“AT SCHOOL IT’S LIKE ROBOTS, YOU ALL DO THE SAME THING AT THE SAME TIME, ALL THE TIME. BUT AT HOME IT’S NOT LIKE THAT”

AN INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE HOME EDUCATED

By

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ABSTRACT

Whilst often seen as a ‘different’ or ‘alternative’ approach to education (Bowers, 2017; Fraser, 1999), home education is a legal and legitimate approach to education, with education, and not school, which is a legal requirement in the UK (Education Act, 1996). Despite this, there is a little research which focuses on home education (Bowers, 2017; Jones, 2013; Webb, 2011), with even less which focuses on the lived experiences of children and young people (CYP) who have experienced both school and home education (Broadhurst, 1999; Jennens, 2011). This research aimed to explore the lived experiences of CYP who have experienced education in school and at home, and the transition between the two. Four semi-structured interviews were analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to identify both shared and unique experiences. This small-scale study identified seven subordinate themes related to CYP experiences in both school and home education settings. Participants reflected on experiences in both settings and the transition between the two. Findings are discussed further to explore professional implications of supporting CYP in both settings.

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GLOSSARY

ADCS	Association of Directors for Children's Services
ASD	Autistic Spectrum Disorder
BERA	British Educational Research Association
BPS	British Psychological Society
CME	Children Missing Education
CYP	Children and Young People
DfE	Department for Education
DEdPsy	Doctorate of Educational Psychology
DA	Discourse Analysis
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan
EHE	Elective Home Education
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FOI	Freedom of Information
GT	Grounded Theory
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
LA	Local Authority
NC	National Curriculum
PCP	Personal Construct Psychology
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SAO	School Attendance Order

SES	Socio-Economic Status
TA	Thematic Analysis
TEP	Trainee Educational Psychologist
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
YP	Young People

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the context of the current research at a local and national level, focusing on the countries from which participants were recruited (England and Wales). Whilst much of the research on home education has been conducted in the US (Jackson, 2007), this has not been explored in detail in this thesis due to the significant differences in home education between the US and the UK (Rothermel, 2003). This chapter will discuss home education terminology, before exploring the legal context of home education in the UK.

This research was carried out whilst I was a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP), on placement in a Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology Service (EPS) within the West Midlands, and explores the lived experiences of children and young people (CYP) who have previously attended a school setting and are now home educated. The intention for this research is not to present generalizable findings from a small participant group, but to allow a platform from which home educated CYP can discuss their experiences of both systems.

1.2 Researcher positionality

As a TEP with a background as a teacher, it is important to make my positionality clear. During teacher training, I was trained to assess children based on academic performance and 'age-related' progress, which I recognise are not always relevant or appropriate to the field of home education. I had no experience of home

education professionally, although I had watched the educational journey of a friend, whose daughter had transitioned between school and home education at the age of 7 years old. Prior to embarking on the Doctorate of Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) course, I worked for a LA as a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) caseworker, during which I worked alongside a qualified Educational Psychologist (EP) in updating an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP) for a child with SEND needs, who was home educated. This emphasised the positive effects home education can have on both child and family; something which I feel is rarely highlighted in the media. In my current role as a TEP, I have become increasingly interested in the phenomenon of home education and recognise the significance and legitimacy of it as an approach to education. I consider myself neither an advocate of home education nor a critic, but a professional who is interested in exploring the lived experiences of CYP who have experienced education in school and at home.

1.3 Terminology

There are various terms used to describe CYP who are receiving education other than at school, and, despite home education being legal for over seventy years (Education Act, 1944), terms used to describe it are often confused and imprecise (Eddis, 2015). For this reason, an overview of 'common' terms is included in Table 1.

Table 1: Overview of common definitions of home education

Term	Definition
Home education	"Home education essentially involves the child's parent taking practical responsibility for the child's education, in ways other than sending the child to school" (Jennens, 2011, p.144) "Home education is a phenomenon in which children of varying ages are educated at home rather than in a formal school environment" (Neuman and Guterman, 2016, p. 359)
Elective Home Education (EHE)	"Elective home education is a term used to describe a choice by parents to provide education for their children at home or in some other way they desire, instead of sending them to school full-time" (DfE, 2019b, p.5). "Elective Home Education (EHE) is defined as where parents or carers decide to provide education for their child at home rather than sending them to school. Home educated children are not registered at school or other educational establishments (Pupil Referral Units etc.)", (Hopwood et al., 2007, p.1)
Home schooling	"Home schooling is the practice of educating one's children at home instead of at school" (Kraftl, 2013, p.438) "Home schooling is a practice in which parents do not send their children (of any age) to school but educate them at home instead " (Neuman and Guterman, 2017, p.148) It should be noted that the term 'home schooling' tends to be used more in United States (US) contexts.
Unschooling	"'unschooling'…aims to have learning be entirely child-directed, free of any external imposition" (Coleman,

	2010; Gaither, 2009; Taylor-Hough, 2010; Thomas & Pattison, 2007) in Kunzman and Gaither (2013, p.14) "…to allow students to pursue whatever interests them, a method often called 'unschooling'" (Gann and Carpenter, 2019, p.169) "Unschooling is a child-centred approach to learning and is increasing in popularity among 21st century homeschoolers" (Ricci, Laricchia & Desmaria, 2011; Rolstad & Kesson, 2013) in Pell (2018, p.18)
De-schooling	"The process by which a child who has been in school re-acclimatises him or her self towards the new environment of home education from the school environment. The process of de-schooling is not limited to relearning how to learn, it is learning how to trust in their own safety again. In this sense, it is the re-establishment of the child's concept of self and individuality" (Fortune-Wood, "De-Schooling", n.d)
Flexi-schooling	"An arrangement between the parent and school where children are registered at the school in the usual way but attend school part-time. For the rest of the time, the child is home educated" (Fortune-Wood, "Flexi-School", n.d)

One of the difficulties with the use of the Department for Education (DfE) 2019 definition of home education as noted above is the idea of 'choice'; whilst for some parents home education may be based on choice linked to philosophical and social reasons, for others, home education may be linked to other circumstances, such as dissatisfaction with the school, or difficulties in finding a school to meet the needs of their child, which may have resulted in parents feeling as though they have little choice but to home educate (Longfield, 2019). As a result of the word 'elective' implying a positive and informed choice (Parsons and Lewis, 2010), I have chosen

not to use this term throughout this thesis, and will instead use the term 'home education'.

The term 'home education' is said to function as an 'umbrella phrase', covering a range of practices from 'home schooling' (with some reference to 'school' routine, and elements of school being implemented at home), to 'unschooling' (Davies, 2015), as defined in Table 1.

For the purpose of this thesis, the following definition will be adopted:

"Home education essentially involves the child's parent taking practical responsibility for the child's education, in ways other than sending the child to school" (Jennens, 2011, pp.144).

This definition has been chosen as it highlights the responsibility of parents to provide an education, but also that this is not restricted to education in the home.

1.4 Home education in the UK

Although education is compulsory in the UK, attending school is not. State-funded education is available for all children of *compulsory school age (*DfE, 2019a*)* whose parents request it, and every child should be in school or receiving alternative provision made by the LA or the child's school, unless parents themselves can make suitable arrangements, i.e., home education (DfE, 2019b).

CYP in England are required to continue in some form of education or training until at least their 18th birthday (DfE, 2016), which may include home education. CYP in Wales can leave education on the last Friday in June, if they turn 16 by the end of that academic year (UK Government, 2021).

Whilst there is no legislation that supports home education as a specific approach in the UK, section 7 of the Education Act (1996) notes that:

“The parent of every child of compulsory school age shall cause him to receive efficient full-time education suitable:

(a) to his age, ability and aptitude, and

(b) to any special educational needs he may have,

Either by regular attendance at school or otherwise”.

Where the decision to home educate a child is made prior to compulsory school age, there is no legal requirement for the parent(s) to notify the LA. Where the CYP is currently attending an educational setting and the decision is made to home educate, although there is no legal requirement for parent(s) to notify the setting, they are encouraged to do so to avoid attendance measures being implemented (DfE, 2019a, 2019b; Welsh Government, 2017). When an educational setting is made aware of a parent(s) intention to home educate, they are required to inform the LA, who will remove the CYP from the admissions register.

Parents are not required to have any qualifications or training to provide their children with a suitable education (DfE, 2019b; Welsh Government, 2017), and, if a decision to home educate is made, are financially responsible for providing resources/making provisions which support home education (for example, books, stationary, IT, visits, examinations), (DfE 2019a, 2019b; Welsh Government, 2017). Parents may choose to make arrangements for a child to receive part of their education in a school or college setting (sometimes known as flexi-schooling).

However, there is no obligation or legal requirement for schools and colleges to offer this.

LAs do not have right of entry to access the family home to assess educational provision made by parents; this may only be done at the invitation of parents. Whilst home educating families have the right to accept or decline a visitation by the LA, it is felt by some that the acceptance of a visit normalises state inspection, and legitimises the idea that home educating families are dangerous, abusive, or different (Charles-Warner, 2020). However, LAs do have a duty to identify, so far as possible, those CYP who are not receiving a suitable education (DfE 2019a, 2019b; Welsh Government, 2017). With this in mind, LAs may make informal enquiries to parent(s) in order to establish the level of education being provided, although parent(s) are under no obligation to respond. Home education policies differ between LAs, although all are expected to support home educating families in setting up and continuing to provide suitable, efficient and full-time home education (DfE, 2019a; Welsh Government, 2017). Inconsistencies in practice between LAs has been highlighted as a concern (Myers and Bhopal, 2018), resulting in a 'postcode lottery' of support for home educators. Some suggest that further training needs to be provided to those working with home educating families in the LA to support the development of consistent approaches (Charles-Warner, 2021a; Collier, 2021; Fensham-Smith, 2021).

1.5 History of home education

Although still seen as a 'different' or 'alternative' approach to education (Bowers, 2017; Fraser, 1999), home education is not a new concept. Prior to the

introduction of compulsory education, most children were home educated under a different guise, with the responsibility for their education laying with their parents (Broadhurst, 1999; Neuman and Guterman, 2017). Children were taught daily living skills, with some children being taught to read at home (Riley, 2015) and others learning trades as apprentices (Davies, 2015; Neuman and Guterman, 2017). Few schools were available, and these tended to be reserved for more affluent children, or those expected to fulfil religious positions (Neuman and Guterman, 2017). With the introduction of mandatory education laws, public schools were established, teachers trained and the responsibility of education returned to the government (Neuman and Guterman, 2013; 2017). In the UK, statute law regarding home education and the rights of parents has remained relatively unchanged since the 1870 Education Act, with the more recent 1944 and 1996 Education Acts maintaining a similar provision to that originally stated. Parental involvement in their children's education has steadily increased (Neuman and Guterman, 2017), as can be evidenced by the increasing numbers of CYP who are home educated, as discussed in 1.7.

1.6 Home education and safeguarding

As noted above, parent(s) have no legal obligation to inform the LA that they intend to, or are home educating. If a child never attends school, a LA may be unaware that s/he is being home educated. This may also be the case if a CYP moves between LAs (Longfield, 2019), sometimes resulting in significant difficulties on the part of LAs in maintaining an adequate oversight in identifying this cohort of CYP, and differentiating them from other groups, such as Children Missing from Education (CME). It should be highlighted that, despite the inclusion of some home

educated CYP in CME statistics (for example, referenced in the Longfield Report, “Skipping School”), CYP who are educated at home are not missing from education and should not be included within this cohort of CYP (Jennens, 2011).

LAs have the same safeguarding policies for home educated children as they do for all children within the locality (DfE, 2019b). School is often seen as a protective factor in the lives of some (Schooling, 2017) with CYP said to be more likely to make safeguarding disclosures in school than elsewhere (Arora, 2006). It is sometimes argued that CYP who attend a school or other educational setting are seen daily by school staff (DfE, 2019b) and may also be seen by external professionals. However, due to the nature of home education, CYP receiving this type of education may not come into contact with anyone other than their immediate family (DfE, 2019b; Longfield, 2019; Schooling, 2017).

Collier (2021) highlights the challenges surrounding recent 2019 home education guidance (DfE, 2019a; 2019b) and inconsistent interpretations of this between LAs, resulting in differences in the level of support/challenge offered to home educating families. Collier also notes that, where there are no responses from parent(s) regarding education being offered at home, the LA often have no other way of fulfilling their duties other than issuing a School Attendance Order (SAO). However, with no clear guidelines on what constitutes ‘suitable’ and ‘efficient’ education, Davies (2015) questions the suitability of monitoring visits by LAs to assess this, with no pre-defined criteria in place, linking to Collier’s (2021) concerns around inconsistency.

Home education and risks to safeguarding have come under particular scrutiny following media coverage of the deaths of Victoria Climbi'e (2000), Khyra Ishaq (2008) and Dylan Seabridge (2011). The death of Victoria Climbi'e, who is said to have been registered as home educated at the time of her death, prompted initial calls to introduce stricter monitoring of home educated children, including the introduction of a national home education register. It is important to highlight that there is no proven correlation between home education and safeguarding risks and home educated CYP are not automatically 'vulnerable' or 'at risk' by way of their education (DfE, 2019b). There have been some concerns raised that home education may be used by a minority as a way of avoiding LA and children's services involvement (DfE, 2019b; Longfield, 2019). However, for some families, the decision to home educate is itself associated with safeguarding concerns, for example, challenges faced by CYP in an education setting, linked directly to their physical or emotional well-being (Charles-Warner, 2021a; DfE, 2019b).

There is little evidence which suggests that home educated CYP are at a higher risk of safeguarding concerns. However, home educated CYP are significantly more likely to be referred to children's social care as 'at risk', when compared to children under 5 and those attending school. Despite this increase, home educated CYP are significantly less likely to be subject to a child protection plan, i.e., more children are referred initially, but there are more safeguarding concerns which are escalated to child protection plans for those in school (Charles-Warner, 2015).

1.6.1. The Badman Review (2009)

Following the death of Khyra Ishaq in 2008, Graham Badman was commissioned to review and report on home education practices. Following a 6-month review, twenty-eight changes to the regulatory and legislative aspects of home education were recommended, including a mandatory, national registration system for home educated CYP and mandatory access by LA officials to the home of home educating families (Charles-Warner, 2019; D'Arcy, 2014). Although recommendations were initially accepted by the government, the review was contested by many home educating families, and recommendations not implemented.

1.6.2. The Lord Soley Bill (2018)

Further attempts have since been made to seek similar monitoring and inspection of home educating families. In 2018, Lord Soley presented a Bill in the House of Lords, seeking to implement the following:

- An LA duty to annually assess the educational development of home educated CYP
- An LA duty to provide advice and information to home educating families, should this be requested
- Mandatory registration of all home educated CYP

The Bill notes that mandatory assessment may include home visits, a review of 'work' completed as a result of home education and interviews with child and parent(s). Since the presentation of the Bill in 2018, draft guidance was developed for

LAs and home educating families (DfE 2019a, 2019b), which, as noted above, have been received with varying degrees of satisfaction between LAs and home educating families (Charles-Warner, 2019). Whilst the Bill was withdrawn from the House of Commons at the time of writing, there are some concerns from home education advocates that this could be re-enacted in the future, placing additional emphasis and scrutiny on home educating families, with some fearing the "inherent criminalisation of home educating families, by giving LAs the power to interview home educated children and insist on home visits, which no other sector of law abiding society is subjected to…" (Charles-Warner, 2019, pp. 3).

1.6.3. Home education consultation

In addition to the Lord Soley Bill, a consultation was put forwards by the DfE (DfE, 2018), calling for a greater oversight of home educated CYP. The consultation stated that this was a direct result of concerns over children labelled as 'vulnerable' within the home education community, for example, those who were receiving an unsuitable and inefficient education at home (Long and Danechi, 2019). The consultation sought views on proposals to amend existing legislation regarding home education, including the introduction of a mandatory register for home educated CYP as recommended by Badman (2009) and Soley (2018) and a duty on LAs to provide support to home educating families if requested. Following the closure of this consultation in July 2018, a further consultation was published in April 2019 (DfE, 2019c), focusing again on the above proposals, although, at the time of writing, there had not yet been a response from the government. However, there continue to be hearings chaired by the Education Committee, with the most recent at the time of

writing (March, 2021) including expert panel members discussing the advantages and challenges of the introduction of a home education registration system, inconsistencies between LA approaches to home education and the monitoring of progress and outcomes for CYP who are home educated.

Another government consultation, 'Children not in school', was launched in 2019; which again explored the potential of the introduction of a mandatory register for home educated CYP (DfE, 2019c). Whilst the final report was yet to be published at the time of writing, home education advocates have questioned the legitimacy and evidence regarding safeguarding concerns (Nelson, 2013; Smith and Nelson, 2015) on which the consultation is based, as well as querying the name of the report, noting that, although home education is a legitimate form of education, those who choose to engage in this approach are 'othered' and faced with institutionally negative attitudes (Charles-Warner, 2020). It has been suggested that a needs analysis of home educating families should be carried out initially, assessing the 'visibility' of home educated CYP and what support is required by families (Charles-Warner, 2021a).

Whilst current home education guidance and legislation in Wales mirrors that of the UK, parallel consultations and proposals have been put forwards by the Welsh Government which recommend enhanced oversight of home educating families and provision, including registration for all home educated CYP (Holland, 2021). Similar to the Lord Soley Bill, consultations have been paused, with suggestions that these may be reviewed again in line with the next government term (Nicholson, 2021).

1.7 Home education figures and statistics

Whilst it is important to have an idea and overview of the amount of CYP who are home educated, it should be noted that, even with the most precise data

collection, the figures provided here are estimates. Home educated CYP are a difficult group to research (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013; Maxwell et al., 2018; Neuman and Guterman, 2016) and, with current legislation meaning that home educated CYP do not have to register with their LA, figures provided can only identify those who are registered. Recent research suggests that most home educating families are known to their LA (Charles-Warner, 2020; Cheaseley, 2018). It should be noted that, even if registration and movement across LAs was accounted for, the home education population is not static; whilst some CYP may have been home educated for some time, others may be home educated as a result of other factors, such as off-rolling, waiting for a school place (Jennens, 2011), or as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. For these CYP, a return to school may be imminent, resulting in a constant turbulence of home education figures (Lees and Nicholson, 2017).

Data recording the amount of CYP who are home educated within England, and common reasons for this, are collected annually by the Association of Directors for Children's Services (ADCS). Whilst this data is partially based on Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, information from those LAs who have not responded is averaged based on data received, i.e. averages from other LAs are applied to those who do not respond (ADCS 2018; 2019; 2020). For the purpose of this research, only figures received from FOI requests have been included in the data, in an attempt to avoid any inflation of figures.

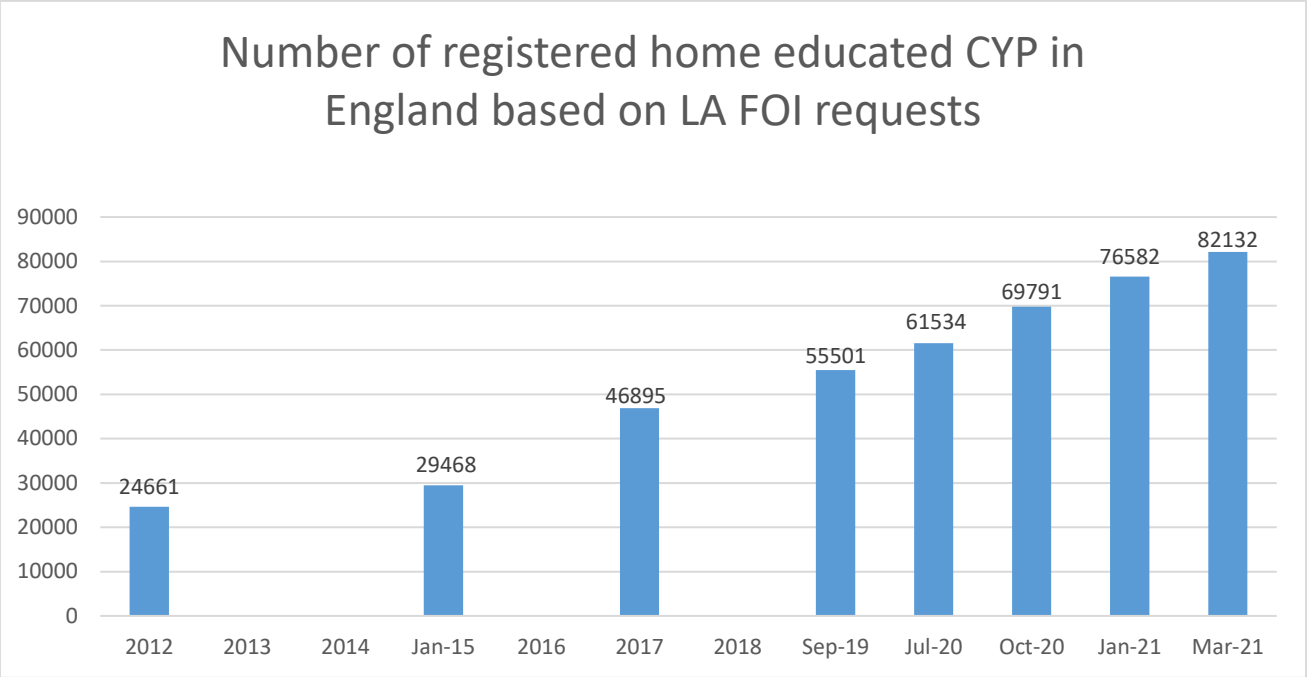

Figure 1: Numbers of home educated CYP in England (based on FOI requests from LAs)

Figure 1 shows a rise in the number of CYP home educated in England; a rise said to be mirrored in the statistics in Wales (Welsh Government, 2021). Caution should be urged when reviewing Welsh statistics, which also include pupils educated in Pupil Referral Units, which may lead to an over-inflation of figures. The following chapter will explore common reasons for parents and families choosing to home educate.

1.8 Structure of Volume One

This volume includes five chapters, including this introductory chapter. Table 2 provides an overview of this volume, accompanied by a short summary of each chapter.

Table 2. Summary of chapters in Volume One.

Chapter	Summary
Chapter One **Introduction**	This chapter provides an introduction to the practice of home education within England and Wales, in addition to an overview of my positionality as a researcher. An overview of the definitions of home education and how this is currently monitored, regulated and supported within England and Wales is included, alongside a brief history of home education, before a discussion of contemporary issues relating to home education. Developments within the regulation and oversight of home education are discussed, alongside an overview of the current statistics regarding home education figures in England and Wales.
Chapter Two **Literature Review**	This chapter explores an overview of motives for home education, before specific research exploring pupil views of home education, and the transition to home education is reviewed in more detail. The chapter concludes with a research rationale for this volume and an overview of research questions which are explored as part of this.
Chapter Three **Methodology**	This chapter outlines the methodology and methods used to address the research questions within the presented research, alongside a discussion around the research philosophy and my related epistemological position. IPA is described as the approach in this research and alternative methodologies considered. Methodological reflections are discussed, with Tracy's (2010) framework for qualitative research used to enhance the credibility of the research.
Chapter Four **Findings and Discussion**	This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the analysis process, including superordinate and subordinate identified themes. An overview of participants' experiences is included alongside example quotes related to each theme.
Chapter Five **Conclusion**	This chapter provides a summary of the research with reference to the main findings, alongside strengths and limitations of the research. Implications for practice in education are discussed, before recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The following chapter explores research on the practice of home education, including reasons for families choosing home education, before exploring relevant research in more depth. This is split into two parts; home education and pupil views and home education and transition. The research rationale is explored in further detail, linked specifically to gaps in the literature as highlighted throughout the chapter.

2.2 Reasons for choosing home education

The motives of families for home education can vary considerably, with these changing over time (Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; Neuman and Guterman, 2019). For example, a family may engage in home education as a result of difficulties within the school system, but may continue to do so due to evidence of progress being made at home. Whilst for some families there is a clear motivation for home education, for others, there may be a complex interplay between several factors, where one may impact on another (DfE, 2019b; Kraftl, 2012; Myers and Bhopal, 2018).

It is important to highlight the classification made by some researchers which emphasises two key groups within home education: those CYP who have never attended school, and therefore, have always been home educated, and those CYP who have attended school and since become home educated (Jennens, 2011; Thomas, 1998).

The most commonly cited reason for home education is CYP's needs not being met, with an increase in CYP with SEND being home educated (Schooling, 2017). Suggestions are made that this may be linked to financial reasons, with schools having less access to resources to support CYP with SEND (Longfield, 2019). Another common rationale for home education is that of difficulties experienced in school and dissatisfaction with the school system. This may be linked to factors such as bullying, relationships with school and pedagogical and ideological beliefs although, as noted by Medlin (2000), the decision to home educate can often be linked more to the advantages of home education than the disadvantages of school. As can be seen in Figure 1, Chapter 1, the numbers of CYP who are home educated has increased throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, with some speculating that this is linked to parent(s) being able to 'trial' home education and discovering that it is a more practical, viable and appropriate option for their child/ren (Charles-Warner, 2020). Other motives for families choosing to home educate can be seen in Table 3, although it is important to highlight here that, although the political and public rhetoric of home education suggests a homogeneous group, the home educating community is very much a heterogeneous population (Myers and Bhopal, 2018).

