

**Volume 1**

**An Appreciative Inquiry: Capturing peak experiences of Educational  
Psychology practice in one Local Authority under COVID-19  
restrictions.**

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## **Abstract**

The Coronavirus pandemic has been described as an unprecedented event in human history (Lillie et al., 2021). By 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) stated that a pandemic was ongoing due to the number of infections documented in many countries (WHO COVID-19 Strategy Update, 2020). In the UK, community-wide safety orders were introduced abruptly on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020 by Boris Johnson, the UK Prime Minister. This included the sudden partial closure of all education settings for an unprecedented period (Stifel et al., 2020).

The context for Educational Psychology (EP) practice had to quickly adapt to remote and virtual working for an extended time. This presented several challenges for EPs and Trainee EPs (TEP) including pragmatic and ethical considerations, the advocacy role of the EP, transferring practice to remote and virtual delivery, and the impact of COVID-19 restrictions on EP wellbeing REF?. At the time of writing there was a lack of research capturing the reflections of UK-based EPs, or research which aimed to identify the strengths and opportunities in the best of EP practice under the remote and virtual context for working. The overarching aim of the current research was therefore to capture the successes and strengths evidenced in EP and TEP practice, with consideration for participant wellbeing and the context for data collection being a primary factor underlining methodological choices.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology was used as a participatory research approach to meet this overarching aim. A steering group of eight EPs and TEPs, were recruited from one Local Authority (LA) in England. The 5-D model of AI, (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2005), was

adapted for virtual use and the aim of the research. Three key research questions were formulated following the initial 'Define' session and topic selection which focused on capturing key characteristics of peak EP and TEP practice; perceived facilitators of these experiences; and envisioned future practice under COVID-19 restrictions.

The AI cycle revealed five reoccurring themes, described broadly as: collaboration, community-based practice, ethically driven practice, flexibility within a traded model, and EP and TEP wellbeing. Seeking connection in the virtual, remote world seemed to be at the core of participants reported peak experiences, whether that be connection personally with colleagues and peers or connection within the community to support recovery.

Implications and key reflections for EP services and EP practice are explored, and directions for future research identified.

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated to my loving parents Janine and Mark, who have always been my biggest supporters in everything I do.

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## **Glossary of terms and acronyms**

**AEP** – Association of Educational Psychologists

**AI** – Appreciative Inquiry

**AR** – Action Research

**BPS** – British Psychological Society

**COVID – 19** – Coronavirus Disease 2019

**CYP** – Children and Young People

**Dream Dialogue** – The organisation or group envisions ‘what might be’ by asking questions about stories to elicit detail about aspirations for the shared future.

**EP** – Educational Psychologist

**EPS** – Educational Psychology Service

**PAR** – Participatory Action Research

**Positive Core** – Elements which make us the best of an organisation or group and its people.

**Provocative Proposition** – a possibility statement which bridges the ‘best of what is’ with an organisation or group vision of ‘what might be’. It is the groups desired future written in the present tense as though it was happening today, to guide the planning and design of the future.

**TA** – Thematic Analysis

**TEP** – Trainee Educational Psychologist

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This initial chapter introduces volume one of a two-part doctoral thesis in Applied Educational and Child Psychology, completed at the University of Birmingham. The chapter provides an overview of the context for this research, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on research plans and outlines my personal and professional interest in the research area and methodology, before sharing the research aims.

### **1.1 Background to this research and the impact of COVID-19**

The COVID-19 pandemic is wide-reaching and continues to have a significant impact on all our lives. In relation to this research, the onset of the COVID-19 in early 2020 coincided with my original data collection. I had initially proposed to study the influence of Video Enhanced Reflective Practice (VERP) on intervention fidelity when used in supervision to support the development of Teaching Assistants (TA) understanding and use of direct instruction and precision teaching in Key Stage One.

I received ethical approval for the original research in March 2020 and was beginning to arrange my recruitment with schools as the first national lockdown was introduced. After approximately 6 weeks, together with my research and placement supervisors, we decided that the proposed research was not feasible. The focus of the research did not feel a priority for schools, or ethical to encourage schools to take a focus on learning and professional

development of staff when school environments felt uncertain and the wellbeing of staff and students the greater priority.

I submitted a second research proposal for the current research in May 2020 which was approved in May 2020. The focus of this research was intentionally broad to allow me to capture the successes and strengths evidenced in the practice of Educational Psychologists (EPs) during this unprecedented time of working. The research design needed to be resilient to the national and local measures taken in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and potential future measures, such as partial school closures, ongoing need for remote and virtual working and the changing context for EP practice over the course of data collection. The research also needed to be sensitive to participants' needs and wellbeing. Table 1 offers an overview of my research journey.

Beyond the impact of the pandemic on my research, other personal life factors have affected my thesis completion. This has included taking two leave of absences during my third year of the course to support my dad through ill health. In combination, these factors have resulted in a delay to my data collection and the writing of this thesis.

| Date                     | Activity  |
|--------------------------|---|
| March 2020               | National lockdown including partial school closures and work from home orders introduced in England.      |
| April 2020               | New research proposal considered and discussed with my research supervisor.                               |
| April 2020               | New research proposal and application for ethical review submitted to the University of Birmingham.       |
| May 2020                 | New application for ethical review approved, plans for participant recruitment and research design begin. |
| June 2020                | Participants recruited.   |
| August 2020              | Leave of absence.   |
| August – September 2020  | Data collected and analysed with participants.  |
| October – November 2020  | Leave of absence.   |
| January – June 2021      | Completion of Volume Two requirements for submission of full thesis and placement days with LA.           |
| July 2021 – January 2022 | Working within a LA EP service.<br>Writing of Volume One for submission of full thesis.                   |

*Table 1: Brief timeline for research proposal and data collection*

## **1.2 Personal and professional interest in the current research area**

Prior to the current doctoral training course, I trained as an Early Years teacher through the charity Teach First. During my time as a teacher, I worked with a range of education, health, and care professionals to support the strengths and needs of children in my classrooms. The variety of EP work was of particular interest to me and encouraged me to apply for the training course.

During my professional training, I have developed my understanding of the EP role and learning of systemic work, and the application of positive, strengths-based psychology to support others and bring about sustainable change. The University of Birmingham offer a focus on organisational developmental and change models throughout the course, which encouraged my interest in this area. In March 2020, the University of Birmingham hosted a three-cohort study day for the doctoral training course. The focus of this day was organisational change in EP practice, with an emphasis on positive psychology and the use of Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This peaked my personal interest in the use of AI as a method and theory to enable reflection on successes and generate energy for change with a group or organisation.

The early pandemic saw few EP-role specific guidance documents produced, though the later stages of 2020 saw the introduction of guidance documents circulated by the British Psychological Society (BPS, 2020a; 2020b; 2020c), and the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP, 2020a; 2020b). There remains a lack of empirical research which involves UK-based EPs themselves, captures reflections on EP practice, or seeks to find the strengths, values, and opportunities in the best of EP practice under the change of working context. Without critical reflection on the role and work of EPs during this challenging and ever-changing context, the profession may be missing opportunities for growth and development in response to community and wider society-level needs. The opportunity to capture these developments live will not occur again under the same circumstances. The profession has likely changed its role, remit, and context for service delivery and is now moving in more dynamic, hybrid delivery directions. This forms my overarching professional interests in this

research area, and the aim of the current research: capturing ‘the best of what is’ when everything feels unknown in a changing context for EP practice.

### **1.3 Context and rationale for the research**

The current research was completed in a large Local Authority (LA) Educational Psychology Service (EPS), referred to as Greenshire\* EPS throughout this research. The eight EPs and TEPs recruited for participation in this research were all either employed or on placement in the summer of 2020. The focus for research is on the positive aspects of EP practice during the first national lockdown, from March to July 2020. This exploration needed to be conducted with sensitivity to participants’ wellbeing and experiences of the pandemic. AI was chosen as the methodology for data collection to ensure an emphasis on identifying successes, facilitators and strengths of the EP practice shared. However, AI is not about being positive all the time, the primary aim is generativity through collaborative discussion and appreciative questioning.

The aim of this research is to capture the peak practice of EPs and TEPs under early COVID-19 restrictions and explore what they perceive to be facilitative factors supporting this practice. The product of this work will be shared with the wider EPS as a reflection on peak experiences of this time, and to offer reflections for future EPS delivery in navigating the challenges of remote and virtual working.

\*pseudonym

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter begins with an introduction to the history of the EP role and identification of the contexts for work over the last century. The emergence of traded service delivery in England is described, alongside an acknowledgment of socio-political contexts for EP practice, up to present day and discussion of TEP experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic and impact on the EP role is explored through a systematic review of the literature in relation to school psychology practice under COVID-19 restrictions. Key themes from the literature identified are discussed before research aims and rationale are described with some reference to the methodology chosen as this is guided by the overarching research aim to remain ethical and mindful of participant wellbeing at a time of uncertainty.

### 2.2 Historical developments of Educational Psychology practice in England

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, psychology was developing as an area of academic study in universities and in providing service for people with “mental disorders” (BPS 2017, p.25). The context for EP practice, even in its earliest form, has been influenced by political agenda and legislative changes. Figure 1 below outlines key chronological information on the origins of EP practice in England.

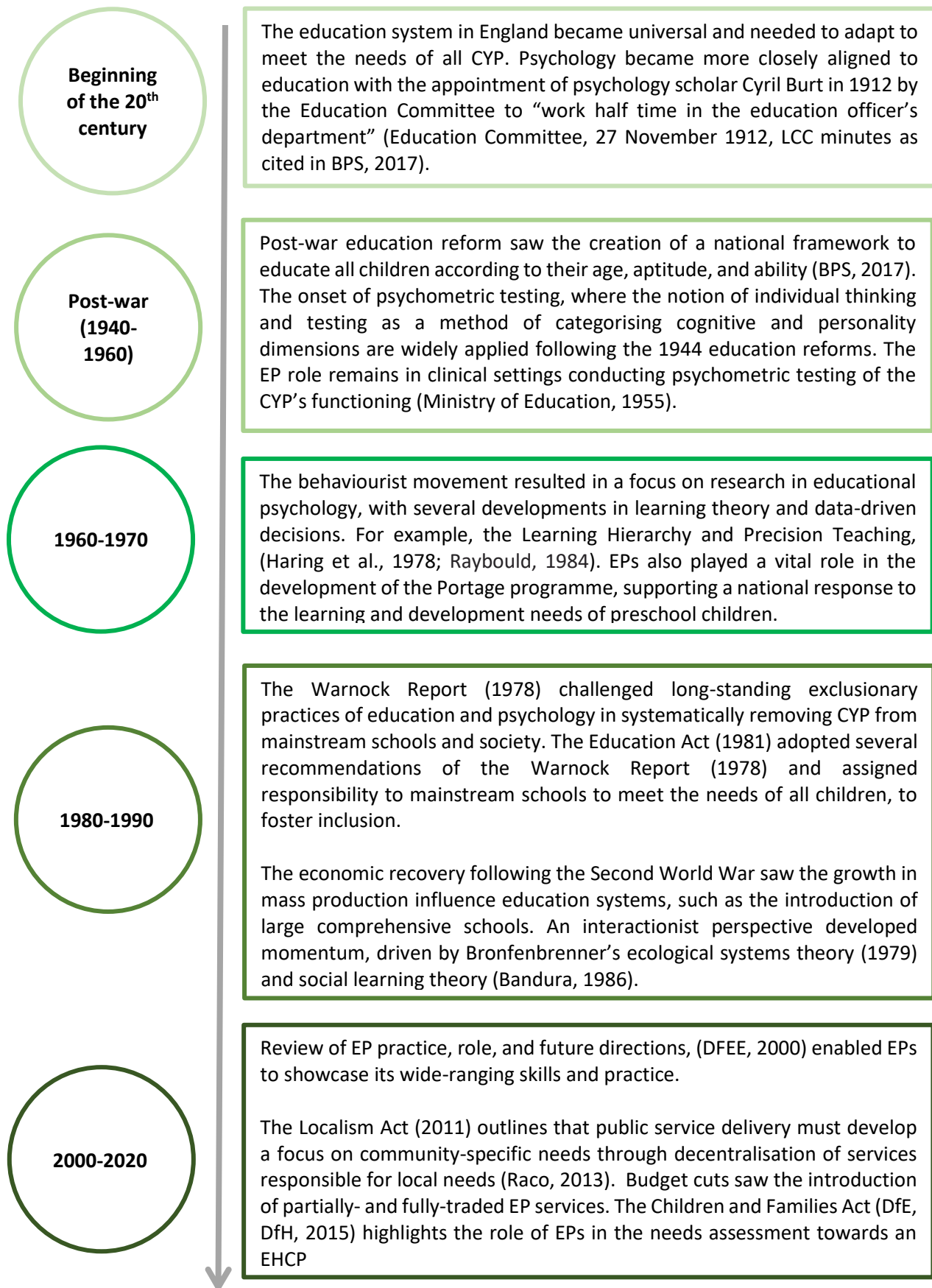


Figure 1: Key chronological information on the origins and development of the EP role in England



The Elementary Education Act of 1870 introduced universal education, meaning that resources for teaching and learning needed to be shared more widely and to serve a greater range of needs (Arnold, 2017 cited in BPS, 2017). A primary role of EPs became the administration of Binet's (1904) first iteration of a psychometric assessment. This test was not informed by psychological or educational theories of intelligence or ability, and therefore is not a measure of intelligence or innate cognitive abilities (Richardson, 1996). Cyril Burt's own interpretation and use of the Binet's psychometric test was to determine "*the degree of intelligence with which any particular child is endowed...sets an upper limit to what he can perform*" (Burt, 1955, p.281). This early link between EPs and psychometric testing arguably lays the ground for UK EP practice assumptions and ongoing controversy around the use of such measures to determine access to provision.

Although the context for EP practice and work is now varied across public and private sectors, as outlined by the Workforce Survey (DfE 2019), all EPs are registered to practice with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) meaning that all practitioners need to adhere to the same standards of conduct, proficiency, and continuing professional development (HCPC, 2012).

The role and practice of EPs has evolved to meet ever-changing social and political needs over time. Key time points to note in relation to the development of the EP role include the post-war education reforms, advancements in understanding of behaviour and psychological theory development, socio-political agendas, and economic influence. Table 2 below offers an

overview of key legislative changes, paradigm and psychological theory focus over time and the impact of these factors on the EP role.

| Time point                                      | Key legislation   | Impact on EP practice   | Paradigm shifts and prominent psychological theory  | Context for EP practice and service delivery   |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <b>Beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century</b> | The Elementary Education Act (1870)   | The universality of education meant that resources for teaching and learning needed to be shared more widely and to serve a greater range of learner's needs. EPs worked to differentiate CYP likely to succeed in education and those less likely, through psychometric testing.   | As the role of EPs emerged at the beginning of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century, the dominant paradigm was Freudian psychodynamic analysis of behaviour.  | Emphasis on assessment role and access to provision.   |
| <b>Post-war 1940 - 1960</b>                     | The 1944 Education Act and 1945 Handicapped Pupils and School Health Service Regulations 1945 | The 1944 education reforms saw new terminology used widely in education, defining children as 'Educationally Subnormal' and 'Maladjusted'. This language reflected the growing influence of psychological and educational interpretations of need in comparison to medical diagnoses.   | Psychometric testing, where the notion of individual thinking and testing as a method of categorising cognitive and personality dimensions was widely applied to the distribution of education resources. | EP practice remained in child guidance clinics, though their role was subordinate to psychiatrists who were responsible for carrying out assessments of mental health and family dynamics. |
| <b>1960 - 1979</b>                              | The Warnock Report (1978)   | Behaviour modification approaches taken on board by education practitioners through a focus on rewards and punishments (BPS, 2017). Some acknowledgment of the influence of environment is evident here, with psychologists acting to add contextual understanding of the oversimplistic model of behaviourist principles in use, by emphasising the role of environment in cueing behaviour (for example, the applied analysis of behaviour model, Solity & Bull, 1987). | In the late 1960's, behavioural approaches became the lens for exploring the world in EP practice.  | Practice remains largely in health settings, with some transference to school and education settings. The interactionist approach begins to emerge.  |
| <b>1970 - 1989</b>                              | The Education Act (1981)  | The Education Act 1981 adopted several recommendations of the Warnock Report (1978) and assigned responsibility to mainstream   | The paradigm shift here for EP practice   | The context of EP work also shifted from clinical  |

| Time point         | Key legislation  | Impact on EP practice  | Paradigm shifts and prominent psychological theory  | Context for EP practice and service delivery  |
|--------------------|--|--|---|---|
|                    | The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Children Act (1989)                                | <p>schools to foster inclusion. This led directly to the growth of the EP profession, who now had specific legal responsibilities within the creation of Statements of Special Educational Need.</p> <p>The UNCRC (1989) and the Children Act (1989) resulted in the development of a multitude of child-centred tools and methods in EP practice, and a greater focus on collaborative consultation with parents as part of EP assessment (Kennedy, 2006).</p>  | <p>moved away from a focus on individual assessments and within child factors to environmental attributions of behaviour and whole systems working. An interactionist perspective was introduced, driven by Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) and social learning theory (Bandura, 1986).</p> | <p>settings to school and education settings.</p>   |
| <b>1990 - 2010</b> | <p>DfEE (2000) Review of EP practice, role, and future directions.</p> <p>The Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) policy.</p> | <p>The appointment of Tony Blair and the Labour Party in 1997 saw a wave of education reform in the UK. A review of EP practice, role and future directions was commissioned, (DFEE, 2000), which enabled the profession to showcase its wide-ranging skills.</p> <p>The Every Child Matters (DfES, 2004) reinforced multi-agency working across education, health and care and created structures, systems and job roles to target unified efforts and develop schools as community hubs for accessible services.</p> <p>By early 2010 the UK experienced rising national debt and an unstable economic climate on both a national and international level. The new Coalition government reduced public spending.</p> | <p>Moving forwards, EP practice is focused more to community practices and supporting community cohesion, a concept drawn from social psychology and group behaviours (Taft et al., 2020).</p>  | <p>The context for EP work was securely within education settings and expanding to multi-agency and systems-level working (Currie, 2002).</p> |

| Time point         | Key legislation  | Impact on EP practice  | Paradigm shifts and prominent psychological theory | Context for EP practice and service delivery   |
|--------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                    |  | Reform allowed alternative providers to enter the state school system (i.e., academisation and free schools).  |  |  |
| <b>2010 - 2020</b> | <p>The Localism Act (DfCLG, 2011)</p> <p>The Children and Families Act (DfE, DfH 2015)</p> | <p>The Localism Act (2011) outlines response to community-specific needs. LEA budget cuts saw the EP role shift in context for delivery, with the introduction of partially- and fully traded EP services.</p> <p>EP practice is responding to needs arising from LEA budget cuts through research, systemic work and with a focus on community-level needs to ensure that provision and intervention is appropriate (Taft et al., 2020).</p> <p>The Children and Families Act (DfE, DfH, 2015) introduced a more collaborative, multi-agency needs assessment process resulting in an EHCP where appropriate. EPs are highlighted as key contributors to EHCP needs assessment as a statutory role within EP practice</p> |  | <p>The EP role and context for service delivery shifted again from centrally funded public servant to partially or fully traded service responsible for generating income (Lee and Woods, 2017).</p> <p>Now EPs work in a variety of contexts. Most EPs are employed by local authorities (LAs) but work across public and private sectors is becoming more prevalent (DfE, 2019).</p> |

*Table 2: An overview of key legislative changes, paradigm and psychological theory focus over time and the impact of these factors on the EP role.*

### **2.3 Recent developments in Educational Psychology practice and service delivery**

Islam (2013) notes that in the UK there are a range of approaches used to structure models of EP service delivery such as trading services, consultation models, time allocation and service level agreements. The traded service delivery model has become increasingly popular as a result of the economic downturn and austerity measures introduced across England over the past decade. As noted in Table 2 above, the Coalition government proposed a reduction in public spending from 2010. For the education sector, this resulted in a series of reforms and the introduction of alternative providers in the state school system through academisation and free schools.

The tightening of LA budgets at this time impacted EPSs directly, but also introduced a need to support schools who were themselves experiencing reduced funding. An increasing number of LAs reduced their core local offer of 'free service' to schools and community-based services, needing to focus on statutory duties. EP services became responsible for generating income from 'customers', most notably schools, whilst also adjusting to the increased workload as a result of the later 2014 SEND reforms (Lee and Woods, 2017). Prior to this time, EPSs were free at the point of delivery or need and so the shift to mostly traded service delivery has been a significant change in the context of EP practice in England (Hill and Murray, 2019).

The context for EP service delivery was again impacted by legislation and LA funding, resulting in a significant increase in EPS trading with schools and other organisations from 2012 to 2014 (Lee and Woods, 2017). Traded services are those provided by an EPS which are non-statutory

and are paid for by schools or other settings and organisations. A partially or fully traded model requires the existing service to generate income in order to meet some, or all, of its costs (Lyonette et al. 2019).

Fallon et al., (2010) note that the model of service delivery for EP practice shapes the work which EPs are able to do, and the skills they are able to develop. The traded model of service delivery was reviewed by Lee and Woods (2017) who suggest that the significant expansion of traded EP services has in some ways enabled service innovation and growth, with a greater range of work available, such as skill development in the delivery of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and engagement in advertising and marketing (Islam, 2013). However, Lee and Woods (2017) also capture ethical concerns around ownership of work, though it was reported that this could be mediated through the maintenance or development of good working relationships with education settings.

