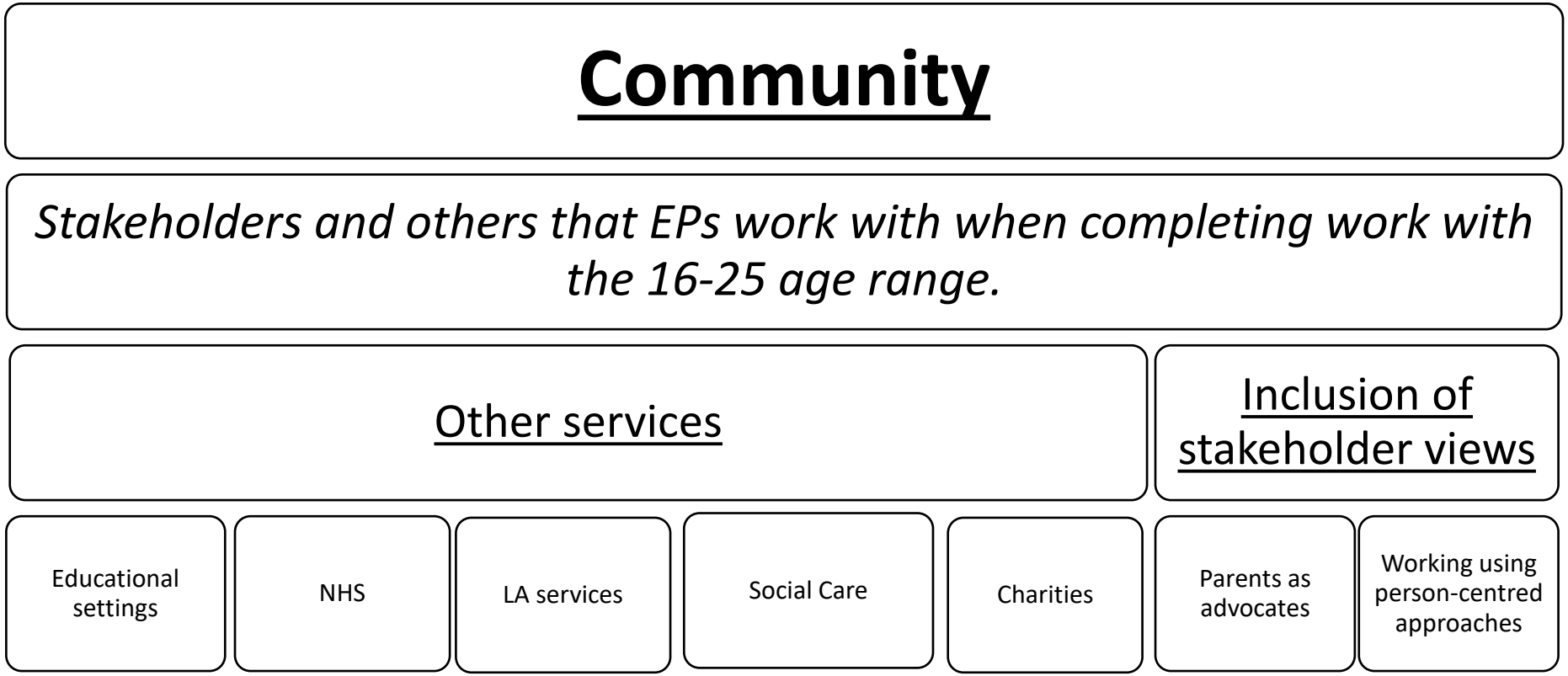


Figure 7.4 Themes and subthemes identified for the ‘community’ node.

Where parents/carers are not considered, this has been at the request of the YP who provided their own consent for EP involvement.

Working using person-centred approaches

Participant 1: *"…she told me absolutely do not contact my mum, do not involve her in this, that will not be OK. Absolutely fine, no problem"* (young person was 21 years old).

EPs who participated in working strategically and on project work included other professionals within their community, such as LA services, other professional services and charities.

Other services

Participant 2: *"…one of the other things that she's (PEP) given me some time to do is working with the Connexion service… looking at how we can help in upskilling them to feel more confident in dealing with mental health issues of YP."*

Participant 5: *"… we've got some very creative providers in in our 16-25 arena in Drewquay. One of them is a charity. I've built up a good relationship with them*

we got together with the charity, myself and Autism Outreach and we asked them would they put together a programme for us (to support self-esteem and self-confidence)."

4.2.6 Division of Labour

Division of Labour examines the ways in which work is shared out (Engeström, 1987) while also considering the impact and influence of power on an activity system. Figure 7.5 presents the key themes and subthemes for the 'division of labour' node.

There was consistency between responses that all EPs gave in relation to how work with 16-25-year-old is received. All EPs reflected on completing statutory work with 16-25-year-olds and the allocation of this work made up most of their involvement with this age range.

Statutory

Participant 3: "*Yeah, so statutory role. I guess it's probably easier to talk about in that and I've done more of those cases*…"

Participant 6: "*All of my involvement in post-16 work has been through statutory to date… in terms of my practice it's all been statutory*."

EPs were allocated statutory work from the EPS based on three different factors: capacity, links EP had with an educational setting or historic involvement with a young person. Participant 7 reflected on the lack of involvement within educational settings, who provide provision for YP aged 16 and over, from a traded perspective and felt that the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) had implicated EPs in a statutory role.

Statutory

Participant 7: "*So we kind of are positioned into the assessment model and advice-giving model to access resources in the gatekeeping role you know, rather than being seen as problem solvers and people who can help.*"

Buy-back from educational settings, specifically FE providers, within Drewquay EPS is currently limited to a single setting and as a result only one EP in Drewquay EPS currently delivers traded hours with an FE provider. Previously, traded work has been commissioned by services such as Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and charities in the local area. However, such services have not bought back into the service within recent years, further limiting opportunities for EPs to engage in post-16 work beyond realm of allocated statutory work.

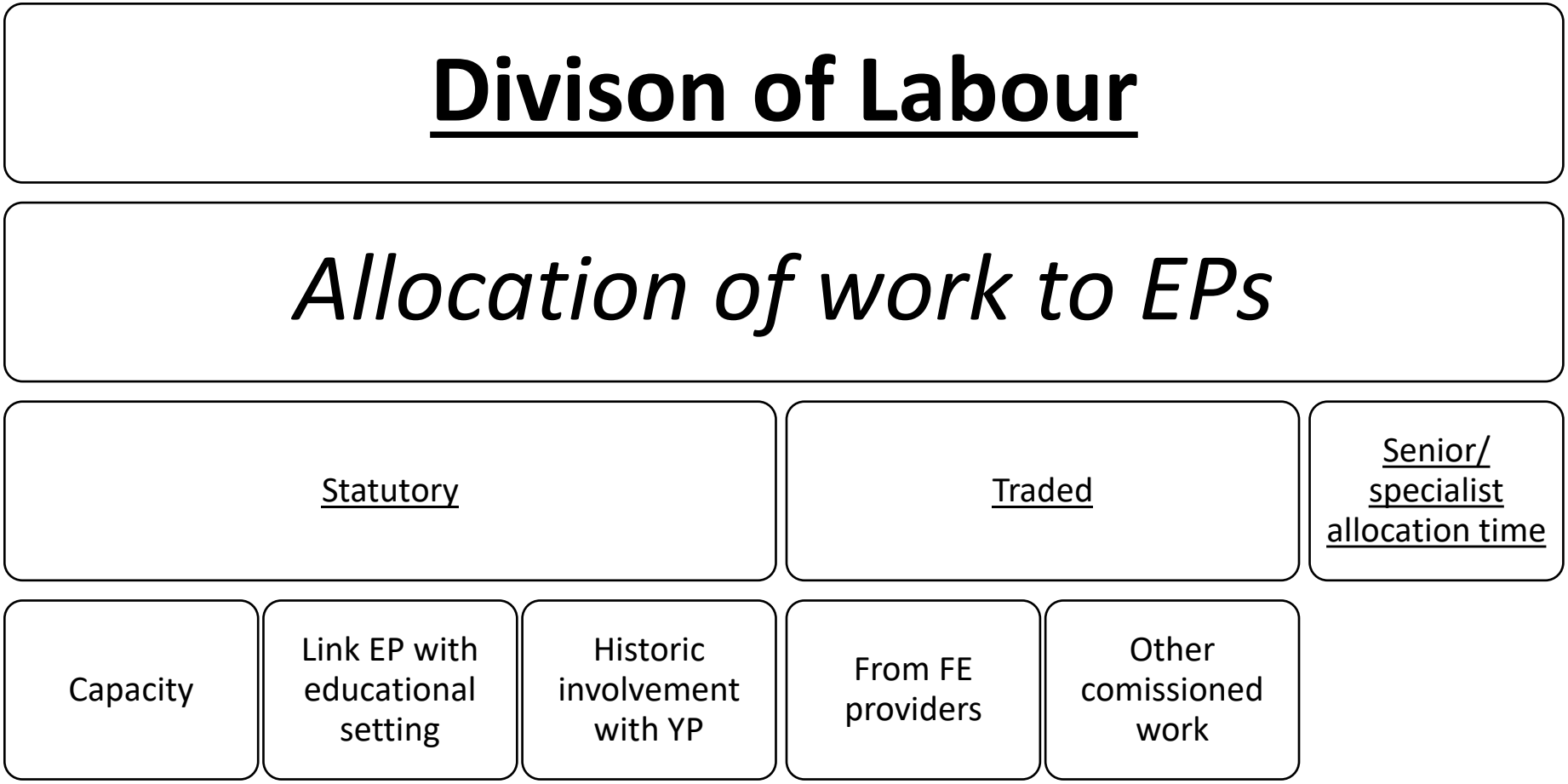


Figure 7.5 Themes and subthemes identified for the ‘division of labour’ node

Traded

Participant 5: "*CAMHS had asked me to do a few additional pieces of casework to support*."

This significantly differs to EPs' work with children under the age of 16 years old, where all EPs within the service are allocated a share of statutory hours and traded hours with educational settings, such as primary and secondary schools, and specialist provisions.

4.2.7 Mediating artefacts and tools

The final node in the second-generation activity theory model presents the mediating artefacts and tools that subjects use within their work (object) in order to achieve their outcomes (Engeström, 1987). Artefacts, also known as and further referred to as tools, may either be 'concrete', such as a physical resource, or abstract, such as language or frameworks used. Figure 7.6 presents the key themes and subthemes for the 'tools' nodes. The overarching theme for this node is coined as tools used by EPs.

4.2.7(i) Concrete tools

Concrete tools refer to policy, documentation and consent, and physical tools such as assessments and tests that EPs use in their work with 16-25-year-olds.

EPs refer to documentation, including policy and guidance that act as tools in their work. Most notably, there was mention of the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) and how this guidance translates to their assessment of YP's needs as part of the statutory assessment process. When considering outcomes, EPs appear to use the Preparing for Adulthood framework (Preparing for Adulthood, 2017) as a tool which provides suggestions on developing outcomes for YP that extend beyond the four areas of need as presented in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015).

Informed consent is gained prior to EPs completing any work for CYP. Below the age of 16, this is gained from parents or carers but EPs have a separate consent system when working with 16-25-year-olds (this does not require consent from parents/guardians). While there is a separate consent system for YP, which does not always require a parent/carers involvement, EPs continued to place significance on the presence of parents or carers for YP above the age of 16.

Consent

Participant 1: "*we had to think about what, like a consent form would look like how we would go about getting consent; what was truly kind of informed consent for students with special educational needs and disabilities within the age range (16-25-years-old).*"

Participant 2: "*I once got called to a house to do an assessment of a 19-year-old lad and I got in, his mum walked out. I was left alone in the house… I was thinking… how is this right? This is where risk assessments for lone working came from just because it has never been a thing before."*

Several concrete tools are used in EPs' assessments of YP's needs, including standardised assessments of cognitive skills, attainment and ability, and mental health and wellbeing. The extent to which EPs used these tools, however, differed.