Table 3: Common motives for home education

Reason for choosing home education	**Research citing home education rationale**
CYP needs not being met (including SEND)	ADCS, 2018, 2019, 2020; Arora 2006; Badman, 2009; Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Bowers, 2017; Charles-Warner, 2019; Cheasely, 2018; D'Arcy, 2014; DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; Longfield, 2019; Maxwell et al., 2018; McDonald and Lopes, 2014; Nelson, 2013; Neuman and Guterman, 2016, 2019; Ofsted, 2019; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2002, 2004; Webb, 2011.
General difficulties experienced in school/dissatisfaction with the school system	ADCS, 2018, 2019; Arora, 2006; Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Bowers, 2017; Charles-Warner, 2019, 2020; Cheasley, 2018; DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; Kraftl, 2013; Maxwell et al., 2018; McIntyre-Bhatty, 2008; Nelson 2013; Neuman and Guterman, 2016, 2019; Ofsted, 2019; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Pell, 2018; Rothermel, 2002.
Pedagogical approaches/preferences	ADCS, 2019, 2020; Arora, 2006; Charles-Warner, 2020; Cheasley, 2018; DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; Neuman and Guterman, 2016, 2017, 2019; Ofsted, 2019; Pell, 2018; Rothermel, 2002; Webb, 2011.
Bullying	Arora, 2006; Cheasley, 2018; D'Arcy, 2014; DfE, 2019b; Gabb, 2004; Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; McDonald and Lopes, 2014; Nelson, 2013; Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Rothermel, 2002.
Familial reasons not linked to school or education	DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Neuman and Guterman, 2017, 2019; Rothermel, 2002.
Religious or cultural beliefs	Arora, 2006; Bhopal and Myers, 2014, 2018; D'Arcy, 2014; DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Jennens, 2011; Pell, 2018; Rothermel, 2002.
Curriculum	Maxwell et al., 2018; Neuman and Guterman, 2016; Ofsted, 2019; Rothermel, 2002.
Home education as the only option	Bhopal and Myers, 2018; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; Nelson, 2013; Neuman and Guterman, 2019; Ofsted, 2019, Parsons and Lewis, 2010; Schooling, 2017.
Avoid pressure for non-attendance or permanent exclusion	Arora, 2006; DfE, 2019b; Hopwood et al., 2007; Nelson, 2013; Ofsted, 2019; Rothermel, 2002.

Breakdown in school and parent relationship	DfE, 2019b; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; Ofsted, 2019; Schooling, 2017.
A short-term intervention for a particular reason	DfE, 2019b; Lees and Nicholson, 2017; Nelson, 2013.
Off-rolling	Cheasley, 2018; Longfield, 2019.
Lack of support from external agencies	Ofsted, 2019.

2.3 Current research into home education

There is a relatively small amount of research focussing on home education (Bowers, 2017; Jones, 2013; Webb, 2011), with the majority of existing research a result of PhD theses (Lees and Nicholson, 2017), and de Carvalho and Skipper (2019) noting that much of this is conducted in the USA. Eddis (2015) attributes this to the UK being at an earlier stage in its development of home education, with less visible home education support groups and a smaller population than that of the USA. Ofsted (2019) also note the lack of research into home education, with the focus of existing research on rationales for home education, approaches to home education, or outcomes as a result of home education, with little focus on the experience of home education from the perspective of CYP (Jones, 2013; Fensham-Smith, 2021). Kunzman and Gaither (2013) highlight the difficulties around politically motivated research into home education, with a significant amount of US research said to be commissioned by home education organisations, potentially leading to a bias in the findings reported. Conversely, it can be argued that some research is politically motivated against home education (Badman, 2009), and therefore, what is needed is a balanced and rigorous view of the home education system in England, with a focus on the views of those involved in it (Charles-Warner, 2021a). Given that home education takes place outside of traditional educational and institutional

structures, it can be a particularly challenging area to research, especially for those who are not part of the home educating community (Bowers, 2017; Myers and Bhopal, 2018; Nelson, 2013).

2.4 Home education and pupil views

Article 12 of the UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child) (UNICEF, 1989) dictates that states should provide "a right for children to express their views and for due weight to be given to those views, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child". However, whether or not CYP's views are part of any decision to home educate is dependent on individual parents (Neuman and Guterman, 2017), with no legal requirement for CYP views to be considered in decisions about their education in the UK (DfE, 2019a), and no obligation placed on LAs to ascertain CYP's views about home education, unless the CYP has an EHCP (DfE, 2019b).

Despite the increasing amount of interest into the phenomenon of home education, there is limited research which focuses on the views of the CYP who are experiencing home education (Jennens, 2011), with few studies in which CYP have been asked their opinions (Broadhurst, 1999). The studies which have been identified are discussed in further detail here.

For the purpose of this thesis, a systematic literature search was carried out via PsychINFO, PROQUEST and EBSCO, using the terms home+ed* OR home+school* AND pupil views, in order to focus explicitly on studies which explored pupil views of home education. Article abstracts were used to assess the relevance

of research, as well as recent article references being used to supplement database searches.

Clery (1998) explored the meaning that home schooled children assign to their home education experiences, interviewing two female participants (aged 12 and 13) to explore their experiences of home education. Four key themes were discussed in the data (autonomy, self-awareness, socialisation and family relationships). Participants are said to have valued the autonomy which they were offered in home education, and discussed this in terms of planning work/learning, flexibility of work undertaken, choice of support in home education and preference of working alone, at their own pace. Participants demonstrated an understanding of their unique needs and how these could be best supported in home education. Family relationships were reported to be improved as a result of home education. However, little information was provided as to the educational history of participants or the analysis that was used to elicit themes. Future research would benefit from exploring the views of a wider age range of participants on their experiences of home education.

Broadhurst (1999) expanded on Clery's research by exploring perceptions of home education, using semi-structured interviews and observations of six children (aged 6-9 years old) and their parents within their home setting. Whilst little information is provided in terms of how data were analysed, findings show that all children viewed their home education experiences positively, indicating that they particularly enjoyed the level of autonomy and flexibility which home education afforded them, along with additional time spent with family, consistent with Clery's findings. Conversational learning was highlighted by participants as being an advantage of home education, which has previously been discussed by Barratt

Peacock (1997) and Thomas (1998) as being a central tenet to home educating families. Alongside this, participants discussed the benefits of self-directed learning, an increase in variance in the curriculum, and an element of 'trial and error' which was afforded within home education. One child indicated feelings of marginalisation, which may be linked to common perceptions of home education as 'different' to the education norms (Bowers, 2017) and the 'othering' of home educating communities (Myers and Bhopal, 2018). However, it should be noted that this study was carried out with a combination of home educated children, i.e. those who had never attended school, and those who had moved from school into home education. It could be suggested that the perceptions of children of their home education experiences may differ considerably dependent on previous educational experiences, and future research would benefit from focusing on one cohort (those who have always been home educated, or those who have moved from school to home education).

In her 2013 PhD, Nelson undertook an ethnographic approach to the exploration of the views of home educating parents and CYP. Visual research methods were used alongside semi-structured interviews to gather information from three groups: parents of home educated CYP, home educated CYP aged 7-15 years, and home educated YP aged 16-25. Data were analysed using the constant comparative method (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Thomas, 2009), with parent, YP and CYP's themes combined. Participants discussed advantages of home education, including learning through conversation, flexibility of travel, lack of pressure, the ability to adapt learning to their own learning style and pursue their own interests, as well as an increased focus on the development of life skills. Participants also discussed disadvantages of home education, including lack of specialist and LA

support and lack of peer group interactions. Whilst the ability to engage in ethnographic research appears to have supported the development of Nelson's relationships and rapport with participants, future research may look at the results from differing groups in isolation, as opposed to generalising themes between groups.

In her 2013 research, Jones explored home education perceptions and experiences of home education from the view of home educated children. She utilised photo voice to support children in communicating their narratives around home education. Nine participants (aged between 7 and 14 years of age) participated in the research, providing narratives in verbal or written form alongside photographs which demonstrated their experiences and perceptions of home education. Participants were also engaged in validating transcripts to ensure that these reflected their views. Data were initially coded before being analysed by NVivo software, following which, Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) was used to analyse themes present in conversational data. Three themes were identified from analysis: identity and development of self, experiences and perceptions of learning, and relationships with others. As with previous research (Broadhurst, 1999; Jackson, 2007), participants highlighted the importance of autonomy and self-directed learning within their home education experiences, with the author commenting that this may have had a positive impact on their sense of self. Children in this research also highlighted feeling different to children who were engaged in 'formal schooling', although this was not always viewed as a negative difference. Participants discussed the advantages of collaborative and co-constructed learning opportunities between them and parents, something which is highlighted by Rogoff (2003) as being linked to

more effective learning. Participants discussed having choices around what, when and how learning took place. As with Clery's (1998) and Broadhurst's (1999) research, the importance of relationships in learning were highlighted, especially those with friends and family. However, as with Broadhurst's (1999) research, participants were a combination of those who had previously attended school and those who had always been home educated, who therefore may have had very different educational experiences which could have impacted on the data generated, especially given the theory-driven process of Grounded Theory.

Bowers (2017) conducted further ethnographic research in his DEdPsy thesis exploring the home education experience. Bowers focused on how home educating parents and CYP understand and engage with the social development of home educated children, as well as investigating what EPs can learn from experiences of home education. Thematic Analysis (TA) was used to explore themes across parents and YP. Parent and YP themes were combined, following which three superordinate themes were discussed; child's experience, parental experience and learning. Participants discussed the freedom afforded within home education, including that of self-directed learning and associated individuality. There is little information provided on the demographics of YP participating in this research, for example, age and current occupation, making it difficult to ascertain an accurate context for their views. As with Nelson's 2013 research, parent and YP themes were combined, with no distinction made for differing educational contexts of participants (two that attended school and became home educated, with the other two being home educated before attending college).

Solder (2017) conducted further research into the thoughts and emotions of home educating families with her DEdPsy thesis exploring the views of home educating parents and YP. This was a two-phase study, first exploring the views of home educating parents via a questionnaire, before interviewing eight children (aged between 4 years old and 13 years old). Solder used narrative and Personal Construct Psychology (PCP) approaches to elicit the views of children on their thoughts and emotions associated with their experience of home education. Children discussed the importance of their relationships with parents which led to collaborative and co-constructed learning, as discussed by participants in Jones' 2013 research. Participants also highlighted a love for learning which was self-directed and linked to personal interests. Participants discussed difficulties in friendships and subsequent bullying in school, and noted that they had more friends, better relationships with siblings and increased self-confidence in home education.

More recently, de Carvalho and Skipper (2019) explored the social interactions of three home educated CYP (aged between 11 and 14 years), in response to common concerns highlighted with regards to home educated CYP missing out on social interactions, said to impact on sense of community (Ray, 2013) and produce 'social misfits' (Romanowski, 2006). Participants in this research completed two-week social interaction diaries, prior to taking part in a semi-structured interview. Parents were also interviewed on their reflections of their child's social interactions, following which all interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Authors identified three key themes from analysis: sense of community, diversity in social experiences and importance of choice in socialising. Participants highlighted the role of home education groups in

their socialisation opportunities, both online and in person. The opportunity to be part of a group also seemed to develop a sense of identity and belonging in participants, with them developing shared identities within a group of home educated CYP and parents. Participants viewed home education as allowing them to have increased social opportunities, with less restriction on when they could participate in chosen activities. They also noted the diversity of CYP with whom they could interact, which was not defined by chronological age or academic ability as is often the case within schools.

In research exploring the move of CYP from secondary school to home education, (Ofsted, 2019) few opportunities were found for the views of CYP to be taken into consideration when exploring the decision to home educate. LAs and individual schools did not see this as their role, and, although some LA representatives worked directly with the CYP and their family, this was not the norm. Recommendations from this research noted that the DfE should "consider the extent to which current legislation and guidance consider children's views during decisions to home educate" (Ofsted, 2019, pp. 8), and implement "better mechanisms for considering children's views during decisions to home educate, particularly when a child expresses a view not to be home educated when a parent is considering home education" (Ofsted, 2019, pp. 19).

2.5 Transition and home education

A further literature review was conducted which explored the experiences of transition of home educated CYP between settings. PsychINFO, PROQUEST and

EBSCO were searched, using the terms home+ed* OR home+school* AND transition*, in an attempt to focus solely on literature which explored the transition in to or out of home education; also highlighted as an under researched area (Ryan, 2019). Article abstracts were used to assess the relevance of the research, along with article references to increase the findings.

The majority of research on home education and transition to/from formal schooling has been generated in the USA (Jackson, 2007), although some studies have been undertaken in the UK, with a focus on the trajectory of home educated CYP into employment or higher education (Goymer, 2001). Goymer explored the views of home educated late adolescents on their period of transition into adulthood, and used interviews and observational data which were thematically analysed. Results indicated that home educated YP adjusted well, socially and academically, to educational and employment settings, and, in some instances, were said to demonstrate increased levels of adjustment when compared to schooled peers. Home education is said to have helped participants to develop powerful learning relationships with their parent(s).

Further research on the transition from home education to Post-16 settings was conducted by Ryan (2019) in his DEdPsy thesis. This study explored the experiences of home educating families during Post-16 transition, and utilised a mixed methods approach, using a combination of TA and interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to analyse questionnaires from home education facilitators, EPs and TEPs, and semi-structured interviews with home educated CYP, with a view to exploring Post-16 experiences and the role of the EP in the transition to Post-16 settings. Three YP (all aged 16 years) were interviewed on their transition

experiences, discussing home education as being more functional than school, and allowing them more opportunities for self-directed learning than in school. Home education was found to be more directed by participants' career goals, and more focused on their individual needs as a result of this.

With a focus on the transition between home education and formal schooling in younger years, Jackson (2007) carried out research using semi-structured interviews to explore the experiences of three children (aged between 10 and 17) who had moved in or out of 'formal' education and had been engaged in home education at some point in their lives. Whilst there is no information provided in terms of how data were analysed, participants discussed positive and negative aspects of school and home education, alongside their transition between settings. Support from parents, reduced expectations, increased curriculum and opportunities for self-directed learning were all highlighted by participants as distinct advantages of their home education experience. Home education was noted as being more flexible and less restrictive than formal schooling, with participants highlighting increased autonomy and a lack of distractions in home education. Disadvantages of home education were noted as being linked to lack of socialisation opportunities and concerns over a potential disconnect from the school curriculum. Participants also highlighted advantages of the formal schooling system, including support from teaching staff and the development of positive relationships with teachers, with disadvantages including school expectations, bullying, separation from peers in streaming and distractions in school. As with previous studies (Broadhurst, 1999; Clery, 1998; Jones, 2013; Solder, 2017) participants highlighted the importance of conversational learning and co-creation of their home education curriculum, along

with relationships with parents and teachers in both approaches. Transition between settings was identified as relatively quick, although this was dependent on formal school experiences.

In their research exploring the movement of secondary-aged pupils to home education, Ofsted (2019) noted that neither LAs, schools or parents are required to provide any preparation for CYP prior to a move to home education, whilst schools and LAs are not required to work with parents and families prior to a move to home education. The research found no clear evidence of any preparation prior to a move to home education, with little information passed on to LAs by schools or parents before the move to home education happened, often due to them having little notice of the move, resulting in a lack of support being offered to the CYP and their family.

In research focusing on home education and CYP with SEND, Arora (2006) found that there were 4 stages of support highlighted by parents as being required to support the transition between formal schooling and home education: before the family consider home education, when families begin to consider home education, when families start to home educate, and when/if families consider a return to school. However, due to the often short amounts of time between these stages, it may be that it is difficult for external agencies to facilitate this support, or even to be aware that this is required (Ofsted, 2019).

2.6 Research rationale

As discussed in Chapter 1, the number of children who are home educated has risen over the past decade and continues to do so (ADCS, 2020; Charles-

Warner, 2020, 2021a, 2021b). Whilst research is conducted into home education by the ADCS annually, this relies on parental engagement and FOI requests being returned. This, alongside a lack of research into home education (Ofsted, 2019) may mean that the understanding of home education by the general public is left to media influences and home education advocates, both of whom may have their own agendas and research angles. In addition to this, there is little research available on the views of CYP who are themselves engaged in home education, as noted above. This has been highlighted by many authors as being a shortfall in the literature (Bowers, 2019; De Carvalho and Skipper, 2019; Fensham-Smith, 2021), and is something that is hoped will be supported in the present research. Additionally, research exploring the transition of CYP in or out of formal education is sparse, and is often focused on Post-16 transition. This research aims to provide an opportunity for CYP to discuss their lived experiences of both systems, as well as their perceptions of what helped and hindered their transition between both systems.

As previously discussed in 2.2, it is suggested that there are two key groups of home educated CYP; those who have never been enrolled in formal schooling, and those who have previously been educated in school but have since moved to home education (Jennens, 2011; Thomas, 1998). Previous research has combined these two groups (Broadhurst, 1999; Jones, 2013; Bowers, 2017), however, this research will focus solely on those who were previously educated in a school setting, but were home educated at the time of the research, and have therefore transitioned between the two settings. Details of analysis are provided in Chapter three, information which has been omitted from previous studies (Broadhurst, 1999; Clery, 1998; Jackson,

2007). Further information on inclusion and exclusion criteria is included in Chapter 3. This research specifically aims to explore the following research questions:

1. What are CYPs lived experiences of school and home education?

2. What are CYP perceptions of what helped and hindered them in the transition them in the transition from school to home education?

2.7 Chapter summary

Following an overview of the legislative and political context of home education in the UK in Chapter 1, this chapter has explored an overview of motives for home education. Research focusing on CYP views of home education and transition in home education is explored and linked to the research rationale and research questions as will be examined and discussed throughout the thesis.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will outline the methodology and methods used to address the research questions as introduced in the previous chapter, comprising a discussion around the research philosophy and my related epistemological position. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is described as the approach used within this research, and other approaches introduced and considered. Methodological reflections, including ethical considerations, recruitment, data collection, research design and data analysis are discussed. Tracy's (2010) framework for qualitative research is used to enhance the credibility of the research.

3.2 Overview

Table 4 provides an overview of the research framework, which will be discussed in further detail throughout this chapter.

Table 4: Overview of research framework

Epistemological Position	Critical Realism
Methodology	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)
Theoretical Foundations	Phenomenology Idiography Hermeneutics
Research Method	Qualitative
Research Design	Case study
Data Collection	Semi-structured interviews

Participants	4 participants (all female, aged between 10 and 14 years, all having previously transitioned from a school setting to home education)

3.3 Research philosophy

3.3.1 Ontology

Ontology is the study of reality and what exists (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988; Punch, 1998), i.e., what is being studied (Thomas, 2017). It is described as "the nature or essence of things…ontological assumptions about social reality will focus on whether a person sees social reality – or aspects of the social world – as external, independent, given and objectively real, or, instead, as socially constructed, subjectively experienced and the result of human thought as expressed through language" (Opie, 2004, p.20). Ontological positions can be conceptualised as a scale, with relativism and realism at opposing poles (Madill et al., 2000).

3.3.2 Epistemology

Epistemology relates to the relationship between the researcher and reality, how we develop our understanding of knowledge and reality (Carson et al., 2001) and 'what' and 'how' something can be known (Willig, 2013). It is described as "the theory of knowledge, thus epistemological assumptions concern the nature of knowledge, what constitutes knowledge and what it is possible to know and understand and re-present" (Opie, 2004, p.21). As with ontological positions, epistemological positions can be conceptualised as a scale, with positivism and interpretivism at opposing poles. Positivism holds that there is one objective reality to be discovered, and therefore one truth, regardless of individual perceptions,

understanding or beliefs (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988), whereas interpretivism is based on the position that a quantifiable and objective, measurable world does not exist, and, as a result of this, reality, truth and knowledge can never truly be known (Pring, 2004). An alternative position is that of critical realism (Denscombe, 2010), which assumes that reality does exist, although is not always observable or revealed by things that can be measured or observed, and is independent of an individual's experience or interpretation of it. This approach aligns with IPA and its theoretical underpinnings, which are discussed in further detail below, with my aim as the researcher not to collect facts or discover theories, but instead to focus on the perceptions, sense-making and understanding of the participants' experiences, and interpret experiences as they have been interpreted by participants themselves. As explored in 3.4, I as the researcher have an active and open role in this approach, with my values and beliefs integral to the way in which social realities are explored and explained (Denscombe, 2010), thus aligning the approach with the epistemological position of critical realism (Hardy and Majors, 2017), recognising that it is impossible for me as the researcher to understand the world in a completely objective and neutral way.

3.4 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

IPA is an approach to qualitative research which involves exploration and subsequent understanding of how an individual experiences a life event and the sense-making involved in this experience. It aims to enable participants to express experiences in their own terms, as opposed to pre-defined categories or themes (Smith et al., 2009). IPA typically uses transcripts from semi-structured interviews,

with analysis seeking to explore individual experience and personal perspectives, situating this within social and cultural contexts (Willig, 2013).

The initial focus in IPA is on participants within their individual contexts, before moving on to more general comparisons (Smith et al., 2009), with more of a focus on group to group transferability than generalised findings (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011).

IPA is informed by three areas of the philosophy of knowledge: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). These will be explored in further detail below.

3.4.1 Phenomenology

Phenomenology is a philosophical approach to the study of experience, exploring “the individual within a world of relationships, language, culture, projects and concerns” (Smith et al., 2009, p.21). It explores the experience of being human and highlights the complexity within which human experience is seated, considering the aspects that matter to us and which make up our world.

3.4.2 Hermeneutics and double hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation, and is particularly relevant in IPA when examining participants’ lived experiences. When retelling their stories, participants are making sense of, and interpreting their own experiences, and relaying this back to the researcher. In turn, the researcher is interpreting the participants’ experiences, thus becoming a double hermeneutic, i.e. a double

interpretation (Smith et al., 2009). It is thus integral to the process of IPA for the researcher to be aware of their own experiences, preconceptions and assumptions, and the impact that this may have on the process of interpretation. As mentioned above, reflexivity is encouraged throughout the research process in order to ensure that the research is not affected by the preconceptions of the researcher.

The hermeneutic circle is the idea of a dynamic relationship between the part and the whole. It is essential for the researcher to understand the parts, but, in order to do so, requires an understanding of the whole; to understand the whole, the parts must be understood (Smith et al., 2009). With this in mind, IPA methodology requires the researcher to move back and forth throughout an iterative, ongoing process of analysis and interpretation, linking together the parts and the whole.

3.4.3 Idiography

Idiography refers to the particular, often focusing on smaller studies which aim for depth and detail as opposed to nomothetic approaches which aim for generalisability (Byrne, 2019). IPA is committed to exploring and attempting to understand how social phenomena are understood by individuals, within a set of specific, contextual circumstances. This is not to say that IPA is unable to make general claims, but does this from an idiographic starting point; that is, individual accounts are the initial focus of analysis. Sampling size in IPA is linked to idiography, with the premise in IPA that ‘less is more’ (Reid et al., 2005). For data to be examined in depth and rich experience explored, Smith et al. (2009) recommend a small, purposefully selected and carefully situated sample of between 4-10 participants, whereby the individual can offer a unique perspective on their

experience, supporting to bring us closer to the universal (Warnock, 1987) by allowing us to consider the phenomena being studied from different experiences and perspectives.

3.4.4 Rationale for IPA

The choice of IPA in this research links to my epistemological position, with a semi-structured interview schedule, alongside visual research methods, selected due to the potential sensitivity of the phenomena being explored. I felt that these were consistent with answering the research questions; the aim being to understand the subjective accounts of children and young people in school and home education and their perceptions of what helped and hindered their transition. IPA's focus on subjective lived experience (Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez, 2011) aligns with the exploration of these research questions, supporting participants in telling their stories, and the researcher in understanding them.

Whilst alternative approaches such as TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006), or grounded theory (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005) may be appropriate for other forms of qualitative research, IPA was selected in this instance due to the ability of the analysis to explore individual experience in depth, gaining detailed and nuanced explorations of lived experiences with no expectation of generic themes, generalisation or theory development.

Previous research on home education has dismissed the applicability of IPA due to the heterogeneity of the home educated population, and therefore, a lack of generalisability of findings (Bowers, 2017). However, those included in this research

may be viewed as a homogenous cohort, given the inclusion criteria applied as detailed in 3.7.2.1, with no intention to generalise findings.

Whilst IPA studies are usually conducted with adult participants (Teuma, 2013), there have been studies which have utilised IPA with children and adolescents (Back et al., 2011; Doutre et al., 2013; Petalas et al., 2009). It is recommended that guidelines for conducting semi-structured interviews with children are adapted in these circumstances (Smith, 2004), with a more interventionist approach taken when working with children. I was conscious of this in all interviews, especially in my interview with Alice, as noted in appendix ten.

3.5 Alternative approaches to data analysis

Alternative methodological approaches to IPA were considered and are discussed in Table 5.

Table 5: Alternative qualitative methodological approaches

Methodology	Key features	Critique in relation to current research
Discourse Analysis (DA)	Focus on the use of language in the construction of reality (Willig, 2013). Primarily interested in interaction or power. Origins in social constructionism	Current research aims to explore sense-making, not language use. Risk of focus away from individual experience using this approach (Smith et al., 2009).

	(Smith et al., 2009).	
Ethnography	An approach used to gain insider knowledge of people's lives by becoming actively involved in their lives for a period of time.	Whilst this approach has been utilised effectively in previous studies in home education research (Bowers, 2017; Nelson, 2013; Solder, 2017), this was not possible in this instance due to social distancing measures linked to COVID-19 and discussed in further detail in the COVID-19 impact statement in appendix one.
Grounded Theory (GT)	Shared codes/categories identified at the beginning of data analysis, with a view to merging individual accounts and establishing links/relationships between them, in order to create one data set at the end of the process (Robson, 2002). Aims to generate a theoretical account of a particular phenomenon through social interactions (Smith et al., 2009).	No importance placed on individual accounts, instead analysing data as a collective (Robson, 2002). Large sample size needed (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1997). This would have been challenging in this research given recruitment difficulties as discussed in 3.7.2.2. The aim of the current research is to explore the lived experienced of participants, not to theorise experiences of school and home education. Does not embrace questions of reflexivity. This was felt to be particularly integral to the current research.
Narrative Approach	Focus on how narratives relate to sense making of ourselves and the world (Murray, 2003) and ways in which individuals organise and bring order to their experiences, including content	This approach can deviate from individual experience and focus more on the social characteristics of narrative (Murray, 2003).The current study aims to focus on individual, lived experiences and, where appropriate, explore differences and similarities between participants within a homogeneous sample. Focus on the current research was on the lived experience of participants, not necessarily on the chronological ordering of incidents and structure in which participants expressed their experiences.

	and structure or people's stories. Some overlap with discursive approaches and phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009).	Less structure in analysis process (Griffin and May, 2012).
Thematic Analysis (TA)	Method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns, also known as themes, within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Can be used inductively or deductively. No pre-existing theoretical framework.	TA has more of a focus on exploration/description of the data, rather than a detailed level of interpretation (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The use of IPA in the current study allows for the exploration of individual experiences through an idiographic approach. Themes that are identified, coded and analysed are expected to be an accurate reflection of the entire data set in TA. In such instances, depth and complexity of data can be lost (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This would not have aligned with the aims of the current research which sought to capture rich detail and nuance of participant's experiences, placing importance on themes pertinent to individuals even though this may not have necessarily accurately reflected the entire data set.