Hill and Murray (2019) conducted a mixed method online survey with 57 EPs from across 29 different LAs in England focusing on professional concerns on the recent changes to service delivery. A key finding reported was that 79% of respondents expressed that they had strong ethical concerns about the structure of traded EPSs in the climate of austerity. EP respondents reported that the traded model of service delivery was not felt to guarantee fair and equal access to all vulnerable groups of children and young people (CYP), thereby violating their statutory right to effective and adequate psychological support (Hill and Murray, 2019). In recognition of the ethical concerns raised within traded service delivery model, the British Psychological Society produced ethical trading guidelines for EP practice to support thinking

and decision making around the ethics of delivering purchased services to a range of commissioners (BPS, 2018).

Whilst the introduction of traded service delivery enabled some innovation and growth for services, Lee and Wood (2017) go on to identify a primary limitation in the removal of autonomy for EPs to direct their services according to their own evaluated priorities rather than commissioner-lead negotiations for EP work. This may in turn impact new skill development and EP professional identity. EPSs in England have broad aims and responsibilities which have evolved and are influenced by socio-political landscapes. Fallon et al., (2010) suggest that this has created a lack of clarity in defining the EP role, especially since the shift in dynamic between school commissioners and EPSs as a result of increased trading.

As education settings and other organisations commission EP involvement within a traded model, the priorities for EP work may not always align to those held by the EP practitioner. This may have also resulted in a shift away from collaborative, multi-disciplinary work with schools towards more needs-focused work leading to a statutory Education, Health and Care needs assessment for individual CYP. Hill and Murray (2019) report a second key finding from EP survey responses as being a significant reduction in multi-disciplinary work under the new traded context of EP employment. Their research found that 68% of Local Authority (LA) EPs felt that multi-agency work had diminished extensively due to education settings not prioritising their budget and EP time in this way, despite UK legislation outlining the value and need for multi-agency, collaborative working across disciplines to support effective identification of need and intervention (DfE, DfH, 2015).



More recently, the Department for Education commissioned the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick to conduct research into the EP workforce in England. The research was based on survey and interview data from newly-qualified EPs (QEPs), LA principal EPs (PEPs) and key stakeholders (e.g., training providers), alongside EP workforce data. The research and report aimed to gain a better understanding of the profile of the workforce, and of recruitment and retention issues which could be addressed through reform of the training or service delivery models (Lyonette et al. 2019). Hill and Murray (2019) also note the emerging concerns around recruitment and retention within the EP workforce and suggest that the pre-existing tensions have likely resulted in the increase in independent practice for some EPs. Independent practice may enable greater engagement in a wider range of preventative and proactive work, and also perhaps allow practitioners to regain some control over the volume and scope of their work with CYP, families and service commissioners.

The EP Workforce Report (2019) highlights that recruitment into the EP profession is a recurring concern, alongside problems of long term retention of EPs working with LAs. Within the report, 68% of PEP respondents indicated that they are experiencing difficulties filling vacant posts. A combination of supply- and demand-side drivers of EP shortages are identified such as: a lack of EPs being trained; location of LAs impacting accessibility and proximity to training providers; demographic issues related to an increasingly female profession; significant increase in statutory work undertaken by LAs; and increases in the range of services that are funding and commissioning EP work. These factors are reported to work in isolation but also have a compounded impact on recruitment and retention within LA EPSs in a traded context.

Despite this, LAs are acknowledged as continuing to remain significant employers of EPs. QEPs who participated in the research report a preference for LA work in the early stages of their careers, though some did raise concerns about remaining in LA work in the longer term due to structural issues related to pay, progression and variety of work. It seems that EPs are not leaving the profession, with the exception of retirement, but are voluntarily moving between LAs or into independent practice to seek better working conditions, including the type and range of work, as also highlighted by Hill and Murray (2019).

The Workforce Report (2019) does outline a range of strategies reported by participating PEPs as mechanisms for addressing the shortage of EPs. For example, increasing the current workforce capacity and seeking more varied work opportunities with a mixture of statutory and traded service delivery, and a 'grow your own' recruitment strategy for the employment of second and third year TEPs. PEPs also reported an aim to review service delivery and business models to ensure practice remained ethical, but was efficient, whilst also seeking out additional funding sources to grow demand for non-statutory work. Rationing of services is also noted as a possible strategy but is reported as the least desirable option as this would involve the reduction of non-statutory work, which would likely contribute to long-term retention problems.

Following a decade of austerity measures impacting LA budgets combined with the SEND reforms in 2014 outlining additions to EP workload, the profession has experienced significant change and increased tension between service delivery aims and practice. The current crises in professional identity, operationalising legislation changes and recruitment and retention

contribute and highlight pressures within the workforce. The recent SEND Review outlines *'steps to increase the capacity of the specialist workforce'* with an increase in the number of Trainee EPs (TEPs) funded by the Department for Education to over 200 from 160 per annum (HM Government, 2022, p. 46). This may alleviate some issues discussed in relation to supply-side factors driving EP shortages. Current training models for EPs and the views of TEPs will now be explored.

### **2.3.1 Experiences of Trainee Educational Psychologists**

To become a qualified EP in the UK, trainees are required to undertake a three-year doctoral training course, including two years on a practice placement with a LA or organisation. Qualified EPs must be recognised by the BPS and Health Care Professions Council (HCPC), and therefore must meet all competencies outlined by these professional bodies. Historically TEPs needed to first be trained and experienced as teachers before applying for a one-year Masters degree (Farrell and Lunt, 2007). In 2006 the EP training route was restructured and became a three year professional doctorate programme in line with the developing EP role and increased responsibilities (McLaughlin, 2020; BPS, 2006).

There are now 13 university training providers across England who have recently seen an increase in their capacity and funding to offer course places for TEPs, following the findings of the EP Workforce Report (Lyonette et al., 2019). The SEND review pledges an increase in funded trainee places to over 200 from 160 in 2020 (HM Government, 2022), which may go some way to support the identified supply-side drivers of EP shortages, as discussed in section

2.3 above. The EP Workforce Report identified that newly qualified EPs report mixed views on the current training model, with 89% of respondents rating their overall level of satisfaction with their training placement as very or quite satisfied. However, only 49% thought the current training model is working very or quite well. Research into the views of TEPs themselves on their training and placement experiences has focused on supporting TEPs through supervision, development of a competency framework and curriculum development.

McLaughlin (2020) offers a review of available research on TEPs in doctoral training in the UK and highlights key themes across the literature of learning theories and models, learning and assessment frameworks, supervision, and implications for training and practice. For example, Woods et al., (2015) explore practice placement experiences and needs of TEPs in relation to supervision access. Seven key themes are identified from TEP focus group data which represent TEPs experiences and needs within supervision. The value of access to supervision in supporting TEP professional development was evident in the findings and highlights the importance of retaining access to available supervisors as part of the practice placement experience.

Woods et al., (2015) also note that the significant reductions in public spending have affected service delivery demands within practice placements, and in some cases reduced the availability of experienced psychologists who could take on a supervisory role to support TEPs. This is an important factor contributing to supply-side drivers in EP shortages, especially as TEP views collected through focus groups and interviews highlight the positive, educative impact that access to regular supervisory support has on the professional and personal

development of TEPs (Woods et al., 2015; McLaughlin, 2020). For example, interview data collected by McLaughlin (2020) suggest that TEPs highly valued the relational features behind the learning and training such as relationships with tutors, peers, and supervisors on placement. TEPs also described their experiences of developing their EP identity and experiencing personal change throughout their training. Receiving feedback and supervisory support was significantly link to how confident the TEPs felt in their new EP identity (McLaughlin, 2020).

The changing socio-political landscape has also impacted the training experience of EPs in light of reduced capacity for services and individual EPs to support TEPs through supervisory relationships, observation of practice, and feedback. Gathering TEPs views on their experience of the training programme may help to inform future teaching and learning opportunities and give an insight into how TEP practice is experienced within the current work climate for educational psychology.

#### **2.4 Community psychology**

More recently EP practice has focused to community psychology (Taft et al., 2020). The onset of traded services raised several ethical and practical concerns for EPs and does pose some barriers to the practice of community psychology, as EP time is constrained, and work is negotiated with commissioning schools (Lee and Woods, 2017). Lee and Woods (2017) go on to report that EPSs were trading successfully, with increasing levels of demand indicating a high value placed on service delivery. Careful considerations around ethical trading and management of customer – commissioner relationships are discussed as key potential limits

to the scope of traded service delivery. Relationships with schools, settings and other external agencies appears key to ensure ethical EP practice in a traded context, as also outlined in the Division of Educational and Child Psychology (DECP), (BPS, 2018) guidance on ethical trading.

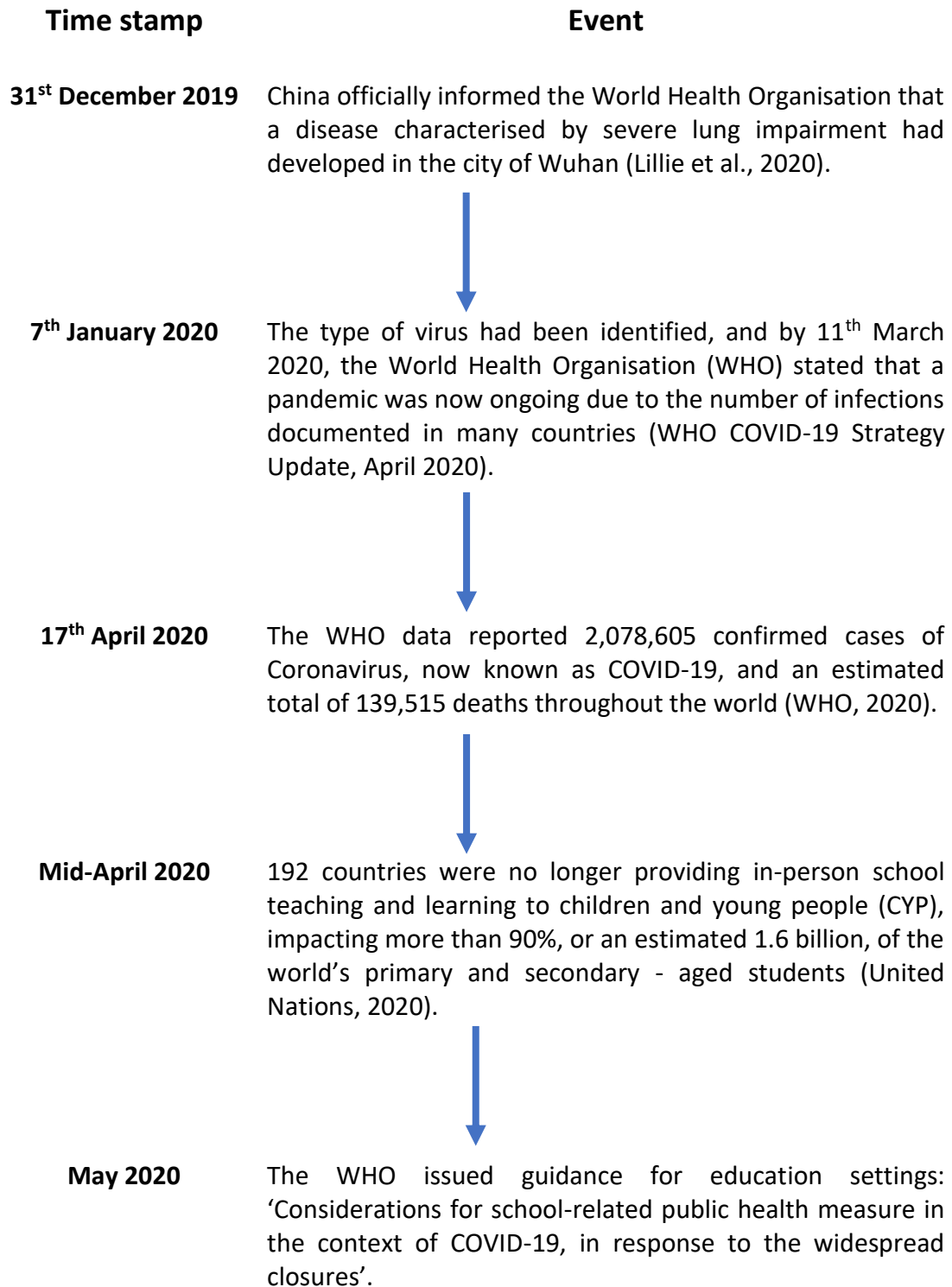
The context for traded service delivery was disrupted significantly by the events of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic introduced a host of new stressors for everyone, and the most recent and unprecedented shift in the context of EP service delivery.

## **2.5 The Coronavirus pandemic and context in 2020**

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted from the widespread prevalence and speed of rate of infection. The health threat developed rapidly in early 2020 and required immediate and urgent action from international authorities. Figure 2 offers a brief overview of the COVID-19 timeline from disease development to school closures around the world.

The speed of implementation for such changes left families and educational professionals scrambling to adjust to what has developed to be termed the 'new normal' in the literature (Horesh and Brown, 2020). The ongoing school closures forced school staff to transition their teaching and learning to remote and virtual learning platforms. Viner et al., (2020) define remote learning as the physical separation of students and educators, and the use of technology to facilitate staff-student communication, learning and school-based support. The new normal continues to evolve from full national lockdown in March 2020 to the re-opening

of communities and re-entry to education and workplaces over the last eighteen months. In 2022, we are still adjusting and defining our new normal.



*Figure 2: Brief overview of COVID-19 timeline from disease development to school closures around the world.*








### 2.5.1 The Coronavirus pandemic in England

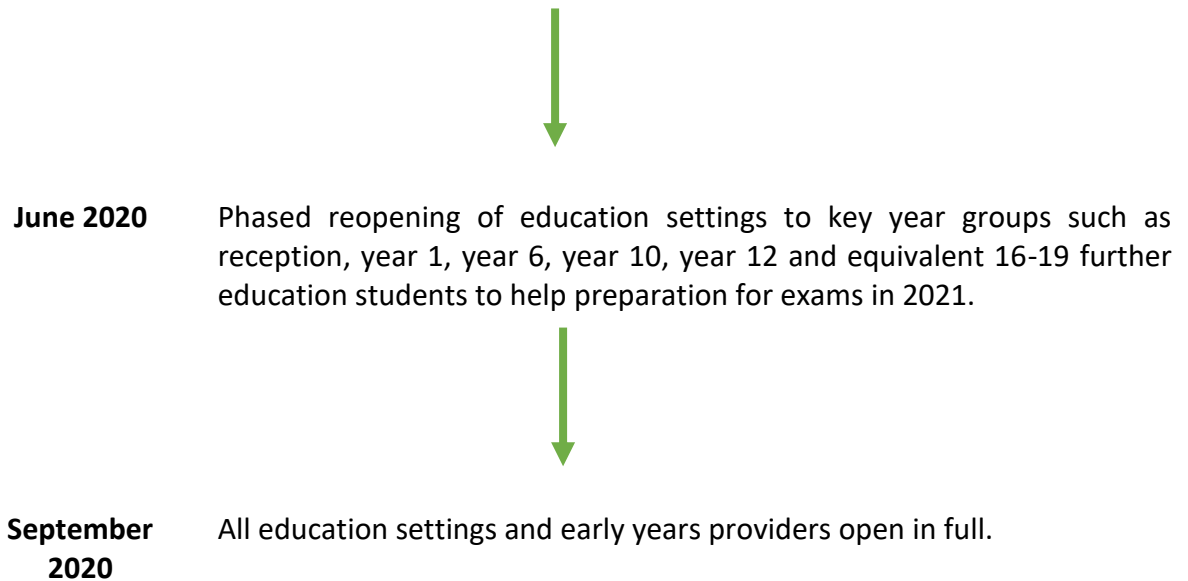
Schaffer et al., (2021) comment that the implemented school closures have likely assisted in containing the spread of viral outbreak, but the long-term impact on children, young people (CYP), families, education professionals and wider community are yet to be fully understood. Christakis (2020) estimated a 9–12-month learning loss when children return to school in Autumn Term of 2020, for example, and that this loss would likely be compounded by the quality of education received through virtual teaching platforms during school closures. Lost opportunities to socialise and develop a sense of belonging with their peer group through isolated access to school from home is also hypothesised to have impacted CYP's mental health and wellbeing during this time (Blustein et al., 2020). In addition, CYP may have witnessed an increase in parental or care giver stress and anxiety or witnessed members of their family and community become ill or pass away or become ill themselves; all of which will have likely impacted their sense of safety and wellbeing (Shaffer et al., 2021).

Between 19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Department for Education (DfE) and Public Health England issued guidance for education professionals. For EPs, amongst others, work-from-home orders meant a sudden and distinct shift in the delivery of services to clients and stakeholders. In England, some aspects of the law on education, health, and care (EHC) needs assessments and plans changed temporarily to give local authorities across England, health commissioning bodies, education settings and other bodies who contribute to these processes more flexibility in responding to the demands placed on them by the ongoing pandemic. These

legislative changes and other key events relating to education settings and the practice of EPs in England is outlined in Figure 3 below.

In addition, association groups and councils affiliated with the EP profession produced their own guidelines, such as the BPS and the AEP. Guidance broadly reaffirms the Children and Families Act 2014 and the SEND Code of Practice 2015 in relation to SEND and Education, Health and Care assessment arrangements.

| Time stamp  | Event   |
|---|---|
| <b>23<sup>rd</sup> January 2020</b>   | The first reported case of Coronavirus in Britain (Lillie et al., 2020).  |
|    |   |
| <b>23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020</b>   | National lockdown announced for England, with all people ordered to 'stay at home' wherever possible. This included the sudden partial closure of all education settings for an unprecedented period (Stifel et al., 2020).   |
|    |   |
| <b>19<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020</b>                               | The Department for Education and Public Health England issued initial guidance for education professionals.   |
|   |   |
| <b>23<sup>rd</sup> March – June 2020</b>  | All education settings remained partially closed. Teaching and learning for most CYP was delivered remotely through virtual platforms. It remained unclear as to when schools may return to full time, in-person, restriction-free teaching, and learning given the rising number of COVID-19 infections and lack of effective, available vaccines at that time (Stifel et al., 2020).  |
|  |   |
| <b>May 2020</b>   | The WHO also issued guidance for education settings: 'Considerations for school-related public health measure in the context of COVID-19, in response to the widespread closures'.  |
|  |   |
| <b>1<sup>st</sup> May 2020</b>  | The SEND Coronavirus Regulations 2020 temporarily amended four sets of regulations specifying timescales around EHC needs assessments and modification under the Coronavirus Act 2020 to Section 42 of the Children and Families Act 2014, (duty to secure special educational and health care provision in accordance with EHC Plan), which outlined that LAs and health commissioning bodies should use their "reasonable endeavours" to discharge this duty. |



*Figure 3: Overview of COVID-19 timeline in the context of England highlighting key events relating to education settings and EP practice.*

## **2.6 Systematic literature review**

To understand more specifically how the current unprecedented shift in context for working has impacted EP and TEP practice, a systematic literature review was conducted. This aimed to identify factors considered to be impactful on EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions in the first national lockdown of 2020, and the adaptations made by the profession.

### **2.6.1 Search strategy**

A database search using the University of Birmingham Shibboleth authentication was completed between 19<sup>th</sup> July 2021 and 20<sup>th</sup> August 2021. The following databases were searched in this time:

- British Education Index Children Development and Adolescent Studies
- Education Abstracts
- ERIC: Educational Research Information Centre
- PsychINFO

Using the following Boolean search term:

Pandemic OR COVID-19 OR coronavirus OR 2019-ncov OR sars-cov-2 OR cov-19

AND

educational psycholog\*

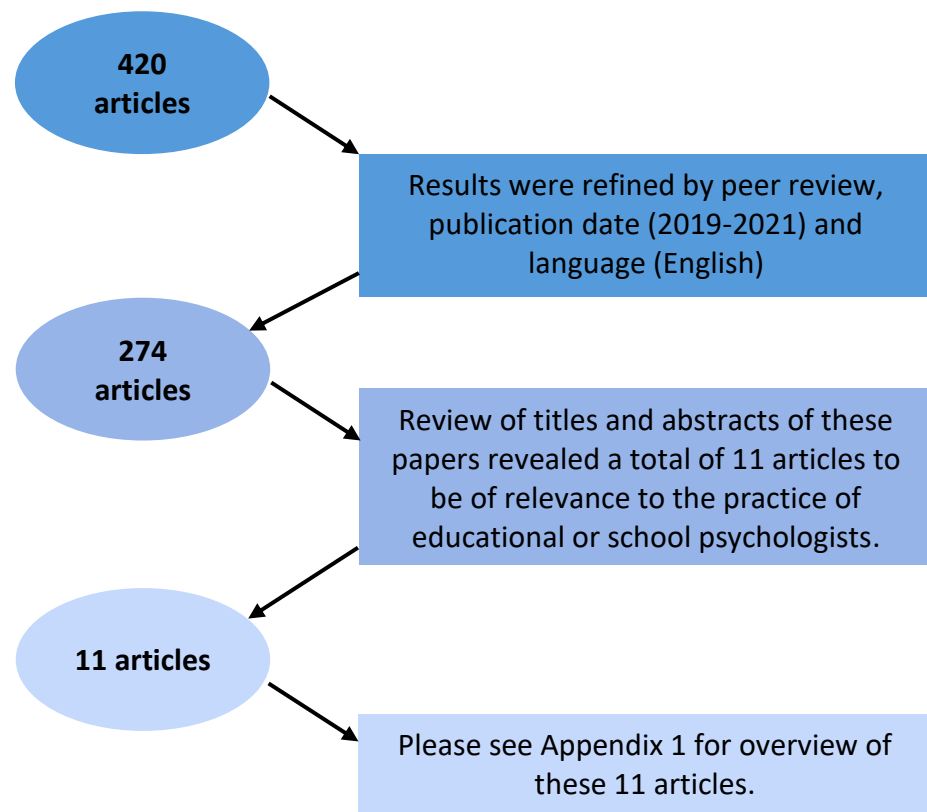
OR

school psycholog\*

OR

psycholog\*

Figure 4 outlines the search results.