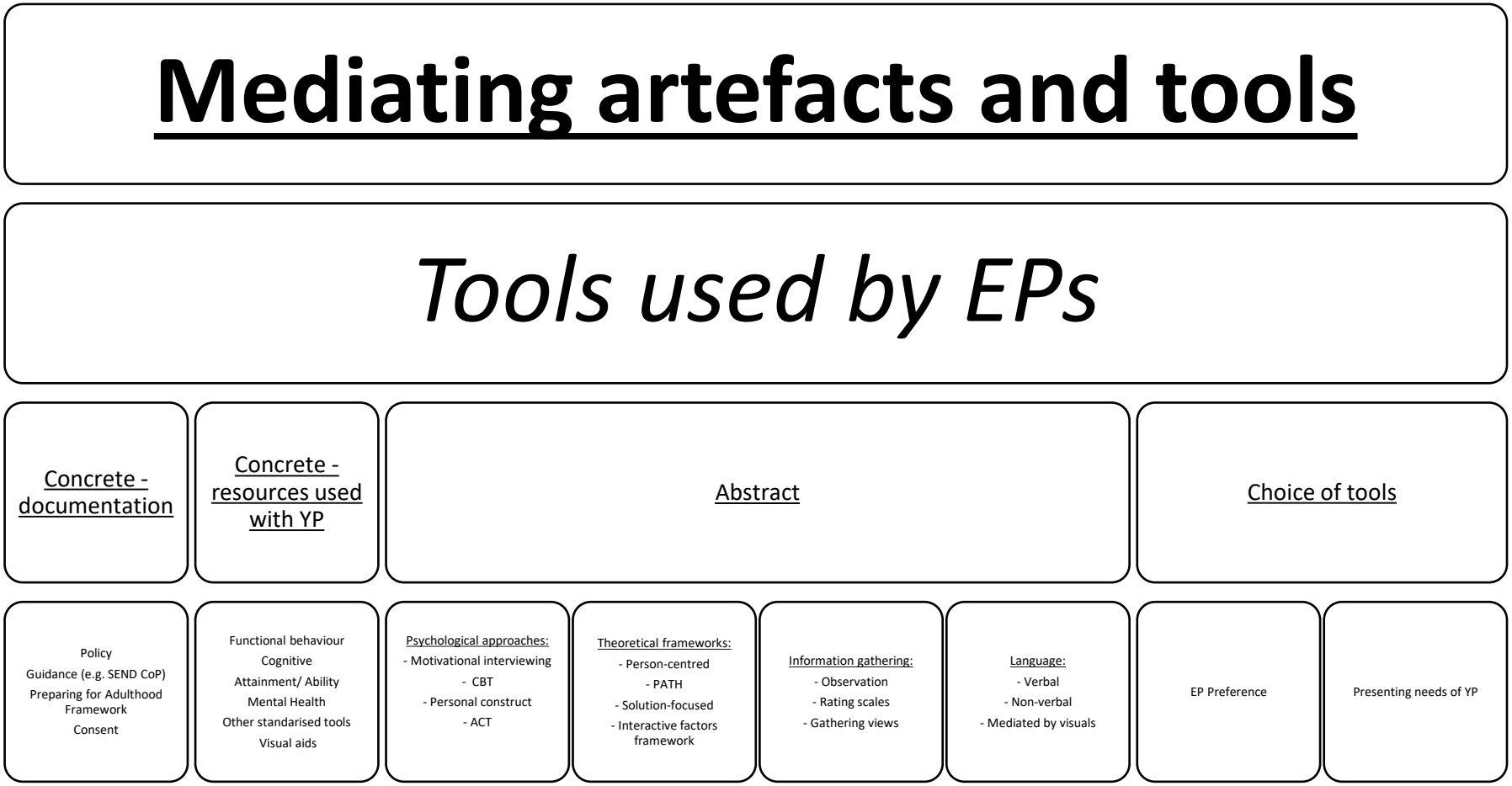


Figure 7.6. Themes and subthemes identified for the 'tools' node.

Some EPs questioned the usefulness of cognitive and attainment-based assessments as it was felt there was often a range of prior of knowledge of YP's previous educational history and attainment. More commonly, EPs referred to assessing functional behaviours specifically using the Adaptive Behaviour Assessment System-3, a standardised assessment that both YP and adults can complete to look at a range of functional behaviour skills deemed important in adulthood, although the length of this was an aspect that EPs felt was a limitation. Assessments of mental health relied on self-report measures such as the Beck's Youth Inventory. Other standardised tools refer to questionnaires or self-report scales that EPs may use. Alongside assessment-based tools, EPs used visual aids, such as objects of reference or cards, to support language and conversation for when a young person had significant communication and language needs

Cognitive/ attainment-based assessments:

Participant 2: "*I think I've only done one cognitive assessment in all the years I've done any kind of post-16 work… I think we have enough attainment data; you know the kids have been in school for how many years you've got enough attainment data to know whether this child has a learning need or not… don't really get the relevance for cognitive assessment at that point because what is it going to tell us?"*

Functional behaviour and skills assessment:

Participant 2: "*I use the ABAS more than anything for post-16 work… are they able to be social, to be included, to independently cook for themselves?"*

Participant 4: "*I have used ABAS...and I found it not very engaging then, so it didn't help build a relationship particularly and for what I felt I was going to get I didn't feel, it wasn't that useful.*"

Participant 7: "*I'm not a fan of the ABAS, it's too long… and I think that the information that's on it, I can collect just by sitting down and having a chat with parents*."

Pilot: "*I was thinking of the ABAS… definitely has been used with more of the older age range because it's norm referenced which is really helpful but also I can refer to the capability of the day to day life and independence of a young person*."

The findings above suggest that rather than having a set procedure for choosing concrete tools, EPs' choice of tools and assessments is pragmatic and driven by both the purpose of their work and personal preference.

4.2.7(ii) Abstract tools

Abstract tools refer to the use of language, frameworks and psychological approaches that EPs use. EPs reported using more abstract tools in their work with 16-25-year-olds to suggest that EP practice may be more commonly mediated by theoretical and framework approaches as opposed to concrete tools. Many of the EPs reflected on the importance of using person-centred approaches to underpin their work with this age range and rationalised the use of this approach as being written into the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). Drewquay EPS commissioned a service to provide training to EPs following the change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) in using person-centred approaches which is likely to have influenced EPs' choice of tool.

Person-centred approaches

Participant 1: *"I think, true person-centred planning done well… it is not just empowering for the individual who has to be central to the work and the support in the assessment, but it's making the stakeholders also feel included and valued and hopefully achieving this shared consensus of this young adult."*

Participant 2: *"I quite like a lot of person centred practices. It fits in really well with the post-16… This idea of actually we all come together in a person-centred, way to work really collaboratively to ensure that you know the way this young person moves forward is in a successful and aspirational way…*

Participant 8: " we also did a big push on a person, cantered approaches and really did a lot around coproduction of plans and ways of using more creative means to capture the views of young people."

To support therapeutic working with 16-25-year-olds, EPs used a number of psychological approaches, including motivational Interviewing, cognitive behavioural therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and personal construct psychology.

Psychological approaches

Participant 5: "*I did therapeutic intervention as well, an extended piece of therapeutic intervention where I sort of adapted a version of PCP and CBT so using something like a personal construct, psychology to ideal self and self-image and then develop that into using CBT approaches to do psycho education with the young person so everything was connected*."

4.2.7 (iii) Choice of Tools

A third theme 'choice of tools' has been identified following EPs' recount of how they decide which tools to use as part of work. EPs recognise that their own preference for tools partly influences the tools they choose to use.

EP preference

Participant 1: "*I don't think I've used too many standardised assessments, but I think that might be more relating to my general practice… I love person-centred planning*."

Participant 2: "*I use the ABAS more for post-16 work because that's round adaptability and about functionality and for me as a professional, these are the things that I need to know."*

Participant 3: "I mainly use consultation because I think people have the answers and I can help to facilitate though questioning and problem solving to find them answers… I always want to be able to do psychology, evidence-based, good, valid, reliable psychology with me, my brain and a piece of paper… they are the tools I mostly use."

A second subtheme that influenced EPs' choice of tools and abstract was the presenting needs of the young person or situation. As most EPs referred to completing statutory assessment and one-to-one work in this study, the term presenting needs of the young person was favoured over 'presenting needs of the work'.

Presenting needs of the YP

Participant 1: "*I'm led by the individual, I mean every individual is different, there are definitely some young adults that if I have bought like coloured resources and felt tip pens and wanted to draw, they'd be like 'Do you think I'm 5?"*

Participant 4 *"in my work here I've done much more just around consultation discussion with key people*."

Participant 6 "… *from the documentation on the needs of the child, the young person, I'm already thinking about what tools I might use or what might be possible or what my questions are: what are the nature of the young person's difficulties, so what tools might I use?*"

Participant 11: "… *it's not always about looking at the age, chronologically, it's about looking at what age the young person is developmentally [when choosing tools]. Say a young person is 18 but the need language differentiated maybe… the language that we may use with an 11 or 12-year-old, for example*".

Finally, in relation to mediating artefacts and tools, there appears to be a disparity between the extent to which tools that have been updated for YP to the age of 16 can then be translated to the 16-25 age group. Abstract tools are more applicable to a

range of ages, whereas concrete tools such as standardised assessments have limited applicability and often do not always extend to YP aged 25-years-old.

Participant 5: "*There were a host of different materials and resources out there but we had existing tools that could be extended inside the range that existed. There are lots of tools like PCP and lots of our everyday tools where you don't really need to have an age range*."

Participant 7: "*I guess the area that I struggle most with is around more to do with mental health…I'm used to having you know, a bag that's got all of those mental health assessments from the portfolios of things and clearly and some of those are not standardised beyond 12 or 13 and most are not standardised beyond 16."*

This suggests that not all tools are applicable to working with 16-25-year-olds, particularly as the standardisation of tools with certain age ranges is a prominent factor that may prevent EPs from using more concrete tools within their practices.

4.3 Contradictions within the findings

To finish this chapter, contradictions among the findings are identified. Two levels of contradictions are identified, and the two levels of contradiction as suggested by Engeström (1987) are explored within this study. Primary contradictions are contradictions between findings within a single node, while secondary contradictions

are contradictions that can be observed in the findings between two separate nodes. Both primary and secondary contradictions were identified following the process of deductive thematic analysis, using the seven nodes of the second-generation activity theory model.

4.3.1 Primary contradictions

Primary contradictions refer to tensions that can be identified in a single node within an activity system. Table 16 presents the key primary contradictions that were identified within EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. Chapters 5 and 6 further considers how contradictions can be addressed through implications to EP practice.

Contradictions identified within the 'rules' node may be expected when the same theme was observed as both a supporting and constraining factor to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. The rules node illustrates the different levels of systems that may impact EPs' work (from within the service, the LA and national context). Contradictions of 'tools' can be observed across both concrete and abstract tools.

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4.3.2 Secondary contradictions

Secondary contradictions refer to tension that can be observed between two differing nodes within an activity system. Table 17 presents the key secondary contradictions that were identified within EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. Contradictions here can be identified across a number of activity theory nodes; this demonstrates the multiple realities and principle of multi-voicedness within activity theory. Participants in a single EPS continue to have differing experiences of working with 16-25-year-olds, with a number of different factors causing tensions within the work that is completed.

Identifying and working on these contradictions can lead to activity systems developing a new focus for activity in the future. While it has not been within the scope of this research to work with the participants to collaboratively act upon the contradictions, implication for EP practice is suggested in Chapter 5. At a later date, the findings from this study will be used to inform service development of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds within Drewquay EPS.

4.4 Chapter summary

The findings from 11 participants have been analysed using deductive thematic analysis and presented under the seven nodes of the second-generation activity theory model. Chapter 5 presents a discussion of how these findings answer the three research questions and implications for EP practice following the identification of contradictions.