3.6 IPA: a critique

Whilst IPA has been deemed to be the most effective framework for analysis within this research, it is also important to explore the limitations of the approach. Although data analysis within IPA follows a flexible, recommended structure, critics of the approach highlight the lack of a standardised process (Giorgi, 2009), with concerns raised as to the quality of the analysis as a result of this. However, advocates of IPA note that this lack of prescription is a strength, allowing for the interpretative foundations of the approach to be adhered to (Smith et al., 2009). The lack of generalizable theories or data produced by IPA has been identified as a

disadvantage (Malim et al., 1992), with the view that IPA studies are ‘subjective, intuitive and impressionistic’. However, the subjectivity afforded by IPA is recognised as being linked to its concern with the lived experience of participants, and therefore the aim being not to produce a set of generalizable theories, or to replicate or test an approach (Thomas, 2009), but instead to explore phenomena in detail.

Whilst the transparency in the lack of researcher objectivity in qualitative research may be seen as a strength of the approach by some (Smith, 2004), the concept of a double hermeneutic is said to lead to a risk of the misinterpretation of data, which may therefore lead to the validity of the findings being questioned (Smith and Osborn, 2008). Reflexivity, bracketing and peer validation are used in this research to support the reflection and interpretation of the data.

Concerns have also been raised around the ability of participants in communicating complex experiences and phenomena (Willig, 2013), with the proposed risk that the reliance on the language of participants may impact on the analysis process (Smith et al., 2009). However, this is remedied within IPA as the focus is not on the language itself as used by the participant, but by the researcher’s interpretation of it (Smith et al., 2009). This study also aimed to support participants’ use of language with the option of visual research methods, as discussed below.

Due to the in-depth, iterative and interpretative nature of IPA, analysis within this approach can be time consuming, especially given its idiographic nature and the focus on individual, lived experiences (Smith, 2011). Its idiographic approach is highlighted as a concern by Todorava (2011), who notes the potential loss of contextual factors with this approach to analysis. However, this is said to be

remedied with rigorous and in-depth immersion and analysis of the data by the researcher.

3.7 Method

3.7.1 Design

A case study design was employed for this research, with this approach allowing researchers to develop an in-depth understanding of an individual's experience whilst also being able to explore shared themes (Smith et al., 2009) with the aim being to "gain a rich, detailed understanding by examining aspects of the case in detail" (Thomas, 2017, p.156).

3.7.2 Recruitment

3.7.2.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion criteria was implemented as a way of ensuring a homogeneous participant group within a heterogeneous population, allowing for the exploration of individual case studies, within which participants had some similarities to each other. Participants within IPA are purposively selected to allow access to a particular phenomenon, resulting in a homogenous sample (Smith et al., 2009), ensuring that participants are experienced within the object of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011).

Table 6: Inclusion and Exclusion criteria for participation in the research

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Above the age of 10 years old. This was chosen using Hart's (2013) guide to children's ability to participate, with Hart suggesting that children over the age of 10 years are better able to self-reflect, and would therefore be able to articulate previous school and current home education experiences. The inclusion of this age also allowed for the representation of participants in both primary and secondary age ranges.	SEND which may prevent participants from being able to access the interview remotely (such as communication and interaction difficulties).
Have previously attended school but are currently home educated. Participants needed to have been home educated for a minimum period of 6 months, to allow them to have sufficient experience of both school and home education settings.	Participants who are being home educated as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and partial school closures. It was thought that the recruitment of this sample may result in distinctly different experiences to those who were home educated due to other reasons.

3.7.2.3 Recruitment difficulties

Difficulties with the identification of home educating families, alongside the diversity of the home educating population (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013), low response rates to research (Bowers, 2017), and the "distrust with which many homeschoolers regard external surveillance" (Kunzman and Gaither, 2013, pp.5) can all impact on the ease at which research is conducted with home educated CYP and their families. Additional recruitment difficulties faced in this research linked to the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed in more detail in appendix one.

The LA home education officer initially acted as a gatekeeper to potential participants (Creswell, 2003), using their contacts within the LA to make home

educating families aware of the research through dissemination of an information poster (appendix two). I was unable to contact potential participants directly due to the implications of the Data Protection Act (2018). Following a lack of response from the initial research advertisement, information posters were sent to neighbouring LAs, with the request that these were disseminated to home educating families. During this time, one participant was recruited through my own contacts (Participant A: Kacey), in August 2020. As a result of no contact from home educating families within LAs in the area, the research was advertised on Facebook and Twitter, following which several more families made contact with the researcher, and two participants were identified as meeting inclusion and exclusion criteria (Participant B: Charlotte and Participant C: Alice). After another prompt to the LA home education officer, a final participant (Participant D: Esther) was identified as satisfying inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3.8 Ethical considerations

University ethics approval was received in May 2020 from the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Process (appendix three). Ethical guidelines from the British Psychological Society Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2018) and Code of Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2014) were also followed, alongside those of the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). An overview of the ethical considerations of this research is presented in the table below.

Table 7: Key ethical considerations as per BERA (2011); BPS (2018)

Guideline	**Ethical consideration of this research**
Informed consent	Following an introduction to the research in the form of a recruitment poster (appendix two), prospective participants and their parent(s) were each sent a separate information sheet which included details of the research (appendices four and five), alongside separate consent forms for participants and their parent (appendices six and seven). Although it was necessary to have parental consent as all participants were under the age of 16, it was important to me as a researcher to have fully informed consent from participants, and it was for this reason that separate consent and information sheets were created for participants. Consent forms were signed as agreement that parents and participants had read and understood the information sheet, and were happy to participate in the research. This was completed before interviews took place, and information regarding the study repeated verbally on the day of the interview. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions prior to, during, and following the interview.
Right to withdraw	Participants were informed in writing (via consent forms, appendices six and seven) of their right to withdraw from the study at any point up until 2 weeks after the date of their interview, as, by this point, data from their interview would be transcribed and anonymised. Participants were informed that any data that was withdrawn before this time would be destroyed and not used. This was verbally discussed with participants at the beginning of the interview. Participants were also provided with my contact details and those of my university tutor, should they wish to know more about the research or withdraw.
Confidentiality	Participants were advised in information and consent forms (appendices four, five, six and seven) that confidentiality would be maintained throughout the study. Following each interview, participants were given a pseudonym via which recordings and transcripts were identified. Any named contacts referred to by participants during interviews were also given pseudonyms.

	Participants were informed that only the researcher would have access to their identifiable data and that, following transcription and analysis, audio files would be deleted. All participants were also made aware prior to, and at the beginning of the interview that, if they were to disclose anything to the researcher which suggested that they, or another child or young person, was at risk, that this would need to be passed on to the relevant LA.
Risks	It was deemed that the most likely risk in this research was that of participants becoming distressed when discussing educational experiences, especially if these had been particularly challenging. Participants were reassured at the beginning of the interview that if there were any questions that they did not want to answer, or were unable to, then they could move on, or terminate the interview if they wished, and that there would be no consequence of this. During the interview, I utilised active listening skills as used in my role as a TEP to sensitively explore the experiences of the CYP. This approach is recommended by Braun and Clarke (2013), although it should be highlighted that this was more of a reactive approach in the moment, and not an on-going intervention.
Data Management	Interviews were recorded using a dictaphone and then transcribed, and information regarding this process was given in information and consent forms (appendices four, five, six and seven). Recordings and transcriptions were stored securely on University of Birmingham software, with only relevant parties (myself and my university supervisor) having access to this (as per GDPR regulations). Following the transcription of interviews, recordings were kept for the first stage of IPA; reading and re-reading, which recommends this being done initially alongside an audio recording. Following this, audio recordings were deleted. Paper based interview notes were kept in secure storage at home, given that there was no university access due to COVID-19 social distancing measures. The following data was stored for each participant: initial contact details, signed consent forms from participant and parent, participant data set and demographic information. Data will be kept securely for 10 years from completion of the research project in secure university systems as noted in the ethics proposal in appendix three. My own records will be deleted following completion of the research write-up and graduation from the programme.

Privacy and safety	Participant A was given the option of where she would like to be interviewed and requested a home visit. LA EPS guidelines for home visits were followed, although it should be noted that this participant was already known to me. As a result of COVID-19 social distancing measures, participants B, C and D were all interviewed remotely via Microsoft Teams. I requested that a key adult was available for them should this be needed throughout the call, although this was not necessary.
Feedback for participants	All participants were given the option of a summarised account of the research, as well as the opportunity to discuss any aspects of the research or findings with me.

3.9 Participants

As mentioned above, 4 young people took part in this research, with overviews of each presented in the table below.

Table 7: Pen portraits of participants

Pseudonym	Age	Educational background
Kacey	14	Kacey lives with her Mother in the West Midlands. She attended primary school up until Year 3, after which she went travelling with her Mother. Although she accessed some schooling whilst overseas, she described this as not a "proper school…they didn't teach you really". Kacey and her Mother returned to the UK when Kacey was 12, following which Kacey attended a secondary school outside of the West Midlands, as she was staying with extended family. After a period of 4 months, Kacey returned to the West Midlands and attended a secondary school for 6 months, following which she returned to home education. At the time of recruitment, Kacey was home educated full time although, at the time of interview, she had recently started attending a part-time college course for 14-16 year olds who are home educated. Kacey was recruited through my own contacts, and was known to me through a friend.
Charlotte	14	Charlotte lives with her Mother and Father in Sussex. She attended primary school up until Year 6, following which she lived overseas with her parents for 2 months and began home education. The family returned to the UK and Charlotte continued home education. Charlotte has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Charlotte was recruited via Twitter, where her Mother saw the research advertised and contacted me directly.
Alice	10	Alice lives with her Mother and Father and 2 younger siblings (aged 8 and 5 years) in North Wales. Her parents had previously considered home education for Alice and her younger brother, but, on the arrival of their third child, felt that this might not be feasible. Following partial school closures in March 2020, and a move to online/home learning, Alice's parents were able to trial home education and felt that this was a successful approach to the education of their children. Alice was recruited via Facebook, where her Mother saw the research advertised and contacted me directly. Whilst Alice had begun home education during the

		COVID-19 lockdown, she was included in the research as this was not the reason for her home education, i.e., parents were considering this beforehand.
Esther	14	Esther lives in the West Midlands and splits her time between living with her Father and his partner, and her Mother and her partner. Esther became home educated in October 2020, following dissatisfaction with the support offered in her secondary school, and with difficulties in identifying a suitable, alternative setting for her. Esther has a diagnosis of anxiety. Esther was recruited via the LA in which I was on placement, following information which was distributed to all home educating families within the area. Her Father saw the research advertised and contacted me directly.

3.10 Data collection

3.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

Given the rich and in-depth analysis afforded by an IPA methodology, data collection methods such as semi-structured interviews are commonly used to support participants in exploring their lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). For this research, a semi-structured interview was chosen to allow the researcher to discuss a list of pre-determined questions related to school, home education and transition, whilst also allowing for flexibility which enabled participants to further elaborate on their own areas of interest. This was particularly important given the age of participants; as it was felt that some CYP may need some sensitive prompting to ensure that a wide range of issues was discussed and explored. The flexibility of the approach allowed me to adapt the wording and order of questions, including additional, open-ended questions in order to examine the phenomenon of home education and omit those questions that were not appropriate, depending on the interview and participant (Robson, 2002; Thomas, 2009). Semi-structured interviews are highlighted as being particularly helpful “where a study aims to understand the meaning of the particular

phenomena to the participants" (King, 1994, p.16). However, it can be argued that there is a heavy reliance on language skills in interviews, (Willig, 2013), which can act as a limitation in some circumstances. It was hoped that, with the use of Hart's criteria for participatory research with children (Hart, 2013), alongside visual research methods as discussed in 3.10.2, participants would feel supported and able to share their experiences.

The interview schedule was informed by guidance written by Smith et al. (2009), and included expansive and open questions with the use of prompts and probes to elicit further information and prompt discussion. A copy of the semi-structured interview schedule used in this research can be seen in appendix eight.

3.10.2 Visual research methods

Visual research methods were also used as a way of eliciting information/experiences from participants which may have otherwise been difficult for them to recall or discuss. Given the nature of COVID-19 social distancing measures and the implications of this on face-to-face research, original ideas for the use of visual research methods were amended accordingly and are discussed below, implications of which are discussed in appendix one.

Two visual research methods were used in the research: the Life Grid Method and a photography collage. Both are discussed below.

3.10.2.1 Life grid method

The life grid method is said to allow for the co-construction of a visual timeline, or life grid, via which significant life events can be plotted (Parry et al., 1999). The

tool uses a grid structure, with the X axis representing a particular passage of time and the Y axis representing retrospective memories, experiences and emotions linked to these time periods. Participants are asked to complete what they can recount in each area, with reference to particular dates/events. An example of the life grid used for this research can be seen in appendix nine. Wilson et al (2007) note the main aims of the life grid as being a visual way in which an individual's life, at various different points, can be co-constructed, explored and revisited.

The life grid method is said to elicit additional responses from CYP which may not be explored via traditional methods which focus solely on written or verbal language (Leitch, 2008; Thomson, 2008), as well as allowing for the "surfacing of…unknown unknowns" (Noyes, 2008, p.141). This was felt to be especially important in the current research, given that participants taking part may not previously have explicitly explored the impact of the transition from school to home education, or their perceptions of school and home education settings. This was offered as an optional element of semi-structured interviews, and was used by Participants A and C, and verbally by Participant D.

3.10.2.2 Photography collage

In this approach, participants are asked by researchers to take their own photographs with a particular focus, with the aim of collating these into a photograph collage and utilising this within a semi-structured interview as a stimulus (Fargas Malet et al., 2010). Participants were given the option of sharing these during the semi-structured interview, although no copies were made as this was not the focus of

the study. No participants engaged with this method, although Participants A, C and D shared aspects of their home education experience by showing me via video.

3.11 Data analysis

Following data collection and transcription, data were analysed using the process recommended by Smith et al. (2009), and as discussed in the table below. Given that IPA is an inductive and interactive process (Reid et al., 2005; Smith et al., 2009), this process was used flexibly, with data interpretations continuously checked, and an ongoing reflexive cycle being applied to each transcript throughout the analysis.

Table 9: IPA analysis process as recommended by Smith et al. (2009).

Stage of analysis	**Description**
1. Reading and re-reading	This stage involves the familiarisation of the researcher with the data set, and involves full immersion in the data. This includes reading and re-reading transcripts, with a focus on reading for meaning, not for pace. For the first reading of each transcript, audio recordings were used alongside each reading of the transcript to familiarise me with the intonation and voice of the participant, which is said to support with later analysis (Smith et al., 2009). Initial pre-conceptions were recorded in my reflexive journal as an attempt to bracket my own experiences and initial interpretations.
2. Initial noting	Said to be the most detailed and time-consuming part of the analysis, this stage involves line-by-line coding of the data set. There was some cross-over between stages 1 and 2, with some initial notes made during the reading and re-reading of the data set. The aim of this

	step is to make extensive notes and comments on the data, focusing on semantic content and language use. Once initial notes were made, I revisited the data set and divided the analysis into three categories as recommended by Smith et al. (2009): • *Descriptive comments:* These included the main content of the transcript including key words, phrases, events and experiences as discussed by the participant • *Linguistic comments:* These comments focus on the way in which content/meaning is presented, and include functional aspects of language such as pauses, laughter, repetition, pronoun use and metaphor. • *Conceptual comments:* These comments are a movement towards a more interpretive approach to the data, with an emphasised need on bracketing and reflexivity within these comments, ensuring that my own preconceptions do not affect the interpretation of the data. This is further discussed in 3.11.1 and included in examples of the reflexive journal (appendix ten). An example of this stage of analysis can be seen in appendix eleven.
3. Development of emergent themes	This stage focuses more on the initial notes made by the researcher, and is less so linked to the transcript itself, relating to the hermeneutic circle; the need to understand the parts, to understand the whole (i.e. understanding initial notes to understand the experience of the participant as a whole). The main aim of this step is to develop emergent themes which reflect understanding of the experience of the participant and are grounded in the data. An example of this stage of analysis can be seen in appendix twelve.
4. Searching for connections across emergent themes	The aim of this stage is to explore emergent themes to understand how they may fit together to form subordinate themes, i.e. linking themes together, with the intention of creating a structured account of the participant's data by drawing themes together. Existing emergent themes may be discarded during this stage, dependent on the research questions. Smith et al.

	(2009) recommend the following ways of looking for patterns and connections between themes: *Abstraction:* The development of a super-ordinate theme by grouping similar emergent themes together *Subsumption:* A super-ordinate theme which is presented as an emergent theme *Polarization:* Opposition between emergent themes *Contextualisation:* The identification of emergent themes which relate to narratives/key life events *Numeration:* Exploring the frequency of particular themes *Function:* Exploring the function of a particular theme My research journal was used throughout this stage to record how connections across themes were sought.
5. Moving to the next case	As per the idiographic nature of IPA, the analysis is carried out with one transcript at a time; it is at this point that I referred to the next transcript and repeated the steps above, taking care to bracket emergent/super-ordinate themes from the previous data set where possible.
6. Looking for patterns across cases	When all transcripts have been analysed using the steps above, the final stage involves reconfiguring and relabelling themes following the identification of connections across cases. Following data analysis, results were discussed with, and critically examined with an Educational Psychology colleague, as suggested by Larkin and Thompson's (2012) peer validation. Confidential data was not accessible to my colleague, with her involvement in analysis linked solely to the review of emergent, subordinate and superordinate themes. This enabled informal discussion of themes, during which anomalies were resolved. This was chosen as the most appropriate way to check the analysis of IPA data, given that member checking with this analysis may not be appropriate due to its interpretative nature (Hardy and Majors, 2017; Larkin and Thompson, 2012).

3.11.1 Reflexivity and bracketing

As noted above, a key aspect of IPA is the interpretation by the researcher, of the interpretation of the participant, of their lived experiences. Linked to this is the importance of reflexivity; that is, the awareness of the researcher in recognising the impact of their own experiences and pre-conceptions on the interpretation of the data. This position recognises that qualitative research cannot be undertaken objectively, and that there is an inevitable impact of the researcher's own lived experiences on the interpretation of data. Reflexivity aims to monitor the role of the researcher in the interpretation and analysis process, ensuring that they are aware of their own presumptions and the way in which these will influence the research process (Langridge, 2007), thus enhancing the trustworthiness and accuracy of the research and the credibility of research findings (Buckner, 2005; Cutcliffe, 2003).

As part of the reflexivity process, bracketing involves 'bracketing off' or 'parking' personal values or assumptions, in an attempt to avoid these impacting on the research process. This should be done throughout the research process, as it is recognised that these personal values can impact on various aspects of the process (Smith et al., 2009). However, as highlighted above, it is questionable as to whether true objectivity can be achieved in research (Crotty, 1996), with the contrary view of Heidegger (1962) being that researcher assumptions can actually add to the research analysis by highlighting previously unconscious themes. As suggested by Smith et al. (2009), a reflexive journal was used throughout this research in an attempt to bracket my own values and assumptions and remove these from data analysis where possible, as well as lending trustworthiness and transparency to the research project as a whole. Excerpts from this can be seen in appendix ten.

However, whilst reflexivity and bracketing have been used throughout the research process, I recognise that my own lived experiences, pre-conceptions and values are still likely to have an influence on the current research.

3.12 Research trustworthiness and quality

IPA has attracted discussions regarding the trustworthiness and validity of the analysis framework (Shaw, 2011; Smith, 2011), with suggestions that the same qualities by which quantitative research is reviewed, for example, validity, reliability and replicability, cannot be applied to qualitative research, and that these terms take more of a positivist perspective (Willig, 2013). In order to assess the credibility and trustworthiness of this research, Tracy's (2010) eight 'Big-Tent' markers for quality have been used, which can be seen in the table below.

Table 10: Tracy's (2010) eight 'Big –Tent' markers for quality

Criteria for quality (end goal)	Various means, practices and methods through which to achieve	How this has been done in this research
Worthy topic	Topic of research is: • Relevant • Timely • Significant • Interesting	I believe that this research is a worthy topic due to the rise in numbers of children who are home educated, ongoing debate and discussions regarding home education, particularly the registration of home educating families (Charles-Warner, 2021) and the lack of research on the practice of home education from CYP themselves (Bowers, 2017). Allowing the voices of home educated CYP to be heard can shed light on their school and home education experiences and their perceptions of support during the transition between the two systems.
Rich rigor	Study uses sufficient, abundant, appropriate and complex: • Theoretical constructs • Data and time in the field • Sample(s) • Context(s) • Data collection and analysis process	Rich rigour is demonstrated throughout this research with links to current policy and legislation. I have provided detailed descriptions of my research design and analysis within this chapter, as well as strong links between literature, methodology and findings throughout this research.
Sincerity	The study is characterised by: • Self-reflexivity about subjective values, biases and inclinations of the researcher(s)	As noted in 3.11.1, I have emphasised the role and impact of reflexivity throughout this research, including making detailed notes of my own pre-conceptions and assumptions throughout recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. My positionality statement in Chapter 1 highlights my position as a TEP and my motivations for exploring the lived experiences of home educated CYP. During initial conversations and interviews with participants, I

	• Transparency about the methods and challenges	was transparent with my positionality as a researcher and as an outsider to the home educating community.
Credibility	The research is marked by: • Thick description, concrete detail, explication of tacit (non-textual knowledge), and showing rather than telling • Triangulation or crystallization • Multivocality • Member reflections	I have sought credibility throughout this research via the development of rapport with participants, trying to ensure that they feel comfortable in sharing their lived experiences of both school and home education with me as the researcher. Through the use of open questioning and prompts/probes as noted in the semi-structured interview (appendix eight), I have aimed to bracket any of my own pre-conceptions and assumptions and allow participants to share their own experiences. This involved developing rapport with participants and enabling them to take the lead in the interviews where they felt comfortable, for example, sharing experiences with me which were not directly linked to my research questions but allowed them ownership and autonomy within the confines of the interview. Credibility has been supported with the use of a reflexive research journal and ongoing note keeping during interviews. Member checking is said to be unsuitable for the method of IPA (Hardy and Majors, 2017; Larkin and Thompson, 2012).
Resonance	The researcher influences, affects or moves particular readers or a variety of audiences through: • Aesthetic, evocative representation • Naturalistic generalisations • Transferable findings	Resonance is demonstrated throughout this research with links to current policy and legislation. I have provided detailed descriptions of my research design and analysis within this chapter, as well as strong links between literature, methodology and findings throughout this research. Whilst the aim of IPA is not to make generalisations or transfer findings, the lived experiences of participants in this research have been used to make recommendations and suggestions for further research and practice.

Significant contribution	The research provides a significant contribution: • Conceptually/theoretically • Practically • Morally • Methodologically • Heuristically	I believe that this research makes a significant contribution to existing literature given the rise in numbers of children who are home educated, ongoing debate and discussions regarding home education, particularly the registration of home educating families (Charles-Warner, 2021) and the lack of research on the practice of home education from the CYP themselves (Bowers, 2017). Allowing the voices of home educated CYP to be heard can shed light on their school and home education experiences and their perceptions of support during the transition between the two systems.
Ethical	The research considers: • Procedural ethics (such as human subjects) • Situational and culturally specific ethics • Relational ethics • Exiting ethics (leaving the scene and sharing the research	This research has been approved by the University of Birmingham's Ethical Review Process and follows ethical guidelines from the BPS code of ethics and conduct (BPS, 2018) and the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2011). Further information on the ethical considerations of this research can be seen in the ethics review form (appendix three) and above in Table 6.
Meaningful coherence	The study: • Achieves what it purports to be about • Uses methods and procedures that fit its stated goals • Meaningfully interconnects literature, research questions/foci, findings and	Meaningful coherence is demonstrated throughout this research with links to current policy and legislation. There are clear links between literature, research questions, data collection and data analysis, with detailed descriptions of the research procedure. IPA is chosen as a relevant and appropriate tool for analysis to explore the lived experiences of participants.

	interpretations with each other	

3.13 Chapter summary

This chapter has explored my research philosophy, including ontological and epistemological assumptions, before exploring the philosophical underpinnings of IPA, including phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography. A rationale for the use of IPA within this research is explored, alongside a critique of IPA and comparison to alternative qualitative approaches. The research design is explained, including sampling, recruitment and associated difficulties. Ethical considerations are discussed in line with BERA (2011) and BPS (2014, 2018) guidelines, and an overview of participants provided. Data collection is discussed in terms of semi-structured interviews and visual research methods, following which the process of IPA is discussed in relation to reflexivity and bracketing, and trustworthiness and quality. The following chapter will discuss the research findings in relation to the research questions and the lived experiences of participants.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

Smith et al. (2009) propose that findings of IPA are combined with the discussion, with a narrative account of findings said to support the analytical process (Richardson, 2000), and avoid difficulties with separating the findings from discussion (Thomas, 2017). For this reason, results and discussion are combined within this chapter. Superordinate and subordinate themes are discussed, alongside contextual information relating to participants' experiences. Where relevant, these are linked to research and psychological theory.