*Figure 4: Overview of refining process to final core articles.*

Individual journals were also searched using the key words: COVID-19, coronavirus, pandemic, educational psychology, school psychology and psychologist. These included journals specific to educational psychology and include:

- Educational Psychology in Practice
- Journal of School Psychology
- British Journal of Educational Psychology
- Educational and Child Psychology

From the literature reviews it was then possible to identify factors considered to be impactful on EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions in the first national lockdown of 2020, and the ongoing adaptations being made by the profession.

Due to the lack of rigorous, peer-reviewed research available in the UK context, because of the short timeline between research publication and the current research data collection, the documents reviewed from psychological associations, government legislation, and first-hand accounts from EPs practicing in England published via blogs, have also been included in the following synthesis.

## **2.7 Literature review findings**

Literature has primarily been drawn from studies based on American populations and therefore refers to EP practice as 'School Psychology'. Whilst there are acknowledged and clear differences on multiple levels (social, cultural, political, educational) between the United States and England, the literature identified was of some relevance to the topic of educational psychology practice under COVID-19 and offers a broader overview of EP practice across the United Kingdom, Europe, and the United States. Where literature refers to 'School Psychology', it should be assumed that the context of the research is the USA.

### **2.7.1 Remote working**

The national lockdown measures introduced curtailed face-to-face working for EPs and other education support services around the world (Stifel et al., 2020). The immediate impact of this on applied psychology practice was the move to remote working which impacts on methods of practice, communication, access to vulnerable learners and their families and access to school sites to observe in context (Stifel et al., 2020).

The BPS released guidance for members on 'Adaptations to psychological practice working remotely' (BPS, 2021a). The key message around remote working is ensuring access to an appropriate, confidential space for professional activities with consideration given to the impact of listening to sensitive material in the home, maintaining appropriate boundaries, separating work from home, and remaining compliant to the Data Protection Act (2018).

Beyond recommendations on remote working, there is a small body of emerging research which has examined the role of applied psychologists during the pandemic and new ways of working remotely to support the psychological needs of communities. For example, the exploration of European health care psychologist roles by Karekla et al., (2021) and the multi-country review of school-based psychologist practices by Reupert et al., (2021).

In the UK, psychological associations developed their own initiatives to help and make known how they can contribute to recovery efforts (Karekla et al., 2021). UK-based EPs were later asked by the Department for Education to support education settings in September 2020, when they would be returning to full capacity, though this was not in a government-level advisory capacity.



More closely linked to the role of EPs, Reupert et al., (2021) undertook a multi-country review of school psychology practices during COVID-19 including data from the USA, Canada, Germany, and Australia. This review captures the most frequently delivered school-psychology services before and after the onset of the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the highest ranked services include psychoeducational assessment, delivery of counselling services, joint family-school systems working, staff training and attendance at Individual Education Plan Meetings. Following the onset of the pandemic and school closures, these shifted to consultation, researching interventions and supports, development and sharing of resources and webpages, and transitioning consultation and support for staff and parents to virtual platforms. Authors suggest that, broadly, there was greater provision of consultation during school closures and a reduction in psychoeducational assessments. The review concludes by recommending various future qualitative studies to provide further detail on specific practices, barriers and enablers for remote and virtual service delivery, and the exploration of systemic factors including guidance and policy on the use of online services.

Reupert et al., (2021) is the only found published and peer-reviewed research capturing the changing focus and context for school-based psychological service delivery under early COVID-19 restrictions in 2020. This provides helpful insights into practice at this unusual time and highlights the similarities in practices across the participating countries, despite differences in their government responses to COVID-19. This study is however limited by the method and timing of data collection; survey data was collected from participants across the four countries at different time points over the year and so variations in the practices reported by participants may be more due to the COVID-19 situation at the time of participation than in

differences in practices. In addition, variations in practices identified could be reflective of differences in school psychology roles and remits of service delivery across the different countries prior to the pandemic, such as a focus on assessment in comparison to counselling and consultation. More practically, the research used convenience and snowball sampling strategies via social media which may have skewed participant representation.

Remote working has arguably facilitated, and necessitated, psychological services to develop their practices in new directions, or to change methods of information gathering and intervention through psychological consultation frameworks rather than individual assessment. Karekla et al., (2021) and Reupert et al., (2021) also highlight the shift to virtual working, with engagement in webpage design, media-based health advertising, and virtual consultations being ranked among the most frequently used method of service delivery during the peak of the pandemic in 2020.

### **2.7.2 Virtual working**

Gould et al., (2007) suggest that, historically, digital means of working within applied psychology fields does seem to have a positive impact on crisis situations such as suicide ideation, and health promotion such as smoking cessation (Lichtenstein et al., 1996). Early during the pandemic outbreak, the WHO proposed the use of digital interventions as a means of psychological first aid and mental-health problem management (Kluge, 2020).

Karekla et al., (2021) note that digital means of assessment and the delivery of psychological services through virtual platforms had been used as methods for service delivery for a few years prior to the pandemic. The onset of virtual and remote working meant a sudden shift in context for psychological work during the current pandemic and has highlighted the need and use of digital working when stake holders, clients and patients could not see their providers in person (De Witte et al., 2021). Digital service delivery has evolved throughout the course of the pandemic and various forms of working have emerged such as telephone applications, self-help programs, teletherapy, hotlines for remote help to provide information and brief interventions, videoconference delivery of psychological interventions and consultations, and virtual delivery of training. However, because the widespread use of such methods has been so rapid and necessary for psychological services to function, there remains very little empirical research conducted which assesses impact and explores limitations or ethical considerations of this work in the current context (Vonderlin et al., 2021).

#### **2.7.2.1 Teleassessment and telepsychology**

The American Psychological Association (APA) (2013) define telepsychology as the provision of psychological services using telecommunication technologies. Telecommunication technologies include telephone, mobile devices, interactive videoconferencing, email, chat, text, and internet (e.g., self-help websites, blogs, and social media). The practice of telepsychology involves consideration of legal requirements, telecommunication technologies, ethical standards, intra-and inter-agency policies, and professional context. The APA suggest that it is the responsibility of the psychologist to balance these factors

appropriately to deliver effective, ethical practice. Similarly, the BPS (2021a) endorsed guidance produced for psychological professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic. which advised that “clinical judgements about the best method of delivery should be based on balanced individual assessment of the risks of infection, efficacy and need” (p.2), and reasonable adjustments should be made to enable all to engage.

Beyond this, Song et al., (2020) report a synthesis of two meta-analyses which lend support to the benefits of using telepsychology within applied psychology practice in the USA (Backhaus et al., 2012; Hilty et al., 2013). Backhaus et al., (2012) capture positive results for the efficacy, client satisfaction, and feasibility of video psychotherapy. Hilty et al., (2013) report that telemental health outcomes were equivalent to face-to-face services delivered to adults and CYP across different settings (e.g., home and emergency care). Whilst these meta-analyses offer interesting results in relation to the positive outcomes of engaging with telepsychotherapy, there are limitations to the research studies included. More efficacy studies are needed to secure understanding of the feasibility, impact, and sustainability of telemental health services.

There are further limits to the generalisability of these studies to school-based psychology practice under COVID-19. For example, psychological formulation of need often relies on triangulation of information gathered from a range of sources and contexts, such as background, culture, observation across home and education contexts, cognition and learning assessments, eliciting views of the CYP and more. Many of these data gathering techniques

are either not feasible or in need of significant adaptation to be completed remote or virtually during COVID-19.

### **2.7.3 Ethical considerations of remote and virtual working**

The initial stages of the pandemic saw psychologists needing to adapt practice with little guiding research. This placed EPs in the uncertain position of needing to balance ethical codes of conduct with meeting the needs of their communities through adapted methods. Furthermore, guidance that was later created by the AEP and BPS was likely implemented differently by EP services and private practices across England. Stifel et al., (2020) refer to this as one of the most contentious issues for school psychologists during the pandemic; ensuring the health and wellbeing of all stake holders is maintained whilst completing ethical, valid psychoeducational assessments.

The guidance created for UK-based psychologists includes information on ethical and practical considerations for EP practice during remote and virtual working (BPS, 2021a; BPS 2021b; BPS 2020a; BPS 2020c; AEP, 2020b). Farmer et al., (2020) and Hiramoto (2020) suggest that there is little empirical evidence to support the use of standardised assessments remotely and so EPs need to revisit their approach to assessment where this would have typically been a primary information source. The BPS advised all standardised assessments which “*could wait, should wait*” and any assessment of any kind should be heavily caveated in interpretation and written records with “*extreme caution*” (BPS 2020a, p.4).

Stifel et al., (2020) expand on this describing that EPs are responsible for conducting unbiased, equitable, and where possible, comprehensive evaluations of need which help to determine CYP's level of need and required provision in a timely manner. CYP are entitled to equitable assessment of need to identify appropriate support as part of the graduated approach to Special Educational Needs and Disabilities in England. Wright et al., (2020) therefore suggest that the lack of evaluation of teleassessment methods and normed measurement tools means that the evidence base on which EPs may rely is potentially compromised. Hass and Leung (2020) suggest psychologists should compensate for the limitations of virtual telepsychology assessments by cross validating the findings with data gathered using other methods, thereby creating triangulation within the data gathered.

A further limitation to virtual delivery of psychological services is that psychologists are rarely systematically trained to use technology in their practice, (Karekla et al., 2021). Karekla et al., (2021) hypothesise that this has likely been a limiting factor in psychologists' ability to transfer their practice to virtual working with ease and recommends future high-quality training for psychologists in digital services in accordance with psychological standards on practice. In the UK, the BPS, (2021a; 2021b; 2020a; 2020c) developed guidelines for psychological assessment undertaken remotely and adaptations to psychological practice during COVID-19, though these were not specific to EP practice and do not substitute further training for psychologists.

More practically, Stifel et al., (2020) identify concerns with telepsychology and assessment in relation to ensuring informed consent by adapting guidance for CYP and families, privacy and security of data collected, and ensuring confidentiality in consultation, assessment, and data

storage. Stifel et al., (2020) and Song et al., (2020) suggest that a hybrid model for EP service delivery is likely moving forwards, with a combination of in person and virtual or remote working. Authors suggest that this will require EPs to attend to updates on epidemiological knowledge of COVID-19 and how to implement relevant safety measures to support safe practice (e.g., Personal Protective Equipment and personal risk assessments). As the context for delivering EP work again shifts in line with epidemiological understanding of COVID-19, EPs will continue to balance ongoing ethical and legal considerations against the pressure to complete casework assessment or involvement for school's most vulnerable learners (Stifel et al., 2020).

#### **2.7.4 Anti-oppressive practice and the advocacy role of Educational Psychologists**

Linked to ethical considerations in relation to virtual and remote working, EPs must also consider CYP's and family access to telepsychology methods and practicalities such as a confidential, safe space to use when engaging with such methods (Szulevicz, 2021). A recently published United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report on inclusion and education during the initial stages of the pandemic suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and deepened global and educational inequalities (UNESCO, 2020). Salerno et al., (2020) and Webb et al., (2020) argue that structural racism and other forms of intersectional oppression precludes equitable access to educational and psychological support services for CYP and families who hold minoritized identities. Lupton (2020) suggests that the current pandemic can be viewed as a sociocultural phenomenon and therefore

exposed and amplified inequalities and made tacit structures of power and control more visible.

Lavy (2015) has also demonstrated that reduced instructional time disproportionately affects the academic achievement of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Similarly, Bayrakdar and Guveli (2020) found that students in the UK from ethnic minority, low-income backgrounds, or single-parent families, spent significantly less time on schoolwork than their peers during school closures. Widening educational gaps created by school closures is a global phenomenon (Armitage and Nellums, 2020; Viner et al., 2020), and the abrupt change to online learning has further highlighted the inequalities in access to technology (Correia, 2020). Delivery of remote SEND services has also revealed critical gaps and difficulties in the use of teleassessment and psychology. For example, Schaffer et al., (2021) reported school psychologist views on how their practice had changed and barriers to practice under COVID-19. Most participants reported difficulty with access to vulnerable families due to inadequate internet connection.

Lund and Gabrielli (2021) outline a range of potential strategies for addressing person-level and systemic barriers presented during the pandemic for health psychologists across areas such as access to education and systemic oppression. The advocacy role of psychologists is highlighted at both the level of the individual and macrolevels. The authors conclude that psychologists should make conscious efforts to amplify the words of marginalised individuals, especially CYP.



Emerging literature therefore suggests that school psychologists need to carefully consider and advocate for CYP to have equitable access to telepsychology, teleassessment, and the technological resources necessary to engage with learning and teaching opportunities. Long-standing and pre-existing biases and inequalities should not be a further barrier to equitable access to psychoeducational support, (Schaffer et al., 2021; Solerno et al., 2020; Song et al., 2020; Webb et al., 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated a need for service provision through virtual and remote working methods (De Witte et al., 2021; Van Daele et al., 2020), and evaluative reviews of this method of working considering ethical concerns, the ongoing pandemic context, and legal implications of EP involvement for many CYP across the world.

### **2.7.5 Wellbeing of Educational Psychologists and those in training**

Recent literature suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has introduced a series of stressors that are likely to result in transient anxiety in children and caregivers, and in psychologists (Brooks, Webster, Smith, et al., 2020; Farmer et al., 2020a; Farmer et al., 2020b; Liu et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020). An individual's response to stressors will undoubtedly vary but a universal increase in stress is likely to result in an increased prevalence of adverse reactions. Specifically, for front-line health workers, Sethi et al., (2020) used online questionnaires to gather the views of health professionals in Pakistan and reported a significant impact on the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of all participants. Similarly, in China, Huang et al., (2020), report on the impact of direct, face-to-face clinical work experienced by some health professionals and the impact of working from home for others. For example, the use of

technology at home is argued to have blurred the boundaries between work and home life, leaving some practitioners feeling they needed to be always available, resulting in self-reported increases in anxiety and over working (Huang et al., 2020).

In the UK context there were at the time of writing no peer reviewed research studies identified in relation to the wellbeing of educational psychologists under COVID-19 restrictions. The BPS Presidential COVID-19 task group have however commissioned and published guidance for the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of psychologists and linked virtual resources to launch the guidance documents (BPS, 2020b). Over 200 participants were self-selected with efforts made to ensure balanced representation from a range of psychological divisions and diverse backgrounds, though criteria around this is not described in the publication. Participants shared personal reflections through a survey in relation to risks and positive benefits to supporting wellbeing during COVID-19.

The research identifies ten key impacts of the pandemic on psychologist's wellbeing, with many overlapping with previously discussed themes in this literature review. For example, ethical, moral, and professional dilemmas, adjustment to remote working and changes to the modality of face-to-face service delivery. Findings also indicate an impact on personal anxiety and feelings of uncertainty with comments included around career and financial security and worry associated with the expectation that psychologists "*should be able to cope*" (BPS, 2020b p.4).

Core mechanisms identified by psychologist's as supportive for wellbeing during the pandemic included:

- Support from managers and supervisors including regular wellbeing check-ins.
- 1:1 case supervision and opportunities to reflect on the emotional impact of work.
- Guidance documents to normalise responses.
- Clear communication, acceptance of not knowing answers.
- Practical support to facilitate remote working.
- Assessment of suitability of home/work environment.
- Setting and maintaining boundaries between work and home.
- Self-compassion and self-care.
- Professional guidance and resources.
- Support from colleagues.
- Training webinars to increase understanding of adaptations to work.
- Group reflective spaces.
- Learning through webinars, guidance, and peer networks.
- Having a voice and feeling able to escalate concerns.

Results also identify some positive factors such as the creation of opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and find creative solutions to challenges that were energising. Participants also note the distinct role of psychologists in supporting the general population through application of psychological theory and in raising awareness of the impact of stress on physical and mental health. Participants noted the positive benefits on their wellbeing of having more

flexibility in working patterns, opportunities to engage with such initiatives, share knowledge and skills and for making time to reflect and create in teams.

The BPS guidance (2020b) encourages psychologists to reflect on and record the positive and negative impact of the pandemic on their work. Research during the current context is likely to help improve understanding of the psychological impact and the development of responses to COVID-19, as well as contributing to the evaluation of those responses. The shifting context for service delivery during this time may have afforded some opportunities, but psychologists themselves will likely have been impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. Supporting the wellbeing of these professionals should also be considered in recovery efforts.

#### **2.7.6 New initiatives in the UK**

EPs are likely impacted by COVID-19 but may have also had more flexibility to engage in and explore other areas of their training (Schaffer et al., 2021). A better understanding is needed for how the roles and responsibilities of EPs changed during the initial few months of the COVID-19 pandemic and how they responded to such change. Schaffer et al., (2021) and Reupert et al., (2021) indicate a shift in school-based psychology practice across the world, with the focus broadly moving from assessment and identification of individual need to engagement with webpages, virtual meetings, consultation, and systemic projects.

Chenneville and Schwartz-Metter (2020) suggest that applied psychologists are positioned to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through research, practice, advocacy, and education, and

are also uniquely placed to understand the impact of this time on communities, education settings, families, and education professionals. A contextual understanding of UK-based EP practice can be gained from resources produced by the BPS and DECP and [edpsy.org.uk](http://edpsy.org.uk) website and blog, an online space for EPs developed by practicing EPs.

Throughout the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic UK-based psychological associations and societies produced a number of publications and guidance documents to support EPs, TEPs and psychologists more broadly in their continued practice. Within these documents, examples of key themes which are covered to guide and support EPs include:

- adaptations to psychological practice during the pandemic (BPS, 2021a)
- working remotely with CYP and their families (AEP, 2020)
- facilitating community resilience and participation in response to COVID-19 (BPS, 2020d; BPS 2020e)
- supporting vulnerable groups such as those with specific complex needs (BPS, 2020g), HIV (BPS, 2020i) and shielding adults and families (BPS 2020h; BPS 2020f)
- supporting CYP and education settings throughout the transition back to school (BPS 2020j; BPS 2020k)
- considerations for online, virtual, and remote working with CYP (BPS, 2020a; BPS, 2020c)

Beyond producing guidance documents for psychologists, the BPS completed research on the wellbeing of psychologists, as discussed above in relation to EP and TEP wellbeing, and on the impact of COVID-19 on students, staff, and Departments of Psychology in UK Universities (BPS

2020b; BPS, 2021c). The latter research aimed to explore the impact of the pandemic in inform support for academic staff and students for their teacher and research under COVID-19 restrictions. Similar to the research on psychologist's wellbeing (BPS 2020b), the BPS (2021c) reported a *'a clear impact on wellbeing with a large majority of staff and students reporting that since COVID-19, they had experienced a decline in their wellbeing'* (p.85).

The BPS (2022) also conducted survey research through social media outreach to gather insights into the experiences of EPs in adapting to the constraints of remote service delivery and social distancing during the 2021 January-March national lockdown. Analysis of survey results identified challenges, opportunities, novel developments, and long-term anticipated changes in EP practice. Within the results, adapting all elements of psychological practice and the loss of face to face opportunities to work with CYP, families, and education staff is identified as a particular concern for UK EPs. In line with the BPS (2020b) survey on psychologist's wellbeing, this survey also reports that 14% of participants acknowledged the importance of connecting with their colleagues to maintain working relationships and support their wellbeing. In relation to opportunities and novel developments, the results highlight the benefits of virtual psychology communities, such as a Twitter, for sharing resources and practice, and the development of complementary EP services through remote working such as virtual training and supervision for SENDCos and school staff, webinars, and telephone helplines.

The edpsy blogs also offer EPs and TEPs an online space to share resources within the EP community, such as an update on COVID-19 information for children, families, and

professionals (O'Hare, 2020). Williams (2020) also shared EP practice and the development of 'Drawing the Ideal Safe School' resource for practitioner use in supporting recovery efforts. Linked to this are several blogs published on the broad topic of transition back to education, and supporting the recovery with schools, families, and communities. These blogs touch on the sharing of therapeutic resources (Green, 2020); the development of resources to support education settings following a critical incident (Ruane 2020); and the use of an engagement model to respond flexibly and creatively to the challenges posed for education in the pandemic (O'Connor, 2021).

A review of the blogs published on this platform from March 2020 to August 2021 revealed four key themes for UK-based EP practice developments during the initial stages of the pandemic: resource and skill development, supporting recovery, research, and community psychology approaches. For example, Houghton (2021) commented on the pandemic allowing EPs to deliver core functions in innovative and creative ways. Houghton (2021) explored and implemented the use of Bitmoji Virtual E-Rooms to provide a safe and engaging virtual environment for CYP to ensure a person-centred experience. Pengelly and Sowman (2020) reflected on their adaptations to telepsychology consultation during the pandemic and use of systematic frameworks to support formulation. Shield and O'Hare (2021) later created an interactive discussion platform to enable EP discussion and sharing of resources for working creatively and remotely.

There is a focus in the blogs on ensuring collaborative working and highlighting the breadth of EP practice under the current pandemic context but also moving forwards in supporting

recovery efforts. These articles offer an insight into EP's reflections on successful and effective practice throughout the early stages of the pandemic, and capture the range of work at individual, virtual-working levels, and systemic level research projects. Future research is needed to explore the impact that COVID-19 has had on education settings, families, CYP and psychologists themselves through engagement with EPs; this may enable the EP profession to prepare and plan for extended school closure and future COVID-19 restrictions (Schaffer et al., 2021), and inform models of service delivery which are responsive to community needs and resilient to online working.