Table 16. Primary contradictions

Number	**Location in the activity theory model**	**Contradiction**	**Quotation from participants' interviews.**
1	Rules	EPS has devised a traded offer for FE providers vs. limited buy-back from FE providers	P2: "we were way ahead of other services (developing a traded offer) **vs.** P5: "we found very quickly that the people who were very interested in having support from educational psychologists were rarely the budget holders his who dealt with the budgets in the provision."
2	Rules	CPD to improve EP knowledge vs. EP confidence with age range.	P1: "I was given the same opportunity…to access that training. So that was really valuable" **vs.** P11: "I think that it's been more about developing confidence and understanding this age."
3	Tools	Promoting person-centred approaches vs. engaging everyone within	P2: "Everyone needs training to understand the appropriateness of being person centred" **vs.** P8 "in an ideal world everyone would be around the table working together, but that just doesn't happen."

4	Tools	Having a range of tools within the service vs. needing new tools due to standardisation of ages	P5: “we had existing tools that could be extended to the range” **vs.** P7: “The difficulty comes when you start with assessments that are only standardised to 16 or 18.”
5	Outcome	EP not always clear on their boundaries in assessing and supporting the needs of YP into adulthood	P8: “it can't all be an education focus; it has to be a life focused” **vs.** P9: “*I often struggle with; is how much does it tip into health? you know how much of this is education.”*

Table 17. Secondary contradictions

Number	**Location in the activity theory model**	**Contradiction**	**Quotation from participants' interviews**
1	Tools vs Outcomes	SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) four areas of SEND need as outcomes vs. EPs' outcomes relating directly to preparing for adulthood	P3: "Mainly statutory work, looking at the needs, outcome and provision of the four areas." **vs.** P3: "…I guess a clear kind of outcome that I have in mind when I'm writing these assessments is for their future. It's kind of thinking about you know what kind of support would they need in the workplace? What kind of support they need in living?"
2	Outcomes vs. community	Gathering YP's views at the centre of the work vs. the inclusion of others' (such as parents) views	P4: "making steps towards expressing their own wishes" **vs.** P6: "I've had to think about how I manage, if and how their parents are involved in the assessment process."

3	Tools vs. rules	Using person-centred approaches vs. being constrained by statutory timelines	P9: “I almost feel like a PATH should be a standard part of it (assessment)” **vs.** P1: “a statutory assessment it is constrained by statutory deadlines – we’ve got six weeks.”
4	Object vs. rules	EP’s ability to engage in a range of work vs. working within an assessment based model due to other’s knowledge of the EP role	P8: “I don't see myself as an expert, but I do see myself as someone who has a particular set of knowledge and skills… and can create a space where we can where those can be shared and tested out… I really enjoy seeing other people learn and grow and develop their own ways of thinking” **vs.** P8: “most of the work that I’ve done with 16-25-years-old has been through statutory assessment to get funding, to stay on a course… we were hoping to have vibrant services in the post-16 settings… we’re still working on statutory assessments… most of the work has been based on casework and not strategic work, and to me, there’s an untapped area and we have something more unique to offer.”

5	Subject vs. community	EP's limited knowledge of transition to adult services vs. EPs working with a range of services	P1: I think transition into adult services is still an area that I need I need to work on…" **vs.** P11: "I feel that we work holistically and we work collaboratively with a lot of different services…"
6	Outcome vs. rules	EP to promote, gather and be an advocate for YPs views vs. working within a society who do not provide meaningful education and employment opportunities to YP with SEND	P8: "You know contributing to their community, accessing, you know their social spaces and feeling as though they're valued members of our society and being able to go and do what it is their heart desires" **vs.** P3: "I think as a society you know there is a gap that you know which we should be involved in in kind of reducing…lots of young people with special educational needs and disabilities want to work, but they are not supported to do it anyway."

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

5.1 Chapter introduction

Chapter 5 presents a discussion of the three research questions, relating the findings as presented in Chapter 4 to previous literature. For this section, reference will be made to the findings (themes and subthemes). Themes may overlap in order to answer the different research questions; this represents how activity systems are interactive in nature and demonstrates the dynamic state of human behaviour.

5.2 Research question 1: What are the professional practices of EPs working with young people aged 16-25?

Prior to the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), EPs had the capacity to work with YP to the age of 19 through the statutory process of statement of SEN, meaning that working with 16-19-year-olds is not novel practice. What appears to be more novel is working with FE providers through traded work, which is only an area of work that appeared to have developed following the updated SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015; Atkinson et al., 2015; Lyons, 2016; Damali & Damali, 2018). This is a similar case in Drewquay EPS, whereby following the updated CoP, EPs were allocated time to develop on a traded model of delivery offer for the purposes of trading with FE providers. In practice, developing and extending the traded offer that Drewquay EPS has for primary and secondary school settings appeared feasible with successful experiences trading with both primary and secondary school settings. However, limited buy-back over the past five years from FE providers has meant that professional practices of many of the EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds has been limited to the statutory assessment process. The

demand in statutory work can have wider implications on limiting other forms of work (Crane, 2016; Lyonette et al., 2019).

Regardless of the funding of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds, whether that be through the LA to complete a statutory assessment of YP's SEND or through direct trading with FE providers, this study has found examples of EPs' work that are in line with the five functions of an EP (assessment, consultation, intervention, training, and research) and at all three levels (individual, group and organisational) Fallon et al., 2010).

Prior to EPs completing work with any YP, consent is gained. From the age of 16, Drewquay EPS have a separate procedure that allows YP to consent to involvement from an EP, as opposed to their parent or carer signing consent; this is the consent process for children below the age of 16. Providing the YP has capacity, consent does not need to be sought from a parent or adult for EPs to complete assessment work (this is in line with the BPS practice guidelines, 2017, section 6.2); however, within this study EPs feel that adults with parental responsibility continued to play a gatekeeper role prior to completing work with a YP. According to the BPS (2017), a practising psychologist should decide a YP's ability to provide informed consent based on whether they can understand relevant information needed in order to make a decision, retain that information, use that information to make a decision and communicate their decision. In addition to this, principles from the Mental Capacity Act (2005) should be used, as described by both the BPS (2017) and Brian (2018a), when working with 16-25-year-olds. Atkinson et al. (2015) Damali and Damali (2018) comment on the importance of EPs having an understanding of the Mental Capacity Act (2005) when

considering whether YP can provide informed consent. EPs within this study did not feel confident or competent to assess a YP's capacity based on the principles of the Mental Capacity Act (2005). This may explain why EPs continue to rely on parents or carers to act as gatekeepers for consent prior to working with 16-25-year-olds.

EPs' assessments focused on the needs, outcomes and provision that they felt YP would need to make progress. However, the approach to assessment was focused on the functional skills required for their transition into adulthood. These are grouped by the Preparing for Adulthood (2017) framework as employment, independent living, community inclusion and health. This is reflected in EPs' choice of assessment tool, whereby EPs were pragmatic in order to address their hypothesis or find the information that they were looking for. Many of the EPs reflected, however, on moving away from learning-based assessments as it was felt that much of this data was available by the time a young person was at least 16-years-old and the focus moved to assessing functional behaviour skills. While EPs' choice of tools is influenced by their own preference, it is likely that the cultural factors within the EPS influenced the choice of tools; within Drewquay EPS, the ABAS was bought for the purpose of completing work with 16-25-year-olds, and thus has likely influenced EPs' choice of tools. A second example of how the EPS' culture is likely to influence the choice of tools is the use of person-centred approaches. Drewquay EPS had commissioned EPs to be trained in person-centred approaches following the updated SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), reflecting that this approach to practice is deemed valuable within the service.

Consultation continued to be central to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds as a way to gather information and promote collaborative problem solving, moving away from the EP as an expert but rather a professional who, through questioning, can support others to find solutions. However, while EPs promote consultative and systemic ways of approaching problems, Ashton and Roberts (2006) report that special educational needs coordinators most value the individual assessment and advice model of EPs' work; a model that continues to be prevalent in EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds.

Therapeutic-based interventions were the most prevalent type of interventions EPs in this study spoke of with YP aged 16-25. Most of these interventions were designed to support YP's mental health and wellbeing, most likely due to a rise in concerns for C/YP's mental health (Atkinson et al., 2012) and EPs being viewed as a profession who have the necessary skills to practice therapeutic work safely (Atkinson et al., 2015; Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016). Within research, examples of EPs providing therapeutic intervention with 16-25-year-olds include the use of personal construct psychology to understand behaviour in the 19-25 age group (Hymans, 2018) and cognitive behaviour therapy to improve low moods (Boden, 2020).

EPs raised the issue of consent and capacity when working with YP. This has been mirrored in research, both as a competency that TEPs and EPs should consider (Atkinson et al., 2015) and an area of development within other EPSs (Damali & Damali, 2018). Damali and Damali (2018) consider developing a consent form for 16–25-year-olds, however, where YP have significant SEND, discussions are required to ensure YP are providing informed consent, and where necessary, involving others may

be necessary to support with this. To help with this decision, the Mental Capacity Act (DoH, 2005) will be important as guidance to support EP practice; Atkinson et al. (2015) specify this as a competency that TEPs and EPs may need when working with 16-25-year-olds. Davis (2018a) details a number of considerations that must be made when gaining informed consent from a YP including key legislation and policy guidelines, support from both the BPS and HCPC when working with YP past the age of 16 years old.

Where participants delivered training or engaged in research, this was often engaging in traded work either from the LA or FE providers. Similar to providing intervention support to YP to support their mental health and wellbeing, FE providers and Connexions, a LA service who provide career support to YP with an EHCP, have funded an EP to provide training. This includes supporting YP's mental health and wellbeing, which was deemed important in preventing YP becoming NEET. Providing direct intervention to YP to support their mental health and wellbeing, while providing training and upskilling the adults who support a YP, is in line with Dunsmuir and Hardy's (2016) application of the ecological model of development (adapted from Cicchetti & Lynch, 1993 and Bronfenbrenner, 2005) to demonstrate how EPs have the skills to work across a number of systems to promote change and support in developing positive outcomes for YP.

There were less examples of EPs engaging in research with 16-25-year-olds. The one example provided was driven by exploring the needs of FE providers, following the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) to inform the development of a traded offer for FE

providers. Recent event sampling of EP work activity in Scotland found that EPs engaging in research continues to be a low incident activity (Education Scotland, 2019) despite the change in EPs' training to promote further engagement with research (Frederickson, 2013).

5.3 Research question 2: What supports and constrains the professional practices of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds?

Of the four themes that were identified as being either a supporting or constraining factor to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds, three themes were both supporting and constraining.

To support the knowledge of EPs working with 16-25-year-olds, Drewquay EPS commissioned a number of opportunities to engage in CPD and continue to provide online CPD within the service. Developing knowledge of working with this age range is particularly important. However, a specific type of knowledge is required when working with FE providers. Futcher and Carroll (1994) found that the differing set-up FE providers often have in comparison to traditional school settings can be a barrier to EPs practicing efficiently. EPs in this study reflected on the different set-up FE providers have, referring to them working more like 'business' models. EPs also reflected on needing to develop knowledge surrounding the transition from child to adult services; an area identified as challenging from EPs by Atkinson et al. (2015) as procedures for transitions between services and assessments differ across contexts.

The change to the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) following the Children and Families Act (2014) extended the age range in which EPs are involved in the statutory assessment of YP's SEND from 19 years of age through to 25-years-old. This extension in age was described to be one of the most significant developments in the educational psychology profession (Atkinson et al., 2015). Through the change in the SEND CoP, it become possible to consider trading with education providers and settings who cater for YP to the age of 25 to raise the potential for EPs to collaborate with a range of FE providers (Lyons, 2016). Drewquay EPS responded to this change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) through developing a traded offer for FE settings. Winward (2015) highlights that working within a traded model with educational settings provides the opportunity to engage in a wider range of work, such as delivering therapeutic interventions. Within Drewquay EPS, the EPs who have had the opportunity to engage in delivering commissioned work, primarily with FE providers, have delivered therapeutic support. While historically therapeutic work may have been delivered by health professionals, over recent years there has been an increased focus on EPs to deliver it, both as a professional with the skill and to address the increased need for mental health support in C/YP (Atkinson et al., 2012). The use of therapeutic support for 16-25-year-olds can also be found in the research (Atkinson & Martin, 2018; Hymans, 2018; Attwood & Atkinson, 2020; Boden, 2020).