4.2 Overview of Themes

Seven superordinate themes were interpreted from the data, with Smith et al's (2009) criteria of convergence of at least half of participants for a master superordinate theme (i.e. across the participants) used to determine these. Convergent and divergent accounts are discussed throughout, to highlight both commonality and individuality of experiences (Larkin and Griffiths, 2004; Smith and Osborn, 2008), with quotations for individual interviews used to exemplify participants' experiences. Superordinate and associated subordinate themes are discussed in turn, following which the findings are related back to the research questions, which are as follows:

- What are CYP lived experiences of school and home education?
- What are CYP perceptions of what helped and hindered them in the transition from school to home education?

Table 11: Overview of Superordinate and related subordinate themes

	Subordinate themes	**Kacey**	**Charlotte**	**Alice**	**Esther**
Superordinate theme one: Independence in learning	Autonomy	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Flexibility		✓	✓	✓
	Self-directed learning	✓	✓	✓	✓
Superordinate theme two: Support for learning	Support in education	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Resources	✓	✓	✓	✓
Superordinate theme three: Expectations	School expectations	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Home education expectations		✓	✓	✓
Superordinate theme four: Transition	Decision to home educate	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Awareness of home education	✓	✓	✓	✓
Superordinate theme five: Identity	Identity and learning	✓	✓		✓
	External view of home education	✓	✓	✓	✓

Superordinate theme six: Learning	Curriculum	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Intrinsic motivation	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Collaborative learning		✓	✓	✓
	Approach to learning	✓		✓	✓
Superordinate theme seven: Relationships	Belonging	✓	✓		
	Impact of education on socialisation	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Family relationships	✓		✓	✓

4.2.1 Superordinate Theme One: Independence in learning

4.2.1.1 Subordinate Theme One: Autonomy

All participants discussed the element of autonomy in home education, with home education seen to provide participants with additional freedom and choice in their approach to, and engagement in learning.

Kacey: *"[pause] I liked having like a bit of like, freedom, I guess"*

Figure 2: Reflective box 1

Kacey appeared to find it difficult when talking about the advantages of home education, and this may have been linked to her preference for formal schooling, which is discussed in further detail in subsequent superordinate and subordinate themes. Her use of the words "I guess" suggest that she may have felt neutrally about the advantages of home education.

Charlotte: *"there wasn't as much, like, formality, and it wasn't as constrictive. Like, obviously we had a schedule, and we had, ya know, points of what to do, but, it wasn't as, ya know, forceful, if that makes sense?...It was more in my hands than it was before"*

Figure 3: Reflective box 2

Charlotte's use of the metaphor "it was more in my hands than it was before" suggests that she felt an element of control over her home education learning that she wasn't as familiar with from her formal learning experiences, implying that home education was something that she felt that she could 'contain' or 'manage'.

Alice: *"here, we are having the afternoons to like ourselves, but at school you have to work all day"*

Esther: *"at school, it's like all the same stuff like you don't really get to go on walks and stuff, but, when you're at home then you can do work in different ways, in the way that like, kinda suits you"*

Autonomy in home education was linked to the self-directed and flexible nature of the approach, both of which are discussed in subsequent subordinate themes. Autonomy was linked to factors including the timetabling of participants' days, with less expectation in terms of the beginning and end of the school day, along with the option of where they worked, with Esther noting that home education

allowed her to engage in outdoor learning; an option which was not afforded to her in school. Whilst participants recognised that there were core subjects and expectations to be fulfilled (discussed further in superordinate themes three and six), an increased level of autonomy in home education was viewed as an advantage.

Increased levels of autonomy in home education are discussed in the literature, with home educated CYP highlighting the advantage of being able to take control of their learning (Broadhurst, 1999) and noting higher levels of autonomy in home education (Clery, 1998; Jackson, 2007) than in formal schooling. CYP in Jones' 2013 research discussed their ability to make choices in home education, regarding what, how much, when, where and how they learnt. Less autonomy in education is said to be linked to unhappiness and anxiety, with increased autonomy being linked to increased motivation, and CYP feeling competent and valued (Fisher, 2021a).

Esther also discussed autonomy in relation to school; in particular, a school setting that she was planning to attend for her GCSEs.

Esther: *'cause you can choose, like, there's three buckets (that's what they call it) it's like health and social, business, and like music and dance and drama and stuff.*

Esther presented as particularly excited for the opportunity to have increased autonomy in her learning in secondary school; something that she had not experienced prior to becoming home educated.

Figure 4: Reflective box 3

I wondered whether the lack of autonomy that Esther had previously experienced was linked to her age, with options at GCSE level quite common in secondary schools in the UK education system, with less choices linked to curriculum prior to this stage. I wondered whether this increased level of autonomy may have been experienced by Esther had she remained in secondary school for Year 9.

4.2.1.2 Subordinate Theme Two: Flexibility

Flexibility in home education was linked mostly to the movement of learning to more appropriate times, for example, to allow for time spent with family, holidays, and extra tuition. Participants highlighted the flexibility with which they could access learning, with more of an individual decision made as to how long learning would take and therefore what this looked like within their schedules.

Charlotte: *"It changes around sometimes given like, say if I'm doing a course, then obviously I have to switch around the schedule a bit"*

Alice: *"at school you're only allowed to go on holiday in, at the, on the summer holidays, but you know like after the summer? So we were able to…because we were doing home schooling, we were able to take a week and then just have an extra week another time"*

Esther: *"if we wasn't in lock down and, I could go on holiday and I would still be able to do my work"*

Participants in Jackson's (2007) research noted the increased flexibility of home education when compared to their formal schooling experiences. This was also discussed in Clery's (1998) research, with participants highlighting the advantage of being able to complete learning in the morning and utilise afternoons for socialising or self-directed learning (as discussed in further detail below and highlighted by Alice in the previous subordinate theme), and having flexibility regarding the amount of work completed (as discussed further in superordinate theme three).

Charlotte discussed the flexibility of home education in relation to COVID-19, noting the impact of social distancing restrictions on the flexibility of home education, but also the benefit of home education being flexible.

Charlotte: *"yeh it's been, ya know, monotonous, with covid recently, and not being able to go out places, but it's nowhere near as stressful or as limiting as school was…given recent times we've had to change it around a bit and everything"*

Figure 5: Reflective box 4

The flexibility of home education as an approach is highlighted in the language used by participants, for example, "I have to switch around the schedule a bit…I can push stuff back and like, move it around". For these participants, flexibility and autonomy were linked advantages, with the flexibility of home education to re-arrange learning adding to their feelings of autonomy and subsequent control.

It should be noted that, whilst participants have mentioned here, and in subsequent themes, the impact of COVID-19 on their home education experiences, this was not included as a theme due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, as it was felt that this was not a true reflection of 'typical' home education experiences. However, experiences of home education in relation to COVID-19 directly would warrant further research.

4.2.1.3 Subordinate Theme Three: Self-directed learning

Self-directed learning within home education linked to autonomy and flexibility as discussed above, but was more directly related to participants' learning and schedules. Participants discussed the self-directed nature of their schedules, for example, when they started learning, when they took breaks and how much work was completed. Another element to this theme was the way in which participants discussed learning as being led by them and their interests.

Charlotte: *"I wake up one day and I think I'm really interested in this topic. I want to learn more about it"*

Alice: *"we'd like choose a topic and we'd do like some stuff like researching about the thing we like"*

Esther: *"I also do sometimes equine studies which is like, my horse psychology stuff. And…I don't have to do history or geography"*

For Charlotte, Alice and Esther, self-directed learning was characterised by their intrinsic motivation to learn, which is discussed in more detail in superordinate theme six.

Self-directed education is discussed and advocated for by Fisher (2021b), who defines it as “an education where the learner retains control of what they are learning. They are free to choose what they learn, and they are free to stop when they have learnt enough. They retain their control over what they do” (Fisher, 2021b, pp.56). Whilst none of the participants in this research had fully self-directed learning, and were expected to cover some specific subjects, there were elements of choice when it came to what they were learning, particularly for Charlotte, Alice and Esther. For these participants, self-directed learning was linked to their own individual interests and was integrated into their curriculum alongside core subject expectations. Self-directed learning has been highlighted as an advantage in other home education research (Broadhurst, 1999; Daniels; 2017; Jackson, 2007; Nelson, 2013; Ryan, 2019; Solder, 2017), and is said to lead to passion, motivation and engagement in learning (Jones, 2013).

4.2.2 Superordinate Theme Two: Support for learning

4.2.2.1 Subordinate Theme One: Support in education

Kacey discussed a preference for being educated in school throughout her interview, and linked this both to a lack of support in home education, and in terms of her identity and sense of belonging, which are discussed in further detail in superordinate themes five and seven. Kacey identified feeling that support that she received in home education was insufficient for her learning needs, with her

attributing her self-perceived difficulties in maths to those of her mother's. Kacey appeared to place an importance on the teacher in the learning process, and identified a preference for a teacher teaching her.

Kacey: "*I just prefer being at school and college, cos I like a teacher teaching me, because, they'll get it in your head more and they'll be there to help you, instead of like, especially with my Mum and like in maths and stuff. She's not good at maths, so, I'm not good at maths, because she's my teacher and then if she's not good at maths, then she can't really teach me"*

Both Alice and Esther recognised the difference in teacher: pupil ratios at home and in formal education, identifying that support for learning in school may be less available than in home education because of the perceived need to wait for help, whereas at home, Esther had 1:1 support and Alice 1:3 support, meaning that any support could be quickly offered and identified needs/difficulties managed efficiently.

Alice: *"it's easier as well because, the teacher doesn't have to go around lots so you don't have to sit waiting for like 5 minutes until the teacher comes to your desk"*

Esther: *"when I'm learning at school like it, the work sometimes is easier than what like, it's really easy, or sometimes it's really hard and then, you don't really wanna put your hand up in front of everybody else"*

Alice identified a decrease in adult support between infant and junior school, noting that 'you have to work on your own' and 'the teacher doesn't give you as much help', attributing this to the expectation of 'knowing more' because of her age. This appeared to be in contrast to Alice's experience of home education, where she identified that she doesn't have to wait for support.

The advantage of additional support in home education is highlighted by participants in Broadhurst's (1999) research, who noted the difference in educational support between school and home education, linked to increased class sizes in

school settings and more tailored support in home education. Broadhurst discussed the advantages of additional support in home education, including vertical age grouping, 1:1 tuition and peer tutoring. Home educated CYP in Jackson's (2007) and Clery's (1998) research also noted additional support from parents in home education, which may be linked to enhanced parental relationships as discussed in superordinate theme seven.

Esther discussed a lack of appropriately differentiated work in school, with her finding it difficult to request support in a class of other children. However, when discussing home education, Esther implied that work was more appropriately differentiated to her level of learning.

Esther: "*But at home, then the work is set to your like, what you, your ability, so like, or if it's too easy, then my Dad always puts another one on that's harder. So that's more like it 'cause you can choose your ability to do it"*

Parents in home education are said to engage in an activity known as 'dovetailing'; the response to cues from children to support the next stage of their learning (Wells, 1986), and it may be that Esther's quote is an example of this taking place in her home education environment.

Figure 6: Reflective box 5

The ability of parents to engage in dovetailing, in addition to having an in-depth and thorough knowledge of their child's individual interests and level of need led me to reflect on the impact of the parent-child relationship on support offered. As highlighted by Esther above, her Father was able to appropriately differentiate learning not only to her academic level, but also to incorporate her preferred approach to learning and individualised interests; an approach which may not be practical for class teachers in a formal school setting. Although Esther noted that "you don't really wanna put your hand up in front of everybody else and say like that you don't like understand it", she seemed more able to communicate difficulties in her home education learning environment to her Father, suggesting that the parent-child, or parent-teacher relationship is significant in the learning process, as highlighted by researchers who have explored the transition from primary to secondary school settings (Sancho and Cline, 2012; Tobbell, 2003; Tobbell and O'Donnell, 2013).

Support in education was also discussed as being not only linked to learning, but also in relation to friendships. Charlotte discussed the importance of having a support network in the form of home education groups and friendships as being paramount to home education, and something that she would recommend to others' who were exploring the option of home education. This was particularly pertinent given the previous comments that Charlotte had made about the impact of COVID-19 on home education, and I wondered what impact this had on Charlotte's sense of belonging, when these groups were not able to run in person.

Charlotte: "*And just get connections up with people that run courses, try and find a way of like, a support group, and stay in contact with your friends"*

When discussing support in education, Esther noted a lack of support from school staff in terms of friendship difficulties that she was experiencing, which she later discussed as having led to her move from school to home education.

Esther: *"Well, they didn't really resolve the situation. They just like, took me out of the situation, instead of like resolving it, or like, helping to resolve it"*

Here, Esther was referring to initial difficulties that she had following the transition from Year 6 to her secondary school, following which she felt that she received a lack of support from school staff.

Figure 7: Reflective box 6

The lack of support received in terms of managing friendship difficulties in school was highlighted by Esther above, and I wondered what impact this had on Esther's sense of belonging in the school community. For Esther, her lack of peer support during and following transition to secondary school appears to have been confounded by a perceived lack of support from school staff, thus highlighting a sense of isolation from the school community, and potentially leading to her feeling like an 'outsider'.

In addition to this, Esther discussed friendship difficulties which she felt were managed by removing her from the situation, instead of managing the situation itself and supporting her in resolving ongoing conflicts. The importance of relationships, both with teaching staff and peers are discussed in Mumford and Birchwood's (2020) literature review exploring pupil views of transition, with findings suggesting that positive peer and staff relationships can have a positive impact on the transition from primary to secondary school; something which appears to have been lacking in Esther's transition.

4.2.2.2 Subordinate Theme Two: Resources

Participants noted a combination of resources used in home education, including key stage textbooks, online courses, tutors, use of the internet and office equipment such as desk, chair and whiteboards.

Kacey: *"I use key stage books [pause] there's loads of books and there's like specific brands"*

Charlotte: *"maths I have a tutor for that, English I'm doing an online course and science I'm doing an online course"*

Alice: *"we use lots of books and if we can't find the information we need in the books, we, look on Dad's iPad or on Mum's phone"*

Esther: *"Mum and Dad and I put some money towards it and got a MacBook and then we got the desk and the chair and like all stuff to do my work. And there's a whiteboard up there"*

The increase in online learning platforms to support home education is discussed by Riley (2015), who notes the link between increased support being available online and related autonomy in home educated young adults. Whilst participants in this research discussed a combination of learning approaches, all mentioned the use of technology and/or the internet in supporting their learning in home education. In her thesis exploring the impact of new technologies on home education practice, Fensham-Smith (2017) found that, whilst participants engaged in diverse approaches to home education, advances in technology continue to support home educator's access to learning resources and support groups. This was particularly the case for Charlotte, who used technology to access online courses and remain in contact with home education groups, and Esther, who relied on technology resources to access her online curriculum and associated learning.

Figure 8: Reflective box 7

Given that parents are financially responsible for any resources needed in home education (DfE, 2019a; 2019b, Welsh Government, 2017), I wondered what the impact of increasing technology was on CYP accessing home education. Research has highlighted the impact of the 'digital divide' as a result of remote learning linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, with CYP from lower socio-economic backgrounds more likely to have limited internet and device access and less likely to have conducive learning environments in the home (Andrew et al.; Cullinane and Montacute, 2020). I reflected on the impact of this for home educated CYP, and whether lack of access to technology may prevent some families from engaging in home education, or hinder others who are already engaging in home education. This is discussed in further detail in 5.4.2.

4.2.3 Superordinate Theme Three: Expectations

4.2.3.1 Subordinate Theme One: School expectations

Whilst all four participants discussed expectations that were placed on them in school, there appeared to be some divergence around how these were perceived. For Kacey, these were seen as an advantage; a level of consistency and structure in school that she felt she missed in home education.

Kacey: *"So you kind of know what you're doing and it's all set and planned. Whereas home ed sometimes it's not"*

Kacey identified school uniform as being a desirable expectation that she would prefer in her current setting; in contrast to Esther, who identified the expectation of a uniform in school as an additional pressure, with her referring to her peers as viewing the lack of this in home education as an advantage.

Kacey: *"Cos with uniforms, you just wear the same thing every day…and then you only have to think about the weekend"*

Esther: "*that's why people would want to be home schooled because they can have their phone and they don't have to get into their school uniform everyday"*

Figure 9: Reflective box 8

Given the perceived impact of home education on Kacey's socialisation and identity, as discussed in further detail in superordinate themes five and seven, I wondered whether, for her, the idea of wearing a uniform was associated with a sense of belonging and identity which she didn't appear to have experienced in her home education experience, due to limited involvement with home education groups and several transitions.

Three participants discussed school expectations in a way that suggested that they were perceived as non-desirable, and, in the case of Charlotte, the cause of 'pressure and stress'.

Charlotte: *“what school did is basically said ‘your SATS are going to kill you if you don’t study for them, they’ll murder you, ha ha haaa”*

Charlotte: *“a lot of it from school that was an issue was just a lot of pressure and stress really”*

Alice: *“in maths time I'd be taken away and be doing tests on that then but, but I’d miss like my favourite like, subject on maths because I’m being taken away and doing tests”*

Esther: *“when I was in the success centre, they would like, always make me go and get my work from the classroom and stuff. And like, they would always, they’d try make me go into the lessons which I really didn’t want to”*

The impact of school expectations on CYP is discussed by Stammers and Williams (2019) who highlight difficulties with the current national curriculum including a lack of flexibility, increased prescriptiveness and testing, and increasing anxiety in parents, teachers and pupils. This is evidenced in Charlotte’s quotes above, with her drawing attention to the pressure placed upon her in lessons and formal testing situations in primary school. For Alice, the continuation of work when she had completed set work meant that she never truly experienced success in her eyes, which was to complete work, instead facing additional and increasing expectations, which may have impacted on her sense of self-competence and made it more difficult for her to experience a sense of success. Esther discussed anxieties around attending some lessons, and later attributed this to friendship difficulties. However, she talked about teachers trying to ‘make her’ go to lessons which she didn’t want to attend, and I wondered what the impact of this was on her anxiety.

Alice identified the increase in expectations as she got older, with her describing a preferred, learning through play approach in infant school, which was replaced by increased expectations in her junior school setting.

Alice: *"once you got into the juniors you had, you got no afternoon break, you had to work all afternoon without stopping"*

For Alice, there appeared to be a significant change in expectations between key stages, with her noting a lack of recreational opportunities in junior school, and referring to opportunities to play and engage in group work in the infant school. As noted by Stammers and Williams (2019), it should be recognised that there is a need for a balance between academic achievement and individual needs, and, where play-based learning is encouraged and favoured in lower key stages, "children's time to develop their own natural curiosity is chipped away at by the increasing expectations to have bums on seats listening to a teacher" (Stammers and Williams, 2019, pp. 39).

4.2.3.2 Subordinate Theme Two: Home education expectations

Home education expectations did not appear to be viewed as negatively as school expectations. For Charlotte, the consistency of home education expectations appeared to give a sense of structure to her schedule, whilst still allowing for the flexibility, autonomy and self-directed learning as previously discussed. Charlotte recognised that there were elements of home education which she found stressful, but that stressful situations happened a lot less in home education than they did in school.

Charlotte: *"you have to do maths English and science and do your GCSEs for them. They are mandatory subjects"*

Charlotte*: "home ed obviously has its moments that get stressful, say, you need like a project done but you, somehow, forgot, definitely forgot, to work on it, ya know, you've got to cobble that together, immediately. But ya know, that sort of same stress happened in school…that happens a lot more occasionally now"*

Figure 10: Reflective box 9

Charlotte described English, maths and science as mandatory subjects; subjects that were non-negotiable and had to be studied. I interpreted this as a parental expectation within home education, given that there is no set, mandatory curriculum to be taught in home education. All participants in this research discussed English and maths as being part of their home education curriculum, and I wondered whether this was reflective of home education as a whole, with these seen as a core subjects around which self-directed learning is based.

For Alice and Esther, home education expectations were viewed favourably in light of the increased autonomy and flexibility which was afforded to them. For Alice, this included ensuring that work was completed, and afternoons were used for this purpose, although, if work was completed, afternoons were allocated to self-directed learning. This appeared to work particularly well for Alice, who previously commented that she preferred to get work completed; something which she wasn't always able to do in school.

Alice: *"in the afternoons, if you haven't like finished what you did supposed to do in the mornings you would do that in the afternoon"*

Esther also appeared to prefer home education expectations, with her implying that these were reduced in comparison to school expectations.

Esther: *"So, that's my favourite part that I don't have to like get dressed sometimes or like, wake up early"*

However, Esther also pointed out that although home education expectations were different to those in school, she felt that the learning that she engaged with and produced in home education was more meaningful than that which she was involved with in school.

Esther: *"even though I do, I work less hours, the work that I do is more like meaningful work"*

This reflects previous research into home educated CYP views, with Meighan (1995) reporting that previously schooled CYP who were now home educated felt more able to be efficient in home education than when they attended school, commenting that it took them less time to get through their work.

Figure 11: Reflective box 10

Esther's comment on 'more meaningful' work led me to reflect on what this meant to her – was work more meaningful because it was self-directed? Or because she was afforded a higher level of autonomy and flexibility with which to complete it? Or could it be linked to the level of support discussed in the previous superordinate theme, with increased support in home education being linked to an increased understanding or increased success in home education outcomes?

Esther also discussed curriculum specific home education expectations, including her home education expectations as being varied, for example, with different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment, and I wondered what the impact of this was on her engagement in home education, with previous comments suggesting that she preferred the variety in home education when compared to school expectations.

Esther: "*sometimes it's like, there's a few questions I have to answer. Sometimes it's like, research things, or like, draw something, and, sometimes I have to do assessments. So today I have an assessment for English. And then, sometimes, like, with the Oak learning I have to watch the video and then answer the questions on the video"*

4.2.4 Superordinate Theme Four: Transition

4.2.4.1 Subordinate Theme One: Decision to home educate

All four participants discussed the transition to home education and the decision to home educate, although circumstances were distinctly different for each participant. Kacey had experienced several moves between school and home education, with her first making this transition in primary school. The decision to home educate was made by Kacey, although she viewed this as an important decision to be presented with at her age.

Kacey: *"if I said well I wish I wasn't home schooled, she would say stuff like, erm [pause] that well you chose to. But I was in Y3"*

Kacey: *"you shouldn't really give someone that age, like a big life decision…especially cos like, maybe they don't want it in the future"*

Figure 12: Reflective box 11

As discussed in Chapter two, Article 12 of the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989) notes the right of children "to express their views and for due weight to be given to those views, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child" (DfE, 2019a, pp.9), although there is no legal requirement for CYP views to be considered in decisions about their education. For Kacey, it appears that her views and wishes were taken into consideration and acted on in terms of a move to home education, although she feels that she was too young to make this decision. Given the increasing importance placed on gaining the views of CYP, I wondered how this could be achieved effectively so that CYP feel that they are heard and their views are acted on, but to avoid potential feelings of pressure regarding important decisions, as voiced by Kacey above. As Kacey was in Y3 when she moved to home education, and therefore aged 7-8 years old when the decision was made, it could be argued that she was too young to fully understand the long term impact of her decision, although I wonder at what age it is 'appropriate' for CYP to make decisions about their education.

For Charlotte, the decision to home educate appeared to be based on her experiences in primary school, with her noting the impact that school had on her mental health. The decision to home educate was made by her parents and communicated to her in her final year of primary school. In contrast to Kacey, the

decision for Charlotte to be home educated was made without her input, and was something that she felt that she had little to no control over, with her describing being 'thrust' into home education. Charlotte discussed the impact of this on her, and noted that this transition was one of the most challenging aspects of home education, with it taking some time for this to 'sink in'.

Charlotte: *"the way I was thrust into home education is unusual"*

Charlotte: *"I didn't really get a choice in the matter [laughs]"*

Charlotte: *"that's when it started to all kind of, kinda sink in, and yeh, it was, it was an interesting build up to it, because obviously I saw all of my friends going for tester days"*

Figure 13: Reflective box 12

I found Charlotte's comments and language around her transition to home education particularly interesting, for example, her being 'thrust' into home education, (suggesting that it was something that she was 'thrown' into, with little to no warning), 'it didn't immediately hit me' (home education as something which physically impacted on her, and the shock experienced as a result of this), 'it started to all kind of, kinda sink in' (home education as a lifestyle change which needed some adjustment to, and acceptance of). Charlotte's use of language when discussing her transition to home education suggests a lack of control over the situation, and I wondered what impact this had on her identity and sense of belonging, in addition to the school expectations that she discussed in superordinate theme three. Given Charlotte's ASD diagnosis, I also wondered whether this impacted on the challenges of the transition and associated changes, and how this could be supported for CYP with and without ASD diagnoses.

For Alice, the decision to move to home education had previously been considered by her parents for her and her younger brother as a lifestyle choice, and not linked to any difficulties within the school system. The COVID-19 pandemic and associated move to home learning gave Alice and her family the opportunity to 'trial' home education before subscribing to it officially. As a result of this, the move from school to home education happened quickly, as it aligned with the government closures of schools and move to online and home learning, which therefore left the family little time for preparation for the transition. Alice described school during this

time as ‘utter chaos’, with the move to home education initially being seen as exciting, alongside reservations over missing school. The ability to ‘trial’ home education worked for Alice and her family, and they found that home education was ‘fun’. This is discussed by Charles-Warner (2020, pp.3), who notes that “COVID-19 has given parents the opportunity to dip their toes in the waters of home education”, with an increase in home educated CYP said to be linked to the ability to trial home education.

Alice: *“because we were forced to, I was like ‘Actually, this is actually quite fun’. That's why we started it because Mum and Dad, we found it really fun”*

Alice: *“I felt kind of excited, because, because like kids at school, it was like utter chaos. So like, when we went, we didn’t know when we went, and then, we suddenly just had to go and I’m like ‘what?! What’s happening?!’”*

Home education for Esther was considered in relation to the difficulties that she was experiencing in secondary school, including conflict and friendship challenges. Esther discussed difficulties with her secondary school when she transitioned there in Year 7, as this had not been her school preference. This, alongside the separation of Esther from her cousins during transition, combined with friendship difficulties in school resulted in a challenging transition.