### **2.7.7 Changing context for EP practice and community psychology approaches**

The pandemic has necessitated an abrupt shift to virtual and remote working for the EP profession from mostly face to face in education settings, with some telephone consultation with parents and key staff where needed to supplement involvement. Whilst this change of context may offer benefits, such as the potential to improve access to services and efficiency and greater flexibility, the barriers created by ceasing face to face work for so long have been difficult to navigate with little research on the sustainability and impact of remote working (Hiramoto 2020).

The psychological needs created by the widespread impact of the pandemic are predicted to be at a level not previously observed (Blustein et al., 2020). Whilst these needs will likely be normal reactions to extreme stress over time, they may require psychologists to work above the level of the individual, instead approaching needs systemically through multi-disciplinary



work with a particular focus on reducing inequalities. The BPS (2021b) suggest that there may be value in psychological services proactively building community-psychology networks with other disciplines at a local authority level to enable *“better reach of psychology to some of the most vulnerable in society and those who work directly with them”* (BPS, 2021b, pg. 4). An edpsy blog published in August 2020 also highlights the need to prioritise community re-engagement and rebuilding in schools following the early pandemic crisis, as a recommendation for education policy makers (Popoola et al. 2020). The recommendations suggested are based on pupil views and psychological frameworks such as: the Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1954), the Eco-Systemic Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and the Power Threat Meaning Framework (Johnstone and Boyle, 2018).

Recovery models to support individuals following mass trauma also emphasise the benefits of community-psychology approaches and a focus on community level interventions. For example, Jacobson and Farah (2012) offer a recovery model through outreach, psycho-social interventions, and access to trusted sources of information to increase community empowerment. This approach was reported to be most effective when any intervention following mass trauma fostered the empowerment of grassroots networks and the development of community principles. Understanding the strengths and needs of communities and responding flexibly is important for recovery approaches (Jacobson and Farah, 2012). Similarly, Carpenter’s recovery curriculum highlights the role of a systematic, relationships-based approach with 5 levers to support recovering on re-entry to school: relationships, community, a transparent curriculum, metacognition, and space to rediscover.

## 2.8 Rationale and research aims

Although the BPS (2020a; 2020b; 2020c; 2021a; 2021b) have produced a range of guidance documents, there was at the time of writing a limited research base which involves UK-based EPs themselves, captures reflections on EP practice, or seeks to find the strengths, values, and opportunities in the best of EP practice under such an extreme change of working context. Without this critical reflection on the role and work of EPs during this challenging context, the profession may be missing opportunities for growth and development in response to community and wider society-level needs. This forms the overarching aim of the current research: capturing the best of what is when everything feels unknown in a changing context for EP practice.

Discussion of the impact on EPs themselves also highlights the need for sensitive, considerate research methodology choices which are driven by an understanding of the context for research and the potential biopsychosocial impact upon participants at a time of increased stress. The BPS (2020b, p.2) state that *“we are truly living through a time of monumental personal, social, and professional change and challenge which at times feels worthy of dystopian fiction”* (p.2), focusing attention on the challenges and barriers to practice. The research discussed throughout this literature review captures the ‘dystopia’ of 2020 but seems, perhaps understandably, hesitant to champion the success of EP practice during the pandemic. This again contributes to the overarching research aim of capturing the best of ‘what is’ when the context for practice is akin to dystopia, and the wellbeing of participants is

important to support. When formulating the research aims, a primary driver was felt to be ethical considerations, and participants wellbeing and experiences of the pandemic.

The research adopts an Appreciative Inquiry (AI), participatory approach in which the participants are key stakeholders in the research focus, process, and outcomes. AI has many definitions in the literature but is defined by its creators as a *“collaborative search to identify and understand an organisation’s strengths, it’s potentials, the greatest opportunities, and people’s hopes for the future”* (Cooperrider et al. 2008, p.151). It is both a theory and a methodology which follows a strengths-based model of change to uncover the positive core of an organisation or group (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2005).

The research aims to capture the best of ‘what is’ in relation to EP and TEP practice under early COVID-19 restrictions in England, identify facilitators to this practice, and support participant wellbeing by focusing on strengths and successes at a time of uncertainty and isolation.

## **2.9 Research questions**

The nature of Participatory Action Research (PAR) and AI is that research questions could not be defined prior to engagement with the participants. Broadly, I was hoping to focus on an aspect of EP practice within the context of COVID-19, to capture the abrupt change to the context of EP working because of the initial national lockdown. My initial guiding research questions were therefore:

1. What do EPs and TEPs perceive to be facilitative factors which have enabled an aspect of their practice to flourish under COVID-19 lockdown restrictions?
2. How do EPs and TEPs perceive this aspect of their practice to continue flourishing in the future?

Following the first phase of the AI, the research questions evolved to the following with participants:

1. What do EPs and TEPs in one LA EP Service perceive to be key characteristics of peak practice under COVID-19 restrictions?
2. What are the perceived facilitating factors supporting successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions introduced in March 2020?
3. Based on past successes, in what ways do EPs and TEPs envisage maintaining peak practice under future COVID-19 restrictions.

## **CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction to Methodology**

In this chapter I will give an overview and a rationale for the chosen methodology to address the current research aims and questions outlined above. Aspects of methodology to be discussed include the current study's epistemology, methodology, design, and approach to analysis of data collected. The application of AI will be explained, including a description of analysis procedures within the current research. The chapter concludes with an evaluation of the research quality.

### **3.2 Methodological orientation**

#### **3.2.1 Overview**

Gray (2004) suggests that methodology is the process through which theoretical and philosophical assumptions are justified for the methods and analysis selected for the research. This study adopts a qualitative methodology and aims to uncover characteristics of successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. Facilitative factors which are perceived by participants to have enabled the successful practice are also explored with a view to maintaining these aspects of practice for future, ideal working.

#### **3.2.2 Ontology**

*“Ontology is the study of being”* (Crotty, 1998, p.10) and ontological assumptions concern beliefs about the nature of what is being investigated. Ontological debates centre around whether reality exists independent of our consciousness and experiences, or within our consciousness and through experience (Levers, 2013). The current research is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm, adopting the ontological position that there are multiple realities of events and experiences. Interpretivists believe that reality is multiple and relative and therefore cannot be known objectively (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988).

Interpretive research often sits well in the context of education- and social science-based research, where there is a co-creation and collaboration between the researcher and the researched, preserving its integrity (Gibbs and Costley, 2006). This approach therefore seeks knowledge through participatory research methods with people, valuing their individual realities in context.

### **3.2.3 Epistemology**

Epistemology is concerned with the nature of knowledge and is “a way of understanding and explaining how I know what I know” (Crotty, 1998, p.3). According to Gergen, (1978, 1994), knowledge is not abstract, objective, or absolute; it is concrete and situated in context for individuals, meaning that there are multiple truths. Social constructionism therefore views knowledge as situational and subjective because it is constructed between individuals within a particular context.

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) suggest that within AI, the appreciative process of knowing is socially constructed. Knowing takes place through interaction with and within a social

system, and social systems determine their own reality. Social knowledge is therefore a narrative creation, not an aspect of the physical world discoverable through “*detached, value-free, observational methods (empiricism); nor can it be relegated to the subjective minds of isolated individuals*” (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987 p. 137).

In the context of this inquiry, the social theory of ‘peak EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions’ is bound by the context of the group; the theory is fluid and fleeting, identified and constructed by the group members at a point in time. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggest that emphasis in such inquiries is therefore on capturing how group members give meaning and order to their individual experiences within their system.

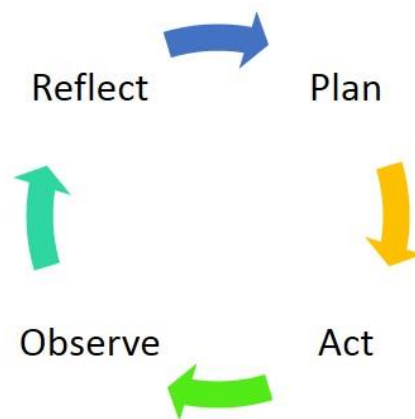
### **3.3 Current research design**

#### **3.3.1 Participatory action research**

Littman et al., (2020) described PAR as an approach to action research which emphasises participation and action by members of the community affected by the research. PAR is grounded in critical, constructivist, and action-oriented epistemologies (Chataway, 1997; Crotty 1998; Lewin, 1946). PAR processes are characterised as inquiry-based, collaborative, and transformative for participants and communities (Rodriguez & Brown, 2009).

As demonstrated by Figure 5, PAR is a cyclical research process of problem identification, action and reflection leading to further inquiry and action for change through democratic processes of decision making (Littman et al., 2020). McTaggart (1994, p.316) states that Action Research (AR) begins with an “*imperfectly understood felt concern and a desire to take action*”. AR is often participatory in nature as the group identifies clusters of problems which are of

mutual concern and work together to act through research to improve the situation. PAR is a form of self-reflective inquiry completed by committed groups who share a social situation, to improve the rationality, coherence, or satisfactoriness of their social practice, understanding of social practice, the institutions and ultimately the wider society in which these practices are situated.



*Figure 5: Lewin's Action Research Model, adapted from McNiff, (2016, p.116)*

In the current study PAR is used to refer to a research partnership between myself (Olivia Rogers, researcher) as an AI facilitator and participants of the AI project, with the shared overarching aim of producing knowledge about EP and TEP practice.

### **3.3.2 Appreciative Inquiry**

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) suggest that AR has limited transformational potential because of the problem-centric approach taken. In contrast, AI proposes a focus on positivity and appreciating the best of the organisation. In their seminal paper, Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) introduced AI as a re-envisioned AR model. Their basis for the AI



conceptualisation of AR was a socio-rationalist perspective which, as described by Gergen (1994), assumes instability of social order. AI therefore offers the view that our reality is a contextualised outcome of the moment which is open to continuous and variable reconstruction through individual perspective. The approach begins with the assumption that there is something within every organisation, group, or system that works, and that a multi-dimensional approach to AR is needed which generates theory and develops organisations.

Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) go on to propose the dimensions of AI as part of an action research model, as outlined in Figure 6 below:

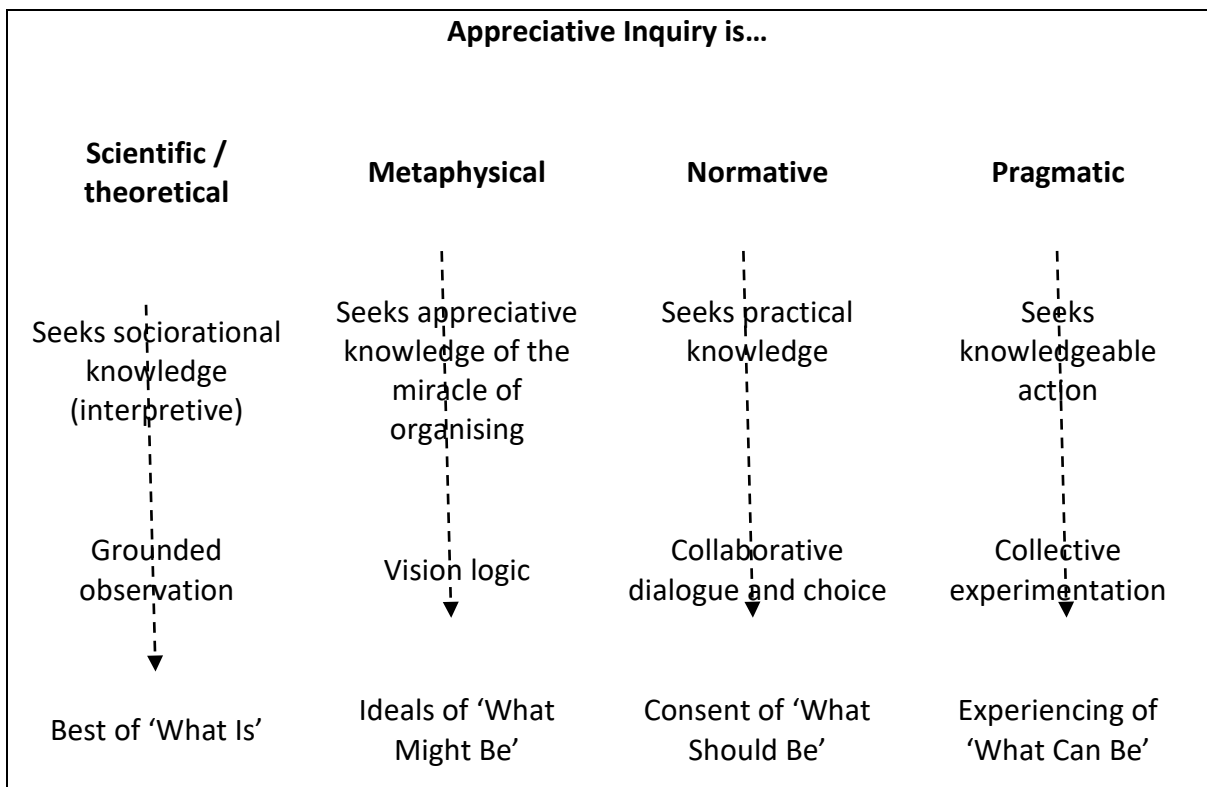


Figure 6: Dimensions of AI: Action Research model for a Humanly Significant Generative Science of Administration (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987)

AI was initially developed by Cooperrider (1986) as a philosophical approach to organisational change which focuses on the use of positive and appreciative conversations to stimulate ideas and act as an impetus for change (Ludema and Fry, 2008). AI is influenced by the effects of positivity: the placebo effect, the Pygmalion effect, and the effects of positive thinking and imagery on outcomes. These can collectively be described as the 'heliotropic hypothesis' which suggests that human systems tend to evolve in the direction of positive images (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2005).

AI represents a data-based, theory-building methodology for evolving and putting into practice the collective will of a group or organization. Within education research, AI is developing momentum as a recognisable framework for exploring and collaboratively sustaining organisational change (Tosati et al., 2015). AI is characterised across disciplines as a '4-D Cycle' and is defined as a "collaborative search to identify and understand an organisation's strengths, its potentials, the greatest opportunities, and people's hopes for the future" (Cooperrider et al., 2008, p.151). Bushe (2011) suggests that AI is best applied when acknowledged as a set of principles rather than a framework or process to work through, guided by eight core assumptions; please see Appendix 2 for more information.

### **3.3.3 Applying the five principles of Appreciative Inquiry to the current research**

Cooperrider, et al., (2008) outline five core principles of the AI approach which facilitators of AI are encouraged to grasp to internalise the basis of the 4-D cycle. Table 3 offers an overview of these five principles and application to the current research.

| Principle                            | Description   | Application and relevance to my research   |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>The constructionist principle</b> | This principle asserts that language and dialogue is the method through which the world is understood and constructed (Reed 2007). Consequently, it must be recognised that individuals create multiple interpretations of the social world, and it is through inquiry and shared dialogue that we can elicit these understandings. No single data set will capture a sufficient story and researchers adopting this approach must consider that every truth shared will have potential but also limitations. All approaches and facilitators are therefore concerned with the co-construction and exploration of individual stories and successes from an organisation's past, present, and future, and the way in which these stories have influence over the way the group thinks and acts (Reed, 2007). | The current research is participatory in the design of data collection and analysis. This is primarily to allow participants to construct their own interpretation of events and represent their views. We spent the first two focus groups (Define, Discover) sharing peak experience stories in pairs and then with the wider group. This protected time for story-sharing created enthusiasm, momentum and a focus on strengths and successes as a group. It also allowed detailed exploration of everyone's construction of successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions. |
| <b>The principle of simultaneity</b> | Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2005) suggest the act of inquiry through questioning is intervention, as inquiry and change are not separate moments; they can and should be simultaneous. Bushe (2011) notes that the act of inquiry can be thought of as intervention because inquiry enables reflection, which creates a generative space to explore new patterns of thinking. This aspect of AI differs from other action research frameworks, and places emphasis on language and shared reflection. Cooperrider et al. (2008, p.50) suggest that "the seeds of change are the things people think, and talk about, the things people discover and learn, and the things that inform dialogue  | The current research seeks to use appreciative questioning as a prompt for reflection on past successes under a particular context of working: the early COVID-19 restrictions from March – July 2020. The research aims to capture peak EP and TEP practice during this period, and key factors present that are considered by participants to have facilitated their successful practice. The act of inquiry throughout appreciative questioning is therefore the intervention for reflection on practice. Creating opportunities for reflection with                          |

| Principle                         | Description   | Application and relevance to my research   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|
|                                   | and inspire images of the future. They are implicit in the very first questions asked”.   | peers and colleagues is noted in the literature review as a protective factor for EP and TEP wellbeing during the uncertain working context of COVID-19 (BPS, 2020b).  |
| <b>The poetic principle</b>       | This principle draws on narrative concepts and suggests that individuals have choice over where they focus their constructions of the world. Cooperrider et al. (2005, pg.9) suggest that the poetic principle can be understood through the metaphor of seeing human organisations as a “open book” in that every organisation’s story is being constantly co-authored.  | The choice of topic to study/ inquire on would have determined what we discovered. The topic choice was deliberately broad to begin with: EP practice under COVID-19 and then defined by participants through the telling of peak experience stories from this context of working. AI aims to disrupt the habitual ways of storytelling within organisations to enable positive change to be drawn out of tangible successes within the organisation (Reed, 2007). The focus on strengths and successes was also a deliberate choice and a primary rationale for selecting AI – to support participant wellbeing and reflection on a challenging work context. |
| <b>The anticipatory principle</b> | Bushe (2011) suggests that the anticipatory principle is related to possibility-centric approaches rather than more traditional problem-centric approaches to organisational change. The process of identifying a positive future through reflection as a group on what works well, enables change to occur in the direction of positive focus. In essence, understanding about the future will shape how we move towards this potential future | The literature review revealed some changes to the focus of the EP / school psychologist role but did not explicitly capture the strengths and possibilities for future service delivery directions, from the view of EPs themselves. Anticipation of future EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions is likely laden with challenges and barriers to the   |

| Principle                     | Description   | Application and relevance to my research   |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
|                               | (Reed, 2007). Anticipation therefore opens new possibilities about the future (Boyd and Bright, 2007).  | continuation of service delivery, but a shift to identifying a positive future based on past successes and group strengths is hoped to generate a shared, positive vision for the future. It is hoped that this process will support participants to clarify aims for their practice and develop a shared interest in pursuing these aims.   |
| <b>The positive principle</b> | This principle asserts that the act of asking appreciative questions is more engaging and productive as a process for achieving change than the energy-sapping focus on problem presenting and solving observed in other organisational change models (Reed 2007). Cooperrider et al. (2008, p. 10) suggest that “momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding, attitudes such as hope, inspiration, and the sheer joy of creating with one another”. The power of positive imagery is a key factor in AI and is underpinned by research into positive effect and learned helpfulness, positive imagery as a dynamic force, and metacognition and conscious evolution of positive images (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). Therefore, this approach suggests that the more positive the questions are to guide the organisation through change development the greater length and rate of sustainability of change will be (Cooperrider et al. 2008). | The current research is aiming to shift the focus from the challenges presented by COVID-19 restrictions to EP practice towards the strengths of the profession and successful practice evidenced. In doing this, it is hoped that momentum for critical reflection on aspects of this practice will occur and inform future practice considering the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. All activities completed by participants were appreciative and positive in their focus. Discussion of challenges and barriers to work were not frequent in their occurrence. Participants reflected often on their enjoyment of the process, as detailed in my reflexive account and personal reflections on this research (See section 6.6). |

*Table 3: Overview of the five principles of AI and application to my research*

### 3.3.4 The Appreciative Inquiry 5-D cycle within the current procedure

The underlying assumption of AI is that an organisation is a solution to be embraced rather than a problem to be solved. The AI cycle is therefore rooted in the positive experiences and successes of others, and works through a process of appreciating, envisioning, co-constructing, and sustaining, with all members of the group involved.

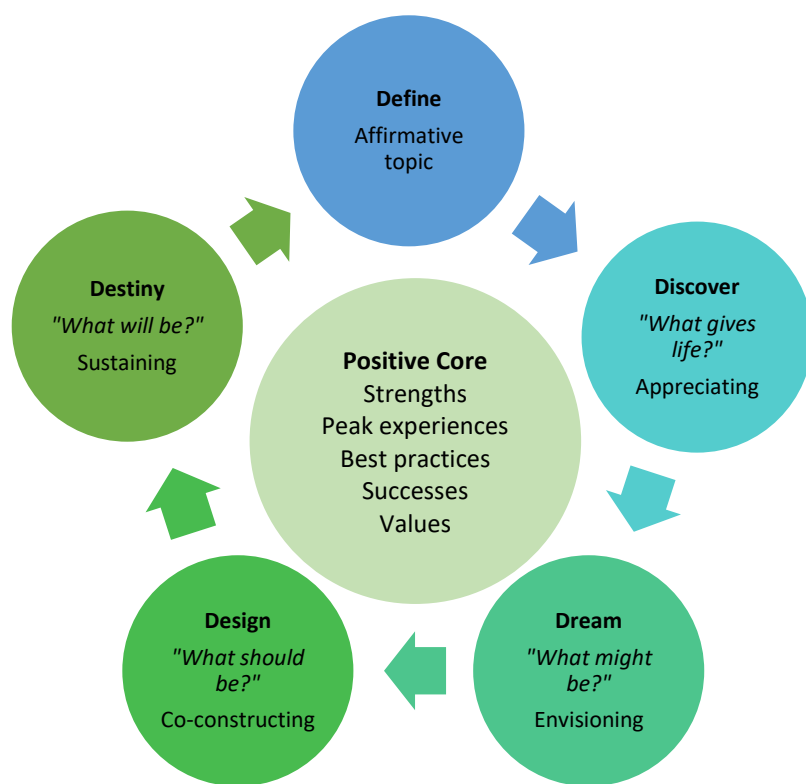


Figure 7: Phases of AI, adapted from the AI 4-D Cycle, (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2005)

The most widely applied AI framework is the 4-D cycle, more recently adapted to the 5-D cycle, (see Figure 7), to highlight the emphasis placed on the selection of an affirmative topic choice (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2005). Figure 8 and Tables 4 and 5 below outline how the

5-D cycle was applied in my research. Please also see Appendix 3 for additional description on each of the 5-D phases.