While the paragraph above highlights how the legislative and trading context has been a supportive factor to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds, both have also been a constraining factor to practice. In Drewquay EPS, buy-back from FE providers has been limited and is currently limited to a single FE provider, which has implications for

the number of EPs who can deliver traded hours and implement the training which they have received with YP aged 16-25-years-old. Clarkson (2018) discusses how trading can be a barrier to EPs working with post-16 YP, which is currently the case in Drewquay EPS. One possible reason for this could be FE providers' knowledge of the EP role, a reflection shared by EPs within this study. While the study did not examine FE providers' perception of the EP role, this finding has also been shared in historic research by Futcher and Carroll (1994) and in more recent research by Morris (2018), who suggests that limited knowledge of the EP role may be a barrier to further commissioning EP involvement. In relation to legislation, EPs feel that their involvement within the statutory assessment process of YP's SEND has led to FE providers understanding the role as an assessor and advice giver. This mirrors the research of Crane (2016) and Lyonette et al. (2019) who both recognise that EPs are continuously being placed under increased demand for statutory assessment involvement which may be contributing the reduced understanding and need for EPs to be engaging in other forms of work.

When considering the different ways in which work with 16-25-year-olds is shared amongst the EPs, the division of labour node further considers the concept of power in the allocation of work within an activity system. When referring to FE settings, participants reflected on the business model in which many settings often operate as; a model that differs to many primary and secondary schools that trade with Drewquay EPS. Considering FE settings as businesses provides opportunities to consider who has the financial power to trade with the EPS. From this study, the main point of contact for the EP differs to the budget holder which may further constrain opportunities for the EPS to trade with FE settings. This issue can be found in Futcher and Carroll's (1994)

research, where it was reflected that professionals within FE settings had differing roles leading to challenges in who the EP contacts to fund their work in comparison to who they work with in the setting.

EPs promote high aspirations for YP and attempt to promote these by providing support and strategies to those around YP, such as education providers, on how best to support YP to achieve these aspirations. EPs have the capacity to do this within educational setting and those who trade with the service (Clarkson, 2018), however, to promote and support YP to achieve their aspirations may be constrained by views that society hold about YP with SEND where a focus continues to be placed on YP accessing ongoing education as opposed to employment opportunities as they progress into adulthood (Goana et al., 2020). Many YP with SEND aspire for similar outcomes in adulthood to those without SEND, such as valuing a job and aspirations to have a successful career (Mitchell, 1999), however, EPs within this study felt that society's limited understanding of YP with SEND and their knowledge of supporting additional prevented YP to achieve the outcomes that they aspire to. Similar results have been previously found by Mitchell (1999) who described a lack of employment opportunities for YP with SEND, attributing this to society's a lack of understanding of SEND. From these results, education continues to be observed as the inclusive option for YP with SEND as opposed to work-placed settings or employment options (Bason, 2012), but this may provide a ceiling to YP achieving the aspirations that EPs place at the centre of their work.

5.4 Research question 3: To what extent can the professional practices of EPs working with children aged 0-16-years-old be extended to working with young people aged 16-25-years-old?

From this study, there are many observable similarities to suggest that areas of EPs' practice can be extended and applied to working with 16-25-year-olds. EPs spoke of the five core functions which they continue to engage in when working with 16-25-year-olds, although for most EPs this is limited to assessment and consultation as a result of completing statutory assessment work and providing therapeutic-based intervention work. These five core functions (Fallon et al., 2010) date back to the Scottish Executive Education Department report (2002) and thus were recognised as central modes of working to EP practice prior to the extended age range, demonstrating how they have been applied to working with 16-25-year-olds. Fewer examples were provided of engaging in training and research, however a recent review of EPs' work in Scotland continues to show EPs most often engage in assessment, consultation and intervention before training and research (Education Scotland, 2019). The nature of completing statutory assessments, which is how most EPs within Drewquay EPS currently engage in work with 16-25-year-olds, mean that EPs complete a higher level of individual assessment and report writing (Damali & Damali, 2018).

Many of the abstract tools could be applied to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds, likely because of their flexible nature which differs to the concrete tools that often have a lower and upper standardised age range. While the examples of practices with 16-25-year-olds did not analyse the tools that were used (see Chapter 2, Table 3) the focus of much of the practices used abstract approaches to work, including personal

construct psychology (Hymans, 2018), cognitive behavioural therapy (Boden, 2020), narrative approaches (Hobbs, 2018) and person-centred planning (Bason, 2020).

EPs spoke about the importance of gathering and advocating for YP's views and aspirations as they make the transition to adulthood; an area of EP practice which has been embedded for many years (Atkinson et al., 2015) and is not unique to working with 16-25-year-olds. What may differ is the weight that is placed on the views of YP once 16-years-old, with EPs reflecting on how they arrange assessments based on the wishes of YP or the extent YP's views and aspirations are central to the assessment compared to the views of other stakeholders, such as parents. Atkinson et al. (2015) advocate that "*post-16 professionals should engage directly with the young person rather than via third parties so that those young people are integral to the planning process" (*p. 160). In practice, this can be observed in the different consent processes in Drewquay EPS for children (0-16) where parental consent must be gathered, in comparison to post-16 YP who can self-refer into the service. The issue of informed consent is reflected upon by Davis (2018) and considered as a step that Lewisham EPS would like to develop as part of their service to 16-25-year-olds (Damali & Damali, 2018).

A significant differentiating feature was in the allocation of work to EPs. All of the EPs spoke about the division of work within the service; specific to 16-25-year-olds, most of the work that EPs had completed was of a statutory nature. This is likely a result of the current traded context within Drewquay EPS, whereby only one FE provider buys EP hours and thus significantly impacts opportunities for EPs to engage in traded work.

A similar result was found in Damali and Damali's (2018) research on the work of EPs with 16-25-year-olds in the London Borough of Lewisham. When working with children below the age of 16, EPs have a broader split between statutory assessment work and being the named link EP for primary and secondary schools as buy-backs from these settings are significantly higher than FE providers.

When EPs engaged in intervention-based work with YP, often through the traded model of service delivery, most of this work focused on delivering a therapeutic-based intervention. Examples of therapeutic approaches included Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and employing principles from Personal-Construct Psychology; approaches that have been used in work with 16-25-year-olds (Hymans, 2018; Boden, 2020). Therapeutic intervention with YP predominately focused on supporting mental health and wellbeing outcomes, unlike delivering interventions with children where outcomes were perceived to be more focused on improving attainment levels. It is well documented that EPs have the skills to work therapeutically (Atkinson et al., 2012; Atkinson et al., 2014; Dunsmuir & Hardy, 2016) however, the focus on supporting mental health and wellbeing outcomes appears increasingly prominent when supporting YP. Atkinson et al. (2012) suggest that one possible reason for the increase in need for EPs to deliver mental health based intervention support is due to the shortfall in accessing specialist support from Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. While this research is almost a decade old, the sense that EPs are sought to deliver mental health based interventions to compensate for difficulties accessing specialist services has been further shared by Allen and Hardy (as cited in Price, 2017). Price (2017) concluded in their doctoral

research that while EPs' work with C/YP to support their mental health, there is a vast array in practices. The lack of clarity surrounding boundaries and expectations of EPs to conduct mental-health based interventions, in comparison to other specialist services, is likely to contributed to a mixed range of EPs delivery of intervention support.

There is a different process in gaining consent for children and YP aged 16-25-years-old. For children, the primary caregiver (parents or those with parental responsibility, such as social workers) provides consent on behalf of the child, however, for those over the age of 16, there is an increased need for YP to provide informed consent for EP involvement. Davis (2018a) suggests that whether an EP is working with children or YP, they should be able:

- Provide an explanation of the role of an EP and the reason for involvement;
- give C/YP the chance to ask questions about the role and share their views on the recording of information, who has access to reports and knowledge of the outcomes from work;
- discuss how the C/YP remains safe;
- ensure that the C/YP has given informed consent and can withdraw at any time

5.5 Using contradictions as a mechanism to suggest implications for educational psychologists' practice

The implications for EP practice have arisen from contradictions that were identified in the data set (see section 5.3). Acting upon these contradictions will facilitate the

development of a new object of activity, the development of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds.

One suggestion for EPSs would be to develop an updated traded offer for FE providers and or other settings who provide support for 16-25-year-olds. Small scale research would investigate how FE providers understand the EP role and how they feel an EP could provide support to their setting. While this research was conducted very early on in Drewquay EPS following the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), views from FE providers may have changed over time following increased involvement from EPs through statutory assessment. With the information acquired from FE providers and settings who could trade with the EPS, it would be the hope that opportunities to trade would increase through the development of a traded offer that directly addresses the needs of the commissioning services, based on their views and needs; a commissioner should be aware of the full service that they are buying into (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Completing this work would serve to address a number of the contradictions identified with this research, including:

- Rules: EPS has previously devised a traded offer for FE providers vs. limited buy-back from FE providers;
- Rules: CPD to improve EP knowledge vs. EP confidence with age range;
- Object vs. rules: EPs' ability to engage in a range of work vs. working within an assessment based model due to other's (FE providers) knowledge of the EP role

With an updated traded offer, it would be the hope that buy-back would increase and commissioners, in this instance FE providers, would have a greater awareness of the EP role, thus EPs could engage in a range of work in all five core functions (Fallon et al., 2010) and across different levels (individual, group and organisational) (Fallon et al., 2010). With an increased buy-back, more EPs would have the opportunity to engage in traded work, to implement CPD and hopefully improve their knowledge of working with 16-25-year-olds.

Applying person-centred approaches to working has been cited by many of the EPs in this study as central to work with 16-25-year-olds. The SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) promotes such practices, however applying these approaches is challenging due to practical constraints, such as the six weeks for EPs to complete statutory assessments and the expectation that EPs are the experts that complete assessments and provide advice. Organisational culture and approach to understanding, and valuing, person-centred approaches impacts the ability to implement such a practice within work (Gondek et al., 2017). To implement person-centred approaches, EPs may use the skills that they possess as trainers (Dutton, 2013) to train FE providers on how to implement person-centred approaches as well as the importance of doing so to support YP.

The development of collaborative working with other services who have involvement with YP aged 16-25 could benefit EPs' knowledge in two ways. Firstly, collaboration with others may clarify the role of different services supporting YP as EPs in this study felt unsure on the boundaries of their role outside supporting YP within the education

context. For example, in this study, EPs reflected on to what extent should they be working with YP to develop healthy and safe relationships, or whether this was the role of a different service. Secondly, in the findings, EPs reflected on their limited knowledge of the transition ages and processes from children to adult's services. Having an EP from within an EPS to connect with other professional services and disseminate this knowledge to EPs may address this issue. Crichton and Hellier (2009) detail a number of differences regarding multi-agency working, including boundaries and role expectations, which need to be addressed to allow for successful multi-agency partnerships supporting 16-25-year-olds. This is particularly important as assessment procedures and protocols are likely to change as YP move from children to adult services (Atkinson et al., 2015).

The sixth secondary contradiction identified, between outcomes and rules, suggests that there is a position for EPs to be working within community settings in order to help others beyond educational settings to understand and support the needs of YP with SEND as they transition to adulthood. All EPs spoke about the importance of gathering YPs views and advocating for their aspirations. However, these aspirations and chances to engage in meaningful employment are not always shared and supported by society, and thus, YP with SEND continue in education which is deemed as the inclusive solution to support their needs (Mitchell, 1999; Bason, 2012; Gabriel, 2015). In practice, and as found in this study, YP with SEND receive EHCPs to remain in education but are caught in a cycle of churning and make limited further and meaningful progress in education (Hewett et al., 2016). This further supports the argument that the EHCP and guidance as set out in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015)

may not be suitable for aiding YP with SEND into meaningful employment in their transition to adulthood, to suggest not all aspects of working with 0-16-year-olds is suitable to be extended to working with 16-25-year-olds.