Esther: *“a lot of the people were very mean, like, a lot of them just didn’t really want to learn. It wasn’t a very good school. The teach, some of the teachers were nice, but it’s just not the best school, so I didn’t really want to go there. And then, when the students started being not very nice either then I didn’t like it at all. And because they don’t want to learn then it, they just disrupt the whole lesson and you can’t learn”*

Transition from primary to secondary school is described by some as the most significant taken by CYP (Stringer and Dunsmuir, 2012; Zeedyk et al., 2003) and the

most challenging (Hopwood et al., 2016), with increased expectations in learning and independence. As noted by Mumford and Birchwood (2020), relationships are highlighted by CYP as being a key facilitator to a successful transition to secondary school, and something that Esther described as lacking in her transition, for example, with her making the transition with very few known peers, separated from family members who gained places in a preferred secondary school, and a perceived lack of support from school staff.

Esther described the decision to transition from school to home education as a collaborative decision between her and her Father. The option of becoming home educated was offered as an alternative option to school, but a decision which could be reversed should Esther not enjoy it. In this sense, although Esther was similar to Kacey in having autonomy over the decision, the opportunity to home educate was presented as a trial, in a similar way to Alice's experience. Esther appeared to have some reservations regarding home education, which are discussed in further detail in the following subordinate theme.

Following the decision to home educate, Esther describes a lack of support from school, and felt that, although some recommendations were made in terms of home education resources, there was little other support for the transition to home education, with Esther describing herself as "not their problem".

Esther: *"they wouldn't, like, they weren't really helping that much. But, Miss Benjamin, she was quite helpful. She was telling my Dad some places where we could do like, to find work and stuff. But, other than that, they weren't very helpful"*

Esther: *"They like, just, because I left the school then they just thought that like now it's my Dad's problem, not their problem, to find work, sort of"*

Esther: *"When I left then they didn't really do anything. They just ignored it"*

Figure 14: Reflective box 13

Esther perceived a lack of support from school staff following the decision to home educate, and describes this as "it's my Dad's problem, not their problem". I wondered about the impact of this on Esther, with her, and her associated learning, being viewed by her as a problem to be solved, and one which she perceived school as being unwilling to support with. From a legal perspective, school staff are not obliged to support with transition to home education or support with home education resources, meaning that there was no expectation for school staff to provide any support after the decision to home educate had been made. Despite this, I wondered about the impact of this perceived lack of support on Esther's identity and sense of self-worth as a learner.

Figure 15: Reflective box 14

Although the circumstances regarding the decision to home educate were different for both Esther and Alice, I wondered what the impact of COVID-19 had been on their transition to home education. For Alice, COVID-19 and associated partial school closures had given her and her family the opportunity to trial this way of learning before making the decision to formalise it. For Esther, although she returned to school following the return to school for all children in September 2020, she had experienced several months of learning from home, and so, in essence, had also had the opportunity to trial this before fully subscribing to it, in contrast to Kacey and Charlotte, who moved straight from school to home education, with no home learning in between.

4.2.4.3 Subordinate Theme Two: Awareness of home education

None of the participants had any knowledge of home education prior to engaging in it. For Alice and Esther, a lack of awareness of home education led to misconceptions or concerns about home education and what the experience may be like for them. This was mediated for both participants once they had started to engage in home education.

Alice: *"I felt like 'no, no, no way!' because we were, because that's because I was younger and I, 'cause we hadn't done it before, I didn't really know what it was like. I thought it'd be like, like, more strict and stuff"*

Esther: *"Because I would be like, I wouldn't have anybody to talk to really, I would be at home all the time. Like, I thought that, as well, 'cause I wasn't at school then I wouldn't like, have any friends or anything because you can't go anywhere, especially because Corona then I know that we couldn't really go anywhere. Or do anything really, so I knew that, but I thought that I would like, just be at home all the time and*

I'd be stuck, like, with nobody to talk to or anything 'cause all my friends are at school all the time, yeah. But, it's nothing like that"

Whilst there is a lack of research exploring CYP awareness or knowledge of home education, it could be assumed that knowledge/understanding of home education will be based on prior experiences. Home education is not discussed as a viable option to formal schooling (Fisher, 2021b), meaning that it is often only understood by those engaging in it, or linked to it professionally. This may impact on the awareness of CYP prior to engaging in home education, with them having little to no knowledge and understanding of what it may involve. External views of home education may also impact on CYPs awareness or understanding of home education, as discussed in more detail in superordinate theme five.

Kacey's key understanding of home education was linked to her identity, and the perceived difference between her and her schooled peers, leading to feelings of embarrassment.

Kacey: *"I just knew that like I wasn't in school with my friends"*

Kacey: *"I was a bit embarrassed about it a lot because my other friends were in school and I wasn't"*

Figure 16: Reflective box 15

Kacey's understanding of home education appeared to be distinctly inked to her identity compared to her peers, with her viewing herself as different to her peers as a result of the way in which she engaged in learning. Kacey's feelings of embarrassment around being home educated suggest that she viewed home education as a negative difference, and experienced a potential desire for conformity in order to be more like her peers. I wondered what the impact of this was on her sense of self, with her viewing her access to learning as embarrassing.

4.2.5 Superordinate Theme Five: Identity

4.2.5.1 Subordinate Theme One: Identity and learning

Three participants made links between learning (both school and home education) and their identity, with Alice being the only participant not to discuss this.

Figure 17: Reflective box 16

I wondered whether this could be linked to Erikson's psychosocial stages of development (1968), with the three remaining participants being aged 14 years old, and therefore developing through adolescence. For Erikson, bodily changes in adolescence can create confusion, during which young people can experience identity conflicts. I wondered whether this explained why this theme was not interpreted for Alice, who was significantly younger than the other three participants.

For Kacey, being home educated had a significant impact on the development of her social identity, with her feeling as though she had missed out on key experiences of adolescence.

Kacey: *"in school like you have those like crushes during childhood but then if you're home educated you don't really meet that many people"*

Kacey: *"when people finish schools, like they'll have like memories from school and like have their prom and stuff and I wanna have that, I still want it"*

Figure 18: Reflective box 17

Kacey appears to feel as though she has missed out on important social aspects of school, and I wondered what the impact of this was on her identity. She previously discussed feeling different to her peers and an associated sense of 'embarrassment' as a result of this, and I wonder whether the lack of experiencing aspects of school which Kacey sees as integral, such as those mentioned above, have added to her feeling different to school aged peers, in addition to a fear that she will take this into adulthood, with the potential for social relationships that she develops having experienced aspects of school which she hasn't, thus adding to her feelings of difference.

Charlotte attributed mental health difficulties and low confidence to her experiences in primary school, and felt that a move to secondary school for her

would have added to this. For Charlotte, secondary school was something to 'deal with' following the challenges that she had experienced in primary school.

Charlotte: *"I knew secondary would be worse than primary, for like, my mental state was already in shatters at that point. I was, not in a good place"*

Esther's identity was linked to learning in terms of the view that she had of herself. Esther viewed herself as 'being smart', and enjoyed attending creative writing lessons in school during which she could 'show this off', although felt that, in home education, this was not an option and she could not show her 'smartness' to anybody other than her Father.

Esther: *"I used to go to creative writing lessons with my cousin and I loved that because then in English and stuff I got to show people all my writing, like all the stuff that I did in creative writing. So that was really good and I loved being like, smart, basically. And I still do well, now we have nobody to show my smartness to, other than my Dad"*

Participants in Jones' (2013) research were said to have a clear sense of identity which was linked to home education, with them viewing themselves as different to schooled peers, although they viewed this as an advantage; viewing them and their home education experiences as privileged. Experiences in home education were also said to develop the identity of participants in De Carvalho and Skipper's (2019) research, with participants attributing increased confidence to their experiences of socialisation in home education.

4.2.5.2 Subordinate Theme Two: External view of home education

The idea that home education is not suited to everybody was highlighted by Alice; a sentiment also reflected by Esther in parts of her interview. For both Alice and Kacey, home education was very much dependent on parents and home life, and therefore reflected the vast amount of approaches to home education (Rothermel, 2003). Charlotte described external views of home education as 'lawless' and a deviation from the 'norm', highlighting the assumption that children are legally required to attend school.

Kacey: *"Lots of people think that it's just like, you don't really do any work and you're kinda just at home. But it's just, a tiny bit more laid back, but it depends like, who you, what your parents are like really"*

Charlotte: *"I think it's seen as [sighs], because, obviously you're out of the school system which is out of the norm and people don't like that"*

Alice: *"Well, some people. Probably won't like it. Maybe because, they, their situation at home is not good or that, they like being with friends all the time. Some people might say it's good because at school they don't have any friends or stuff like that or they get bullied"*

Figure 19: Reflective box 18

I wondered what impact external views and perceptions of home education had on home educated CYP, with connotations such as lack of work, home education as a deviation from the norm and 'lawless' being associated with the practice of home education. Whilst participants in this research were aware of the realities and expectations of home education, I wondered how it might feel for them to be seen as not participating in learning, or being 'different', and how these views may impact on their identities. It may be that, for some home educated CYP, this is an advantage, in a similar way to that discussed by a participant in Jones' (2013) research. However, for YP like Kacey, this may reinforce existing beliefs about being 'different' to peers; differences which are seen as a disadvantage, or a negative.

Home education is not well known as a viable alternative to formal schooling, with the UK described as "conceptually and practically in the dark about the very possibility" (Lees and Nicholson, 2016, pp.306), with a lack of information provided to parents about the option of this as an alternative to formal schooling. This can lead to

misconceptions of home educated CYP as being unsocialised or completing no learning (as discussed by participants in this research), and can lead to the mis-labelling of this cohort of CYP as missing education (Charles-Warner, 2020). Others' perceptions of home educated CYP is discussed by Jones (2013), who notes that the experiences and perceptions of home education are influential in the development of CYP's sense of self and identity.

4.2.6 Superordinate Theme Six: Learning

4.2.6.1 Subordinate Theme One: Curriculum

All four participants discussed curriculum, both in terms of what they had previously accessed in school, and, for Kacey, what she was currently accessing in college, as well as discussing their home education curriculum. Whilst there were some similarities in terms of core subjects in home education, such as English, maths and science, there was some divergence in other areas. Parents interviewed by Neuman and Guterman (2017) discussed feeling an obligation to teach certain subjects in home education, including English and maths, and I wondered whether this was linked to motivations of the participants' parents in this research to include 'core subjects' within home education.

Kacey: *I'm doing English, maths, science, English literature, and IT*

Figure 20: Reflective box 19

Kacey highlighted the subjects that she was studying in college at the time of the interview. It may be that, as Kacey was attending a college course specifically for home educated CYP, the curriculum options were focused on core GCSE subjects, with less options of alternative curricula.

Charlotte and Alice both discussed curriculum preferences at school. For Charlotte, her interest in science was 'broken' in school, due to the monotony of the curriculum and repeated experiments, although she was able to highlight other curriculum areas in which she was interested. Charlotte appeared to have continued with these subjects in her self-directed learning in home education, with her discussing these at other points in the interview.

Charlotte: *"I like drawing, modelling, I like writing stories, but, yeh, and, I like science. I used to like it a lot more but then the school kind of broke that interest for me. Because it used to be a lot more interesting then it just got really monotonous and it was basically the same experiment over and over again"*

Figure 21: Reflective box 20

Charlotte's recognition of her increased engagement in favoured subjects, including art, computer science and religious studies links to superordinate theme one, specifically autonomy and self-directed learning, with Charlotte highlighting that these subjects were seen as advantageous because she was interested in them. This is discussed further below, in the subordinate theme of intrinsic motivation.

Alice had a keen interest in art, and, whilst this was a passion for her in school as well, she discussed the limitations of the school curriculum in terms of restricted amounts of time to cover different art techniques, as well as the inability to complete pieces of work before moving on. This was particularly challenging for Alice as she identified herself that she prefers to finish work; one of the advantages that she noted of home education.

Alice: *"in the art at school, they will working about like, so like printing, and you only, and you were working on it for a few weeks…And but this time [at home] you get to choose whether you do leaf printing or ink printing. So it's kind of like less restricted, but, but, I find this one more fun. Because you were able to like finish it off in the afternoons if you haven't finished it, but at school you just have to leave it where it was and just forget about it"*

Esther identified that her curriculum options at home were more flexible and less restrictive than those offered in school, with her viewing school expectations of pupils as “like robots”. Esther appeared to view her home education curriculum as more self-directed and autonomous, as discussed in superordinate theme one.

Esther: *“at home you can do whatever you want basically. Like, you change your lessons all the time and it’s not like, kind of at school it’s like robots, you all do the same thing at the same time, all the time. But at home, it’s not like that. And you can go anywhere to do your work”*

Participants in De Carvalho and Skipper’s (2019) research also appeared to value the increased choice of activities in home education when compared to options provided in school, with them noting a wider range of activities available to home educated CYP. This was discussed by Esther, who noted that the flexibility of home education enabled her to access additional learning opportunities such as kick boxing and piano lessons, which she was now able to engage in during the ‘school day’.

Charlotte discussed the variance included in her home education curriculum, which appeared to have elements of self-directed learning included alongside core curriculum subjects.

Charlotte: *“on Monday I was doing maths with my tutor… Tuesday, I did, I think I did, I did modelling because I’m doing a thing with the local museum… I did, research on a topic I was interested in. Then Wednesday I did a English, oh no that was science, I did science on Wednesday, and then on Thursday I did English”*

4.2.6.2 Subordinate Theme Two: Intrinsic motivation

Intrinsic motivation is defined by Ryan and Deci (2000) as participating in an activity solely for internal satisfaction, feeling passionate and energised about the activity, and feeling a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment following completion of the

activity. All participants in this research highlighted the importance of learning and presented as intrinsically motivated to learn. For Kacey, this presented as a frustration, as she felt that she wasn't learning as much as she'd like to be in home education, and highlighted that, when she attended an overseas school, she wasn't taught "well". Esther also expressed similar frustrations linked to school, noting that other children didn't want to learn, thus impacting on her access to the curriculum.

Kacey: *"I didn't like it because I wasn't learning that much at home"*

Esther: *"It's really annoying because then I want to learn but I can't because they're just like, really naughty, well not naughty, like silly"*

Figure 22: Reflective box 21

I imagine this may have felt frustrating for both Kacey and Esther, with them viewing school as having a specific purpose for learning, but being unable to fully access or engage with this as a result of other pupils, and how, for some pupils in school, this could result in them also disengaging with learning.

Charlotte discussed a distinct lack of engagement and intrinsic motivation when referring to learning in school, noting that lessons were not engaging but described them as "long" and "boring". This contrasted with Charlotte's views of her home education curriculum, which, as previously discussed, was autonomous and self-directed, which may explain increased levels of intrinsic motivation for Charlotte in accessing this.

Charlotte: *"When things get boring I lose all motivation for it, which is not, a good mindset really, but, ya know, I'm starting to figure out how to motivate myself"*

Although Alice did not discuss intrinsic motivation explicitly, she presented as eager to showcase and share her learning. Whilst Alice's formal learning

opportunities, such as Maths and English, were led by her parents, Alice discussed more informal learning which appeared to be part of daily life, for example, when her and her siblings found caterpillars whilst out on a walk. As with her artwork, Alice was keen to share her outdoor/practical learning with me, and this is discussed in further detail in subordinate theme four: approach to learning.

4.2.6.3 Subordinate Theme Three: Collaborative learning

For Charlotte, collaborative learning was linked to her desire to engage in more projects with friends from home education groups.

Charlotte: *"[sighs] I'd like to do more like projects with my friends….I do do them occasionally but I don't do them enough*"

For Alice and Esther, collaborative learning was linked more to learning with family, with this being siblings and parents for Alice, and grandparent for Esther.

Alice: *"sometimes we go to the woods and help Dad. Or we cut up logs and put them in the stack for when Dad does deliveries. And in the first lockdown as well, we made, bug houses and a bench"*

Figure 23: Reflective box 22

Alice was the only participant in this research to be home educated alongside her siblings, and I wondered if this had any impact, along with her young age, on the amount of collaborative learning done with peers and family. As previously mentioned, I also wondered whether social distancing measures associated with COVID-19 impacted on her options of attending home education groups and being involved with learning with people outside of the family home.

Esther: *"because I have horse courses, so, me, we got my Nan it for Christmas as well, so then I go to the horse field with my Nan. We always talk about what we got on the end of module tests and stuff and like, if one of us doesn't understand something then we explain it. I love that because sometimes like, my Dad knows nothing about horses really. But, so, because I have the course online and my Nan has the course and I love talking to Nan about the course"*

Esther talked about her and her Nan learning together, for example, with them explaining parts of the equine studies qualification to each other and being able to learn from each other. Due to the nature of home education, a common misconception may be the lack of collaborative learning, or learning from others, although, for Esther, it was particularly important, especially in regards to her equine studies. This was also observed by Thomas (1998), who noted that learning in home education was taking place not in isolation but as a result of interactions and interventions facilitating learning. Conversational learning has been discussed in previous studies exploring CYP views of home education, with participants highlighting the advantages of collaborative learning in home education (Broadhurst, 1999; De Carvalho and Skipper, 2019; Jackson, 2007).

Esther also discussed learning alongside her Father, and them taking a 'trial and error' approach, working out what worked best for her and which elements of home education they wanted to change. It felt as though this aspect of collaborative learning gave Esther additional autonomy over her home education experience.

Esther: *"we didn't really know what stuff to get my work from and how to plan my work and stuff. So it wasn't that good. But now we know like good places to get my work from"*

This approach to home education appears to be common, with home educating families said to identify differing learning styles and learning objectives over time and therefore adjust learning approaches accordingly (Meighan, 1995; Thomas, 1998), and some said to decrease the formalisation of home education approaches as they become more experienced (Barratt Peacock, 1997; Kunzman and Gaither, 2013). This appeared to be the case for Esther, who noted that, at the beginning of home education, she would have a set timetable, but as time went on, it

became less formal and more flexible, with Esther appearing to co-create her learning approach alongside her Father; an approach said to facilitate effective learning (Rogoff, 2003).

4.2.6.4 Subordinate Theme Four: Approach to learning

Kacey's preferred approach to learning was for this to be adult-led, and to be taught by a teacher. This may link to Kacey's previous comments about difficulties in achieving mastery within certain subjects due to being taught by her parent, and her desire for social interactions.

Alice discussed her approach to learning in home education, and, whilst part of the pedagogical approach in her home setting seemed to be fairly structured and linked to core subjects, Alice also discussed other learning opportunities, including practical learning approaches. This appears to be a preferred approach for Alice, with her also referring to practical activities that she was engaged with in school.

Alice: *"I think I was in Year 1, I went, I started ballet, and I do stuff like, like school trips, I did bible exhibition, Plas Menai and the zoo, I went to the zoo"*

When discussing her approach to home learning, Esther referred to her preference for feedback. Whereas, in a school setting, this would be given by a teacher/member of staff, Esther discussed this in terms of online computer programmes that she had used to support her learning. As discussed in the previous subordinate theme, Esther's trial and error approach to home education meant that she initially engaged with learning programmes in which there was no feedback. However, the trial and error approach used by her and her Father meant that they

were able to trial different learning programmes to find one which suited Esther's preferred way of working.

Esther: *"if you get it wrong then it just tells you that you got it wrong. It tells you the right answer, but it doesn't tell you like what you've done"*

4.2.7 Superordinate Theme Seven: Relationships

4.2.7.1 Subordinate Theme One: Belonging

Two participants talked specifically about home education groups, although had varying experiences and expectations of these. For Kacey, the idea of attending a home education group was similar to the concept of a 'play date', where she felt she would be forced into friendships which she may not have otherwise chosen.

Kacey: *"it's like, a little play date kinda thing, I don't really wanna be like, go to try and find friends. I wanna meet my friends, like I wanna go into school and see who I thinks nice and talk to them, be their friend…"*

Kacey also implied a lack of friendships in home education, with her noting that once home education expectations had been met, there was nobody in particular to socialise or make summer plans with.

Kacey: *"when you're at home, like, if you finish all the work that you've been assigned to do, then, you don't have anything to do, and like, if it's the summer holiday, you don't really have any friends to hang out with, or, there's no school trips, and stuff…"*

For Charlotte, home education groups and courses were an aspect of home education which she would recommend to other prospective home educated CYP. Charlotte associated these with friendships and a sense of belonging, and noted that it was where she had met some of her good friends, and one of the ways in which she stayed in contact with peers.

Charlotte: *"one of my course groups I do, go with them, they do good work and Kevin's a, a nice guy. And just get connections up with people that run courses, try and find a way of like, a support group, and stay in contact with your friends.*

Charlotte also discussed course groups and 'connections' as being an integral part of home education; an addition which resulted in 'smoother sailing' in home education, and one which seemed to add a sense of belonging and prevent isolation.

Charlotte*: "But once you've made the connections that you need to make, to say, with tutors and with people that run courses, you've, it's a lot smoother sailing"*

Figure 24: Reflective box 23

Whilst the benefit of home education groups was based on Charlotte's own personal experiences, I wondered what the impact of attendance of these may have been on Kacey and her lived experiences, and whether they may have supported the development of her identity and sense of belonging, as well as allowing her to develop support networks in home education with other home educated CYP.

Home education networks are said to be popular in the UK (Fortune-Wood, 2006), and, although the format can vary (De Carvalho and Skipper, 2019), Kraftl (2013) notes attendance as a way in which home educated CYP may feel less marginalised; spending time with others who have made the same education choices and therefore finding validation of their own approach to education. Participating in home education groups is said to promote a strong sense of community, thus impacting on the developing identities of CYP and increasing self-esteem (Hogg and Abrams, 1990). Participants in De Carvalho and Skipper's (2019) research noted the advantage of home education groups as developing a sense of belonging and providing opportunities to engage with a range of different aged peers in a variety of activities.

4.2.7.2 Subordinate Theme Two: Impact of education on socialisation

Although Kacey had experienced bullying in school, friends and relationships appeared to be the main aspect of formal schooling she missed, and was referred to several times by her throughout her interview.

Kacey: *"I had a group of friends at the start and then I ended up getting bullied a bit by them"*

Kacey: *"I didn't really make many friends, because I didn't go to school and meet people"*

Kacey: *"I missed all my friends, really"*

Home education appeared to be a barrier to socialisation for Kacey, and she discussed that her identity as a home educated CYP impacted on her ability to meet new people and develop friendships.

Charlotte identified the 'inevitability' of conflict between children at school, and noted that this was due to being 'cooped up' with peers, although didn't note that she had experienced any particular difficulties with friendships in school.

Charlotte: *"there were obviously a few moments of which there was, ya know, children making other children cry but that kinda happens in a school"*

Similar to Kacey, Charlotte highlighted that she missed her friends when she left school, and implied that this contributed to the difficulty of the transition between school and home education. Since becoming home educated, Charlotte noted that she had attended several home education groups and courses, and it is these that have contributed to her current friendships, with her noting that her closest friends are also home educated.

Charlotte: *"The hardest part was being away from my friends, and all like, the people, and, having a complete change of scenery, schedule, all of that"*

Charlotte: *"but yeh, overall, pretty much like the friends I consider close are all home ed"*

Figure 25: Reflective box 24

I wondered whether this had had a positive impact on Charlotte's identity and sense of belonging as a home educated YP as suggested by Kraftl (2013) in the previous subordinate theme, and whether the attendance at home education groups had supported her transition between school and home education, especially given that Charlotte noted lack of friendships as being a contributing factor to finding the transition to home education so challenging.

Similar to Kacey and Charlotte, friendships were a key aspect of formal schooling which Alice missed, which, in her case, may have been exacerbated given the social distancing measures of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although she later discussed friendship difficulties in school, Esther also highlighted an advantage of school as being able to see friends, and it felt that, for all participants, friendships and relationships were naturally linked to a school setting.

Esther: *"sometimes you want to be at school so that you can like see your friends and stuff"*

Esther perceived 'judgement' from peers in school, and this appeared to impact on her confidence to speak out in school, fearing being judged by peers and them talking about it "forever".

Esther: *"the students are very judgy, so like, if you do one small thing, then talk about it forever. And I didn't really like that because, then I was always scared to do stuff"*

When talking about friendships in home education, Esther referred to a group of friends with whom she spends time outside of school, although noted that having no access to friends and social interactions in home education was a benefit to her,

meaning that she could concentrate on home education expectations during the day and socialise with friends outside of school times.

Esther: *"I do have a few friends that sometimes we go to the park and stuff. Well my main friend is Pip and that she is my best friend and we always go to the park together"*

Esther: *"when my friends are at school then obviously I can't talk to them. But it's quite good. Because then I don't get distracted by them texting me all day."*

Esther discussed difficulties in making friendships in her secondary school, which may have led to difficulties settling into school and being able to fully engage in the curriculum. As previously discussed, the impact of Esther's transition to secondary school appeared to impact on her sense of belonging and socialisation, with her noting friendship difficulties throughout secondary school.

Esther: *"the school that I wanted to go to in Year 7, where, that's where all my cousins went and stuff, so I went to a school where I knew no one, there was I think one person from my primary school who went to that school, so I didn't really know anybody and then, in Year 8…I didn't really, like I had friends, but they weren't very nice and they were nice to me. But to other people they weren't very nice"*

4.2.7.3 Subordinate Theme Three: Family relationships

In the case of Alice and Esther, family relationships were highlighted as being positive and as a result of home education, and were linked to collaborative learning with parents and siblings. Kacey discussed disadvantages of home education and the impact of family relationships, specifically the mother-daughter bond.