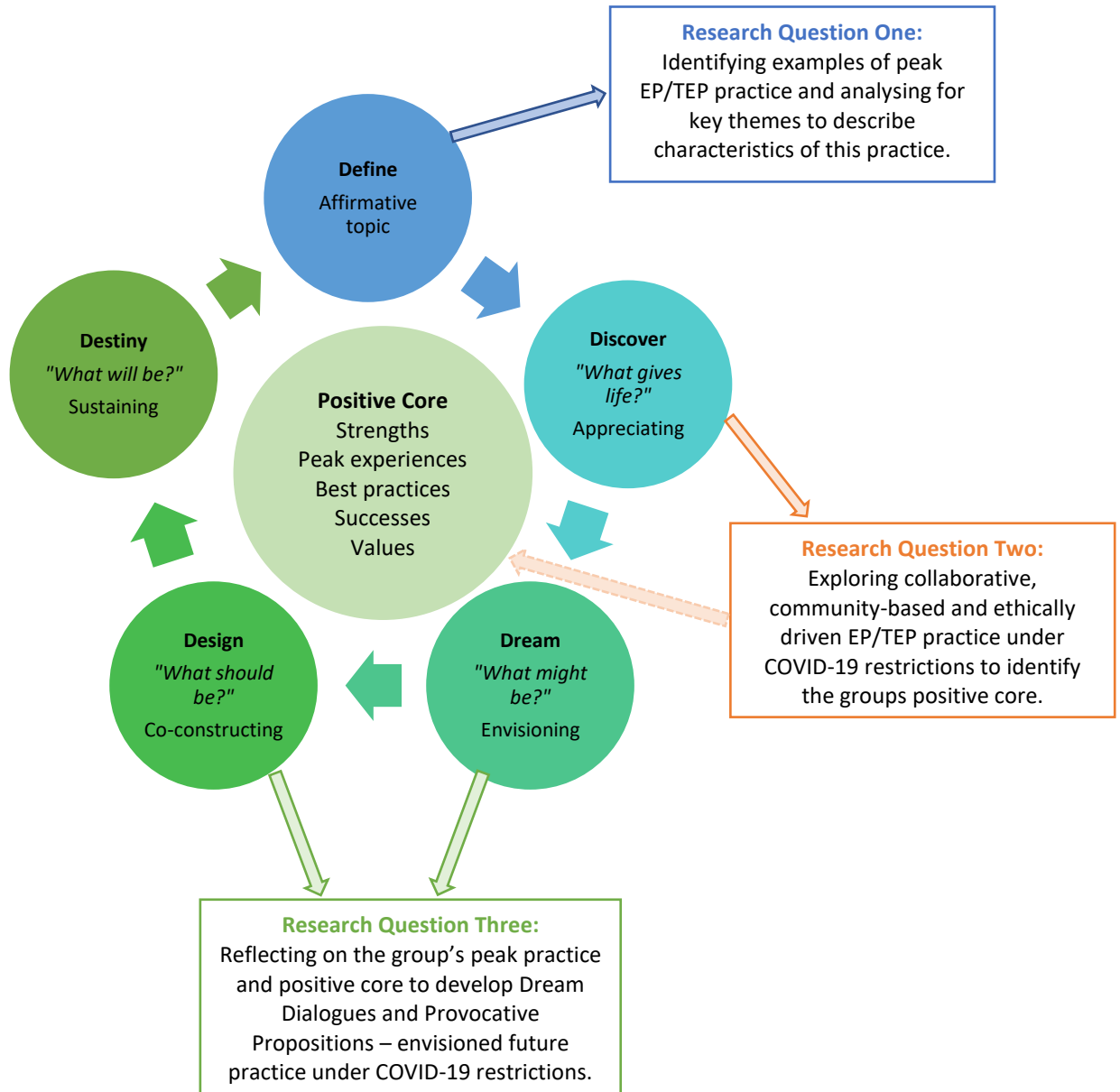


Figure 8: Overview of AI cycle and where data was collected and analysed for each research question

| Session  | Description of the introductory session.   | Outcomes of this session  |
|--|--|---|
| <p><b>Introductory session</b></p> <p>July 2020<br/>30 minutes</p> | <p>This was an additional session to support recruitment, not a part of the AI cycle as described by Cooperrider et al., (2005).</p> <p>I created this additional session to support with recruitment of participants from the EPS, and to offer the opportunity for potential participants to learn more about the research and ask questions. The introductory session was a live workshop via Microsoft Teams.</p> <p>I also produced a short, pre-recorded webinar (<i>See Appendix 4</i>) to share with interested EPs / TEPs which covered the basic methodology, theory, research aims and participant commitments.</p> | <p>Webinar shared.</p> <p>Participants recruited and informed consent gained from participants.</p> <p><i>Please see Appendix 5 for informed consent information sheet.</i></p> |

*Table 4: Overview of the introductory session*



| Phase of AI   | Description with reference to Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance.  | Application in my procedure   | Outcomes of each phase in my research  |
|---|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Define</b></p> <p>July 2020<br/>1.5 hours</p> | <p>This initial phase is where the selection of a topic is completed. Topics can be pre-selected and defined by a group from the organisation or by the researcher. In these cases, the AI initiative is usually driven by an identified area for organisational development. Alternatively, Cooperrider et al. (2005) outline the process of selecting a topic choice using the four AI foundational questions within mini-interviews which involve all members of the organisation.</p> | <p>I met with the area senior of my team within the EPS to share my research proposal and ethical considerations. I proposed two options: a pre-selected topic, informed by the senior leadership team in the EPS to enable a focus to align to EPS priorities, or a participant-led inquiry whereby EP participants are facilitated to generate their own definition of a topic for inquiry through the AI 'define' process. We decided on the latter to give a more participatory emphasis on the research.</p> <p>Over Microsoft Teams, the steering group of eight participants met and completed mini paired interviews based on the four foundational questions of AI to establish a defined topic for focus.</p> <p>Participants fed back their interview summaries to the wider group. Whole group analysis for codes and then key themes in the stories shared were then identified resulting in three key aspects of defined 'successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions' for Discovery interviews.</p> <p><i>Please see Appendix 6 for all documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Define phase.</i></p> | <p>Participants introduced to AI and the first appreciative task: Topic area definition.</p> <p>Whole group analysis of stories shared. Key characteristics of successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions identified in response to research question 1.</p> <p>Interview schedule for appreciative Discovery interviews created with participants – <i>please see Appendix 7.</i></p> |

| Phase of AI   | Description with reference to Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance.  | Application in my procedure   | Outcomes of each phase in my research   |
|---|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Discover</b></p> <p>August 2020<br/>1.5 hours</p> | <p>Discovery is about seeking to uncover and learn from times and situations where the organisation is at its best. The task of this phase is to discover positive exceptions and past successes in the organisation to identify the life-giving factors of the organisation. This is completed through paired participant interviews where participants interview one another to understand their own peak experiences in relation to the topic. Ideally, these interviews involve all members of the organisation to maximise contributions and storytelling of the organisation at its peak. The organisation's positive core is identified in this stage but is also woven throughout the entire cycle.</p> | <p>Over Microsoft Teams, I shared the group notes created in Define. Participants then used their interview schedule (<i>see Appendix 7</i>) created at the end of Define for their paired appreciative discovery interviews. The aim of the second appreciative interviews in this session was to identify peak experiences in relation to the define successful EP/TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions – that which is collaborative, community-based, and ethically driven.</p> <p>Pairs analysed their peak experiences shared to identify underpinning values, key strengths of practices and wishes. Initial themes were shared with the wider group to identify whole data codes, and key themes, which were felt to describe key characteristics of the successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions.</p> <p><i>Please see Appendix 10 for all documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Discover phase.</i></p> | <p>Interview summary sheets completed by each pair (<i>see Appendix 8 for an example</i>).</p> <p>Positive core of the group identified. <i>See Appendix 9J or section 4.3 for further information.</i></p> |
| <p><b>Dream</b></p> <p>August 2020<br/>1.5 hours</p>    | <p>This stage enables participants to explore the outcomes of the Discovery paired interviews and extract key themes from the peak experiences shared. The primary aim of this stage is to expand participant's sense of what is possible for the</p>   | <p>Over Microsoft Teams, the group revisit their identified positive core and worked together to identify key themes in their peak experiences which were felt to represent the areas of EP practice they would most like to develop moving forwards. Participants then affiliated themselves with a dream and created 'dream teams' to explore the possibilities of the dream to its furthest extent.</p>  | <p>Opportunity mapping – collation of key themes under 'wishes' created as a group. Key themes in 'wishes' refined to</p>   |

| Phase of AI  | Description with reference to Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance.   | Application in my procedure   | Outcomes of each phase in my research  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | organisation through exploration of the organisation's history. This means that the envisioned dream is practical and grounded in the evidence shared by participants of the organisations past strengths.   | <p>Participants worked in their Dream Teams to create a Dream Dialogue – a rich picture of how their dream would look and feel in practice.</p> <p><i>Please see Appendix 11 for all documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Dream phase</i></p>  | <p>three Dreams for elaboration.</p> <p>Dream Teams created their visions. <i>Please see sections 4.4.1 for reporting of the Dream Team outcomes.</i></p>  |
| <p><b>Design</b></p> <p>September 2020<br/>1.5 hours</p> | <p>This phase involves the creation of the organisation's "social architecture" (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p.45) by generating Provocative Propositions which capture and represent the Dreams previously explored. According to Cooperrider et al., (2005), Provocative Propositions are statements written in the present tense and describe the ideal organisation in relation to an aspect of the organising such as leadership, decision making, communication etc.</p> | <p>Over Microsoft Teams, Dream Teams shared their vision for successful EP / TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions with the wider group</p> <p>Dream Teams then worked together to develop their Provocative Propositions (possibility statements).</p> <p><i>Please see Appendix 12 for all documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Design phase.</i></p> | <p>Provocative Propositions created for each Dream Team's vision to capture design elements for future EP practice in response to RQ3.</p> <p><i>Please see sections 4.4.2 – 4.4.4 for reporting of the Design task outcomes.</i></p> <p>Group discussion on designs and</p> |

| Phase of AI    | Description with reference to Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance.  | Application in my procedure  | Outcomes of each phase in my research |
|----------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|
|                |   |  | reflections shared on the AI process. |
| <b>Destiny</b> | Once the design for organisational change is complete, the Destiny phase supports the organisation in delivering their designs over time. By this point in the AI cycle, momentum for change and potential for change through implementation are high. Individuals in the organisation commit to actioning next steps towards the realisation of the organisation dreams as captured in the Provocative Propositions. Destiny is an ongoing process which should bring the organisation back to the Discovery phase overtime. | As the current research was aiming to capture a snapshot of successes and strengths during a changing context for working, rather than pursue organisational changes the 'Destiny' phase was not included in the research design or procedure. The research methodology was designed with participant wellbeing in mind and taking a curious, appreciative approach to understanding how the COVID-19 restrictions may have altered EP/TEP practice. These points are discussed further in the discussion of this research, and in my reflexive account of the research which can be found in section 6.6. |                                       |

*Table 5: Overview of the AI 5-D cycle and application to my research procedure*

### **3.3.5 Summary of methodological design**

The current study has selected the methodological framework of Appreciative Inquiry as a PAR research design applied to a single case study. The case in the current research is a group of eight EPs and TEPs who are either employed or working on a 2-year placement in one LA EPS.

The data source for this study is information gained through participatory application of an AI framework; information related to the AI cycle is gathered throughout the AI process with participants and considered for data value and analysed live by participants to establish authenticity, accuracy, and credibility (Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994).

Following guidance by McNiff (2013), this research will be written in the first person using 'I' rather than 'the researcher'. McNiff (2016) states that this is essential for research which is interpretative and where readers need to know who I am, as well as my stance.

### **3.4 Rationale for use of AI methodology**

Whilst considered a relatively new research methodology in education, AI has previously been applied to the context of an EP service to explore various aspects of practice or service delivery, for example, contribution to community cohesion (Taft et al., 2020). Examination of unpublished grey literature also demonstrates the use of AI methodology to explore EP practice with education settings over a range of topics such as developing frameworks for wellbeing amongst others, (Pahil, 2019; Antczak, 2020). The AI model used in the current research was adapted for virtual and remote facilitation and applied as a reflective framework

to stimulate discussion and critical reflection on the EP's work during the first national lockdown in 2020.

The current research focuses on the positive aspects of EP practice during the first national lockdown. This exploration needed to be conducted with sensitivity to participant's wellbeing and experiences of the pandemic. AI is not about being positive all the time – the primary aim is generativity through collaborative discussion and appreciative questioning.

The theoretical assumptions underlying AI are rooted in positive psychology (Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi 2000). When discussing the impact of positive thought Fredrickson (2001; 2013) reports that positive emotions not only make individuals more resilient and increase their ability to cope with adversity, but they also increase openness to ideas, creativity, and capacity for action. For example, the experience of gratitude and positive emotions can influence wellbeing, performance, increase happiness, improve relationships, boost the immune system, and increase productivity (Armstrong et al., 2020; Emmons, Froh and Rose, 2019). At a time of uncertainty and public health crisis, AI was selected as the most appropriate methodology to create a sense of collective self-efficacy, sense of belonging, purpose, and wellbeing amongst the participant group. With very little research available on the strengths and opportunities for EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions, the AI process also aims to Discover, Dream and Design these positive aspects of service delivery to inform community-driven recovery.

### **3.5 Research context: Greenshire Local Authority Educational Psychology Service**

Greenshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is a large, traded EPS situated in a rural county of central England. In 2020, the Office for National Statistics reported a total population estimate of 584,000 residents for Greenshire LA. An estimated 92.7% of residents are described as White in relation to ethnic group and 95.7% of residents estimated to speak English as their primary language. Within the LA there are a total of 194 maintained primary schools, 36 maintained secondary schools, 10 specialist schools and 14 independent education settings. Greenshire EPS serves 92% of maintained and specialist settings with 36 EPs and 6 TEPs split across five geographical areas within the LA. The EPS has also developed good professional links with other agencies in the LA, such as the Virtual School.

During the first national lockdown as part of the COVID-19 pandemic, all EPs and TEPs were ordered to remain at home working remotely from 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020. All face-to-face work was cancelled and moved to remote virtual delivery where possible. Schools in the LA remained partially closed, open only to vulnerable learners, the children of key workers, and those CYP with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) in place. These parameters for EP practice remained in place until September 2020, where some relaxation in service risk assessment was implemented to enable EPs to go into schools to deliver face-to-face work where work could not be delivered remotely or virtually. EP practice shifted suddenly and dramatically to entirely remote and virtual working for the foreseeable future.

Trading with maintained education settings ceased for summer term 2020 (April – July 2020), and EPs were instead tasked with the production of wellbeing resources, webinars, training,

parent helpline consultations and school staff supervision whilst also maintaining their statutory duties to support EHC needs assessments. The current research was completed as shown below in Table 6.

| <b>Date</b>           | <b>Event</b>  |
|-----------------------|---|
| <b>February 2020</b>  | Introductory session at the University of Birmingham on Appreciative Inquiry in education. Discussion with AI facilitators and researchers.   |
| <b>March 2020</b>     | First national lockdown announced to curb the spread of Coronavirus in England.   |
| <b>March 2020</b>     | Re consider research proposal and feasibility of original study planned for summer term 2020.   |
| <b>April 2020</b>     | EPS ceases trading with education settings for one term and mandates a work from home order for all EPs and TEPs following risk assessment.   |
| <b>April 2020</b>     | Complete reading for new research proposal and submit research proposal to the University of Birmingham.  |
| <b>May 2020</b>       | Apply for Ethical Review at the University of Birmingham.   |
| <b>June 2020</b>      | Receive confirmation of Ethical Review.<br>Confirmation received from my host EPS and the University of Birmingham for the research to be undertaken as part of completion of the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology.<br>Begin creating AI information resources and recruitment webinar for potential participants<br>Recruit participants. |
| <b>July 2020</b>      | Introductory workshop with potential participants via Microsoft Teams.<br>Informed consent gained.<br>Dates set with participants for focus groups to follow.   |
| <b>July 2020</b>      | Creation of Microsoft Teams working groups and resources for participants to facilitate virtual focus group working through the 5-D cycle.  |
| <b>July 2020</b>      | Define session data collection and analysis with participants via Microsoft teams.  |
| <b>August 2020</b>    | Discover session data collection and analysis with participants via Microsoft teams.  |
| <b>August 2020</b>    | Dream session data collection and analysis with participants via Microsoft teams.   |
| <b>September 2020</b> | Design session data collection and analysis with participants via Microsoft teams.  |

*Table 6: Overview of research activities in chronological order*



### **3.6 Procedure**

Cooperrider et al., (2008) most recent guidance text on planning and facilitating AI was used as a reference for the current AI. This handbook recommends that all first-time facilitators allow adequate time and flexibility to the process. The handbook offers detailed descriptions on how to plan and implement AI in a range of organisations and with a variety of participant groups. I was the AI facilitator and so I planned and managed the process while participants led the data collection, topic of inquiry and data analysis processes. Please refer to Table 4 in section 3.2.4 above which outlines the procedure in relation to the AI phases, and Appendix 13 which offers a comparison of Cooperrider et al., (2008) requirements for Appreciative Inquiry applied to the EPS AI steering group project.

### **3.7 Location and setting**

The introductory session and all following data collection sessions were delivered via Microsoft Teams to enable remote and virtual working. This enabled full participation of all participants due to the flexibility of joining the sessions from any remote work location.

### **3.8 Sampling approach**

A purposive sampling method was used to recruit participants for the current research. Etikan et al. (2016) suggest that purposive sampling allows participants to be recruited based on the study's purpose, with the expectation that each participant will be able to provide unique and rich information of value to the study. The purpose of this study was to explore EP and TEP

views on their peak experiences of practice under COVID-19 restrictions, and so a purposive sampling approach enabled the recruitment of participants with the relevant skills, knowledge, and experience to support data collection towards this research aim.

Participants were therefore recruited from the whole EPS, aiming to include a range of EP and TEP practitioners with varying levels of experience and from across the geographic areas of the LA. The following inclusion criteria was applied:

All participants must:

- Have been employed by the EPS since March 2020, or,
- Have been on a training placement with the EPS since at least March 2020
- Have completed some work with schools, individuals, other professionals, or the wider community during the COVID-19 pandemic period to date.
- Have been able to access Microsoft Teams from their remote work location; this is the virtual meeting platform through which all data collection for this study will be completed.

### **3.9 Participant information**

All participants were employees of, or training in the LA EPS where I was on placement as part of my training.

There were eight total participants:

- One specialist senior educational psychologist
- Two senior educational psychologists

- Two main grade educational psychologists
- One newly qualified educational psychologist
- One second year trainee educational psychologist
- One third year trainee educational psychologist

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The research was guided by the BPS Code of Human Research Ethics (2018; 2021), the British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) and The University of Birmingham code of practice for research.

#### **3.9.1 Informed consent**

An opportunistic, purposive sampling technique was used. All members of the EPS were given access to a pre-recorded information webinar produced by me and invited to a live information workshop via Microsoft Teams to enable informed consent to be obtained. Information regarding the theory and process of AI was shared and opportunities were built in for questions. The EPs in attendance were then sent a participant information sheet and informed consent form via email (See Appendix 5).

Participants were given my telephone and email contact to use if they have any questions, or concerns before, during, or after data collection. No personal contact details of the participants were gathered or shared.

### **3.9.2 Right to withdraw**

All participants were notified of their right to withdraw, both in writing and verbally via Microsoft Teams. Participants were provided with my contact details should they wish to withdraw from the study later; participants were advised of the date after which it would no longer be feasible to withdraw their data.

Due to the collective, group discussion-based nature of AI methodology, it would have been impossible to ensure entire removal of one participant's contribution once the AI had begun. All contributions shared within the AI would remain anonymous and at no point were participants asked to share their name or any other identifying information about themselves.

### **3.9.3 Confidentiality**

All efforts were made to ensure participant data was treated confidentially and that their data and/or identities are not identifiable in research findings or this written account. Participants were made aware that confidentiality may need to be broken and a third party involved if safeguarding concerns arose, in line with local authority safeguarding procedures.

All participants were known to me as I am currently on placement in the EPS. When recruiting participants, the level of confidentiality and anonymity were outlined in the webinar workshop, information sheet, and consent form. This was highlighted again and discussed at the start of the AI allowing for any questions.

### **3.9.4 Storage, access, and disposal of data**

All participant's data was stored in an anonymised format. Pseudo-names were allocated to each participant and the EPS itself during data collection and analysis.

Section 3.10 and 3.11 describe the participatory methods used for data collection and analysis.

All data collected through participants own notes (e.g., interview schedules and summary sheets) were transferred onto an encrypted USB memory stick that only I can access. Data which identify participants or organisations will be coded.

As outlined by the University of Birmingham Code of Practice for Research, data will be retained for 10 years. After which time all data will be destroyed by securely shredding hard copies and erasing all electronic files.

### **3.9.5 Potential risk to participants**

Primary considerations for risks to participants were in relation to supporting their wellbeing and not adding additional pressure to a challenging work context. As previously identified, this was a driving factor in the research design.