5.6 Chapter summary

Chapter 5 presents an overview of the findings for each of the research questions in this study. These findings were related back to previous literature, as discussed in Chapter 2. The final chapter will provide a summary of this research and use the findings to inform future research and suggest ways for EPs to work with 16-25-year-olds moving forward.

CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Chapter introduction

The final chapter of this study summarises the aim of this research and the key findings. The strengths and limitations of this research are presented, including reflections on using the second-generation activity theory model. The way in which the findings from this study will be applied to Drewquay EPS as well as implications for more general EP work with 16-25-year-olds. Suggestions for future research ideas are provided before the final conclusions of this study are shared.

6.2 Research aims and summary of results

The aim of this research was to explore the professional practice of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds five years on from the updated SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) whereby the statutory age was extended from 19 to 25-year-olds. Data was gathered from 11 EPs within Drewquay EPS and semi-structured interviews were structured using the second generation activity theory model (Engeström, 1987). Using deductive thematic analysis, themes and subthemes were identified for each of the seven nodes of the activity theory model. Chapter 5 presented a discussion of the findings, structured under the research questions and related findings to previous research findings.

The five core functions of an EP (Fallon et al., 2010) continue to be prevalent in EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. Assessment and consultation were the two most commonly cited functions; most EPs in this study only engaged in work with 16-25-year-olds through the allocation of a statutory assessment of their educational needs.

Intervention work most frequently focused on providing therapeutic support for YP aged 16-25. A few reasons are suggested for this:

- EPs are professionals who have the skills to provide therapeutic support;
- there has been an increased focus on the mental health and wellbeing of C/YP;
- FE providers may interpret EPs' core skills as falling within the realm of therapeutic practice.

EPs are willing to engage in traded work with FE providers, however, at present, buy-back from FE providers within Drewquay LA is limited to one setting. There is not the range of opportunities to engage in delivering traded hours as with primary and secondary school settings.

From their work, EPs hope to support YP in sharing their views, developing aspirations for their transition to adulthood and develop functional skills including academic and personal, which are deemed important within adulthood. EPs view themselves as advocates for YP and have a role in training and upskilling stakeholders who work and support 16-25-year-olds. When creating outcomes for YP, EPs hope to do this in a collaborative manner. The outcomes of 16-25-year-olds may extend beyond the four areas of need as documented in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). This leads EPs to question the remit of their role and subsequent needs, outcome and provision that they write within statutory assessment reports.

Similar themes can both be a supportive and constraining factor to EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. EP knowledge has been developed as a consequence of CPD

opportunities with Drewquay EPS. However, EPs' confidence working with 16-25-year-olds may not be as secure as working with children in primary and secondary school settings, where all EPs had opportunities to engage in traded work. The SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) opened up opportunities for EPs to work with YP to the age of 25, however the traded context has not seen a high level of buy-back from FE providers.

When completing work with 16-25-year-olds, EPs engage in work with a number of immediate stakeholders within a young person's life, specifically parents and educational settings, alongside a number of other professionals and services. This demonstrates that EPs have the skills and capacity to work across a number of systems.

EPs use a range of resources in order to complete their work with 16-25-year-olds. EPs' choice of resource is influenced by pragmatism, choosing a tool which aids them in gathering the information that they are seeking to find as part of their work, and by personal preference for specific resources or approach. EPs gave examples of resources such as standardised assessments, although these may not always be applicable to working with the whole 16-25-age-range due to the cut-off age of standardisation. All EPs used a variety of psychological approaches and frameworks within their practice to suggest EPs have a preference for using resources that are not limited by cut-off ages and standardisation.

There were areas of EPs' professional practice with children below the age of 16 that were applicable to their work with 25-year-olds. Most pertinently, this can be observed

in the object of EPs being their engagement with the five core functions (Fallon et al., 2010). Similar to children below the age of 16, EPs continue to work with a number of other professionals in their work with 16-25-year-olds. For EPs in Drewquay EPS, most of their work with 16-25-year-olds arises from statutory requisitions of YP's SEND, unlike working with children where work is commissioned through both statutory requests and traded work with educational settings. EPs use of psychological knowledge and framework is applicable across age ranges. Only certain standardisation tools could be used with 16-25-year-olds as each tool has its own standardised cut off age, meaning it can only be used with certain groups. The assessment of functional behaviours and skills was exclusively spoken about with young people aged 16-25-years-old. This suggests that the four areas of need as stipulated in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) may need reviewing on their suitability for YP aged 16-25 who are focused on gaining employment, aspiring to live independently and form healthy relationships in the community.

6.3 Critique of the research

A number of critiques can be made about the current study which are considered below.

6.3.1 Piloting and sampling

The interview scheduled was piloted with one EP in Drewquay EPS. The data from this interview was included within the final data set for two reasons: firstly, there were minimal changes made to the interview schedule following the pilot (see Chapter 3) and secondly, upon analysing the data, there was consistency between the codes

identified in the pilot study and the interviews held using the final interview schedule. A true pilot study would have been a small-scale study conducted prior to the final, larger scale study (Thomas, 2017) with the inclusion of more participants. Piloting is important to improve the quality and rigour of a final study; a process that allows for the refinement of research questions, methodological approach and planning for potential challenges that may occur throughout the research (Malmqvist et al., 2019).

Within qualitative research, and this study, it was not the aim to make claims of generalisability of results because the study is exploring for discovering (Stebbins, 2001), and while it is important to consider the personal motives of participants, these become less significant when the purpose of the study is to explore the activity within a single setting. Cohen et al. (2018) explain that

> *…in much qualitative research, emphasis is placed on uniqueness… of the phenomenon, group or individuals in question… How far they are representative of a wider population or group is irrelevant as much of qualitative research seeks to explore the particular group of study, not to generalise* (p. 223).

I believe this is consistent with the principles of activity theory; differing activity systems have different cultural influences that impact on an activity and it may be that aspects of the activity described within this study differ from the activity of EPs from a different EPS (activity system).

6.3.2 Approach to data analysis

Deductive thematic analysis was used to analyse the data under the seven nodes of the activity theory model. The strengths and limitations of thematic analysis are presented in Chapter 3. Deductive thematic analysis, driven by the activity theory model, may limit the richness of the data (Cohen et al., 2018).

6.3.3 Limitations of the findings

As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to explore for discovery (Stebbins, 2001), to find out what, at present, is EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds. EPs spoke predominantly about providing support within FE providers for YP with SEND, whether that was through a request for statutory assessment with the aim of YP remaining in a FE provision through additional funding or through traded work, such as the examples given while talking about therapeutic intervention. This suggests a biased perspective that EPs only work with 16-25-year-olds in FE provisions, when a broader perspective suggests that EPs from other activity systems (such as other EPSs) may work within a range of differing settings to provide support to YP not limited to FE providers, for example within custodial settings.

6.3.4 A critique of activity theory

A critique of activity theory, including its strengths and limitations, is presented. In addition, reflections on the use of the activity theory model as a tool to gather data within this research is shared, with reference made to some of the strengths and limitations.

6.3.4 (i) Strengths of activity theory

A strength of activity theory is the clear theoretical origins that underpin the approach, stemming from sociocultural and cognitive influences, meaning that it can be applied to any question that involves human action (Leadbetter, 2017). It has been applied across a myriad of domains, and in educational psychology, the theory has clear practical applications that can form the basis of intervention and assessments (Flynn, 2005). Leadbetter, a practicing psychologist and researcher, praises activity theory for emphasising the importance of understanding individual actions within wider systems of activity (Leadbetter, 2005); the development of second-generation activity theory certainly allows for this wider understanding with the inclusion of rules, community and division of labour as nodes to further widen the understanding of cultural factors that impact an activity system. This sentiment has been previously shared by Daniels (2001) who claims that activity theory is unique in understanding how individuals and cultural tools work together, rather than understanding each aspect of an activity in isolation. The focus on identifying contradictions and making them explicit to activity systems is a strength of using activity theory and examples of this can be seen in educational psychology practice. Atkinson (2006) examined the transition from Year 6 to Year 7 from the perspectives of pupils and teachers and identified contradictions between the different subject positions; in this context, identifying and addressing these contradictions can be a mechanism for change to promote more successful transitions. The identification of contradictions has been described as "*the principle of its self-movement and… the form in which the development is cast"* (Ilyenkov, 1977, pp. 330, cited in Engeström, 2015) meaning that activity emerges as solutions to previous contradictions.

6.3.4 (ii) Limitations of activity theory

A number of critiques have been made about activity theory. Its development is not linear (Havnes, 2010); critics fear it is the result of a number of ideas as opposed to being a clear theory. In response to this, Engeström argues that the natural evolution of activity theory is representative of its key principles, namely the principle of multivoicedness (Engeström, 1999, cited in Engeström et al., Punamaki, 1999). Human activity is endless, multifaceted, mobile and rich in variations of content and form, and the dynamic nature of activity theory allows for shared understanding to develop and form based on the societal and cultural factors at the time of interpretation; systems are not static processes (Leadbetter, 2017). Daniels (2001) praises activity theory for highlighting the interaction between individuals and the wider activity systems, including social, cultural and historical factors that mediate activities, whereas Toomela (2000) has suggested that it neglects to consider individual differences that naturally occur and influence human behaviour.

6.3.4 (iii)Personal reflections on using activity theory

The activity theory model provided a structure in order to plan questions that were going to be asked; participants found receiving pre-interview guidance useful and a brief overview of activity theory interesting to further understand their involvement in the research. Activity theory is praised for its attempt to understand activity within a wider cultural context (Daniels, 2001; Leadbetter, 2005) and considering wider factors that influence an activity has provided a broader understanding of the work that EPs complete with 16-25-year-olds as well as some of the constraints to practice.

Activity theory is dynamic in nature and values understanding on how different interactions influence an activity system. However, the extent of this has led critics of activity theory to question whether the theory is simply an 'idea' as opposed to a theory. Engeström (1999) would suggest understanding factors that influence human activity is core to activity theory and the value of activity theory is having the freedom to understand the depth of human activity, which the model provides.

However, the dynamic element of activity theory did cause me to reflect on a number of occasions where themes should be placed. An example of this is the idea of consultation. In the end, consultation was seen as part of the object, that being a focus of the work that EPs were doing. Other research that applied the activity theory model in a similar way identified consultation as a tool (Krause, 2018). My approach was to understand the approaches that EPs took in completing consultation and to interpret that as the tool, and thus consultation used as the object. Conversations through tutorial support and using stages of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013) enabled me to reflect on my own interpretation of a theme. This reflection did lead me to understand some of the criticisms of activity theory, such as the one offered by Havnes (2010).

6.4 Next steps for this research

Upon completion of my doctorate, I will be employed at Drewquay EPS as a qualified EP. The next step of this research is to disseminate the findings with the EPS, in particular the contradictions. Engeström (2001) suggests that once the contradictions, that are causing disturbances within an activity, are identified, they can be acted upon

to be resolved to develop further the activity. The contradictions that have been identified within this data will be shared with Drewquay EPS. EPs will be guided to work through Engeström (1987) expansive learning cycle. Though engaging in this process, "*learners construct a new object and concept for their collective activity and implement this new object and concept in practice*" (Engeström & Sannino, 2010, p. 2). From this, EPs will have the opportunity to develop their work with new knowledge and ways to practice which can be further reflected on in order to explore the extent in which the activity has developed.