Kacey: *"you have to spend, like, your entire life, with your, well, not your entire life, but, most of your time with your parent, and when you go to school you're kind of like, learning, but you also have time away from your parents, socialise with your friends. But then, if you're home schooled, you're just, with your parents almost 24/7"*

Kacey: *"it ruins a bit of your relationship with your parents, I think, because like, you don't really like, connect that well because you're spending so much time teaching with each other"*

For Kacey, the increased amount of time spent with her parent as a result of home education was a disadvantage, as she didn't have the time away from her parent at school, nor did she attend home education groups which also may have increased the space between them.

Alice discussed increased time with her family as a distinct advantage of home education, and had developed learning relationships with both her Mother and Father as discussed in the previous subordinate theme.

Alice: *"I enjoy doing this much more because like it's spending more time with my family"*

Figure 26: Reflective box 25

I wondered whether, for Alice, family bonds were also strengthened as a result of having siblings who were home educated as well, so that the home education approach to learning was a way of life, and something which all members of the family equally subscribed to. It may also be that Alice's age, along with those of her siblings, supported the development of relationships with her parents, with them being her main caregivers as well as her educators. The presence of siblings in her home education environment may have given Alice additional opportunities for play, as well as having peers to learn alongside.

For Esther, home education appeared to support the development of several family relationships, including the relationship between her and her Father, and with her Nan, as previously discussed. Another aspect of home education which Esther preferred, and which was linked to socialisation, was the visiting of family members whilst she was at home. Esther noted that, if she had been in formal schooling, she would miss out on these visits and not see family members as much, but, as they visited during school hours, she enjoyed having the opportunity to spend additional time with them, and saw this as a distinct benefit of home education.

Esther: *"my Nan, when she comes, or Peter's Mum when she comes, I love that, I love seeing when other people come 'cause they don't come when, when my, like, when Eddie is at home and when everybody is at home. They come in the day. And I love that"*

Figure 27: Reflective box 26

I wondered what the impact of this was on Esther's identity and sense of belonging, with her feeling as though she would 'miss out' on these family interactions if she was engaged in formal schooling. It may be that, as the eldest of her siblings, it gave her a sense of responsibility; a feeling of being able to spend time with adult family members without younger siblings being around. As mentioned briefly in superordinate theme six, home education appears to have had a positive impact on Esther's relationship with her Nan, both in the sense of collaborative learning, but also in the sense of a developing friendship between them, with Esther noting the advantage of being able to spend additional time with her Nan, during afternoons, something which formal schooling may not have afforded her the opportunity of.

The benefits of the development of adult-child relationships in home education is cited widely in the literature (Broadhurst, 1999; Goymer, 2001), with home education said to lead to a powerful learning relationship between the CYP and their parents (Goymer, 2001). In research focusing on the views of home educated CYP, additional time spent with family is viewed as an advantage of home education (Broadhurst, 1999), similar to Alice and Esther's experiences in this research, with some YP viewing their families as cohesive units and noting that they felt part of the decision making process in home education (Clery, 1998). Participants in Jackson's (2007) study noted that support from parents was an advantage of home education, whilst participants in Jones' (2013) research noted that relationships with both friends and family provided an additional source of support and encouragement within home education, and highlighted the importance of relationships in learning.

4.3 Answering the Research Questions

This chapter has explored superordinate and subordinate themes interpreted from four interviews using IPA. Analysis from the data interpreted in this small scale study has revealed that, whilst participants were a homogenous cohort, experiences of school, home education, and the transition between the two settings were multifaceted, with similarities and differences demonstrated between participant's experiences.

4.3.1 Research question 1: What are CYP lived experiences of school and home education?

Overall, participants appeared to prefer home education to formal schooling, although this was not the case for one participant (Kacey). Participants discussed both preferred and non-preferred aspects of formal schooling. School pressures and expectations were noted, including workload, assessments, timetable, subjects and school uniform expectations. These appeared to be viewed as a disadvantage for most participants, with this being viewed as conformity and having to be the same as peers by Esther, with stress/pressure to perform academically noted by Charlotte and Alice, which was apparent as early as Year 4. However, school expectations were viewed as an advantage by one participant (Kacey), with another (Esther) commenting on autonomy in school, linked to the additional GCSE choices that she was looking forward to in her new school placement.

Teaching and support in school was also discussed, with one participant (Kacey) viewing this favourably. However, Esther and Alice noted a lack of support in

school as a result of adult: pupil ratios, although this is not a disadvantage of school that has been raised in previous research.

All four participants discussed friendship challenges and conflicts in school, with one participant (Esther) discussing this as being linked to her transition to home education. Participants also highlighted the beneficial impact that school had on friendships and associated relationships, noting that this was a key aspect of school that was missed following their transition to home education.

Participants also discussed their experiences of home education and the advantages and disadvantages of this. Participants discussed increased autonomy and flexibility in home education, which was linked to increased curriculum choices and self-directed learning. In turn, this appeared to have a positive impact on intrinsic motivation. This is consistent with the literature, with previous research highlighting flexibility (e.g. McIntyre-Bhatty, 2008), autonomy (e.g. Riley, 2015) and self-directed learning (e.g. Solder, 2017) as being distinct advantages of home education. Participants could make decisions regarding how, when and where to complete home learning, with core subjects complemented by self-directed learning for Charlotte, Alice and Esther. This, alongside varied approaches to learning, including formal (alongside a tutor), online and independent study, and collaborative study with siblings or peers, appeared to impact on participants' intrinsic motivation to learn. Opportunities for collaborative learning were evident for Charlotte, Alice and Esther, with all three participants noting a preference for learning alongside peers or siblings. However, this aspect of learning was not noted by Kacey, who experienced learning in home education independently, with no attendance at home education groups.

Alice and Esther seemed to value the additional learning support offered in home education, and compared this to the school context where they identified that, due to class sizes, less support was available. Esther identified that learning in home education was more tailored to her and her individual needs, with her feeling more confident in asking for help in the home environment. For both of these participants, I wondered whether previously enhanced relationships between family and child then supported the learning relationship and subsequent support available, or whether home education and the need for additional learning support then positively impacted on the parent-child relationship. However, this was not the case for Kacey, who perceived a detrimental impact on her relationship with her parent as a result of home education. Participants also identified a large range of resources used to support them in home education, with all participants noting the use of technology.

Although expectations in home education were identified, these were said to be less stressful than in school, with Charlotte noting that home education expectations felt more manageable, and a different kind of stress to that at school. It may be that the level of autonomy and flexibility which was afforded to participants led to them feeling more able to manage their learning and alleviate subsequent levels of stress, with less need for conformity as discussed by Esther, and less academic pressures noted by Alice and Charlotte. For Kacey, home education expectations did not appear to be as fixed/structured as she may have preferred, with her demonstrating instead a preference for a set timetable and expectations, and being taught as opposed to self-directed learning.

4.3.2 Research question 2: What are CYP perceptions of what helped and hindered them in the transition from school to home education?

Participants had varied experiences of the transition from school to home education, although this may be expected given the variance in home education rationale (Table 3, Chapter 2), and the impact that this may have on transition. For two participants (Esther and Charlotte), the decision to home educate was based on difficulties in school, with both participants linking their mental health difficulties to experiences in school. For Alice, the motivation for moving from school to home education appeared to be based on a lifestyle change as opposed to any specific difficulties in school. Kacey did not give any specific reasons for moving to home education.

None of the participants experienced a planned transition period from school to home education. It was particularly interesting that no participants discussed any external support, for example support or meetings with a home education officer, and I wondered what parental experiences had been. Esther felt that school staff saw her/her education as “not their problem”, and would have preferred additional support in setting up in home education. For Charlotte, preferred support would include links to other home educated CYP and home education groups, and I wondered what the impact of this could be for CYP who have not heard of, or engaged with home education before, with none of the participants in this research having heard of home education or understanding what it involved. The introduction of this when families are planning a move to home education, or following a move to home education, may support in easing both CYP and parental anxieties around the move.

For Alice, the beginning of her home education experience was marked by partial school closures as a result of the COVID-19 social distancing measures, which may have had a significant impact on how quickly this transition happened. Whilst Charlotte experienced 2 months overseas as part of her introduction to home education, she didn't appear to view this as part of a transition to home education. Charlotte appeared to find this challenging, and noted that a more familiar environment in which to begin accessing home education may have supported her transition. For Esther, previous partial school closures appeared to give her a 'trial' into home education and how it would work, and it could be argued that this was an unplanned, but gradual transition into learning about home education and what it would look like in practice. Kacey did not explicitly talk about her transition to home education, but did discuss the decision making process of moving from school to home education.

Kacey viewed the autonomy and decision making given to her when deciding on the move to home education as a disadvantage, feeling that she was too young to make this decision. For Alice and Charlotte, the decision to move from school to home education was made by parents, and, although both participants appeared to exhibit some apprehensions around the prospect of home education, these appeared to ease once they had settled into home education. This appeared to take longer for Charlotte, although may be linked to her difficulties in home education overseas and her being home educated as an only child, as opposed to Alice who was being home educated alongside her siblings, at the same time as schools were partially closed.

All participants highlighted the challenge of leaving friends behind following their move to home education, and this was especially apparent for Kacey, who

appeared to have no specific family connections or friendships which supported her in home education, resulting in her viewing home education as quite an isolating experience. However, for Esther, Alice and Charlotte, social connections were made via home education groups or with family members, and these appeared to support participants' transition into home education.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

As noted in chapter 2, much of the research on home education demonstrates polarised views of this form of education. Advocates of home education highlight the advantages of home education on aspects such as life outcomes (Goymer, 2001), autonomy (e.g. Broadhurst, 1999) and mental well-being of those who engage in it (e.g. Jones, 2013). However, more politically motivated research focuses on the disadvantages of home education, for example, concerns around the safeguarding of children who are home educated and a belief that children who are home educated are therefore 'invisible' (Longfield, 2019), with calls to introduce stricter monitoring of home education, including the implementation of a national register and annual assessments of the suitability of home education (Badman, 2009; Soley, 2018). Despite strong opinions and aforementioned polarised views of home education, there is little focus on the lived experiences of those participating in it, i.e. CYP who are home educated. With this in mind, the current research supports in minimising this gap in research and providing a platform for home educated CYP. As can be seen in chapter 4, lived experiences from CYP who are home educated can demonstrate some of the polarised views as highlighted in the literature, with both advantages and disadvantages of school and home education discussed, although the focus is not intended to portray school experiences as good, home education as risky; neither is the intention to portray school experiences as negative and home education as a preferred option, but more to highlight the lived experiences of the particular participants from this research, in both settings. It is hoped that the inclusion of views from those at the heart of home education can support further

recommendations; for home educating families, for policy makers, for school staff and for those families considering home education.

This chapter provides a summary of this research with reference to the main findings, alongside a critique including strengths and limitations. Implications for practice are discussed, before recommendations for future research.

5.2 Summary and unique contribution

This small-scale case study examines the lived experiences of four CYP who have engaged in formal schooling and home education, and their transition between the two systems. Whilst previous research has examined pupil views of home education (e.g. Solder, 2017) and transition from home education to post-16 options (e.g. Ryan, 2019), this research is unique in that it has supported a homogeneous group of CYP, who have experience of both systems, in exploring their lived experiences, using IPA as a methodological framework; thus supporting IPA as a useful methodology in eliciting experiences and views of CYP, the use of which is sparse in the literature within this cohort (Teuma, 2013).

Whilst caution should be urged given the small sample size of participants and the diverse experiences of participants, this research contributes to the limited research base on home education within the UK, especially from the perspective of CYP, with the majority of research conducted in this area either combining findings with those from parents (Nelson, 2013; Bowers, 2017) or including a combination of CYP who have experienced home education only, and those who have experienced home education and formal schooling (Broadhurst, 1999; Jones, 2013; Bowers, 2017), with little focus on the transition between the two systems. However, this

research is unique in addressing this shortfall, with a focus on CYP who have been engaged in both systems of education, with a focus on their transition between both school and home education.

As discussed in Chapter Four, participants experienced complex and varying circumstances in school, in their transition to home education, and in their current experiences of home education. Alongside individual experiences of participants, commonalities were discussed in relation to school and home education experiences. All participants experienced some difficulties in school, although these appeared to be more prominent for two participants (Charlotte and Esther), and all identified some advantages of school. This was particularly the case for Kacey, who preferred the structure and consistency of education in school. Participants experienced differing experiences in transition, and transition between school and home education varied in length, which is consistent with current literature (Ofsted, 2019). Following the move to home education, three participants appeared to prefer home education and their current experiences, although one participant was attending a part-time college course at the time of her interview, and appeared to prefer this to her previous home education experience. The recent attendance of Kacey to college may have impacted on her views of both formal educational settings and home education. Charlotte, Esther and Alice appeared to particularly value the autonomy, flexibility and self-directed learning which was afforded to them in home education, with this appearing to impact positively on their intrinsic motivation to learn.

5.3 Research Critique

5.3.1 Strengths of the research

As noted above, this research has provided CYP the opportunity to reflect on and explore their school, transition and home education experiences with an adult; an opportunity which some participants may not have previously had, given the lack of statutory obligations in terms of gaining CYP views around school placement (DfE, 2019a), and the inconsistencies in support from home education officers in LAs (Collier, 2021; Myers and Bhopal, 2018). For some CYP and their families, support from the LA may have been received, but this may not mean that CYP views are taken into consideration, given current guidance that states that home education officers are not legally obliged to ascertain CYP views about home education, unless they have an EHCP (DfE, 2019b). It may also be the case that, for some home education officers, with increasing numbers of CYP within their LA, (Chapter 1, Figure 1), the time/capacity is not available for such opportunities to be provided to CYP, especially where this is not mandatory. For Alice and Esther, parents noted informally that the opportunity presented in this research was a particular advantage for them, given the recency of their move to home education, and them having no contact with an adult external to their family since the move to home education.

This research has contributed to existing research exploring the views of home educated CYP and, as with previous studies, has placed the voice of the CYP at the centre of the research, the importance of which is highlighted by the UNCRC (UNICEF, 1989). The focus in this research on the voice of the CYP, and particularly on their lived experiences of both school and home education, place it in a unique position amongst other literature, where CYP views have been omitted (Jones, 2013;

Ofsted, 2019; Fensham-Smith, 2021), or, where they have been included, have been combined with the views/experiences of others' (Nelson, 2013; Bowers, 2017). The use of IPA as a methodology within this research has allowed me to focus specifically on lived experiences of home educated CYP and to look more interpretively, rather than descriptively, into participants' experiences, focusing explicitly on this within data analysis. Although remote interviews were opted for as a result of social distancing measures, it may be that these supported the development of rapport with participants, giving them choice and control over how long the interview lasted, how they engaged (i.e. with the camera on or off), along with an additional element of control regarding what they shared with me. For example, had interviews taken place in the home, it may be that this affected the power dynamic between the participant and I, with me being in their space. The use of remote interviews meant that participants, and I as the researcher, were in our own space, and therefore both parties may have felt more comfortable, impacting positively on the researcher-participant relationship. It is hoped that this, along with optional visual research methods, supported participants in exploring their lived experiences with me; something which has been highlighted as lacking in previous research (Jones, 2013; Fensham-Smith, 2021).

IPA has also allowed me as the researcher to make clear my own positionality and experiences, and be transparent in terms of how this may have influenced the interpretation of the data which was peer checked as a way of attempting to overcome this. Nevertheless, my own thoughts, experiences and pre-conceptions as a researcher are likely to have impacted on some interpretation of the data, with reflexivity used throughout the research in order to provide transparency, and

examples of the data analysis process included in appendices eleven and twelve as a way of making my thoughts and decision making explicit to the reader. Tracy's (2010) framework is discussed in Chapter 3 as a way of reflecting on the trustworthiness of the data. In addition to this, Smith et al's (2009) post-analysis considerations for IPA research are detailed in Table 12 below, in which participant sample, idiography, analysis and reflexivity within this research are explored in further detail.

Table 12: Smith et al 2009 post analysis considerations for IPA research

Considerations as identified by Smith et al. (2009)	**Considerations within the presented research**	**Reflection on the presented research post-analysis**
Appropriate participants which will yield appropriate data.	Participants were gathered through purposive sampling using specific inclusion and exclusion criteria, as detailed in Chapter Three.	Demographic information, including Socio-Economic Status (SES) and parent occupation was not taken during the recruitment process, which may have provided for context for participants' experiences both in school, at home and during transition. The decision to exclude this at the time of recruitment was made in an attempt to avoid any pre-conceived ideas/perspectives and subsequent unconscious bias which may have impacted on data analysis. All participants in the study were female, as there were no males who volunteered to participate in the research. The inclusion of data from male participants may have provided alternative perspectives of the school, home education and transition experience, although participant gender was not part of the inclusion or exclusion criteria. Participants were all English speaking due to interviewer limitations, hence potentially excluding participants who have English as an Additional Language (EAL).

		Additional information, such as reason for home education, was not collected, as this was not the aim of the study. However, this may have provided some additional context regarding the transition from school to home education for participants who did not explicitly disclose this during their interview.
Data that is idiographic in nature	Convergence and divergence are discussed within each theme, with a focus on participants' individual experiences.	Due to word restrictions in the thesis, there were data that were excluded from Chapter Four, with decisions made about themes which linked directly to research questions, and subsequently the most appropriate data to represent themes. For this reason, potentially valuable data was lost, especially given the rich data obtained from interviews, the longest of which was 1 hour and 50 minutes long. Nevertheless, convergence and divergence between participants was discussed within each superordinate theme, with the experiences of one particular participant being distinctly different to others.
An analysis process that explores meaning and understanding given by participants, and not just descriptive	An overview of individual and shared experiences is given in Chapter Four, with the application of reflexivity to explore meaning for participants, as well as interpretations of the researcher.	As a novice IPA researcher, analysis in this research may have been restricted by my limited experience and knowledge of the IPA process, with additional skills in the application of IPA contributing to further theoretical and conceptual ideas. The use of reflexive text within Chapter Four was used in an attempt to explore participants' experiences beyond a descriptive level.

accounts of a phenomena.		
An analysis process that incorporates, as appropriate, phenomenological and interpretive detail to gain an account of the phenomena.	Whilst the interpretation of data is linked to existing theories and literature, I have attempted to be transparent regarding the impact of my experiences on the interpretation of the data. Quotes are used within Chapter Four to illustrate phenomenological and interpretative accounts.	Member checking themes with participants may have provided extra trustworthiness to the analysis process. However, this is noted by Hardy and Majors (2017) and Larkin and Thompson (2012) as not being relevant to the process of IPA. Instead, peer supervision and peer validation (Larkin and Thompson, 2012) with a supervisor experienced in IPA was utilised, alongside peer supervision with other TEPs using IPA methodology.
Checking of data through supervision and/or peer support.	As above, peer and tutor supervision was utilised throughout.	Member checking may have prevented potential researcher bias, although was not appropriate with IPA as noted above (Hardy and Majors, 2017; Larkin and Thompson, 2012), resulting in likely researcher bias.
Transparent data analysis including commentary of	Quotations demonstrating each subordinate theme have been included in Chapter Four. Transcript extracts have been included in appendices eleven	The analysis process is described in 3.11 and examples of this presented in appendices eleven and twelve. Whilst quotations are provided in Chapter Four to support the transparency of the data analysis process, there is likely to be researcher bias present given the nature

examples of extrapolated data	and twelve, demonstrating the data analysis process.	of the analysis and qualitative approach, which is said to be inevitable (Langridge, 2007) and difficult to avoid in qualitative research (Crotty, 1996).
Engagement with theory throughout analysis process.	Theory and literature are used in Chapter Four to support in reflecting on individual participant's accounts.	A comprehensive account of relevant literature may be limited due to my own skills and experience. Word count limitations have also impacted on the ability to cover relevant theories/literature in depth and detail.
Reflection and interpretation of context.	Pen portraits were included in Chapter Three to reflect the individual circumstances and context of individual participants.	Chapter Four includes reflections on participant's experiences and associated findings, with reflection and interpretation highlighted throughout, with the use of reflective text boxes.
Engaging in reflexivity.	This is discussed in further detail in Chapter Three, with examples of this in Chapter Four.	Reflexivity is evidenced in reflective text boxes within Chapter 4, with an example of an extract from my reflexive journal noted in appendix ten.

5.3.2 Limitations of the research

As noted in Table 12 above, all participants in this research were female, and, whilst this was not part of inclusion/exclusion criteria, reflected participants who were aware of the research and happy to participate. This is not an accurate representation of the gender split in home educated CYP, which is said to be almost equal, with 51% boys and 49% girls within the home educated population (ADCS, 2019). However, the inclusion of only female participants within this research may have impacted on research findings, and it may be that future research focuses on male participants or those with other gender identities. The self-selection method of recruitment may have further impacted on data collection, with parents whose children are not having a positive experience in home education potentially less likely to consent to their children participating in research. Research findings from this study may therefore be focused more on negative experiences within school, and positive experiences in home education, with the exception of one participant, and readers should be aware of this when reading and interpreting findings.

As noted in 3.7.2.2, participant recruitment for this study was challenging, said to be common when researching the phenomena of home education (Bowers, 2017; Myers and Bhopal, 2018; Nelson, 2013). This may have been further impacted by a shift in priorities for home educated CYP and their families and increasing numbers of home educated CYP impacting on the workload and subsequent capacity of the LA home education officer; linked to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Following recruitment, data collection was completed remotely for three participants due to COVID-19 social distancing restrictions, meaning that rapport may not have been developed as effectively as if interviews had taken place. This may

have been remedied with multiple interviews as suggested by Doutre et al (2013), although this was not available due to the limited timescale of the research. Completing interviews remotely meant that visual research methods as discussed in 3.10.2 were not utilised as effectively as they may have been under normal circumstances. Limitations linked specifically to COVID-19 and associated social distancing restrictions are discussed in further detail in appendix one.

Whilst my identity within this research was of that of a student of the University of Birmingham, participants and their families were also aware of my placement links to an LA. For one participant, this was the LA in which she resided and had attended school. I have since reflected on the potential impact of this on participant engagement; whilst no participants discussed any experiences with professionals from their LA, I wondered how this may have been perceived by parents, and what the impact of this may have been on recruitment, for example, with negative experiences with an LA potentially discouraging some participants from taking part.

Whilst IPA methodology suited my research aim and subsequent research questions as noted above, the approach is not without its faults, and it was challenging to utilise all elements of IPA within the scope of this research. This is likely to have been impacted on by my novice status as a researcher, with the likelihood that, despite attempts to bracket my own preconceptions throughout the research and engage in continuous processes of reflexivity, these will have impacted on my interpretation of data and subsequent themes, noted by Crotty (1996) as being difficult to avoid in qualitative research. However, as noted above, member checking of themes with participants may have contributed to the rigour of the data presented. The in-depth and detailed nature of IPA (Smith, 2011) resulted in large quantities of

data being produced, although, as noted in Table 12 above, much of this rich data was omitted due to the scope and limitations of this thesis, and it is likely that key themes linked to lived experiences of school and home education, and the transition between the two, were lost. Whilst variation between participants and within subsequent themes is an expected outcome of IPA due to its idiographic nature (Wagstaff et al, 2014), I found this challenging as a researcher, moving from individual to shared themes whilst attempting to stay true to the data and individual participant experiences, which were both convergent and divergent.

A further critique is that of the 'othering' of home educating families and CYP, as discussed in Chapter One. Advocates of home education have previously claimed that research into home education practices can reaffirm the idea that home education is a deviation from the norm, or different to normal practice, as opposed to a legal and practical alternative to formal schooling (de Ballaigue, 2015; Myers and Bhopal, 2018). Whilst it was not my aim to perpetuate this within this research, I wonder if the very choice to research this area of education goes some way to singling out home educated CYP and their families, and therefore perpetuating 'otherness' in this regard.

5.4 Implications for professional practice

As previously noted, the aim of IPA is not to produce generalizable results. However, it could be argued that this is a weakness only if viewed from a positivist perspective, that is, the traditional testing of a hypothesis (Coolican, 2018). However, this research encourages the reader to view implications for practice in relation to

theoretical generalisability, that is, “to consider the results in the light of their own professional experience when assessing the potential prevalence of the phenomenon” (Smith and Osborn, 2007, p.530). For this reason, findings and associated implications are linked to educational practice, and discussed below in relation to each identified superordinate theme.

5.4.1 Superordinate Theme One: Independence in learning

A key advantage of home education was highlighted by participants as being linked to levels of autonomy, flexibility, and self-directed learning. CYP in school should be given additional levels of independence in their learning, for example, making decisions over which aspects of learning they access. In primary school, this could still include a wide range of curriculum subjects, but be differentiated for children to choose at which level they work, and to engage in ways of learning which specifically work for them. In secondary education, this could be more varied, with YP having access to curriculum choices earlier than Year 10 to enable them to focus on preferred subjects in which they are likely to be more engaged. However, it should be noted here that the very nature of home education makes the option of flexible, autonomous and self-directed learning more likely, with a higher adult: child ratio and less restrictions in terms of what is being taught – where schools are restricted to teaching to the national curriculum, home educating families are not. With this in mind, formal education settings should consider how additional elements of flexibility, autonomy and self-directed learning can be utilised within a curriculum structure. On a wider level, it could be argued that it is time for a curriculum restructure, given that

it has been over 30 years since the introduction of the national curriculum (Education Reform Act, 1988), with more opportunities for autonomous and self-directed learning to be implemented into every day teaching practices.

Home educating families should also be aware of the advantages identified in this area by home educated CYP, i.e. autonomy, flexibility and self-directed learning. These aspects should be implemented into the curriculum where possible to avoid a home education curriculum which replicates that of the formal school curriculum, with a change only in learning environment. For three out of four participants in this research, the above aspects of independence in learning were noted as a distinct advantage of home education, and should therefore be utilised throughout home education curriculum where possible. It may be that the implementation of these aspects are supported by home education advocates and charities, with support offered to aspiring home educating families in considering how to manage a home education curriculum and what aspects to include.