Reference to British Educational Research Association (BERA, 2018) was also made when considering potential risks. BERA advocates for ethical respect for any persons, including researchers themselves, when conducting educational research. A primary consideration in the research design was ensuring that the data collection, analysis, and general participation was not bureaucratically burdensome for participants. The context and timing of research was

important in meeting the research aims and needed to be a key consideration when thinking about potential risk to participant's wellbeing. As previously discussed, this was also the primary reason for selecting AI as the methodological vehicle through which creative, positive, successful EP/TEP practice could be reflected upon.

Additional risks to participants were also considered and are outlined in Appendix 14, along with the debrief information circulated to participants.

### **3.10 Data collection**

All data were collected within the AI process. Table 5 in section 3.2.4 outlines the procedure and outcomes of each focus group. All data were collected over the virtual platform used by Greenshire EPS: Microsoft Teams. I created teams and folders within Microsoft Teams that were only accessible to myself and the participants I added to each team. This created a secure, virtual environment for the data to be collected and stored whilst we were completing the AI cycle and meant that all participants could access all the data and resources needed to complete the appreciative tasks virtually.

Whilst data were collected over four separate focus groups, the AI process is iterative in that the content of discussion and methodological approach is adapted over the course of the research. Learning from initial research sessions was used to influence subsequent research sessions, and so could not be planned in full ahead of time.

Participants used templates produced by me to capture their data. The templates were based on the recommendations and examples in the AI Handbook (Cooperrider, et al. 2008), for

example, the Interview Summary Sheets. These data collection methods enabled live member checks and to capture the momentum and interactions of participants in the moment.

Participants produced and collected all their own data, so that the words used felt appropriate and accurate to them. I chose not to audio record the paired interviews or group discussions. Whilst this does present the limitation of not knowing all the participants thinking towards their initial themes generated in pairs, I felt it would create greater freedom of language chosen and positively impact the fluidity of storytelling. The data were all collected virtually, meaning it was harder to create group discussions due to the disjointed interactions. I did not want participants to feel additionally monitored and aimed to reduce the potential impact of the virtual nature of data collection by allowing free discussion, in line with a core research aim of supporting participant wellbeing.

This study used a combination of two key methods for data collection: semi-structured paired interviews and focus group discussion. I also maintained a reflective diary which documented my key reflections on the process of AI as it evolved and on aspects of the data collected. The purpose of this was to capture personal reflections rather than to triangulate data produced by participants. This will be drawn upon in section 6.6 where I offer a reflexive account of this research.

### **3.10.1 Semi-structured interviews**

Semi-structured interviews were used in the phases of Define and Discover. This approach was based on guidance from Cooperrider et al. (2008) for appreciative paired interviews, whereby paired interviews are used for personal story telling of peak experiences. Semi-

structured interviews were chosen as this method provides certainty that key areas of interest would be addressed during the interview whilst retaining some freedom for exploration (Thomas, 2017). The interview schedule for the Discovery phase was created with participants at the end of the Define stage. The key themes in 'defining' peak EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions became the focus of the Discovery paired appreciative interviews. A copy of the interview schedules used for the Design and Discovery phases can be found in Appendices 6 and 10.

### **3.10.2 Focus groups**

The later phases of the AI cycle (Dream, Design) used focus groups to bring participants together. Focus groups were chosen for two key reasons, primarily to enable synchronous collaboration between participants for the creation of Dream and Designs, and data analysis, but also because the guidance produced by Cooperrider et al. (2008) places an emphasis on the sharing peak experience stories with all members of the group to generate an evidence-based positive core. Creating moments where participants could come together for meaningful discussion felt an important aspect of the research methods, to try and meet the aim of supporting participant wellbeing by creating moments of connection.

Thomas (2017) suggests that focus groups allow researchers to facilitate discussion amongst participants rather than between the researcher and participants. As a facilitator, I used the prompts within the interview schedules to stimulate discussion and feedback from the paired



interviews to the wider group; the interview schedules were used as artefacts to help the group focus on the topic of interest for each phase of AI.

Completing the focus group elements of data collection required sensitive facilitation and management, such as being aware of group dynamics and ensuring all voices were heard, in line with the AI approach. Cooperrider et al. (2008) also suggest explaining the strengths-based approach to the methods to participants, and so this was included within the introductory session for participants.

Please refer to Table 7 for additional resources which offer examples of the data produced and collected by participants.

| <b>Please to refer to:</b> | <b>Title</b>   |
|----------------------------|--|
| Appendix 6                 | Define paired mini-interview information shared with participants                          |
| Appendix 15                | Define paired mini-interview data produced by EP1 and EP2                                  |
| Appendix 16                | Define: Research question one audit trail  |
| Appendix 10                | Supporting documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Discover phase. |
| Appendix 8                 | Discover paired appreciative interview data produced by EP1 and EP2                        |
| Appendix 9                 | Mapping the positive core: Research question two audit trail                               |
| Appendix 11                | Dream Team Dream Dialogue information shared with participants                             |
| Appendix 17                | Dream Team Dream Dialogue: Research question three audit trail                             |
| Appendix 12                | Design Provocative Proposition writing information shared with participants                |
| Figure 30                  | Provocative Propositions   |

*Table 7: Additional information to refer to offering examples of data collection process and templates used by participants.*

### 3.11 Data analysis procedure

This research generated the following data and included:

- Interview summary sheets
- Whole group discussion summary sheets
- Graphics
- Thematic maps

Thematic analysis (TA) was chosen for use with participants to analyse the data collected and produced throughout the AI cycle. I felt that TA best fit the epistemological stance and broad research aims and was supportive of the participatory nature of the research, as the results of TA are often easily accessible to others. Clark and Braun (2017) further state that TA is useful in identifying patterns within data which pertain to experiential research, such as individual views, practices or lived experiences. This further highlights the applicability of TA for the current research.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.86) define TA as *“searching across a data set...be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts...to find repeated patterns of meaning”* and suggest that TA offers a systematic and rigorous structure for data analysis. I decided that key themes should be identified at the semantic level of analysis; I assumed that the meaning of participants views were represented through the words they chose to capture their stories and ideas, and those chosen to represent views in group discussion. I was not attempting to *“unravel the surface of reality”* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.81) or complete a discourse, latent

level of analysis and so the analysis did not look to explore additional possible meaning through secondary analysis of the participant's construction of key themes.

The current research was exploratory in nature with the aim of better understanding EP and TEP's own views on their experiences of peak practice under early COVID-19 restrictions, which at the time of researching was in some ways a new concept and context for working. For this reason, a deductive approach to coding, which builds on existing literature and research, did not feel entirely appropriate. I did not have a predefined set of codes or themes based on the research questions or existing literature and participants did not create a set of codes prior to engaging with their data for analysis. Data analysis therefore aimed to take an inductive approach to enable the breadth of ideas shared to be captured. The application of the six stages of TA in the research was adapted to fit with the stages of AI and the time available with participants; this is outlined in Table 8. The process is broadly similar for each of the three research questions within the AI cycle with differences highlighted in the table.

Figure 9 below offers a brief overview of the data analysis procedure for all research questions, which should be understood in conjunction with the description in Table 8 which offers more detail on each phase. Please also refer to Table 7 above in this section for reference to supporting Appendices which provide an overview of audit trails and materials for each stage of analysis.

| Phase                              | Braun and Clarke (2006) description   | How the phase was operationalised for RQ1: Define  | Differences in process for RQ2: Discover and positive core mapping  | Differences in process for RQ3: Dream and Design   |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Familiarisation with data</b>   | The researcher listens to audio recordings, transcribes them, reads and re-reads transcripts, reading and re-reading noting down initial ideas. | Participants shared their peak experience stories with a partner during the paired interviews in the Define focus group. In their pairs, participants noted down key phrases and words to capture their story with language which they felt most appropriate. Participants did this twice: with their own story, and their partner's story to achieve familiarisation with their data to share as a pair.  | Second sharing of peak experience story was a story related to the now-defined topic of EP/TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions which was collaborative, community-focused and ethically driven.  |  |
| <b>Generation of initial codes</b> | Interesting features are coded across all the data in a systematic way.   | Participants then coded their two stories, seeking to identify emerging themes in relation to their peak experiences. These initial ideas were noted down by participants ready to share with the wider group for whole group data discussion and analysis.  | Participants coded their stories, seeking to identify emerging themes in relation to the 'life giving factors': strengths, values and wishes evidenced in their peak experience stories. These initial ideas were noted down by participants ready to share with the wider group for whole group data discussion, analysis, and mapping of the positive core. |  |
| <b>Search for themes</b>           | Codes are collated into potential themes, and all data relevant to each potential theme is gathered.  | Participants shared their peak experience stories in full and their initial codes for key themes capturing their stories with the wider group. I scribed key notes shared by participants to create initial codes for the whole data set and member checked with participants as they shared and discussed their stories and key themes. As a group, participants reviewed the coded data at the end of the focus group and identified emergent themes by grouping codes with similar properties together. | Codes relating to strengths and values of the group were analysed by the whole group for key themes and identification of the group's positive core: facilitators to the identified successful practice in peak experience stories.   | Codes relating to wishes analysed by the whole group for key themes and identification of opportunities for envisioned practice. |

| Phase                             | Braun and Clarke (2006) description  | How the phase was operationalised for RQ1: Define  | Differences in process for RQ2: Discover and positive core mapping  | Differences in process for RQ3: Dream and Design  |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|---|
| <b>Review of themes</b>           | Researcher checks if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set generating a thematic map of the analysis.                                      | Themes are reviewed and member checked by all participants together. Initial and whole group codes are revisited by the group and compared to themes identified to seek confirmation and deviance from the themes. An iterative process of reviewing, discussing, checking back to original notes and initial codes, to adapt and tweak themes continued for the remainder of the Define focus group until participants felt that data saturation had been met and data could be grouped into overarching and subthemes. Thematic maps were drawn by me live with participants via the screen share function in Microsoft Teams. |   |   |
| <b>Defining and naming themes</b> | Continuing analysis in undertaken to refine the specific nature of each theme and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme. |  |   |   |
| <b>Production of themes</b>       | A selection of vivid compelling extracts is distilled with final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis to the research questions and literature.        |  | Positive core identified and thematic map capturing facilitating factors drawn by me live with participants via the screens hare function in Microsoft Teams. | Thematic maps were drawn by me live with participants via the screen share function in Microsoft Teams. Participants grouped themselves into Dream Teams which aligned to their personal visions for future practice. Dream Teams produced their Dream Dialogue and Provocative Propositions to share with the wider group. |

Table 8: Overview of TA process for data in response to each research question

### 3.11.1 Thematic Analysis procedure for participants

Cahill et al., (2007) suggest that, ideally, participants should take part in the coding process of TA if true democratic validity is held within PAR, as this creates an opportunity to share the power of developing and owning the knowledge generated by participants. Having the analysis led by participants also meant that the process was less influenced by my understanding of the literature review and use of AI with EPS settings prior to the analysis stages. I facilitated the discussion with prompts from the six phases of TA to ensure that all phases were completed, and I acted as a 'graphic-er', taking group notes, and recording the codes, themes and thematic maps as instructed by participant discussion.

Best et al., (2022) demonstrated the use of Participatory Theme Elicitation (PTE) in increasing user-involvement in qualitative data analysis. This approach mirrors the stages of TA whilst involving lay researchers following capacity building training sessions. Participants independently analysed data excerpts from interview transcripts, categorising them into groups with similar features based on their own criteria which felt relevant to them. These categories were then grouped together across participants to understand similarities between each participant's categorisation, and then reviewed in turn by participants with consideration for possible outliers, to refine themes further. Researchers recorded key points, codes and developing themes from this discussion.

A similar approach was taken in the present study, whereby participants followed the TA procedure outlined in Table 8 to analyse their own data excerpts recorded during paired

appreciative interviews from Define and Discover phases. No specific, additional training was delivered to participants as a way of capacity building prior to their engagement with the data analysis procedure. All participants were either EPs qualified to doctoral level or TEPs on their own research and training journey. This meant that all participants had some understanding of research methodology and analysis procedures from personal experience and were not entirely lay researchers.

To facilitate the analysis process, I gave participants verbal instructions on the TA procedure to be used and asked participants to describe their understanding of TA before the paired appreciative interviews began. Verbal instructions were delivered as a whole at the start of the process, and then repeated one at a time as we progressed through the phases of AI and data analysis. Themes were described to participants as an aspect of the data that was felt to capture the key, important message in the data and represent a patterned response in their peak experience story shared. Participants were verbally instructed to use their peak experience stories captured in the templates provided as the data for analysis, therefore attempting to create an inductive analysis process using only the data available to guide coding and theme development. Participants were not given pre-defined codes or themes.

There was a time limit to each phase of the data analysis throughout the AI process, with paired interviews timed at 30 minutes and the focus group feedback and analysis timed at 30 minutes. This enabled each session to be approximately 90 minutes in total, with additional time built in for instructions, questions, and checking in with one another.

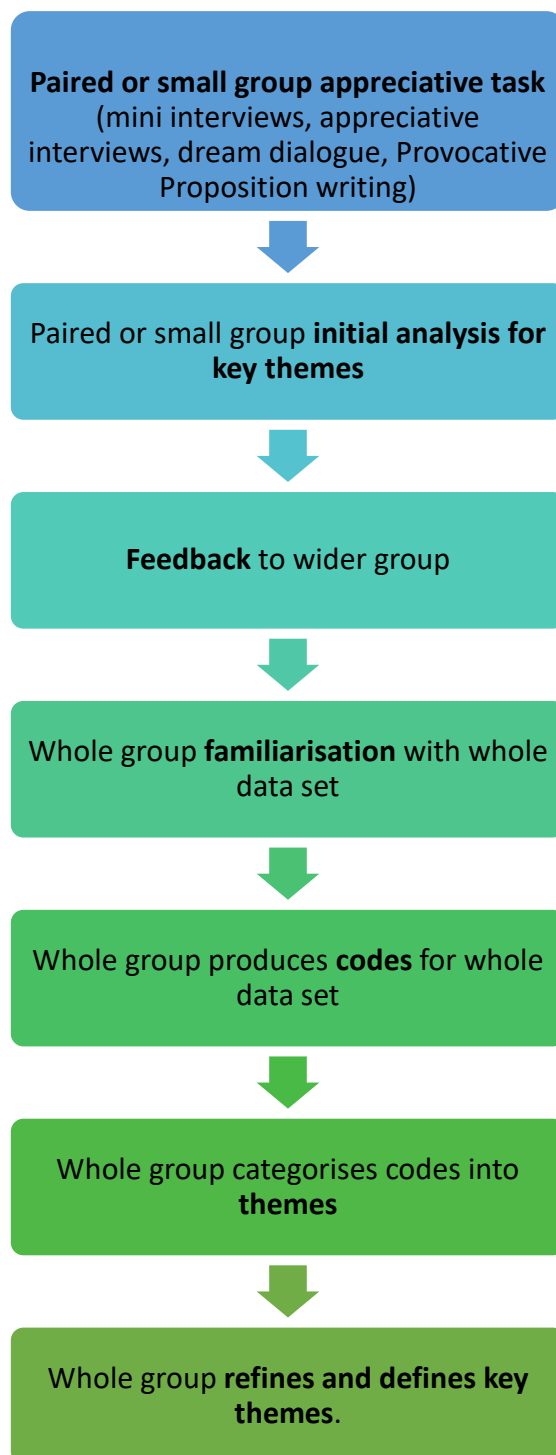


Figure 9: Overview of data analysis procedure to be read in conjunction with Table 8



### 3.12 Evaluation of research quality

Hammersley (2005) suggests that interpretative research should still be examined to determine whether the research is reporting new knowledge, and whether it is balanced, fair and thorough in design. Hammersley (2005) offers a focus on plausibility and credibility when considering the quality of evidence needed to support a knowledge claim, though assessment of these two concepts will “*rest on the dominant world-view on the topic in question...and may well be wrong*” (Thomas, 2017 p. 148). Thomas (2017) suggests methods such as positionality, triangulation, and reflexivity can be applied to explore rigour and quality. Phronesis will also be explored as this research seeks to capture practical, useful wisdom rather than achieve generalisability, in line with AI principles (Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987).

#### 3.12.1 Triangulation

Thomas (2017, p.153) describes triangulation as ‘*looking at different things from different angles and using different methods for looking*’. Two main forms of triangulation were used in the current research: investigator triangulation, where more than one person is involved in the interpretation and analysis of data, (e.g., the current study involved all participants in the analysis and interpretation of data to inform consequent focus group activities); and data triangulation, where there are multiple forms of data collection (e.g., the current research uses both semi-structure interviews, focus groups and whole group analysis).

As the data were analysed live with all participants, continual member checks were also completed. The review of previous sessions at the start of each group discussion also allowed a member check opportunity and reflection time for the group (Tracy, 2010)

### **3.12.2 Reflection on data analysis process**

This study aimed to offer participants the opportunity to inductively analyse data produced by themselves in order to identify key themes in relation to their peak experiences, facilitators to this and envisaged future practice without a pre-determined framework or structure to coding. As described above, participants were verbally instructed on the process of TA to be taken and guided at times in the whole group context on a step by step basis.

The decision to not audio or video record sessions has been outlined in section 3.10. This decision does however pose limitations to the data collected and analysis procedures, which on reflection may be closer aligned to a document analysis or content analysis procedure. Content analysis is the process of organising information into categories related to the central question of the research and document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents and interpreting them in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, or develop empirical knowledge (Bowen, 2009; Corbin and Strauss, 2008). Bowen (2009) suggests that document analysis yields data such as excerpts, quotations, or passages that are then organised into major themes, categories, and case examples through content analysis (Labuschagne, 2003). This is perhaps a better description of the data created and analysed in this study which aimed to generate data about the phenomenon of EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions.

Yin (1994) suggests documents could be used as a form of data with additional sources strengthening the triangulation of data such as participant observation, interviews, or physical artefacts. The current research aimed to triangulate through the combination of participant

interviews and focus groups for data collection but could be considered to be limited in reducing the impact of potential biases that can exist in a single study, as although data were analysed in pairs and again with the wider group, the data collected was from one time point and one set of documents produced by pairs.

Further to this, the analysis procedure aimed to be inductive to explore new data and add to theoretical developments on the practice of EPs and TEPs rather than explain existing theory through a deductive approach. Participants received verbal instructions to use their peak experience stories shared as the data from which to identify codes and then broader themes. As participant's discussion in pairs and focus groups were not recorded, the richness of detail outlining how participants ended with their final themes is not available to fully understand whether the process was entirely inductive.

The final themes do indicate similarities between the peak experience stories shared and the key messages in the AI findings but also highlight concepts which are not directly taken from the data. For example, in response to research question one participants ended on a final theme of 'Ethical' with discussion around the impact of the BPS (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct upon their ethical orientation and approach to work. Reference to this specific guidance for EPs is not clearly made in the data analysed and was not captured as part of a peak experience story for participants. However, this became a part of a key theme which participants felt was an important aspect of their practice under COVID-19 restrictions. This indicates that participants were drawing on their knowledge and experience external to the

AI process and peak experience stories to inform their analysis of the data created, thereby creating a hybrid inductive-deductive approach.

### **3.12.3 Reflexivity**

Reflexivity refers to the examination of my own beliefs, practices, constructs, and experiences during the research process and reflecting on how these may have influenced the research process. Berger (2015) notes that if a researcher clearly describes the contextual intersecting relationships between participants and themselves, it deepens the reader's understanding of the work and increases the credibility of the findings. This is also related to positionality in that the researcher's position as an insider or outsider, and whether they had shared experiences with participants, will impact the relationship between participants and researcher.

Throughout the research process I maintained a reflective log where I captured my thoughts and responses to each of the data collection focus groups; key reflections are captured in section 6.6. As the research was participatory, I was not the sole analyst; Dodgson (2019) notes that participatory methods can minimise potential power differences between participants and researcher as all are involved in creating and analysing the data. I did not have an active role in the TA (as described in section 3.11), which reduces the risk of me using a theoretical framework to analyse data, or applying aspects of my unconscious biases, thereby limiting what is 'seen' in the data. Identifying myself, my potential unconscious biases, and positionality is therefore necessary for readers to take this into account.

### **3.12.4 Positionality**

Thomas (2017, p. 153) states that positionality is *'saying who you are and where you come from'*. Thomas (2017) elaborates in saying that in interpretivist research there is an assumption that knowledge is situated in relations between people. The researcher therefore takes a central role in the interpretation, or the discovery of situated knowledge. In this research, all participants were equally involved in the discovery of situated knowledge of the group – the data collection and analysis. It is therefore important to acknowledge that participants positionality will have also had an impact on the situated knowledge reported, as well as my own positionality. I accept the subjectivity of this research and findings; the research is situated and designed for the purpose of capturing the best of what is in this one situation. My personal and professional interests in the research area are in applying strengths-based principles to understanding the role and context for EP practice at an uncertain time.

In relation to my role and position within the research, it should be acknowledged that I am not an objective observer, or a participant. I had the position of both an insider and outsider as I am familiar with working alongside all participants but was not an active participant or analyst within these processes. This offers some benefits, such as insight into the nuanced dynamics between participants, especially given my own lived experiences of working with the group and the topic of inquiry.

### **3.12.5 Phronesis**

Phronesis describes the virtue of practical wisdom and originated with Aristotle (Thomas, 2016). Phronesis is a model within research based on the learning and practical knowledge that can be gained from research. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) refer to this as a normative

dimension of AI; that which is concerned with seeking practical knowledge from, and for, the context of the AI. The current research aimed to capture practical wisdom on the practice of EPs and TEPs in one context which could be used to inform future service delivery. The findings of each focus group were shared with participants live, and cumulatively at the end of our last session together, as shown in Figure 23, section 4.4.1. Findings will be shared with the wider EPS on completion of this thesis; this will likely be during a virtual whole EP Service briefing over Microsoft Teams, depending on COVID-19 restrictions in place at that time.

## CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

### 4.1 Overview

This chapter presents the findings into the perceptions of EPs and TEPs on the best of their practice under COVID-19 restrictions. This chapter focuses on the presentation of the AI cycle and findings within it related to the three identified research questions:

1. What do EPs and TEPs in one LA EP Service perceive to be key characteristics of peak practice under COVID-19 restrictions?
2. What are the perceived facilitating factors supporting peak EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions introduced in March 2020?
3. Based on past successes, in what ways do EPs and TEPs envisage maintaining peak practice under future COVID-19 restrictions?

As identified in Chapter Three, all participants contributing to the findings presented here were employees of, or training in the LA EPS where I was on placement as part of my training. There were no exclusions applied to participants such as: age, gender, years of experience, specialism, level of training, geographic location. Participants had a range of experience in their current and previous roles and were based across the five geographical areas within Greenshire EPS. As data collection was virtual, all participants could join remotely. A total of eight participants from joined this research:

- One specialist senior educational psychologist

- Two senior educational psychologists
- Two main grade educational psychologists,
- One newly qualified educational psychologist
- One second year trainee educational psychologist
- One third year trainee educational psychologist

Table 8 in Methodology outlines how TA phases were applied in this study. My role during data analysis was to facilitate discussion, reminding participants of the stages of TA and what to do next, and to take notes throughout analysis discussions, formulating thematic maps in front of participants. This was an iterative, pacey process that involved all participants and benefited from the momentum which AI frequently brings (Cooperrider et al., 2005).

AI is a cyclical process in which participants revisit their peak experience stories shared to analyse for key themes from Discovery through to Design. When working with participants to develop an understanding of their perceived peak practice (Define, Discover) through to envisioned practice (Dream, Design), it became clear that there were key similarities presenting as themes in the data shared. Key themes found across the AI cycle will therefore be discussed together in light of their role in 'peak EP and TEP practice' (RQ1), as a 'facilitator' (RQ2), and as part of participant's envisioned 'future practice under COVID-19 restrictions' (RQ3). Figure 8 from section 3.2.4 is repeated below as a reference for the reader.



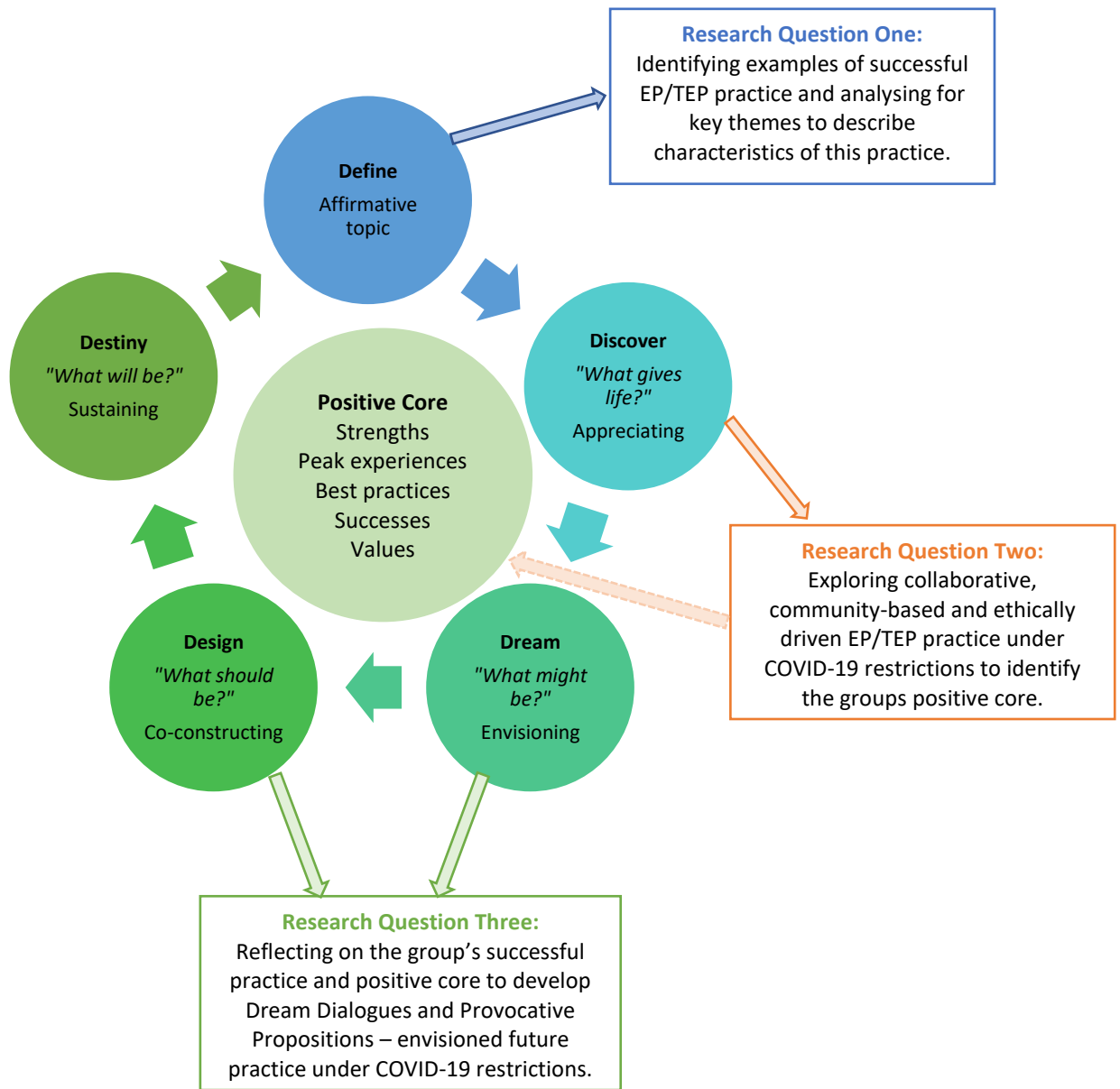
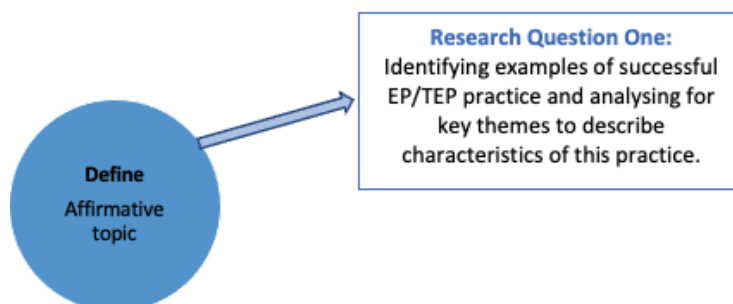


Figure 8: Overview of AI cycle and where data was collected and analysed for each research question

#### 4.2 Research question one: Presentation of findings

What do EPs and TEPs in one LA EP Service perceive to be key characteristics of peak practice under COVID-19 restrictions?

The first research question aims to identify examples of EP and TEP practice which was perceived by participants as successful under early COVID-19 restrictions. Data collected in the first focus group (Define) was used to answer this question, as demonstrated by Figure 10. Participants completed paired mini-interviews via Microsoft Teams to share ‘peak experiences’ of their practice as an EP or TEP under COVID-19 restrictions. Participants recorded their own key notes and the group completed thematic analysis of all stories shared to gain an understanding of key characteristics of successful EP and TEP practice. The data collection and analysis procedures are outlined in full in Chapter Three, sections 3.10 and 3.11.



*Figure 10: Elements of the AI cycle used in response to research question one.*

Participants used a semi-structured interview schedule for the mini-interviews which consisted of two broad questions to prompt open-ended discussion for participant pairs. The questions are adaptations taken from Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance on appreciative interviewing, and were as follows:

1. Tell me about a peak experience (a real high point) you have had in your work during the COVID-19 pandemic\*

- Why was that experience important to you?
- What made it remarkable?
- What was your contribution?
- What did you value most about the experience?
- What do you think was really making it work?
- What helped you? What contributed to your success?
- How has it changed you?

2. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic\* what factors do you feel have given life to the EPS?

- When has the EPS felt most alive, successful, and effective throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?

\*COVID-19 pandemic was defined as the time between 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020, as this was the date from which EPs in this service were asked to work from home, to present day of the focus group (28<sup>th</sup> July 2020).

Appendix 15 offers an example of completed participant interview summary sheets which were then used by participants as the basis for whole group discussion and thematic analysis of key themes describing characteristics of peak practice.

Analysis of key themes in the peak experiences shared, and the life-giving factors of these stories revealed three overarching themes which were felt to capture the essence of peak EP

practice under COVID-19 restrictions: work that was collaborative, community-based and driven by ethical principles of the group. Table 9 below shows an example audit trail from one participant demonstrating how the peak experience stories shared were analysed to reveal themes, codes, and final themes.

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>1. Peak experience story shared</b></p> <p><i>Mini interviews in partners</i></p>                                | <p><b>Participant 3</b></p> <p>Webinar development both live and pre-recorded for schools and families to access. Felt very ethical as this was free to access for all. A rewarding piece of work. CPD – new topics. Wide impact to audience. Technology-practical equipment, software. Colleague support – discussion, observe other EPS’s webinars. SLT support. Creativity. Opportunity to work outside of the traded model.</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Participant’s initial analysis for key themes describing practice</b></p> <p><i>Phase 1</i></p>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Virtual service delivery</li> <li>○ Responding quickly to community needs identified</li> <li>○ Flexibility in service delivery and use of time</li> <li>○ Outside of traded model</li> <li>○ Teamwork and collaboration across bases</li> <li>○ Supporting wellbeing of community and us – collaborative working, coming together.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>3. Whole group analysis: codes identified after sharing story with the whole group</b></p> <p><i>Phase 2</i></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Virtual working</li> <li>○ Getting the psychology out there</li> <li>○ Collaboration with other EPs</li> <li>○ Having an impact on community wellbeing and understanding of our role.</li> <li>○ Creativity enhanced</li> <li>○ Ethical, free to access services and resources</li> <li>○ Support from SLT</li> <li>○ Applying positive psychology</li> <li>○ Strategic and systemic work</li> <li>○ Positive feedback from parents</li> <li>○ Sense of actualisation</li> <li>○ Work felt meaningful</li> <li>○ Work felt purposeful</li> <li>○ A real need for webinar work</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>4. Whole group analysis: developed themes</b></p>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Open mindedness</li> <li>○ Space to be creative</li> <li>○ Collaborative working</li> <li>○ Engaging and challenging work</li> <li>○ Support from colleagues</li> </ul>  |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>identified after whole group discussion</b></p> <p><i>Phase 3</i></p>                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Adapting practice together</li> <li>○ Team spirit</li> <li>○ Innovation</li> <li>○ Skills used to support our community</li> <li>○ Lifting of traded service constraints</li> <li>○ Time</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>5. Whole group analysis: final themes identified after whole group discussion</b></p> <p><i>Phase 4</i></p> | <p><b>Collaborative working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support within the EPS</li> <li>○ Peer support</li> <li>○ Team spirit, enthusiasm, and positivity.</li> <li>○ Technological support allowing easier collaboration</li> </ul> <p><b>Ethics – our guiding principles and values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Work reflective of, and grounded in, our principles, beliefs, and values as practitioners.</li> <li>○ Creativity in sharing psychology across different mediums with different colleagues</li> <li>○ BPS (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct. Four primary ethical principles: respect, competence, responsibility, integrity</li> </ul> <p><b>Community Psychology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Attuning to what is important for our community right now and responding to the identified needs</li> <li>○ Creativity in service delivery</li> <li>○ Community level support</li> <li>○ Time and freedom to respond to community-level needs.</li> <li>○ Working collaboratively to deliver a more community-focused psychological service across the LA.</li> </ul> |

*Table 9: Example analysis process for participant 3 through Define appreciative interviews and following participant analysis of stories shared*

The thematic map below (Figure 11) was the product of the Define focus group. Items in orange are example peak experience stories added to support the trail of thinking from story sharing to themes for participants.

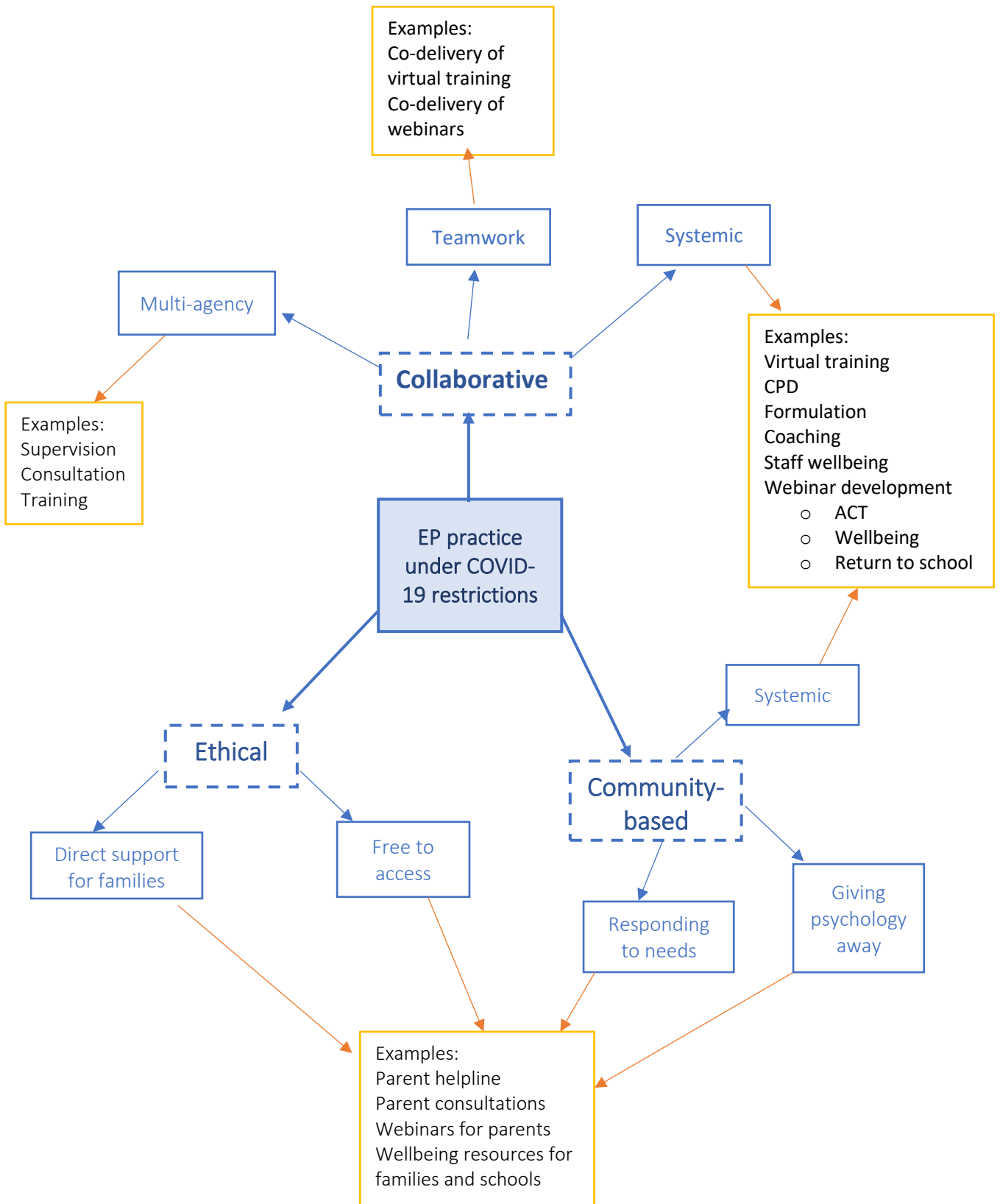


Figure 11: RQ1 thematic map produced with participants, showing three overarching themes and examples drawn from peak experience interviews.

The initial themes and codes of data were subject to phase three and four analysis to refine each overarching theme and convey the overall story (Braun and Clarke, 2006); please see Appendices 15 and 16 for examples and audit trail. This resulted in three main themes which were felt to capture all subthemes and examples of EP peak practice under the COVID-19 time in 2020. Each main and sub theme will now be explored in turn with supporting extracts from participant's own data.

#### **4.2.1 Main theme: Collaborative working**

Participants described this theme as: collaboration and teamwork within the EPS, with families, with schools, and with other LA support services. Figure 12 below shows an extract from the thematic map produced with participants as a reference point. Please see Appendix 18 for example codes and supporting data extract for every theme captured here, in addition to the descriptions below.

It is noteworthy that all eight EPs and TEPs spoke about an aspect of 'collaborative working' in relation to their peak experiences of EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. The theme of collaboration is also evident across all three research questions and remains a prominent thread throughout all the group's discussions and appreciative tasks. The term 'collaborative' was used as a primary descriptor when defining successful EP practice in the Define focus group. Primary examples of the group's collaborative working included delivery of virtual training, remote consultation, remote coaching, and webinar development across a range of topics. Collaborative working was felt to be exemplified by practice which involved collaboration across teams, multi-agency working, and systemic projects.

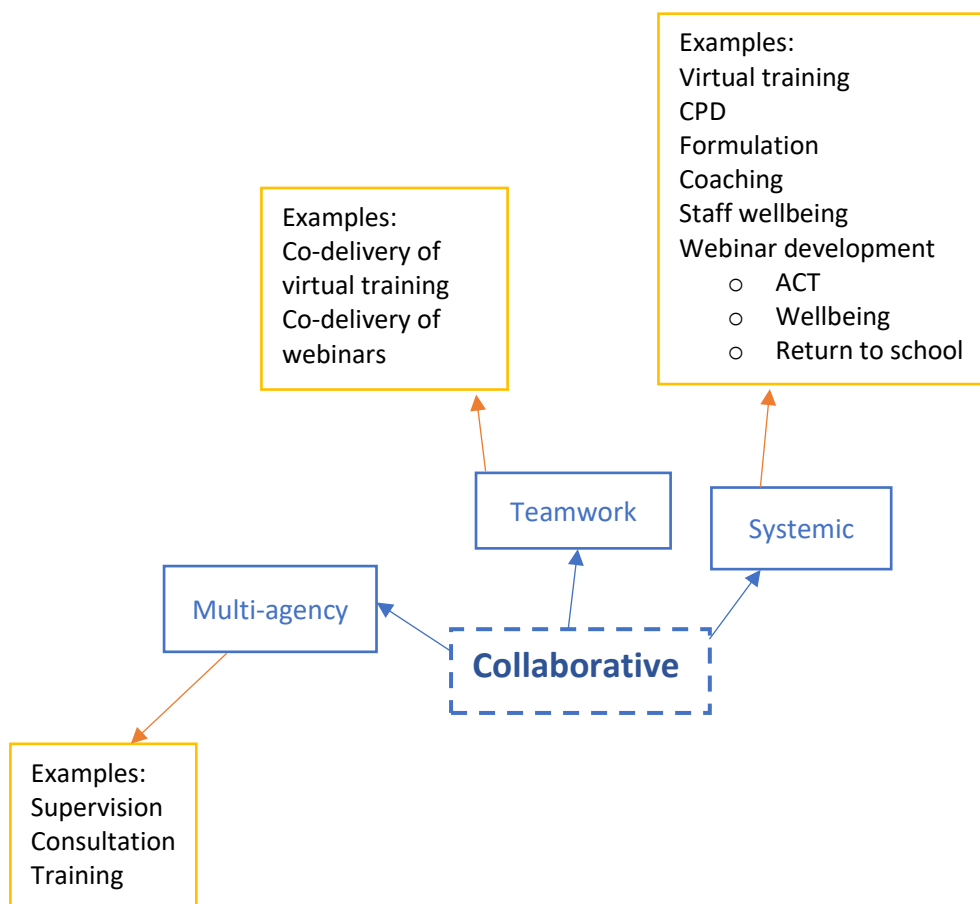


Figure 12: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for 'Collaborative'.

#### 4.2.2 Sub-theme: Collaborating across teams

Some participants did speak about collaboration with other professionals and families, but all participants raised collaboration with other EPs as a peak experience. For example, EP 1 captured virtual training in their interview schedule, describing it as working collaboratively

*“in pairs and small groups; this felt purposeful and allowed for cross team working for the first time; working with different colleagues”.*



Participants also began to speculate as to why ‘collaboration’ and ‘collaborating across teams’ was a defining feature of successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions for the group. Discussion centred around the connection and communication facilitated by collaborative working, and the felt impact on participant wellbeing, for example, EP 5 wrote:

*“more communication between teams and EPs with weekly briefings to bring the whole service together. Helped me to understand the direction of the service.”*

and EP 3 captured:

*“Broadened ideas and creativity for project work. Also meant we could check in with one another, supporting wellbeing.”*

#### **4.2.3 Sub-theme: Multi-agency working**

Participants referred to multi-agency working when sharing their peak experience stories such as working more closely with SENDCos, Designated Safeguard Leads and supporting other professionals in the LA. This theme is carried through to Dream and Design where it is captured as a key feature of envisioned successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions.

The group acknowledged the wider impact of more multi-agency working, mainly around this practice resulting in *“greater understanding of our role, who we are and what we can do.”* – EP 7.

#### **4.2.4 Sub-theme: Systemic projects**

Systemic projects and working were felt by participants to fall into ‘collaborative’ and ‘community-based’ overarching themes. Visibility as a service was noted by participants as a by-product of engaging in more systemic project work within the community and to support other services in the LA. For example, EP 3 noted:

*“Webinar development – working beyond traded model and individual casework. Project to reach and help whole community in response to community-level needs. SLT support. Lots of momentum to keep developing webinars. Autonomy of service acknowledged by higher levels of the authority.”*

Raising the profile of the EPS through systems-level working was a key theme here and is why ‘systemic working’ and ‘systemic projects’ is captured twice in this data.