6.5 Implications for EP practice

Section 5.5 provides detailed suggestions on implications for EP practice with 16-25-year-olds that has arisen from the contradictions identified in the findings. A summary of these implications are shared below:

- EPSs may benefit from completed up-to-date small scale research with FE providers in order to develop a traded offer. Five years on from the updated SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015), EPSs can now share examples of successful work with FE providers to demonstrate the range of professional practices that EPs engage in with 16–25-year-olds
- Wider training for all services and professionals who work with YP in person-centred approaches would be beneficial. This would ensure a consistent approach is being used to support YP
- Placing EPs within the community could help to promote meaningful employment and community inclusion for YP with SEND by supporting services to meet their SEND

6.6 Suggestions for further research

This research provides a broad overview of the work of EPs with 16-25-year-olds. Future research may wish to focus on certain areas of EPs' work within this age range, including:

- With 19-25-year-olds (beyond the statutory age of remaining in education in England);
- Role of EPs who are supporting 16-25-year-olds who wish to gain an EHCP to re-enter mainstream education;
- Role of EPs in supporting 16-25-year-olds who attend alternative provisions, such as residential care, specialist educational settings or custodial settings;
- Role of EPs when supporting 16-25-year-olds in employment, such as through supported internships and apprenticeships;
- Using the expansive learning cycle (Engeström, 1987) within the research in order to develop new objects of activity and evaluate them.

In addition to considering different areas of practice for future research, this research will be considered a case study of Drewquay EPS. By considering this a case study, this will enable the inclusion of further in-service data to consider why half of EPs did not respond to the invite to participate in this research, as well as statistical data, such as the proportion of statutory assessments completed for 16–25-year-olds.

6.7 Concluding comments

Five years on from the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) this research focuses on the professional practices of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds in Drewquay EPS. 11 EPs shared examples of their professional practices and what they considered to be both supporting and constraining factors to their work with this age range. This demonstrates that EPs use a range of similar resources, specifically psychological approaches and frameworks with 16-25-year-olds as they would with children 0-16-years old. Differences in practices occur in their outcomes, where EPs place a stronger focus on functional skills that are important for adulthood and the views and aspirations that YP have for adulthood.

Contradictions are identified across different nodes of the activity theory model to suggest that EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds may be influenced and affected by a number of factors. Contradictions will be addressed in Drewquay EPS to further the development of a new object of practice. Contradictions have also been used to consider further implication for EP practice. This research presents a broad overview of EPs' work with 16-25-year-olds, thus suggestions for further research focus on specific areas of work, including differing age ranges, YP with specific needs and YP within specific settings

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Initial invitation to participate email

Dear colleague,

I hope that you are all keeping well and had a restful half term break.

As mentioned in the service teams meeting last half term (21.05.2020) I have adapted Volume 1 of my thesis to gather the views of how EPs have adapted to working with YP aged 16-25 in light of the SEND CoP 2015.

This email is to invite you to participate in my research. Please find the attached document that further outlines my research, participant inclusion criteria and a consent form. I am hoping to complete interviews between WB 22.06.2020 and finish by the end of July so that I have the summer to engage in transcription and go through the rich data that will come out of these interviews!

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to ask.
I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best wishes,

Sasha

Sashvinder Mandair BSc Psych (Hons), PGCE

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Appendix 2: Pre-interview guidance sent to participants

This document is designed to provide some guidance prior to our interview. I am looking at to analyse the role of an educational psychologist and the work they complete with YP aged 16-25. The inclusion of YP aged up to 25 was an addition to the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Code of Practice 0-25 (2015).

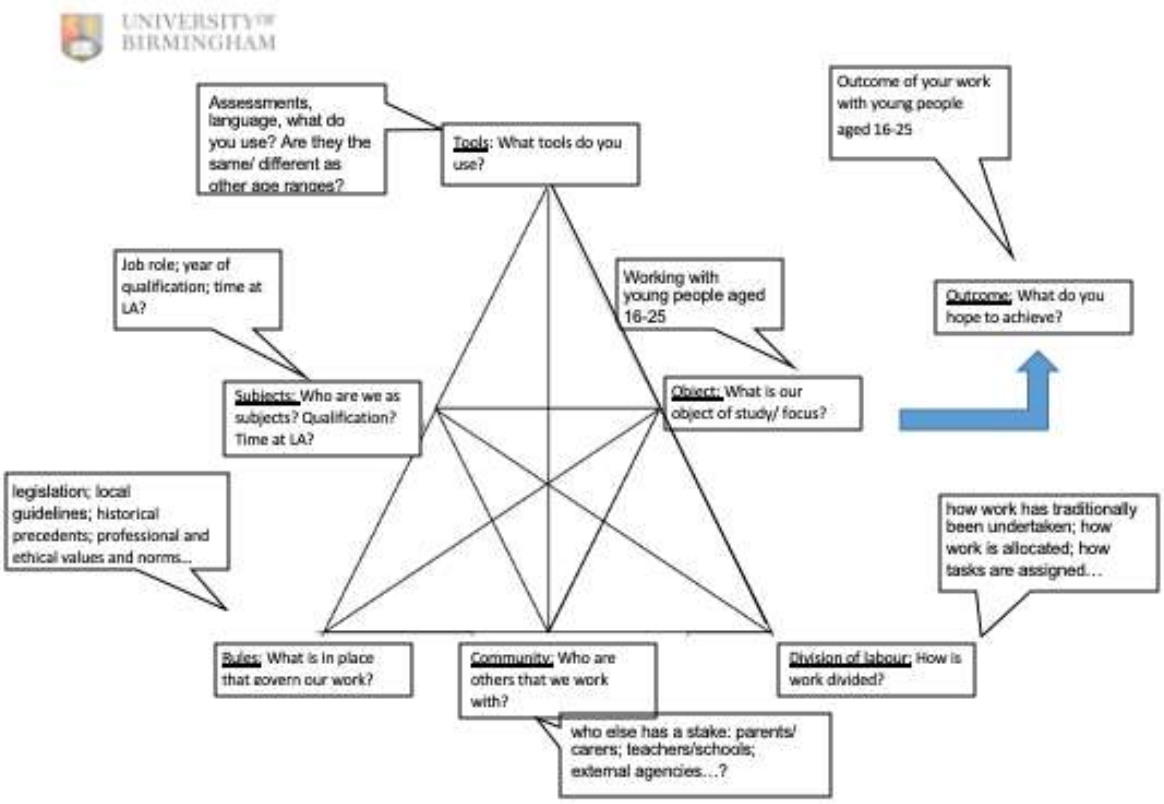
Prior to the interview, you may wish to:

- Think about your work pre-2015 and post-2015 SEND CoP update, if you graduated before 2015;
- Think about how you work has changed and developed with this target age range;
- Look back at previous work that you have completed to think about the work you had done.
- Consider how the role and practice of an educational psychologist will continue to develop with this age range.

I am going to use Activity Theory to help structure the interview and as methodology to analyse the results. Activity Theory attempts to 'theorise and provide methodological tools for investigating the processes by which social, cultural and historical factors shape human functioning.' The premise of Activity Theory is that a collective work activity, with the basic purpose shared by others (community), is undertaken by people (subjects) who are motivated by a purpose or towards the solution of a problem (object), which is mediated by tools and/or signs (artefacts or instruments) used in order to achieve the goal (outcome). The activity is constrained by cultural factors including conventions (rules) and social organisation (division of labour). Historicity, refers to the history that is present in the activity system within the individual participants and within the mediating tools and rules existing in the activity system; it

will be explored analysing the development of your practice with the 16-25 age range and your perceptions of the role and practice of an educational psychologist in the future.

On the next page you will find an Activity Theory model with some prompts, questions and ideas that may support you in preparation and throughout the interview.



Appendix 3: Semi-structured interview schedule

1. Subject – whose perspective?

- Semi-structured interviews conducted with educational psychologists (EPs) within one educational psychology service (EPS)
- The focus of the research is to look at the role of the educational psychologist and practice when working with YP aged 16-25
- All EPs would have completed at least 3 pieces of work with a YP aged 16-25 while working at this EPS
    - When did you qualify?
    - How long have you been at Drewquay EPS?
    - What professional development opportunities have you participated in that have supported your knowledge and practice to work with YP aged 16-25?

2. Object – what are people working on?

- What is the main focus of your work with YP aged 16-25?
- Can you describe some of the work that you have completed with this age range?
- How do you feel about the variety of work that you complete? Are there any other ways you wish that you could work?
- What skills have you been able to transfer from your work as an EP in other contexts?

3. Outcome – what is to be achieved?

- What do you feel are the main outcomes when working with this age range?
- What do you think others feel are the main outcomes when working with this age range?
- Are there any resources/ documents that have influenced how you design outcomes for this age range? – e.g. SEND CoP, Preparing for Adulthood Agenda, in service documentation?

4. Rules – what supports or constrains the work?

- What supports your work with this age range?
- What constrains/restricts you work with this age range?
- Is there anything extra you feel you need in order to improve/ enhance/ support your practice with this age range?
- Do any of the supporting or constraining factors you have mentioned influence how you approach working with YP aged 16-25?

5. Community – who else is involved?
- Who do you currently work with when completing work with this age range?

6. Division of labour – how is the work shared?
- How do you currently get allocated work with YP of this age?

7. Instruments/ tools – what is being used?
- What tools do you use to support your work? (language used, assessment tools, communication tools)
- How far are the tools (for example assessment materials) that you use in schools settings applicable to post-16 contexts?

8. Future practice – how do you see the role of the EP when working with YP aged 16-25 in the future?

Appendix 4: Timeline of data collection and analysing results

Research Activity	**Date**
Conversation with the principle educational psychologist at my placement service and awareness of need and focus on YP aged 16-25 within the local authority	September 2019
Development of research interest, design and methodology through supervision with university tutor to develop Application for Ethical Review (AER)	September 2019 – December 2029
Research panel with two conducted at the University of Birmingham with two academics within the School of Education and Department of Psychology for feedback regarding my volume 1 proposal and design.	12 February 2020
Inform all EPs through a team meeting that I will soon be recruiting for volume 1 of my doctorate research.	25th May 2020
Email sent to EPs within LA EPS to share research topic and invite an expression of interest (see appendix 1 and 2).	1st June 2020
Pilot interview conducted with one EP.	16th June 2020
Feedback obtained by EP regarding interview and subsequent changes made to semi-structured interview sheet and pre-interview guidance to EPs developed.	16th June 2020
Pilot interview transcribed and thematic map created to be shared through university-based supervision.	18th June 2020

Interview period with 11 EPs. Interviews conducted via Microsoft Teams and audio recorded alongside hand-written notes at the time of interview (see appendix 3).	22nd June 2020 – 16th July 2020
All 11 interviews transcribed (see appendix 4 for an extract).	August – December 2020.
Following transcription of interviews, all transcriptions were coded; thematic maps developed; illustrative quotes identified; and contradictions addressed.	March 2021 – May 2021.

Appendix 5: Application for ethical review

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW

Who should use this form:

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

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

Researchers in the following categories are to use this form:

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

visiting researchers.

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

NOTES:

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

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

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

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL REVIEW	*OFFICE USE* *ONLY:* Application No: Date Received:

1. TITLE OF PROJECT

Using an Activity Theory model to explore the experiences of educational

2. THIS PROJECT IS:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☒

University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☐

Other ☐ (Please specify):

3. INVESTIGATORS

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

Name: Title / first name /	Dr Julia Howe
Highest qualification & position	EdPsychD Senior Lecturer
School/Department	Education
Telephone:	
Email address:	

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

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

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

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

Name of student:		Student No:	
Course of study:		Email	
Principal			

4.

FUNDING

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

Funding Body	*Approved/Pending /To be submitted*
N/A	

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

5. 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.

In 2014 the Department for Education published the new Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and Disability, which outlined a series of reforms designed to improve SEND processes in schools and colleges. The most radical change was to extend the new Code of Practice to meet the educational needs of YP from 19 years to 25 years of age. The role of educational psychologists remains central to the processes described in the Code and they are the only professionals whose advice must be sought by local authorities when assessing the special educational needs of YP . In reality prior to the changing Code of Practice, educational psychologists rarely worked with YP beyond the age of 13 years, relying upon the expertise of Connexions staff to facilitate post-school transition.

As a result of the introduction of the new Code of Practice educational psychologists have begun to extend their work to include assessment and work with YP beyond the statutory school age population (18+). The lead researcher as a practising educational psychologist has had the opportunity to undertake some of this work within a local authority context and has found that while many skills are transferable there are areas of knowledge and practice that need to be developed in order to work effectively with this population.