5.4.2 Superordinate Theme Two: Support for learning

The research highlighted the support that CYP felt that they needed within school, noting that adult: child ratios were smaller at home, and therefore more support was received. Given ongoing school budget cuts and associated staff shortages within education (IFS, 2020), formalised school settings should instead look at how CYP can be supported in their learning without the reliance on a supporting adult. This could include CYP being taught increasing independence skills and approaches to learning such as facilitating collaborative learning between peers,

and supporting CYP in utilising alternative resources to support their learning in school. Education professionals should also be aware of the impact of relationships in school on CYP as discussed more in 5.4.7, and facilitate support for CYP to make, maintain and restore positive relationships throughout school, potentially using approaches such as restorative practice, which can increase independence with CYP and enhance their problem solving skills (McCluskey et al., 2008).

Given the increase in technology used to support home education (Fensham-Smith, 2017; Riley, 2015), and the increasing number of CYP who are becoming home educated, further support in terms of resources and funding for this should be explored within policy. Failure to do this may result in those for whom home education would be beneficial being discouraged from engaging in this practice due to financial implications; thus increasing the digital divide and reinforcing the idea that home education is a middle-class endeavour (Belfield, 2004; Myers and Bhopal, 2018). This should also be supported by LA EHE officers, for example, with signposting to relevant funding for home educating families, as well as supporting access to resources such as equipment and book libraries, in an endeavour to increase the amount of support for learning provided to home educating families, should this be required.

5.4.3 Superordinate Theme Three: Expectations

Participants highlighted the pressure and expectations placed on them both within home education and school settings, although appeared to be more affected by those in school, with pressure and stress in schools said to be increasing and

adversely impacting on the mental health of CYP (Stammers and Williams, 2019). School settings should endeavour to alleviate some of these expectations in favour of a more autonomous and self-directed approach to learning, thus impacting positively on CYP's intrinsic motivation to learn. An increased focus on emotional health and mental well-being should also be prioritised, given ongoing concerns around CYP mental health in schools (Stammers and Williams, 2019).

Home educating families will most likely be aware of the potential impact of increased expectations in school, although caution is still urged for home educating families, for example, to support CYP in managing any home education expectations and being aware that these may differ from those typically seen in a formal school setting.

5.4.4 Superordinate Theme Four: Transition

As noted in Chapter Two, there is currently no expectation for CYP views to be taken into consideration when exploring the option of home education, and, as there is no permission required from a school setting or the LA, transitions can take place relatively quickly, with a CYP finishing formal schooling one day and beginning home education the next. Whilst, according to the Education Act (1944), it is the right of the parent to decide whether or not to engage in home education, future policy should explore the inclusion of CYP views in this decision, so that they are given the opportunity to discuss home education with an external, impartial advocate who can ensure that their views are included in decision making and accurately represented. EPs are well placed to provide this support, supporting CYP to gain an understanding

and increased awareness of home education before engaging in it, potentially helping to alleviate concerns which may be borne out of a lack of understanding, or a public rhetoric around home education which is often distorted (Bowers, 2017). An impartial advocate such as an EP could also be utilised in supporting school staff, the family, and the CYP in their transition to home education; whether this be a phased exit from school and increasing time spent in home education, or include more formalised support from home education groups, as a way of transitioning the CYP and their family into a different way of learning.

This should also be provided as ongoing support for CYP, as it may be that although CYP agree to home education and are advocates of it to begin with, experiences in home education may alter this perception, resulting in them changing their minds, or realising that their preference lies in formal schooling (in the case of Kacey, for example). Again EPs are well placed to provide this support, acting as a mediator between home education and formal schooling and being able to identify advantages and challenges within each system, along with supporting CYP in making their wishes known, to prevent CYP from moving into home education which they then find it more difficult to move out of.

5.4.5 Superordinate Theme Five: Identity

Participants appeared to link their identity to their home education experiences, and viewed themselves as distinctly different to their schooled peers. Professionals working with home educated CYP should be aware of this, especially if the transition to home education has been recent. In this instance, CYP may be

experiencing some levels of conflict in terms of their identity, with social norms defining CYP by age/school year, which are not so apparent within home education (McIntyre-Bhatty, 2008). Given the amount of time taken up by formal schooling, CYP transitioning to home education may also find additional amounts of time difficult to manage, and struggle to find their place within social situations (see 5.4.7). CYP are also aware of the external view of home education, with a common lack of understanding from those who are not engaged in it, or have limited experience of it (Bowers, 2017). Professionals working with home educated CYP should remain aware of this, ensuring where possible that home education is promoted as a viable alternative to formal schooling, with care taken to avoid any 'othering' of CYP and their families, being aware of any assumptions related to home education which may be consciously or subconsciously present in our own practice.

Home educating families should also be aware of the potential impact of home education on the identify of HE CYP, and, although this can be an advantage (de Carvalho and Skipper, 2019), should ensure that additional support is provided to home educated CYP in terms of the continual development of their identity within home education, supporting access to home educating groups to enhance social inclusion in the absence of social relationships which are normally developed in a formal schooling system.

5.4.6 Superordinate Theme Six: Learning

All participants accessed core subjects in home education, and these were supplemented with varying additional curriculum subjects which appeared to provide

participants with increased autonomy and opportunities for self-directed learning, thus having a positive impact on their intrinsic motivation for learning. Home educating families should be made aware of the flexibility and subsequent advantages of a non-restricted curriculum in home education, and therefore the opportunity to incorporate additional, preferred subjects alongside those that are identified as 'core' curriculum subjects (i.e. maths, English and science). Additional support should be offered by LA EHE officers here, to signpost home educating families to alternative curricula and ways of working (for example, online learning groups, tutors, examples of alternative subjects).

Participants noted a lack of flexibility and autonomy when it came to curriculum in school, with less opportunities to follow self-directed learning agendas. A streamlining of the national curriculum would allow CYP to focus on the subjects which they enjoy at a deeper level, and is likely to decrease the prescriptiveness of the current curriculum (Stammers and Williams, 2019). Professionals working with CYP in formal settings should be aware of the potential implications of what may be perceived as a restrictive curriculum by CYP, and work to increase engagement and motivation in spite of this, for example, supporting schools to create a tailored curriculum for CYP when appropriate and required, thus supporting the development of intrinsic motivation by utilising the CYP's own interests.

5.4.7 Superordinate Theme Seven: Relationships

All participants noted difficulties in terms of friendships or bullying within their school experiences, which, for some home educated CYP, impact directly on the

decision to move out of formal schooling (e.g. D'Arcy, 2014). Additional support should be provided in schools to support CYP in making, maintaining and restoring friendships, with this being facilitated by adults in order to encourage independence in CYP. EPs are well placed to offer this support to schools using systemic interventions supporting CYP in developing resilience, communication and interaction skills and a growing awareness of their own and others' emotions. The introduction of an impartial advocate to gain CYP views during and after the transition to home education, as noted above, may also support CYP in articulating any concerns regarding socialisation and aid in addressing these.

Friendships and social interactions within home education should also be supported with ongoing access to home education groups which could be advertised and signposted by the LA home education officer. As noted above, this may serve to support the developing identity of CYP engaging in home education, as well as providing them with social support, noted by Charlotte as being key to her home education experience, but missing in the experience of Kacey, and something which she perceived as having a negative impact on her experiences in home education. Attendance at such groups may also support the development of relationships between home educated CYP and other adults, for example, parents of other home educated CYP, or tutors who may support in the development of home education groups.

Relationships between pupils and teachers are key to the learning process (Mumford and Birchwood, 2020), and research suggests that a breakdown in the relationship between school and home can result in a decision made to home educate (DfE, 2019b; Kendall and Taylor, 2016; Ofsted, 2019; Schooling, 2017). In

these instances, preventative measures such as mediation between the teacher and pupil/parent should be provided in an attempt to maintain this relationship prior to this breaking down.

5.5 Future research

Whilst the focus of this research was on the lived experiences of CYP, and their transition from school to home education, future research would benefit from exploring this from the perspective of others, for example, parents/guardians, or professionals involved in home education. Research exploring the transition from school to home education for parents may also support in understanding the process which they went through, for example, recognising the need for change, identifying home education as a solution or desired outcome of change, and implementing this. It may be that, although participants in this research did not identify an explicit 'transition period', this was more apparent for decision makers who may have gone through the processes as listed above, and were therefore more aware of a transition between the two systems. In addition to this, research including LA home education officers and teaching staff who have some experience of the move to home education, for example, in the case of Esther, would help in exploring their experiences of supporting a move to home education and what support/training they feel would be helpful in terms of supporting families and CYP with this move.

In response to the limitations discussed in 5.3.2, future research should also focus on the lived experiences of males in both formal education and home education, and explore whether these are distinctly different to the females

interviewed in this research, as well as looking into reasons why there may be less views from males included in the research body as a whole.

As noted by participants in this research, home education in practice was different as a result of COVID-19, with social distancing restrictions resulting in the closure of increased public spaces, including home education groups and activities alongside the postponement of some home education courses and a subsequent move to increased online learning. Future research exploring the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on home educated CYP (i.e., those that were already home educated in March 2020) would be useful in exploring changes in practice over this time, the impact of social distancing measures on learning in home education, and whether any changes made during this time have been sustained post social distancing measures, or whether practice has returned to normal.

5.6 Concluding comment

This research provides an account of four CYPs' experiences in school, home education and the transition between the two systems. Despite limitations as discussed in 5.3.2, this research contributes to the existing literature on pupil views of home education and transition. The findings indicate varied experiences within both systems, with advantages and challenges identified in each. Overall, the research hopes to support professionals working with home educated CYP, although also uses CYP views to make recommendations for support within schools, with a focus on creating individualised and tailored learning opportunities for all CYP. As Esther

commented “*at school it’s like robots, you all do the same thing at the same time, all the time. But at home it’s not like that”.*

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APPENDIX ONE: COVID-19 IMPACT STATEMENT

This thesis was completed during the COVID-19 pandemic, with ethics approval initially submitted in February 2020. As the COVID-19 outbreak began to spread, ethical amendments were requested to allow for remote work should the pandemic impact on face-to-face work. These were submitted in April 2020, and full ethical agreement agreed in June 2020.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated social distancing measures, three out of four participants were recruited online, with details of the research being sent to the home education officer within my LA, shared with local Facebook home education groups and on Twitter, along with details shared with neighbouring LAs home education officers. I had initially intended to attend some home education groups to meet with home educating families to explain the research in person, rather than relying on a static and impersonal recruitment poster with potential participants less likely to contact me for further information, as opposed to asking questions in person. I have since reflected on the potential impact of this on recruitment, especially given the difficulties in engaging in research with home educating families as discussed in Chapter three, and wonder what the impact of this approach to recruitment was, with families potentially less inclined to participate knowing little about me and my positionality as a researcher.

It was also imperative that I was very clear about my inclusion and exclusion criteria during the recruitment phase, due to many schools being partially closed and therefore lots of CYP engaging in home/remote learning, which was often viewed by parents and carers as home education. With this in mind, inclusion and exclusion

criteria was designed in a way that aimed to ensure that those who were eligible for participation in the study were home educated due to reasons not linked to COVID-19.

In addition to online recruitment, three out of four interviews were conducted online due to social distancing measures. Microsoft Teams was used as a platform through which to interview participants, with audio recordings made of interviews. Whilst for one participant, this afforded her the option of having her camera switched off, I wonder what the impact of a remote interview may have had on the development of rapport with participants, including the visual research methods aspect of the interviews as detailed below. I also wondered what the impact was of being interviewed in their family home. Whilst for some participants, this may have felt more comforting because of it being their 'safe space', for others it may have felt more invasive, having a stranger interviewing them in their home (Barker and Weller, 2003; Mayall, 2000; Scott, 2000) (in Fargas Malet, 2010). Had it not been for COVID-19 social distancing measures, interviews were intended to take place in a neutral location, in which it was hoped a rapport could be built between the participants and I.

As part of the visual research methods approach detailed in Chapter three, the initial plan was to send participants a disposable camera and ask for photographs to be taken which represented their home education experience, following which printed photos would be discussed in a face-to-face meeting, with the idea of combining these into a photo collage as a way of eliciting conversation about home education, as well as developing rapport with participants. In addition to this, life grids were intended to be completed together, also as a way of developing rapport and initiating

conversation. Due to social distancing measures, the decision was made not to send disposable cameras to participants due to the risk of cross-contamination, although participants were encouraged to take photographs of their home education experience if they wished. The exclusion of this aspect of the research may have impacted on the fluency with which participants discussed their home education experience, or the rapport with which I was able to develop with them, with this relying solely on remote means. Although participant C, Alice, shared photographs with me remotely, these were not explicitly linked to her home education experiences, and it is likely that that was due to Alice only experiencing home education during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore being unable to experience home education groups/activities as would be offered with no social distancing measures in place. Whilst participants C and D (Alice and Esther) completed life grids prior to our interview, these may have promoted further discussion if they were created collaboratively in a face-to-face context.

As a novice to IPA, the analysis and subsequent writing up of the themes interpreted in interviews felt like a daunting task, especially given the isolation in which it was done. At the time of writing up, university library and subsequent learning spaces were not accessible to post-graduate students, with university supervision taking place remotely and LA placement offices remaining closed, meaning that the write-up was done solely at home, alongside remote supervision from both university and placement supervisors. This had an impact on me personally, with it sometimes feeling lonely and isolating, with no physical space to offload and all forms of supervision being restricted to remote means.

APPENDIX TWO: RECRUITMENT INFORMATION POSTER

Hi – I'm Jo, and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist at the University of Birmingham. I am currently researching the experiences of children aged 10+ who were previously educated in school but are now home educated. I would like to spend some time talking to your child about their experiences of both systems. The results from this research will remain confidential.

If you are interested in taking part, please get in touch and I can send you further information/meet up to discuss the project.

Many thanks

Jo Mumford
Year 3 Trainee Educational Psychologist

APPENDIX THREE: UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM ETHICS APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

Application for Ethics Review Form

Guidance Notes:

What is the purpose of this form?

This form should be completed to seek ethics review for research projects to be undertaken by University of Birmingham staff, PGR students or visiting/emeritus researchers who will be carrying out research which will be attributed to the University.

Who should complete it?

For a staff project – the lead researcher/Principal Investigator on the project.
For a PGR student project – the student's academic supervisor, in discussion with the student.

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

When should it be completed?

After you have completed the University's online ethics self-assessment form (SAF), **IF** the SAF indicates that ethics review is required. You should apply in good time to ensure that you receive a favourable ethics opinion prior to the commencement of the project and it is recommended that you allow at least 60 working days for the ethics process to be completed.

How should it be submitted?

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.

What should be included with it?

Copies of any relevant supporting information and participant documentation, research tools (e.g. interview topic guides, questionnaires, etc.) and where appropriate a health & safety risk assessment for the project (see section 10 of this form for further information about risk assessments).

What should applicants read before submitting this form?

Before submitting, you should ensure that you have read 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 (https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/research.pdf)

- The guidance on Data Protection for researchers provided by the University's Legal Services team at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/legal-services/What-we-do/Data-Protection/resources.aspx.

Section 1: Basic Project Details

Project Title: An interpretive phenomenological analysis of the lived experiences of young people who have transitioned into home education

Is this project a:

University of Birmingham Staff Research project ☐
University of Birmingham Postgraduate Research (PGR) Student project ☒
Other (Please specify below) ☐
Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Title: Dr
First name: James
Last name: Birchwood

Position held: Ed. Psych. D Academic and professional tutor
School/Department School of Education

Telephone:
Email address:

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

Title: Dr
First name: Huw
Last name: Williams

Position held: Ed. Psych. D Academic and professional tutor
School/Department Education/DISN

Telephone:
Email address:

Details of the student for PGR student projects:

Title: Ms
First name: Joanne
Last name: Mumford

Course of study: App Ed and Child Psy D
Email address:

Project start and end dates:

Estimated start date of project: 01/05/2020
Estimated end date of project: 01/06/2021

Funding:

Sources of funding: N/A

Section 2: Summary of Project

Describe the purpose, background rationale for the proposed project, as well as the hypotheses/research questions to be examined and expected outcomes. This description should be in everyday language that is free from jargon - please explain any technical terms or discipline-specific phrases. Please do not provide extensive academic background material or references.

The aim of the research is to explore the subjective accounts and experiences of children and young people who are home-educated. The research will focus on their experiences of the transition from school education to home education. The research aims to ascertain the circumstances following which the decision to home educate was made and the subsequent impact of home schooling on the child. My proposed research will collect children's accounts of schooling, exploring the positive and negative aspects of this alongside those associated with home education.

Using a qualitative approach, I am aiming to provide a platform for home-educated children to discuss retrospective accounts of their school experiences, in addition to reflecting on their experiences of being educated at home. Whilst between-participant comparisons are not a primary objective, some cross-case comparison may be undertaken as a form of secondary data analysis.

Visual research methods will be used to support children and young people in communicating their views during the semi-structured interviews. Research suggests that this can be successful due to the interest that children and young people themselves take in images (Bloustein, 2003), and that they can be useful in eliciting emotional and intellectual responses (Freedman, 2003). It is argued by some researchers that this is a particularly useful technique for children and young people who have difficulty expressing meaning through words (Moss et al, 2007), and that, through the creation of images, children and young people are more able and ready to express their emotions and beliefs (Leitch and Mitchell, 2007). Further information regarding specific visual research methods is provided below.

Justification for the research:

1. *Increasing number of children who are home educated within the UK:* The number of children and young people known to be home educated has increased year-on-year for the past five years by an average of 20% each year. The cohort increased by approximately **6,000** between the 2017/18 and 2018/19 academic years (ADCS, 2019).
2. *Vulnerability of children and young people who are home educated:* Research suggests that it is often the most vulnerable groups, for example, those with SEND needs, or those with financial difficulties, who make the decision to home educate, therefore making it more difficult for some parents to offer an appropriate education out of school (D'Arcy, 2014).

3. *Link between exclusion and home education:* Elective Home Education continues to rise despite Local Authority intervention with schools who are suspected of 'off-rolling' (i.e. taking pupils off the school roll without a formal, permanent exclusion or by encouraging a parent to remove their child from the school roll, when the removal is primarily in the interests of the school rather than in the best interests of the pupil; (Ofsted, 2019). A high number of parents withdrawing their children are unprepared, ill-informed and often make the decision to avoid exclusion or are told that the school cannot meet their child's needs (ADCS, 2019). In the academic year 2018-2019, 4% of children/young people who were home educated had received at least one fixed-term exclusion prior to being home-educated.
4. *Lack of research on home education, particularly facilitating the voice of the child and parent:* Nelson (2013) highlighted the lack of research on children who are electively home educated, particularly research which focuses on the views of children who are part of the home education community. Given that this was 7 years ago, and the numbers of home-educated children has continued to rise, it seems appropriate for further research into this group be explored and pupil voice explored in order to inform how they may be supported in the future.
5. *Home educators and home educated children as a marginalised community:* Since the Badman review (2009), it has been argued that the home education community is often marginalised as being 'hippies', 'nerds' or 'new age travellers', with some home educators feeling persecuted and mis-represented (Fraser, 1999; Bowers, 2017).

Key Research Questions:

It is assumed that, although research questions are included below, these will be refined and developed throughout the research, via comprehensive engagement with professional literature and research. This will be done via systematic review methods which will identify and evaluate existing literature and use this to support the current research. Current policy will also be used to define research questions. There is the potential that this may change whilst the research is being carried out, given a recent public consultation exploring the implementation of a registration system for home educated children (DfE, 2019), for which public feedback is yet to be released.

Primary research questions may include:

- *What are pupils' lived experiences of the education system prior to being home schooled?*
- *What are pupils' lived experiences thus far, of the home education approach?*
- *What are pupils' accounts of the transition from formal schooling to home education?*

Secondary research questions may include:

- *What factors of both systems have supported or hindered their development (cognitively, socially, emotionally and physically)?*
- *How has home schooling changed/affected the identity of children?*

Expected outcomes:

It is expected that the outcomes from this research will be relevant for professionals working with all children, with potential recommendations made by children and young people for how they may have been supported further in formalised education. It is hoped that this can support to inform practice within these settings.

Research findings will also support those who work directly with families who home educate, including specialist teachers, educational psychologists (EPs), professionals in health and social care and those working within special educational needs (SEN) teams.

By sharing (anonymous) findings with third party services as noted above (within the local authority within which this research will take place), and through dissemination of this research, it is expected that the voices of children within the home education community will be heard, in order to inform the support that home educated children– and their parents – receive, and to support children who are making the transition out of formal school settings.

Section 3: Conduct and location of Project

Conduct of project

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

A qualitative, retrospective case study approach will be taken to the study, which follows a critical realist perspective, with the main methodology being that of semi-structured interviews. In order to support children/young people in articulating their feelings and participating in the interviews, additional visual methods will be used, which are detailed below and included in the Appendices. Please note that, as the approach will be child-centred, the use of these resources is optional and will depend on the individual and what they feel comfortable in engaging with. Data will be analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which has been deemed suitable given that it allows participants to "offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences" (Smith et al, 2000, p.56).

Semi-structured interviews have been chosen as the main approach through which to elicit the views of children and young people. Braun and Clarke (2014) note key values of using this as an approach, including the ability to collect rich and detailed data about individual experiences and perspectives from vulnerable/marginalised groups. It is therefore felt to be an appropriate method of data collection for this research. A copy of the semi-structured interview schedule for children and young people can be seen in Appendix 1.

As discussed briefly above, visual research methods will be used alongside semi-structured interviews to support the elicitation and elaboration of pupil views. A photo elicitation/collage task will be set during the first session, allowing children/young people the opportunity to gather photos/images which portray their life as a home educated child, and gather these together for our next meeting. Participants will be given access to a disposable camera, along with the means to send this away for photographs to be processed. Whilst suggestions/examples of what to take photos of may be given to participants as a guide, it is hoped that they will use this method as a way of

communicating their own experiences, thus giving me, the researcher, a window into these experiences. As photographs are a participant generated visual material (i.e. selected and created by the young people themselves), they will allow myself, as the researcher, to see phenomena from the point of view of the children and young people with whom I will work (Barriage and Li, 2017). This will be used to give children and young people a 'clear, tangible prompt' (Clark-Ibanez, 2008) alongside their semi-structured interviews. They will also be encouraged to bring artefacts along to the next session if they feel that these will help them in discussing their home education journey.

An example of a photo collage can be seen in Appendix 2. If photos are taken of other children/family members as part of this activity, these will be confidentially destroyed after they have been discussed/used as part of the collage.

During session 1, participants will also be shown an example of a 'life grid activity', which highlights significant aspects of their educational journey. Life grids are used as a visual tool for mapping important life events and encouraging discussion. It is argued that the use of such a tool in qualitative research supports both interviewer and interviewee in a relaxed approach to constructing and reflecting on past events and experiences, facilitating the discussion of potentially difficult issues (Wilson et al, 2007). This will be completed together in session 2. An example of this can be seen in Appendix 3. This has been amended to suit the children and young people who may participate in the study and as such includes life events around the transition between school and home education. However, participants will be given the opportunity to add more time/date specific categories if this suits them.

Geographic location of project

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

The project will take place in the UK, with participants recruited from England. Where possible, this will be within the West Midlands. Data will be gathered at a place convenient to participants (most likely, the family home). However, participants will also be offered the option of meeting at a more convenient location, for example, the office in which I am based, in a bookable meeting room, or in a public space such as a café. If the meeting takes place outside of the family home, the parent/guardian will be asked to escort the child/young person to and from the venue, and ensure that they are able to see (but not hear) the interview taking place (unless this is requested by the young person). If a home visit is requested, the details of the location of the property will be given to my placement supervisor, along with a proposed start and end time for the visit. This will be followed by a phone call to my supervisor following each visit. After each visit, address details will be disposed of confidentially by my supervisor, and known only to myself.

Section 4: Research Participants and Recruitment

Does the project involve human participants?

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

Yes ☒
No ☐

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

Who will the participants be?

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

Children above the age of 10 who are home educated will be included in the research. This age has been chosen so as to include primary school children (in Year 6), who are seen as being fully able to give informed consent for their participation, as well as being fully able to articulate their views, both current and retrospective. Whilst no cognitive assessments will be undertaken to assess the suitability of participants, it is expected that they have appropriate communication skills to be able to participate; their suitability will be assessed via a telephone consultation with their parents, in which it will be discussed if the child has any identified learning and/or communication needs that may impair their ability to engage in discussion with the researcher. The research will be open to all genders, and, as previously stated, is hoped to remain within the West Midlands region (although this is dependent on recruitment, which is further detailed below). Participants will be expected to have previously been educated in a school setting and moved to home education within the last 6-18 months. This will allow for the comparison between both settings, whilst allowing for discussion of retrospective accounts.

How will the participants be recruited?

Please state clearly how the participants will be identified, approached and recruited. Include any relationship between the investigator(s) and participant(s) (e.g. instructor-student). Please ensure that you attach a copy of any poster(s), advertisement(s) or letter(s) to be used for recruitment.

Participants will be recruited via purposive sampling (i.e. specific groups contacted to take part in the research). This is due to the fact that the home education community is often a 'hard to reach' group, and therefore recruitment will take place via word of mouth, including contact with home education groups, as well as in liaison with the home education officer within west midlands local education authorities. Please see Appendix 4 for a copy of the recruitment poster.

Section 5: Consent

What process will be used to obtain consent?

Describe the process that the investigator(s) will be using to obtain valid consent. If consent is not to be obtained explain why. If the participants are under the age of 16 it would usually be necessary to obtain parental consent and the process for this should be described in full, including whether parental consent will be opt-in or opt-out.

Fully informed consent will be requested from children/young people taking part, as well as their parents, on an 'opt-in' basis. A copy of the participant information sheet and parent and child/young person consent forms can be seen in Appendices 5 and 6. Participants will be given a copy of the information sheet prior to signing the consent form. Parents who agree for their child (ren) to participate will be asked to approach their children to ascertain if they would be interested in participating. The researcher will then gain written consent from the participants on the day of the first session.

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

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

Note: Guidance from Legal Services on wording relating to the Data Protection Act 2018 can be accessed at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/legal-services/What-we-do/Data-Protection/resources.aspx.

Use of deception?

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

Yes ☐
No ☒

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

N/A

Section 6: Participant compensation, withdrawal and feedback to participants

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

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

Participants will be given access to the completed research.

What arrangements will be in place for participant withdrawal?

Describe how the participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project, explain any consequences for the participant of withdrawing from the study and indicate what will be done with the participant's data if they withdraw.

As part of the informed consent process, participants will be informed of their right to withdraw from the project, with no penalties/consequence for doing so. If participants do withdraw, any data gathered from them, including activities, photos, drawings, and audio transcripts, along with their personal details, will be confidentially destroyed.

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

Participants will be given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time from the beginning, up to 14 days after their interview is conducted. Participants will be given researcher and supervisor details to enable them to request this. However, after the 14-day period following their interview, withdrawal will not be possible due to the commencement of transcription and analysis of data.

What arrangements will be in place for participant compensation?

Will participants receive compensation for participation?

Yes ☒
No ☐

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

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

Participants will be given the option of keeping all visual resources as created as part of the project (for example, life grids and photo collages). If they wish, these will be laminated/framed as a keepsake for them following their participation. This will be offered post-data collection, regardless of whether or not participants choose to withdraw.

Section 7: Confidentiality/anonymity

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

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

Yes ☐
No ☒

In what format will data be stored?

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

All participants will be assigned a pseudonym which will be referred to throughout the data analysis and reporting. Any identifying details will be omitted; address details will be known only by the researcher and confidentially disposed of following the research.

All participants will be informed that audio-recordings will be held confidentially, and that data will be anonymised throughout the transcription process.

Will participants' data be treated as confidential?

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

Yes ☒
No ☐

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

N/A

Section 8: Storage, access and disposal of data

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

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

Data collected as part of the research will be stored in line with the General Data Protection Regulation (2018). Participant information will be saved to an encrypted external hard drive which will be stored in a locked cabinet, with myself being the only individual with the key to the locked filing cabinet. Participant names will be recorded only on consent forms and subsequently redacted in place of pseudonyms.

Audio recordings from semi-structured interviews will be stored on an encrypted audio device and transcribed at the earliest opportunity to the researcher. Pseudonyms will be given to participants during the transcription process to ensure participant anonymity. Original recordings will then be

permanently deleted, and audio transcription files will be encrypted and then stored on the aforementioned encrypted external hard drive and stored as outlined above.

All data will be processed on a local authority laptop which will be connected to local authority private networks.

In accordance with University of Birmingham policy, data will be kept for 10 years following the study and will be stored securely on BEAR, the University of Birmingham system, after which time it will be destroyed.

Data retention and disposal

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

Yes ☒
No ☐

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

N/A

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

Electronic data will be disposed of after 10 years, in accordance with UoB policy. Paper data will be securely destroyed as soon as the relevant information has been extracted.

Section 9: Other approvals required

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

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

N/A

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

If your project will involve NHS staff, please go to the HRA decision tool at http://www.hra-decisiontools.org.uk/research/ *to establish whether the NHS would consider your project to be research, thus requiring HRA approval in addition to University ethics approval. Is HRA approval required?*

Yes ☐

No ☒

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

N/A

Section 10: Risks and benefits/significance

Benefits/significance of the research

Outline the potential significance and/or benefits of the research

Current legislation notes that it is not a legal requirement for local authorities, parents/carers, or schools, to seek the views of children and young people prior to, during, or following the transition to home education (DfE, 2019. This research will allow for children involved in the home education community to discuss first hand their accounts both of formal education and their current home education. It will allow for benefits and disadvantages of each approach to be explored, and provide a platform for a marginalised community to make their views known. The research will also allow for professionals who may work with those who have been/are due to be home educated, an insight into the reality of home education, to allow for professionals to support this group effectively.

It is also hoped that the research will support in identifying the factors which have led to children and young people being home educated. It may be that these can be used to support educational settings in facilitating the needs of all children and young people who attend.

Risks of the research

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

It may be that, as a result of the interview and exploration of the journey from formalised education to home education, participants are reminded of potentially difficult times during this journey. If the participant is seen to find any part of the interview or activity difficult or challenging, a break will be suggested and I will liaise with the participant in terms of whether they want to continue, and, if so, whether they would like to omit that particular activity or question and move onto another area of discussion. Alternatively, participants will have the opportunity to withdraw from the research altogether and have all data confidentially destroyed as per the withdrawal policy, or continue at another time.

With this in mind, the interview schedule will be sensitively worded, and participants will be advised at the offset that if there is anything that they would prefer not to answer, or any activities they would prefer not to complete, that they can do this at any stage. Withdrawal rights will also be made clear to all participants.

In the unlikely event of a safeguarding concern being raised during the research, the appropriate procedure for the local authority in which they reside will be followed. This will be made clear to participants at the beginning of each interview, alongside the consent and confidentiality details.

Please note that Local Authority employees who work with Electively Home Educated children in the borough in which participants reside will be contacted if there are safeguarding concerns. This will be made clear to participants and their parents.

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

N/A

University Health & Safety (H&S) risk assessment

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

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

Section 11: Any other issues

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

If yes, please provide further information:

N/A

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

If yes, please provide further information:

N/A

Section 12: Peer review

Has your project received scientific peer review?

Yes ☐
No ☒

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

N/A

Section 13: Nominate an expert reviewer

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

Title: Click or tap here to enter text.
First name: Click or tap here to enter text.
Last name: Click or tap here to enter text.
Email address: Click or tap here to enter text.
Phone number: Click or tap here to enter text.

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

Click or tap here to enter text.

Section 14: Document checklist

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

Recruitment advertisement (Appendix 4) ☒
Participant information sheets (for parents and children/young people) (Appendices 5 and 6) ☒
Consent form (for parents and children/young people) (Appendix 5 and 6) ☒
Questionnaire N/A ☐
Interview/focus group topic guide (Appendix 1) ☒

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

Section 15: Applicant declaration

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

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

The information in this form together with any accompanying information is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and I take full responsibility for it. ☒

I undertake to abide by University Code of Practice for Research (https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/Documents/university/legal/research.pdf) alongside any other relevant professional bodies' codes of conduct and/or ethical guidelines. ☒

I will report any changes affecting the ethical aspects of the project to the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer. ☒

I will report any adverse or unforeseen events which occur to the relevant Ethics Committee via the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Officer. ☒

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

APPENDIX FOUR: CYP INFORMATION SHEET

School of Education, University of Birmingham

Information sheet

My name is Jo Mumford and I am training to be an Educational Psychologist. I work with lots of different children and young people, who attend a variety of different educational settings such as schools and alternative education.

I am writing to ask if you would like to take part in a project I am doing. The project is for University and is not linked to any schools. I would like to look at the experiences of young people who have previously been educated in school but are now home educated. I would like to hear about your experiences of both settings.

If you would like to take part in the project I will arrange to speak to you on a secure video call. We will talk about school and what that was like for you, as well as talking about home education and the experiences that you have as part of that. Video calls can be at any time during the week based on what works best for you and your parents/carers.

We may also complete some activities together, one of which will involve you taking photos of your home education experience, and talking to me about these over the video call. Another activity may look at timeline of what your education has looked like, both at school and at home. Both of these activities are optional and are designed to help you to remember different parts of your education.

I will need to be able to hear you on the video call and I will record our conversations. I need to do this so that I can remember everything that you say. I am the only one who will hear this.
You can stop answering questions at any time and you can stop taking part in the project at any time. Your answers will be used in a report but your name will not appear anywhere. Only the researcher (me) will see your name. If you do not want the answers to your questions to be used in my project then you have until two weeks after our video call to tell me or your parents/carers, who can tell me for you. After the research is finished, you can have a copy of a summary report of the findings, although your name will not be included in this, so nobody will know what it is what you have said. You will be asked if you are happy for your parent/carer to have a copy of this, if they request one, but it is up to you as to whether or not you want to share this.

I have a supervisor who is an Educational Psychologist. He is a teacher at my university and is helping me with my project. His name is James Birchwood and if you need to talk to him you can. His email address is

You can ask me about the project at any time. My email address is

APPENDIX FIVE: PARENT/CARER INFORMATION SHEET

School of Education, University of Birmingham

Information Sheet

I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist, currently studying at the University of Birmingham. I work with children, young people and their families to support them in education. This can be in schools, alternative provisions, or in home settings. The aim of my research is to explore the experiences of children who are currently home educated but were previously educated in school. This research is part of the Thesis requirements for the Doctorate in Educational Psychology (DEdPsy) at the University of Birmingham.

<u>What happens if I agree to my child participating?</u>

If you agree for your child to participate in this research, I will speak with you and your child via telephone at a time convenient for you. During this conversation, I will give you an overview of the research and the chance to ask any questions about the research. If, at this point, you decide that you do not want to participate your details will not be stored and you will not be contacted again. If you decide that you would like your child to take part, I will set up a video call meeting with your child, with the time and date arranged to suit you, and, where possible, a quiet environment made available. During the video call, I will work with your child to explore their views of what school was like for them and their views of home education. This will involve some activities, such as life grid mapping and making a collage to tell me about their home schooling, which will be e-mailed to your child prior to the sessions. Examples of these can be seen below:

	Before I went to school	When I went to school	When I left school	Home education	My future
					
What I want to tell you about (family/personal/health/social)					
What I want to show you (family/personal/health/social)					

For the photo collage, I will ask your child if they would like to take photos which represent their home education experience, prior to our video call. If they would like to, they will have the option to share these with me on the video call and we can discuss them. This activity is entirely voluntary and included as a way to support some children/young people in being able to communicate their current experiences using visual media.

Alongside these activities, I will also interview your child using a video recording, to explore their experiences of education. This will be with yours and their fully informed consent.

Interview data will be transferred to an encrypted device on the day of the interview and then deleted from the audio device. Interview transcripts will then be written, during which time your child will be given fake names to ensure that their identity remains confidential. Following transcription, audio data will securely be deleted. Your child may withdraw at any time during the study, up until 2 weeks following the video call. After this, data will have been transcribed and anonymised, and it will therefore not be possible to remove this from the study.

The results of this research will form part of my Thesis and may be published or presented. The research will be supervised by Dr James Birchwood, Professional Tutor on the University of Birmingham DEdPsy Programme.

When the study is complete and the research report submitted, you and your child will have the opportunity to obtain a summary of the study, if your child agrees to this.

Whilst this study is in addition to my placement within the Local Authority, employees who work with Home Educated children in the borough in which participants reside will be contacted if there are safeguarding concerns.

Participation of the study is voluntary and there are no likely risks for taking part in this research.

This research has been reviewed and ethically approved by the University of Birmingham Research Ethics Committee.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact myself, Jo, or my supervisor, Dr Birchwood. Contact details can be found below.

Thank you for showing interest in this research and for reading this information sheet.

Researcher

Jo Mumford

Trainee Educational Psychologist

Educational Psychology Doctorate

University of Birmingham

Research Supervisor

Dr James Birchwood

Professional Tutor

Educational Psychology Doctorate

University of Birmingham

APPENDIX SIX: CYP CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

My name is:

Please circle your answers:

I would like to take part in the project

Yes No

I understand that I can stop taking part in the project at any time up until 2 weeks after my interview.

Yes No

I understand that my answers will be in a report and that my name will not be on the report.

Yes No

I understand that I will be audio recorded during our meetings and that only the researcher (Jo) will hear this.

Yes No

I understand that I can choose whether or not to take part in the activities as part of this project – including the photo collage and the life-grid activity.

Yes No

I know that if the researcher (Jo) becomes concerned about my wellbeing she will need to let someone else know.

Yes No

Signed: _____

APPENDIX SEVEN: PARENT/CARER CONSENT FORM

Consent Form

My child's name is:

Please circle your answers:

I would like my child to take part in the project

Yes No

I understand that my child can stop taking part in the project at any time up until _____

Yes No

I understand that my child's answers will be in a report and that their name will not be on the report

Yes No

I understand that my child will be audio recorded during meetings and that only the researcher (Jo) will hear this

I know that if the researcher (Jo) becomes concerned about my child's wellbeing she will need to let someone else know

Yes No

Signed: _____

APPENDIX EIGHT: CYP SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Overall Question	Possible questions	Prompts	Probes	Child friendly resource/s
What are pupils' experiences, thus far, of home education?	How has your week been? What kinds of things have you been doing? Descriptive What does a typical day/week look like now that you are home-educated? Structural Can you tell me about home education? Narrative How would you explain home education to somebody who	What home education activities have you been doing/what have you been learning about this week? Structural Can you tell me more about…..? What kinds of activities do you do? Descriptive How is this different to school? Contrast Learning, friends, relationships with family, your classroom, how it compares to school? Contrast	What did that involve? Why do you think…..? What do you mean by…? How do you feel about that? Can you explain …… to me?	Education life grid Photo elicitation collage

	knew nothing about it? Descriptive How do you think a non-home educated person would describe home education? Circular	Is there anything particular that you would tell them about? How would you describe it to them? Descriptive	Why do you think that….?	
What are pupil's lived experiences of the education system prior to being home schooled?	Can you tell me what school was like for you? Core question What did you think about school? Evaluative Can you tell me a bit about what you knew about home education? Evaluative	Can you tell me a bit more about…? (Lessons/friends/teaching/school day/homework etc.) How long did you go to school for? Descriptive What did you like about school? What did you dislike about school? Evaluative How did you feel about home education? Evaluative	What do you mean by….? Can you tell me about….? Can you explain to me a bit more about….? How did you know…..?	Education life grid

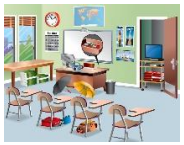
	Do you remember why you started being home educated? Narrative	How did you feel about that? Evaluative What was that like for you? Evaluative	Can you tell me a bit more about that?	
What are pupils' accounts of the transition from formal schooling to home education?	What was it like for you leaving school? Core question What was the best part about moving from school to home education? Evaluative What was the hardest part about moving from school to home education? Evaluative Do you remember getting any extra support from teachers/anybody from the local authority/any other professionals to help in the	How did you feel about it? Evaluative How did it happen? Narrative (Lessons/friends/teaching/ school day/homework etc.) Descriptive (Lessons/friends/teaching/ school day/homework etc.) Descriptive How did they help you? Evaluative What do you think could have helped you more? Evaluative	What do you mean by? Can you tell me a bit more about? What do you mean by? Can you tell me a bit more about? What do you mean by? Can you tell me a bit more about? Can you explain what you mean by….?	Education life grid

	change from school to home education? Narrative What are the main differences between school and home education? Comparative	Is there anything that you would have changed about this? Evaluative (Lessons/friends/teaching/ school day/homework etc.) Descriptive	What do you mean by?	
What factors of both systems have supported or hindered their development?	What do you like about home education? Evaluative How does it compare to school? Comparative Is there anything in particular that you don't like about home education? Can you tell me more about this? Evaluative	In particular, linked to learning, friendships, how you feel and physically – where you learn and what you do " " " "	Can you tell me a bit more about….? What about…..? What do you mean by….? Can you explain that again for me please?	Education life grid Photo elicitation collage

	Is there anything about home schooling that you would change if you could? Evaluative Can you tell me about your friends? Descriptive	For example, lessons, visits, teaching, social groups…. Are they home schooled? Descriptive	Why do you think…..? Can you tell me a bit more about…..?	
Future aspirations	What would you like to do in the future? Descriptive How do you think home-schooling has helped you towards this goal? Evaluative Is there anything else that we haven't covered that you would like to tell me, or any questions that you would like to ask me? Descriptive	Would you like to get a job/train towards something/go to college or university? Descriptive Social opportunities/learning/ physical aspects Comparative	Can you tell me a bit more about…..? What do you mean by….?	Education life grid Photo elicitation collage

APPENDIX NINE: EXAMPLE LIFE GRID

My education timeline

	Before I went to school	When I went to school	When I left school	Home education	My future
					
What I want to tell you about (family/personal/health/social)					
What I want to show you (family/personal/health/social)					

APPENDIX TEN: EXTRACTS FROM REFLEXIVE JOURNAL

Pre-Interview

- As Kacey is a participant who I know, and whose home education journey I have witnessed in a personal capacity, I need to very aware of my own personal knowledge of her educational experience and not let this interfere with her as a participant; both during and following her interview, and in data analysis.
- I am aware of Charlotte's ASD diagnosis and the impact that this could potentially have on her communication and interaction skills – will she be able to converse in two-way dialogue with me as a stranger, remotely? Or will the remote aspect be preferable for Charlotte? Must be aware of potential difficulties, using clarifying questions where necessary and potentially more interventionist approach.
- I am conscious of Alice's age, combined with the recency of her home education experience, and therefore how this could impact on my interview with her. I may need to be more directive/interventionist when interviewing her, and will gauge her confidence levels, alongside her language and communication skills, throughout the interview.
- Esther's Dad has told me that she has a diagnosis of chronic anxiety. I wonder what the impact of this may be on her ability to develop a rapport with me as an unknown person, remotely, and whether the interview could serve to evoke any feelings of anxiety. Focus on her feeling comfortable in talking to me before interview commences.

Post-Interview

- Listening back to Kacey's interview, I don't feel that my interview skills are as honed as they need to be. There are parts of the interview I feel I could have probed more, but instead I accepted answers and moved onto other questions. Did I stick to the script too much? Why didn't I probe more – is this because it was my first interview or because it was face to face? Or because I know Kacey in a personal capacity? Potential to use this interview to act as a pilot?
- (Later extract for Kacey): Having listened to and transcribed Kacey's interview, it feels too rich in data to dismiss as a pilot interview – there are lots of aspects of school and home education that she discusses that I feel are too important not to include in data analysis. To include Kacey's interview in main data, but hone interview skills prior to next interview. Make sure I probe/follow up questions and stray from script where I need to/where it is appropriate.
- Charlotte presented as incredibly mature, with lots of life experience for a 14-year-old! She talked lots about being 'privileged' and having experienced things (such as holidays to Florida, cruises etc.) which other children her age may not have experienced. I thought this demonstrated a deep level of self-awareness and understanding of her individual position. She was able to communicate her experiences with me eloquently and a sensitive recognition that her experiences were, in her eyes, privileged.
- Esther described a difficult transition to school, and perceived a lack of support during and following this. I found this particularly frustrating given that

it was within a school in the LA in which I am currently placed. I wonder if this will cloud how I interpret her data.

Data Analysis Phase

- Whilst I have scoped out the literature, and done some reading around home education and transition, I am relieved that I decided to leave my literature review until after my data analysis phase, as I feel that this could have impacted on my data analysis, for example, themes that I interpreted from my own data set.
- When moving between participant transcripts and subsequent analysis, it is hard to step away from previous noting/emerging themes and to start each transcript with 'fresh eyes'. I'm having to be very aware of each transcript as data in its own right, and the idiographic nature of IPA – this is tough!
- The analysis is taking a long time – am I doing it right? Should it take longer? Should I be able to do it quicker? Although there are set steps to the IPA process and I am following these and using IPA guides and theses to direct me, I worry about not having anybody to tell me if I am doing it right or wrong….is there a right or wrong way to doing it?
- I feel like there are a lot of subordinate themes which could be interpreted from this data, especially given the rich, thick data which I have gathered. I have to keep revisiting my research questions to check that the themes that I am interpreting are actually answering the research questions that I have set out to answer.
- I am conscious of a 'school = bad, home education = good' rhetoric, although this feels like what is coming out from Charlotte, Alice and Esther. Although

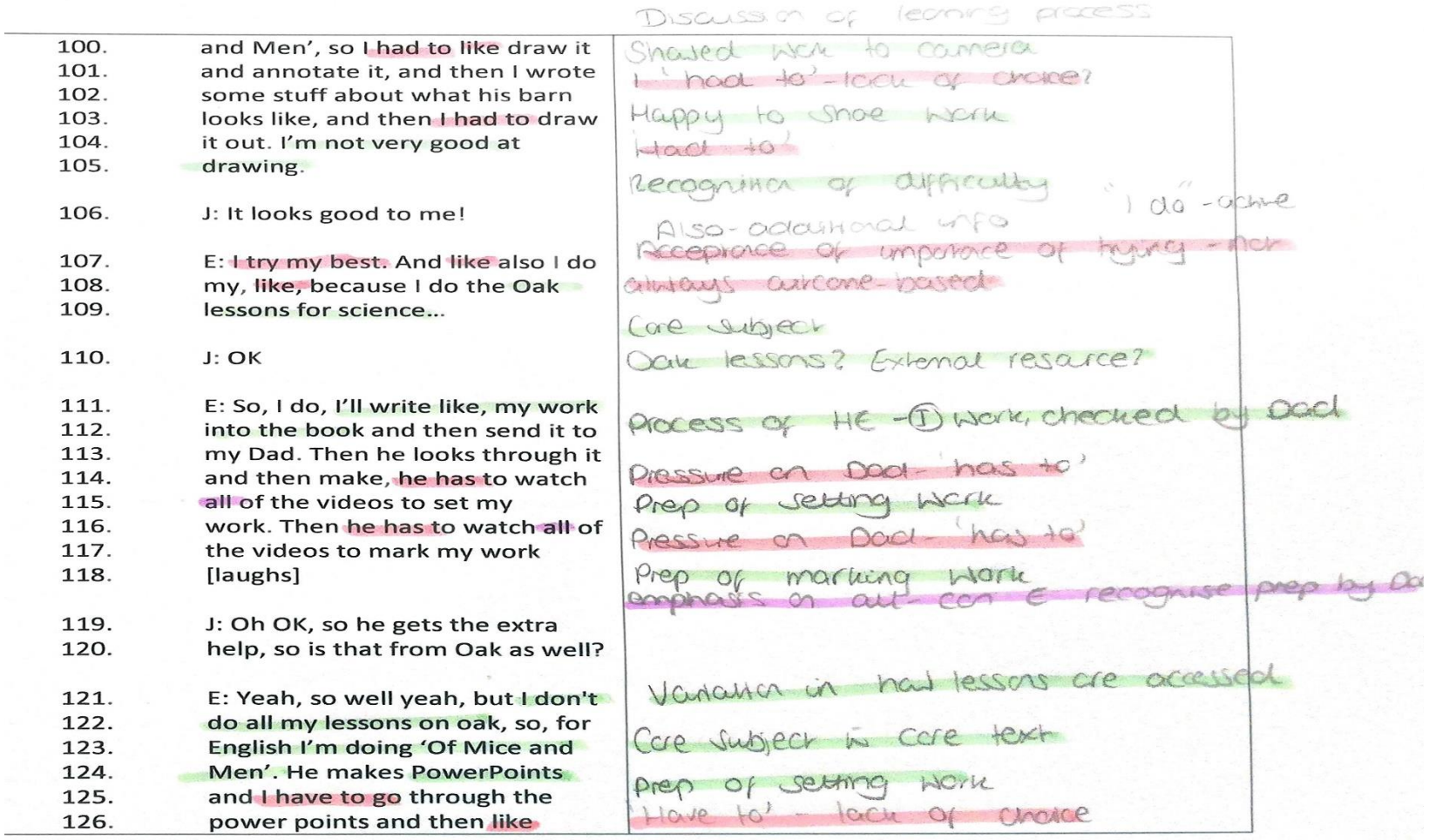
they are all able to recognise advantages of school, they appear to demonstrate preferences for home education – which is fine – I just need to make sure this is grounded in the data and keep returning to original transcripts to check this out.

- As I am writing up data, it feels that there is far too much to fit into a word-restricted thesis – 25k words does not feel like a lot anymore! I'm finding it hard to cut this section down, and I haven't even finished yet. I'm conscious of having to cut words out later on, but need to ensure that the participants' experiences are still shared, and that their data is used to answer the research questions I have set out to answer.

Post-research

- It feels overwhelming to look back at what I have achieved, and feels rewarding to think that I have been able to share the views of CYP who have experienced both school and home education. I hope that I have done them justice.
- I want to make participants' experiences, and my research, meaningful. How can I ensure that my research makes a change? Potential to share with LA, TEPs at UoB as well as presenting at annual TEP conference. I wonder about the potential implications of publication – could this also help to support schools, families and CYP in the transition from school to home education?

APPENDIX ELEVEN: EXAMPLE OF STAGE TWO OF IPA – INITIAL NOTING



100.	and Men', so I had to like draw it	Discussion of learning process
101.	and annotate it, and then I wrote	Shared work to camera
102.	some stuff about what his barn	'had to' - lack of choice?
103.	looks like, and then I had to draw	Happy to share work
104.	it out. I'm not very good at	'had to'
105.	drawing.	Recognition of difficulty
106.	J: It looks good to me!	'I do' - active Also - additional info
107.	E: I try my best. And like also I do	Acceptance of importance of trying - not
108.	my, like, because I do the Oak	always outcome-based
109.	lessons for science...	Core subject
110.	J: OK	Oak lessons? External resource?
111.	E: So, I do, I'll write like, my work	Process of HE - (I) work, checked by Dad
112.	into the book and then send it to	
113.	my Dad. Then he looks through it	Pressure on Dad - 'has to'
114.	and then make, he has to watch	Prep of setting work
115.	all of the videos to set my	Pressure on Dad - 'has to'
116.	work. Then he has to watch all of	Prep of marking work
117.	the videos to mark my work	emphasis on out-con E recognise prep by Da
118.	[laughs]	
119.	J: Oh OK, so he gets the extra	
120.	help, so is that from Oak as well?	Variation in how lessons are accessed
121.	E: Yeah, so well yeah, but I don't	Core subject in core text
122.	do all my lessons on oak, so, for	
123.	English I'm doing 'Of Mice and	Prep of setting work
124.	Men'. He makes PowerPoints	'Have to' - lack of choice
125.	and I have to go through the	
126.	power points and then like	

APPENDIX TWELVE: EXAMPLE OF STAGE THREE OF IPA – EMERGENT THEMES