The researcher works for two days a week within a local authority which is nationally recognised as leading practice in post-16 work. The aim of this research is to capture some of the learning from this experience and to share this with colleagues through publication in a professional journal.

6. CONDUCT OF PROJECT

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

The research will be conducted using unstructured interviews which are developed using cultural-historical Activity Theory (CHAT). CHAT is a theoretical approach based in the work of Engeström (1999) which suggests that the assessments conducted by educational psychologists can be usefully be structured as activity systems. An activity system considers the subject (the educational psychologist), the object (the completed assessment) and the tools, rules and division of labour involved. Thus this approach enable an analysis of individual assessments in the context of wider factors such as the resources that are available and the guidance provided by the SEND Code of Practice and within the Educational Psychology Service.

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

Yes ☒ No ☐

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

research).

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

8. PARTICIPANTS AS THE SUBJECTS OF THE RESEARCH

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

The participants will be educational psychologists working within a local authority setting. The inclusion criteria will be that they have worked on at least 3 pieces of case work with YP who are over 16 years of age.

9. RECRUITMENT

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

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

Participants will be recruited from with the local authority Educational Psychology Service where the lead researcher is employed for 2 days a week as an educational psychologist. An invitation will be made via email using the attached letter and participant will be asked to opt in. There will be no incentives offered. The area of post-16 work is currently of great interest to the profession so it is anticipated that the research will be of interest to the potential participants.

10. CONSENT

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

Participants will be approached and asked if they would like to volunteer to take part in the research using a general email to the team. Once participants have volunteered the ethical guidelines provided by the British Psychological Society (2014) will be used in order to ensure informed consent.

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

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

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

If yes, please describe the nature and extent of the deception involved. Include how and when the deception will be revealed, and who will administer this feedback.

11. PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

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

Participants will be informed of the results of the research through a presentation to the service.

12. PARTICIPANT WITHDRAWAL

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

Participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the research at the beginning of the interview. They will be informed that following the interview they will have 10 days withdraw their data before it is collated with that of other participants.

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

They will be informed that following the interview they will have a month to withdraw their data before it is collated with that of other participants.

13. COMPENSATION
Will participants receive compensation for participation?

i) Financial

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

ii) Non-financial **Yes** ☐

No ☒

If **Yes** to **either** i) or ii) above, please provide details.

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

14. CONFIDENTIALITY

a) Will all participants be anonymous?

Yes ☐ **No** ☒

b) Will all data be treated as confidential?

Yes ☒ **No** ☐

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

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

The data from the interviews will be analysed as a single set rather than as separate interviews which should minimise the risk of recognising individual contributions. Any quotations used to support points within the analysis will be anonymised to ensure that individuals cannot be identified.

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

15. STORAGE, ACCESS AND DISPOSAL OF DATA

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

access to the data, and the method and timing of disposal of the data.

The data gathered during the project (recordings, transcripts) will be anonymised by assigning a number to each participant. The data collected will be confidential and kept secure, with hard copies locked away and electronic copies protected by password. Data will be preserved and accessible for 10 years (as outlined in University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research, 2015-16, p5). Following this time hard copies of data will be shredded, in line with Local Authority procedure and electronic copies deleted.

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

☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ NOT APPLICABLE

If yes, please specify.

17. SIGNIFICANCE/BENEFITS

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

This research will be of benefit to practising educational psychologists as it seeks to draw upon the experience and learning from a team who are recognised as leading practise in the post-16 arena. The intention is to publish the research in a professional journal for dissemination to educational psychologist working in other services.

18. RISKS

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

It is not anticipated that the research poses any risks to the researchers or the participants.

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

It is not anticipated that there will be any risks to the environment or to society from the research.

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

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, please specify

20. EXPERT REVIEWER/OPINION

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

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

21. CHECKLIST

Please mark if the study involves any of the following:

- Vulnerable groups, such as children and YP aged under 18 years, those with learning disability, or cognitive impairments ☐

- Research that induces or results in or causes anxiety, stress, pain or physical discomfort, or poses a risk of harm to participants (which is more than is expected from everyday life) ☐

- Risk to the personal safety of the researcher ☐

- Deception or research that is conducted without full and informed consent of the participants at time study is carried out ☐

- Administration of a chemical agent or vaccines or other substances (including vitamins or food substances) to human participants. ☐

- Production and/or use of genetically modified plants or microbes ☐

- Results that may have an adverse impact on the environment or food safety ☐

- Results that may be used to develop chemical or biological weapons ☐

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

	ATTACHED	**NOT APPLICABLE**
Recruitment advertisement	☒	☐
Participant information sheet	☒	☐
Consent form	☒	☐

Questionnaire	☐	☒
Interview Schedule	☒	☐

22. DECLARATION BY APPLICANTS

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

I declare that:

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

Dr Julia Howe

Appendix 6: Invitation to participate in research email

Dear Colleague,

RE: Invitation to take part in doctoral research

I would like to invite you to take part in a doctoral research project that is exploring educational psychology practice when working with post-16 YP . It has been a number of years since the SEND Code of Practice (2015) was published, and I am interested in finding out how the role of an educational psychologist has adapted to work with YP aged 16-25-years-old. The aim of the project is to explore educational psychology practice using semi-structured interviews. This research is being conducted as partial fulfilment towards my ApEdChildPsyD qualification. Once the research has been conducted, I will also provide feedback on the findings at a team meeting or Service Day, and it is intended that the research will be published in a professional journal in order to share the findings with other educational psychologists. The full thesis will also be made available online through the Birmingham Etheses portal.

In line with the Code of Ethics (2014) from the British Psychological Society, I am writing to ask for your consent to take part, if you have conducted or been involved in at least 3 pieces of work with YP aged 16-25 whilst working at Drewquay Educational Psychology Service. In addition to providing consent, you may stop the interview at any point and also withdraw your data at any point within 10 working days following our interview. If you agree to take part in the research all of your information will be confidential and will be reported anonymously.

I am anticipating that the interviews will last between 30 – 45 minutes and for accuracy, and to support transcription, I would like to audio record each interview. There will be no identifying data on the audio recording as participants will be provided with a participant number. The audio recording will only be used by the researchers to analyse the information collected in the interviews.

I am anticipating conducting the interviews in the Summer 2 school term, between June and July 2020. I am foreseeing that it is unlikely that I will be able to conduct face-to-face interviews as a result of Covid-19, and thus expect to conduct the interviews on Microsoft Teams.

If you would like to take part, please can you sign the consent form below and return it to me via email. Once I have this, I will contact you to arrange a mutually convenient time to conduct the interview.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information letter. If you have any queries, would like any further information or have concerns regarding the research please feel free to contact myself or Julia (supervising tutor).

Yours Sincerely,

Sashvinder Mandair

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Supervising tutor contact details:

Consent form

Name (please type):

I have read the attached letter and:

- I would like to be, and give consent to be involved, in the research;
- I have been involved in at least 3 pieces of work with YP between the ages of 16-25 whilst being an employee at XXX Educational Psychology Service;
- I understand that I can withdraw from the interview at any point, or up to 10 working days after the interview has been conducted for my data to not be included.

Signed (online signature):

Date:

Appendix 7: Excerpt from Participant 2's interview with reference made to 'subject', 'outcome' and 'tools' of the Activity Theory model (phase 1 on thematic analysis)

Participant 2 transcript

Participant no: 2

Date: July 2020

Duration of interview: 1 hour, 18 minutes

Held: online through MS Teams

Any other notes: on a couple of occasions the internet meant that I had to record a couple parts as inaudible.

Transcript	**Link to Activity Theory Node**
SM You'll be able to shed some light of what's happening in terms of the local authority when we move on to the object and how they're really trying to put forward with this age group as well. So I'm just going to ask you a little bit more broadly, can you just tell me a bit more about your role and your practice as an educational psychologist please?	SUBJECT
PPT 2 Search in relation to post 16 or just wider?	
SM Very broadly, really broadly, and down into post 16. However, you feel comfortable answering that.	
PPT2 So graduated five years ago. She now part time because of being a mum, which is a different dynamic into the management of working practices. As a psychologist I came from my solution focused	

background use lots of those approaches within my work. I quite like a lot of person centred practices. It fits in really well with the Post 16 so often, go back to that PATH and the Preparing for Adulthood Framework, I use that an awful lot. Believe a lot in independence, so we should be preparing for independence frequently with what we do and that's where the Preparing for Adulthood framework again. Construct psychology is probably my other game in terms of techniques. Have my schools of a while now they know me know me well and I've had one new school this year so that's a relationship building situation again. In relation to post-16, there will probably further questions down the line so I probably go into too much detail, but at the moment that tends to be a statutory requirement an because they're not tending to buy us in all that much at the moment. Does that give you what?	
SM Yes, that's perfect. I will just quickly ask you one more question in terms of subject in terms of your CPD opportunities, working with an understanding the Post 16 kind of realm of work, I am presuming yours may be a little bit broader just because you've had more experience as well. So it might have come from other places than just within the team.	

SM I mean, I took a lot from that in terms of starting to think about outcomes as well. What we want for the work and the YP . So certainly there's a lot about this Preparing for Adulthood framework and making sure that our YP are meeting outcomes across all four areas as well as the more practical outcomes that you've just spoken about in terms of the internships, the working in the volunteering. What other outcomes would you say that you have in mind when working with this age group?	OUTCOMES
PPT2 I may be a little bit cynical only because I come from a post-16 background, and I kind of know the vicious circle of college where kids have done level 1 course, after level 1 course, after level 1 course because there's no work for them to transition to, you get funding by keeping the child in college because of funding streams you get into this cyclical approach so, for me, I think I very rarely think about Post 16, I think I'm always looking at post 19. Whatever happened, it has to take that child past that little bit further, because if not the kids get stuck in this cycle of going round. I mean I went with a child with Sasha who was Level 3 ICT and they said he couldn't go any further, and when I next checked in on him he was doing level 1 animal care because he liked rabbits. The planning is	

and is not there so for me, that's what it's around, around careers, planning their bespoke tailor made outcomes for post 19 to make sure what happens at Post 16 is reflected off that because if not all that work in place, that post 16 courses, kids are going nowhere. Just about having a slightly longer sight to try and get a direction of path mapped out.	
SM Yeah, absolutely. And how do you think that kind of is either similar or different to the work you do with pre 16? So I guess there's also you've got a lot more trade work, haven't you with that younger age group?	OUTCOMES FUTURE WORK
PPT2 Traded work it's much straight, more structural pathways, and we pretty much know where their transitioning, so we get to our secondary kids, but with a second kinds I often right very similar thanks to wide right from the Post 16 kids, so I've often got a paragraph. You know, my last set of recommendations is often on transition. Whether that's maybe moving on or moving forward. And I always talk about the same things really PATH, person centred approaches and if you can a kind of person centred review. I mean I know what I put down is kind of gold standard and to be aspired for,	

but I think if I write often of somebody might one day say ‘Let's have person centred review, let's give it a go and see if it works’ and we move forward that way so.	
SM I mean, if it brings you comfort. I've had the same outcomes come through him in my other interviews. This idea of actually we all come together in a person centred, person centred way to work really collaboratively to ensure that you know the way this YP moves forward is in a successful and aspirational way.	
PPT2 Yeah, and I think we just have to reinforce that message and sometimes I know there isn’t funding there; sometimes I know it's gonna be poo pooed by the head teacher because they’re going to keep looking at grades, but actually if I keep writing it and it's there, hopefully someone eventually will go ‘okay there is a need for this.’ I'm not paying to look at the resource, I’m paid to say what is best for the kids in my eyes.	
SM	

Absolutely. Do you feel like there's anything else in terms of your outcomes that you would like to share and what you think about when you are working with this age group?	
PPT2 I think I mentioned earlier but independence, yes. That's the key one for me, I think. I don't think I realise quite how much so you know, we're always needs a little groups at the moment for kind of lock down that. I'm in the needs, outcomes, provision group, and actually most of the stuff I've ended up doing this around preparing for adulthood or independence. I'd only really then did I realise how important it was to me and how I already filter it through a lot of what I already do. I just think it's really important because for me preparing the kids for life rather than just college, what you coming out with? You know 10 great GCSEs and 3 a-levels, if you can't live by yourself or you haven't got the skills to be employable or interviews, so it's the employability skills and the independent skills alongside education, I think.	
SM Okay, so yeah, there's definitely potential there isn't there. And I guess the last part of the model before I ask some kind of more specific questions, is this idea of instruments and tools. So what is it	TOOLS

you actually use within your day to day practice with this group of YP ? So I think within this question there's something thinking about what you specifically with this group, where you've been able to upskill yourself will continue to use tools even if you were younger pupil. Tools aren't guess tools is on just, you know, concrete standardised assessments, but it's thinking about the language you use as well and ways you communicate.	
PPT2 So it is different, I think for everybody, but I think a bit differently. I've only done one cognitive assessment in all the years I've done any kind of post 16 work and that isn't to say that kids don't have learning needs at that point. I think the enough attainment data by the you know the kids have been in school for how many years you've got enough attainment data to base to know whether this child has a learning need or not. But, for me, it's the relevance of an assessment. Account of this sounds awful, but don't really get the relevance for cognitive assessment at that point because what is it going to tell us? I use the ABAS more than anything for post 16 work because that's around adaptability and about functionality and for me as an adult, those the things you need to know. So is this child, as well as academically functional, are they able to be social, to be included, to independently to cook for	

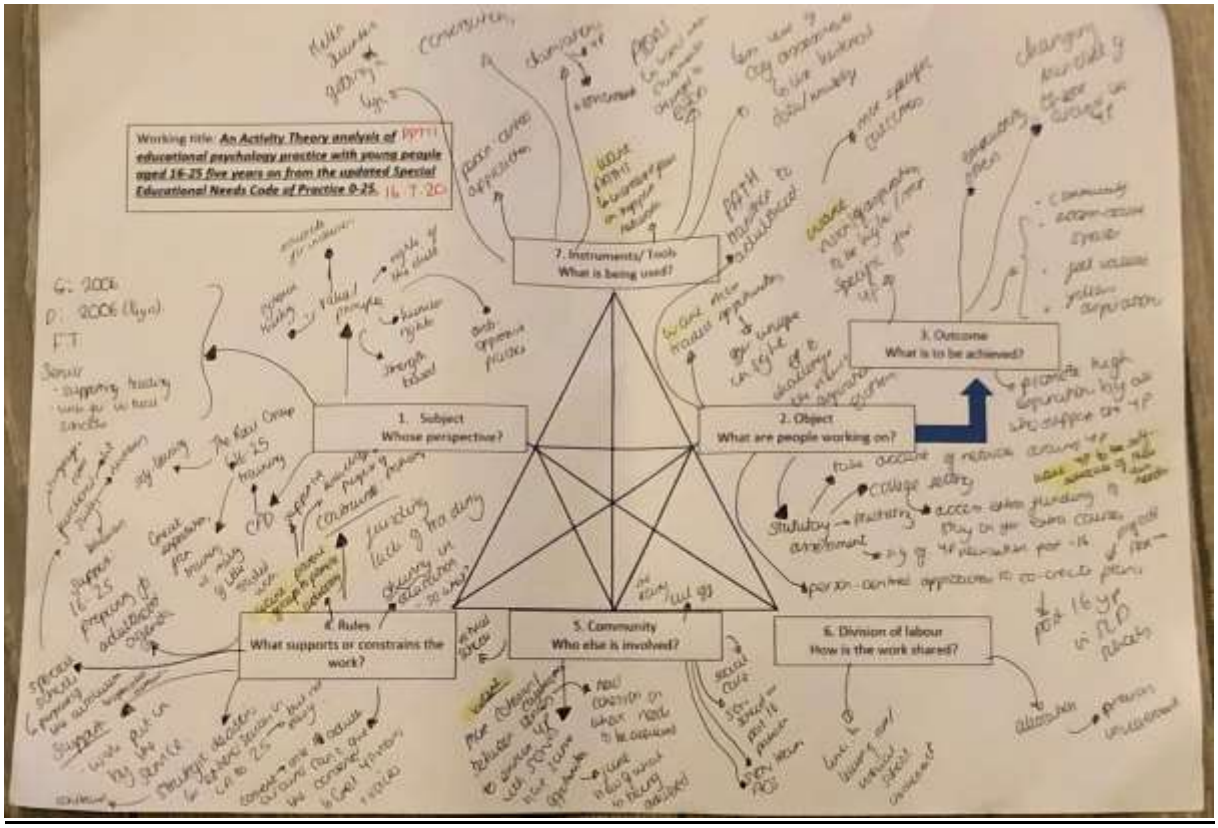
themselves, and I guess it comes back to my local colleges as a wider thing then just scored again and again the important to me for independent living. But I always use that. There was definitely a change in language, there has to be, you're not talking to it… Well know yourself you talk differently to a 5 year old and you do to a 2 and 11 year old. But to talk for a 19 year old I think it's very different and you know for some of our newly qualified staff we maybe 252 you could be working with a 24 or 25 year old and that's really different. A really different dynamic to what we are used to. That's like grown up to grown up, and even when I'm working with the 19/20/21 year old is going up to grown up, yeah. So I think there's a level of like changing respect. A change in, I don't mean I don't respect children, but just, you know, and how you address these children and you get so used to saying things like so and so thinks this is good or you know what you want. Think about it. It's not the kind of questions anymore. It's very person: So what do you think about what your advice around the situation? Because they are stakeholders themselves at that point. I think, you have to have an air of caution as well with your language. And if you talking to 24 year olds it's very easy to get caught up in a grown up conversation. So yeah, I think after must have you barrier up slightly but you don't get taken off down, you know somethings a 24 year old might talk to you about it would be	

something you might talk to you in the pub. So it's just about not getting to, just keep your professional barrier up and just not get into that chit chat, which is really easy because you don't have to guide the conversation quite so much you know, with kids drilling down all the time, but the nice thing about 16 plus is they'll just tell you this is what I've been through; This is what it was like; this is my Story, you don't have to keep feeding it, just being respectful of that story. For me it was recognising you are, you know, I was quite lucky, kind of went through school and college, fairly standard mom and Dad, just recognise and how difficult it is for these kids, not being a college but what they're living with on the outside. So not being in care or anything which is chaotic and not caring for the kids and all that kind of stuff will come through. Since I've just been aware of sign posting, I think it's really important to post 16 and who are could be on hand and we look very quickly about… just kind of general day to days of it. You know, you go to school, you park your car, you go to see the SENDCo, the practicalities of going to college are, firstly, there is no car park or you have to book a car park; that was my first learning point booking a car, then finding the person to speak to and then finding a room in a college is so so difficult. But then finding an appropriate room as well if are you in a room with a 23/24 year old man I think you know you professional boundaries need to watch your	

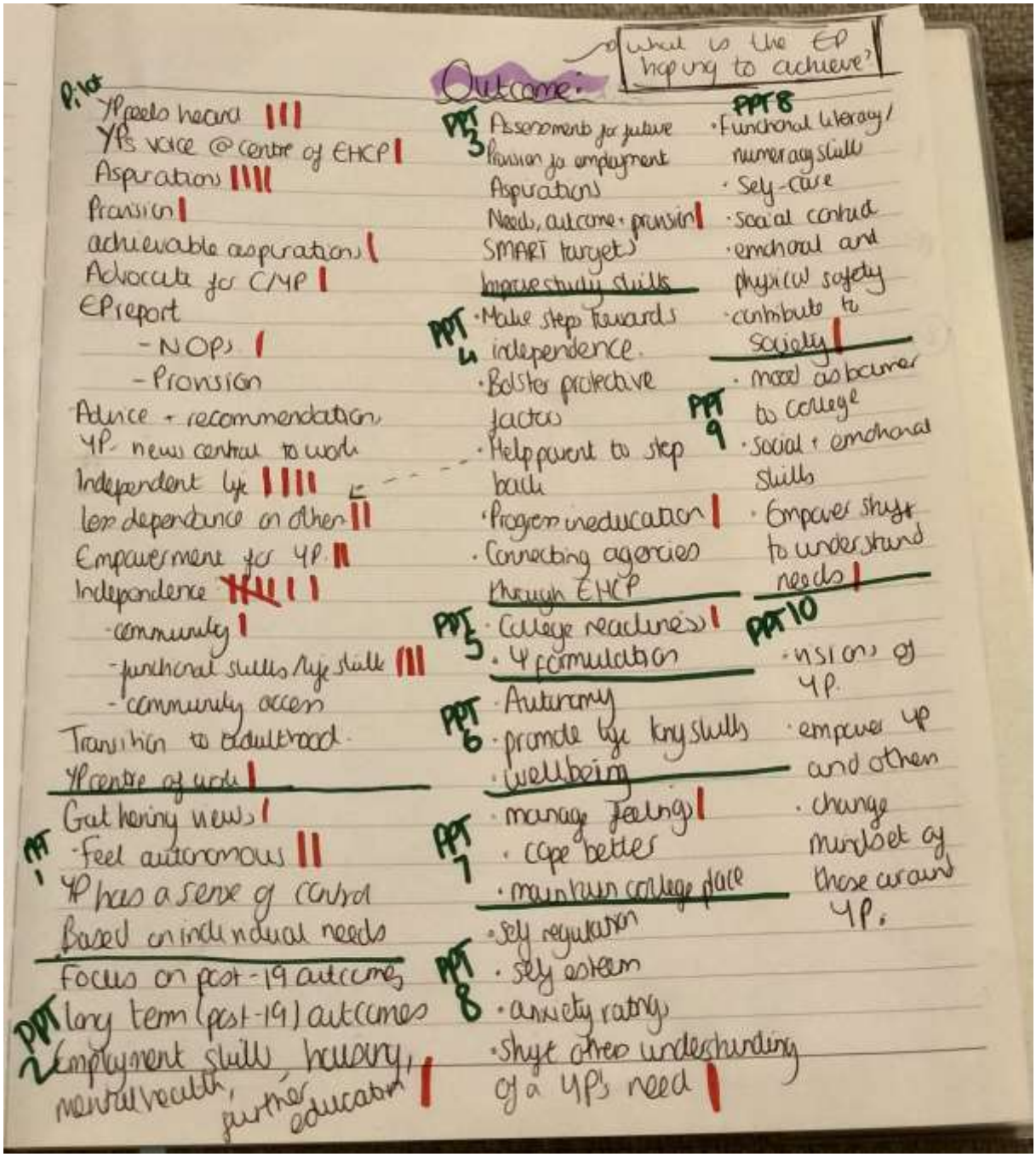
back as well. You need to make sure people around and um, I mean, I once got called to a house to do an assessment of a 19 year old lad and I got in his mum walk out. I was left alone in the house with her 19 year old lad and I don't want to panic for the child but I was thinking Oh my God how is this right? And I mean we had to take it back in service to start looking at this is where the risk assessments, and this is where the risk assessment for alone lone working came from just because it's never been a thing before. I kind of quickly make apologies and I was out the door. You know I dealt with it, but we have to go back and we talk about it. If you're doing a home visit with an adult on your own, not necessarily a lad, it could be a girl, but is that appropriate? It doesn't feel appropriate to me. People have different thresholds. Yeah, so languages assessment. Just reading the thing to make sure we covered everything. Yeah, I mean the one thing we haven't spoken about all really is talked about kind of colleges and internships, but for the kids who have much higher and special education needs, obviously things are very very different. Yeah, we've talked about much more of a kind of mainstream, not mainstream but general pathway, but using non-verbal tools is really, really important. Again, I'm slightly cynical about	

that as well because I've worked in so many colleges where you have a floor in a college for children with higher end needs and they go no where else, you know for Down Syndrome or whatever, and that is where they're left; it doesn't feel inclusive. They're integrated but they're not included.	

Appendix 8: Notes of noticing (phase 2 of thematic analysis)



Appendix 9: Selective coding of data that relates to each node of the Activity Theory model (phase 3 of thematic analysis)



*Red lines refer to where other interviews had made reference to the same concept