#### **4.2.5 Main theme: Community – based practice**

Participants described this theme as: responding to community-specific needs quickly, demonstrating EPS strengths, application of psychology and sensitivity to the community context. Figure 13 below shows an extract from the thematic map produced with participants as a reference point.

The theme of community-based practice is maintained and developed throughout the AI cycle and forms the basis of Dream Team 1’s envisioned EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. Many participants drew on notions of community psychology and the close links with ethical practice in their interview notes capturing the peak experience stories shared. For example, EP 7 noted:

*“COVID wellbeing documents development for families and schools. We were seen for who we are as a service, role better understood by the community, and we grew as a service because of that. Ethically driven with core beliefs at the centre of this work – it was driven by our community entirely and used our skills. Our service can be remembered more for the things we did to support the community.”*

Application of community psychology principles is evidenced through the examples of community-based practice and responding to community-level needs captured by participants in sub-themes.

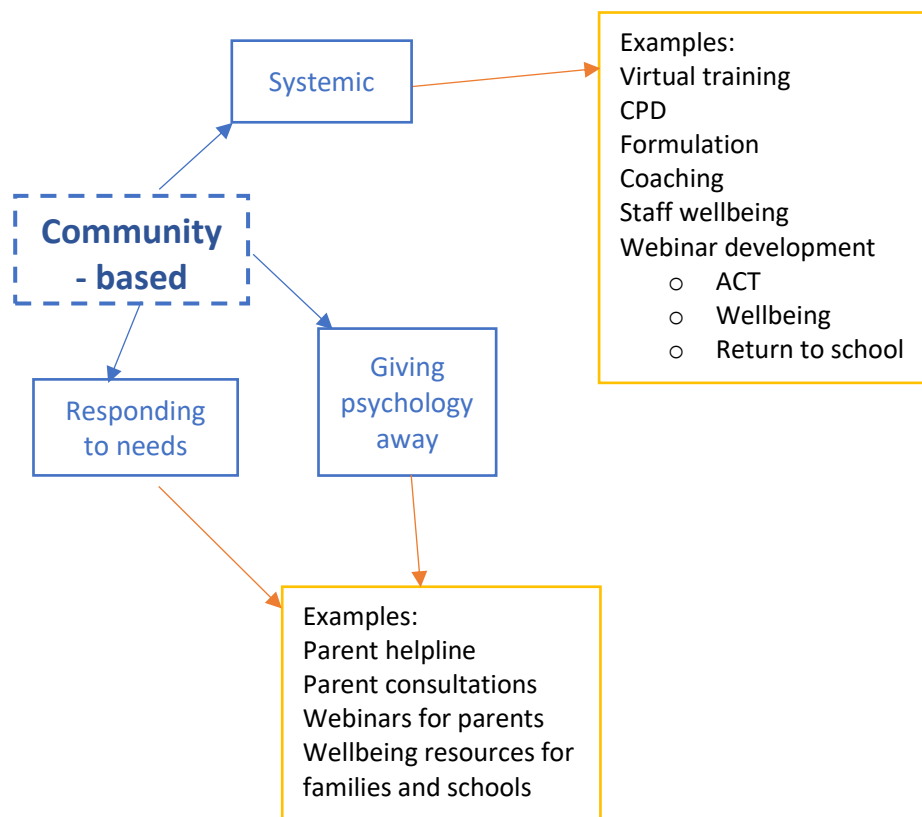


Figure 13: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for ‘Community-based practice’

#### **4.2.6 Subtheme: Responding to needs**

Responding to the needs of the community was felt to be a primary driver for the peak experiences shared. Developing webinars to share psychology, support wellbeing, support the return to school and aspects of teaching and learning were all driven by the emerging needs of the community. For example, EP 7 described the development of wellbeing documents for families and schools as:

*“Ethically driven with core beliefs at the centre of this work – it was driven by our community entirely and used our skills”*

And EP 8 noted that:

*“This is the first time since I’ve qualified that I’ve felt we have been able to go where we want to go and respond to what is needed, as opposed to being told what we’re doing (e.g., going into a school to do an assessment). We’ve been able to survey the landscape, see what needs doing and implement that.”*

Participants also alluded to the flexibility afforded by working outside of the traded model, and how this facilitated more responsive, community-based work under COVID-19 restrictions.

#### **4.2.7 Sub-theme: Giving psychology away**

Participants noted the opportunity to share psychological theory and practice more readily with a wide-ranging audience using virtual webinars, virtual training, and parent helpline consultations. This is again closely linked to the principles of community psychology and ethical practice. EP 2 captured how 'giving psychology away' was felt to:

*"Empower the SENCo to recognise their own strengths, supporting their professional development and understanding of our role more".*

The specific context of COVID-19 was felt by EP 4 to give rise to new opportunities to apply different psychological theory and frameworks in their practice, with a greater focus on:

*"Positive psychology and explaining psychology in layman terms as this felt relevant to supporting staff".*

This sub-theme also captured the opportunities for EPs to share their resources and experiences more readily with others across the EP service, because of increased communication facilitated by virtual meetings.

#### **4.2.8 Main theme: Ethical**

This theme is defined by participants as: Work is fulfilling and purposeful when it is driven by our personal and professional ethical codes of conduct and principles. This is linked to the application of community psychology, where we advocate for community needs and equitable

access to our service. Figure 14 below shows an extract from the thematic map produced with participants as a reference point.

When feeding back their peak experience stories to the wider group for whole data thematic analysis, the participants spoke at length about their guiding ethical principles and professional codes of conduct in relation to their successful practice. Participants noted the influence of the BPS (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct upon their ethical orientation and approach to work, including the four principles of respect, competence, responsibility, and integrity. Participants did not capture this explicitly in their data and so data extracts are not available for this beyond the group notes from thematic analysis discussions where the theme ‘ethics’ was defined by participants, as described above.

All example peak experiences demonstrated an aspect of collaborative, community-based practice which was felt to be both successful and ethical for participants. Figure 14 offers an extract of the thematic map for reference.

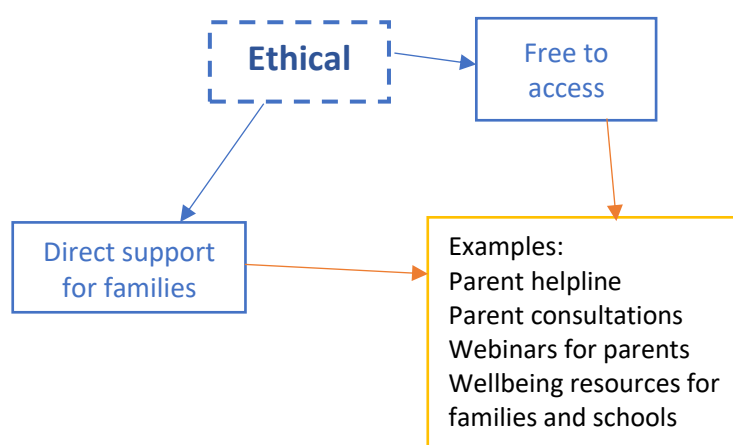


Figure 14: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for ‘Ethically driven’.

#### **4.2.9 Sub-theme: Direct support for families**

Working more directly with families and supporting families through the application of psychology was noted to be a key feature of ethical practice for the group. The parent helpline was discussed as exemplary 'ethical' practice which allowed parents to access the EPS freely and was also felt to have a big impact. For example, EP 6 describes this as:

*“Equitable – the parent helpline was free at point of access with no limits on how many times they could call, and no criteria for a phone call. Working more openly and freely with parents felt very ethical.”*

Participants also discussed the impact of direct work with families on themselves, describing this area of work as:

*“Rewarding, a new area of work, ethical practice with lots of positive feedback from families and school staff about accessibility” – EP 3.*

#### **4.2.10 Free to access service**

Linked to increased direct work with families is the opportunity for free access to the EPS for families. Working outside of the traded model is noted by participants to have enabled more direct work with families, and ethically driven work through free access. For example, the

parent helpline and webinars shared freely with school staff, early years practitioners, parents, and families. EP 3 and EP 6 capture this in writing:

*“Webinar development and training virtually gave us the opportunity to work outside of the traded model...”*

*“Working freely and openly with parents felt very ethical. Free at the point of access felt equitable”.*

Participants again noted the impact on themselves of this way of working such as EP 6:

*“lifting of traded model time constraints meant we were able to dedicate time to meaningful and purposeful projects”*

#### **4.3 Research question two**

**What are the perceived facilitating factors supporting peak EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions introduced in March 2020?**

The second research question is aiming to identify factors which are perceived to be facilitators to the peak practice experiences shared. Data towards this aim is taken from the second focus group, Discovery, as demonstrated by Figure 15. At the end of Define, the group had analysed their first round of appreciative interviews which broadly explored peak experiences under COVID-19 restrictions. This led to the identification of a core theme: collaborative working and two further themes linked to this: ethical practice and community-



based approaches. This meant that the Discovery appreciative interviews focused on this definition of ‘peak EP practice under COVID-19’: that which is collaborative, ethically driven and community-based in its approach.

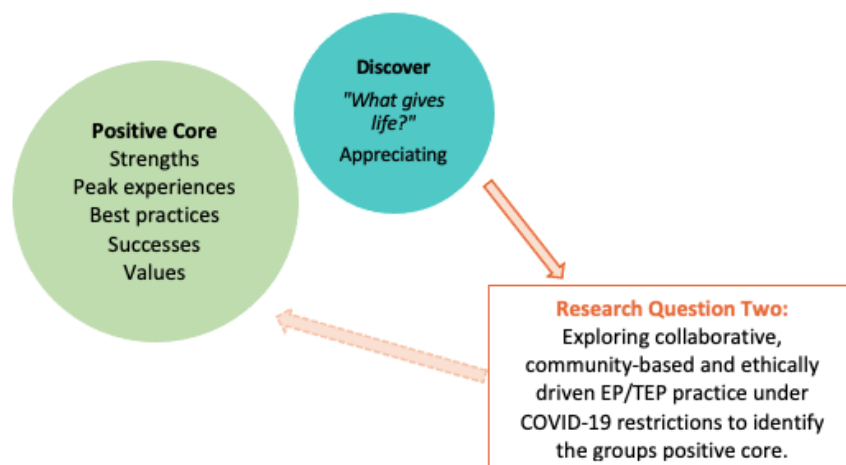


Figure 15: Elements of the AI cycle used in response to research question two

Following guidance from Cooperrider et al., (2005) on the completion of an AI cycle, the Discovery interview schedules were created by participants, using the three key themes identified in their Define session. The aim of these second-round appreciative interviews was to delve deeper into the defined ‘peak EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions’ and conduct an analysis on the peak experiences shared to understand the group’s strengths and values which had facilitated their peak experiences – the ‘positive core’ of the group. The questions were as follows:

**Topic: Collaborative working:**

- Describe a time when your practice / work felt most collaborative, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell me a story that stands out for you which best embodies this ideal.
- Add detail to your story. What were you doing? How were you feeling? Why did you feel that way?
- What was most noteworthy?
- What was the EPS doing that helped you do this / have this experience?
- How has this experience changed you? Or your practice?

**Topic: Driven by my ethics, values, and principles to meet the needs of our community:**

- What are one or two of the EPS's most effective tools / techniques for enhancing community-based practice?
- In your own experience, how has the EPS best strengthened community resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, so far?
- Without being modest...what do you value most about yourself as a T/EP?
- What is it about the EPS that you value the most?
- How has the EPS kept these values alive during the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Topic: Envisioning the future:**

- Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our community.
  - How are you working differently?

- How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?
- If you had three wishes to adapt the EPS practice to include more collaborative working, what would they be?

Appendix 8 offer examples of completed participant interview summary sheets which were then used by participants as the basis for whole group discussion and thematic analysis of key themes to map the positive core, identifying strengths and values of the group. Participants mapped their positive core in their pairs before whole group analysis and refinement of the positive core. See Figure 16 below for an example positive core analysis from one pair.



Figure 16: Positive core for partners 1 and 2 following analysis for key themes in their peak stories.

Analysis of the Discovery stories shared for strengths, values, and enabling conditions revealed four overarching themes which participants felt captured their group positive core, and represented the facilitative factors present supporting their practice. Table 10 below shows an example audit trail from one participant pairing, demonstrating how the peak experience stories shared were analysed to reveal themes, codes, and final themes.

| Phase   | Description  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1. Discovery interview story shared</b></p>   | <p>Brief from SLT to create wellbeing documents for families and schools. Collaborative group work. Small teams, working quickly, planning. Used Teams. Strong sense of direction (previously unclear), a really defined task. Purposeful. Re-energised us. Worked well together as a team – nice to work with colleagues, share ideas, bounced off each other well. Felt less overwhelming because shared the responsibility and ownership. Felt supportive in an unknown situation. Effective teamwork. Gave hope we could offer something during COVID-19. Shown what can be achieved as a team – we often work individually – this was a chance to be creative, open and share knowledge.</p> <p><b>Compelling quote</b></p> <p>“how can we help?”</p> |
| <p><b>2. Initial analysis for key themes with partner</b></p> <p><i>Phase 1</i></p>             | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Collaboration across the service</li> <li>○ Care</li> <li>○ Advocacy</li> <li>○ Supportive</li> <li>○ Creativity</li> <li>○ Flexibility</li> </ul> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Responding to the community</li> <li>○ Collaboration</li> <li>○ Sharing psychology</li> <li>○ Advocating</li> <li>○ Celebrating community-based practice</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>3. Secondary analysis with the wider group: codes generated</b></p> <p><i>Phase 2</i></p> | <p><b>Strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Advocating for CYP</li> <li>○ Supporting colleagues</li> <li>○ Effective communication</li> <li>○ Responsive to needs of community</li> <li>○ Flexibility</li> <li>○ Autonomy</li> <li>○ Sharing knowledge and psychology</li> <li>○ Strengthen community resources</li> <li>○ Project work</li> <li>○ Systemic work</li> <li>○ Regular contact with whole service briefings</li> <li>○ Flexibility in working</li> <li>○ Trusted</li> <li>○ Opportunities to work together</li> </ul>  |

| Phase  | Description  |
|--|--|
|  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Care about outcomes for CYP</li> <li>○ Strong ethical drive</li> <li>○ Innovation</li> <li>○ Supportive</li> <li>○ Wanting to make a difference</li> </ul> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Inclusion</li> <li>○ Teamwork</li> <li>○ Responsiveness</li> <li>○ Making a difference</li> <li>○ Having an impact</li> <li>○ Equitable access to our service</li> <li>○ Authentic</li> <li>○ Efficient</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>4. Secondary analysis with wider group: developed themes</b></p> <p><i>Phase 3</i></p> | <p><b>Group personal strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creativity</li> <li>○ Trust</li> <li>○ Team players</li> <li>○ Sharing knowledge</li> <li>○ Enthusiasm</li> <li>○ Collaboration and teamwork</li> <li>○ Application of psychology</li> <li>○ Reflection</li> <li>○ Organisational agility</li> <li>○ Interpersonal skills</li> <li>○ Consultation skills</li> </ul> <p><b>EP Service strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Systemic perspectives</li> <li>○ Supportive colleagues (peers and SLT)</li> <li>○ Flexibility</li> <li>○ Effective communication in the service</li> <li>○ Responding to community needs</li> <li>○ Technology available</li> <li>○ Trust in us</li> </ul> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Care for others</li> <li>○ Sharing psychology</li> <li>○ Altruism</li> <li>○ Inclusion</li> <li>○ Impact</li> </ul> |

| Phase   | Description   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Responsiveness</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>5. Secondary analysis with wider group: refined final themes</b></p> <p><i>Phase 4</i></p> | <p><b>Group personal strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creativity</li> <li>○ Trust</li> <li>○ Team players</li> <li>○ Sharing knowledge</li> <li>○ Enthusiasm</li> <li>○ Collaboration and teamwork</li> <li>○ Application of psychology</li> <li>○ Reflection</li> <li>○ Organisational agility</li> <li>○ Interpersonal skills</li> <li>○ Consultation skills</li> </ul> <p><b>EP Service strengths</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Systemic perspectives</li> <li>○ Supportive colleagues (peers and SLT)</li> <li>○ Flexibility</li> <li>○ Effective communication in the service</li> <li>○ Responding to community needs</li> <li>○ Technology available</li> <li>○ Trust in us</li> </ul> <p><b>Values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Care for others</li> <li>○ Sharing psychology</li> <li>○ Altruism</li> <li>○ Inclusion</li> <li>○ Impact</li> <li>○ Responsiveness</li> <li>○ Collaboration</li> <li>○ Advocating</li> <li>○ Community psychology</li> </ul> |

*Table 10: Example process for participant one through Discovery appreciative interview and following participant analysis for strengths, values and enabling conditions*

The thematic map below (Figure 17) was the product of the Discovery focus group. Through live discussion facilitated by me, the participants familiarised one another with their peak experience stories, identified initial themes, wider codes for the whole data set, revised themes and final themes which are capture in the map below.

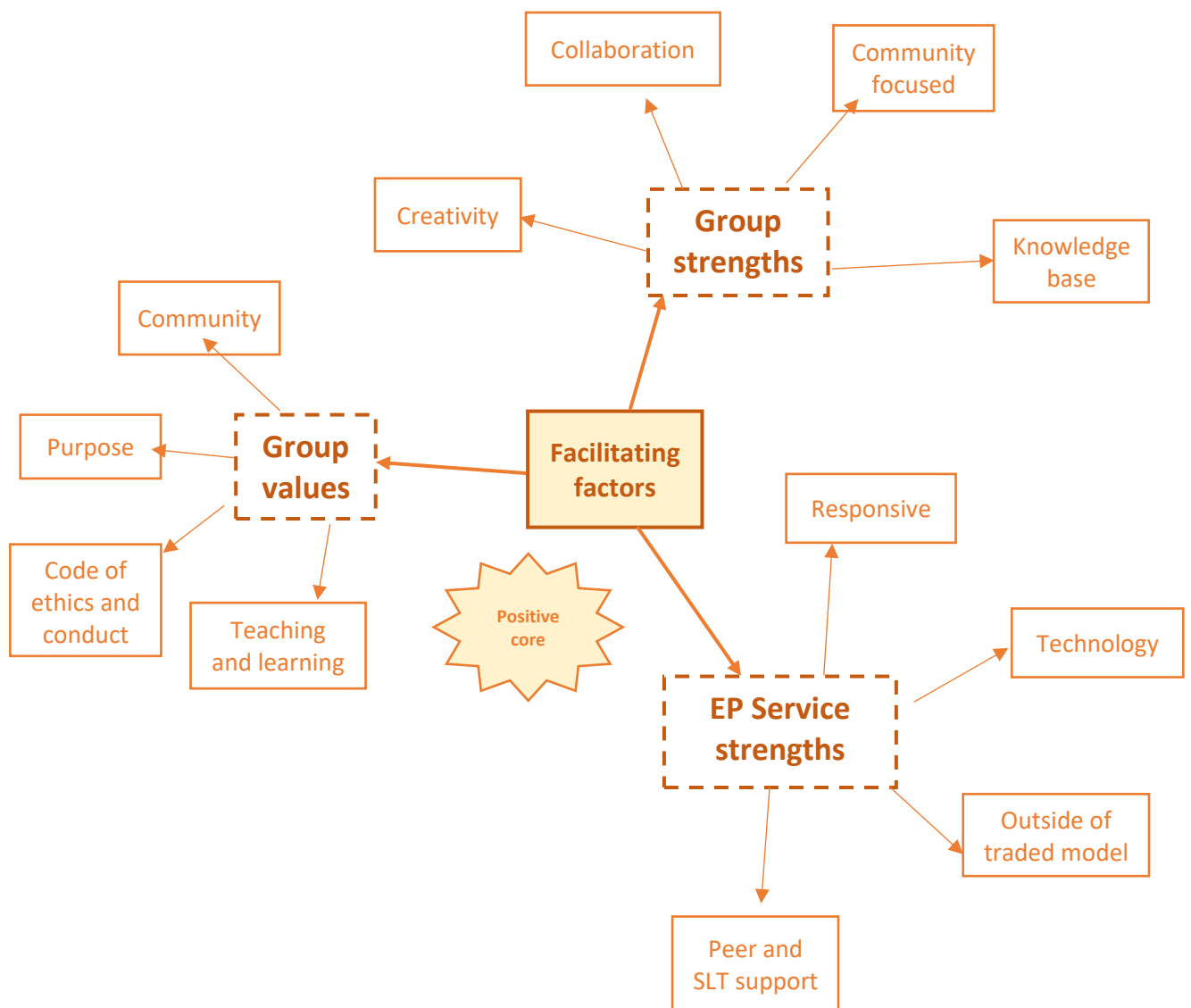


Figure 17: Thematic map produced with participants for research question two showing three core themes derived from participant's mapping of the positive core.



The thematic analysis process, as outlined in section 3.11, resulted in four core themes which were felt to capture all subthemes and examples of facilitative factors including personal strengths, EP service strengths and group values. Each final theme and subtheme will now be explored in turn with supporting extracts from participant's own data. Please see Appendix 19 for codes and supporting data extracts for every theme described below.

#### 4.3.1 Main theme: Group strengths

Participants identified a range of strengths within their Discovery peak experience interviews. Throughout the phases of analysis, participants created the sub-themes of strengths which are personal to the group members, and strengths which were felt to be of the EPS itself. The description and discussion of sub-themes under 'group strengths' (Figure 18) will again highlight the influence of community-based practice, collaborative working as well as acknowledging the creativity and innovation, and personal knowledge base of the group as key facilitating factors.

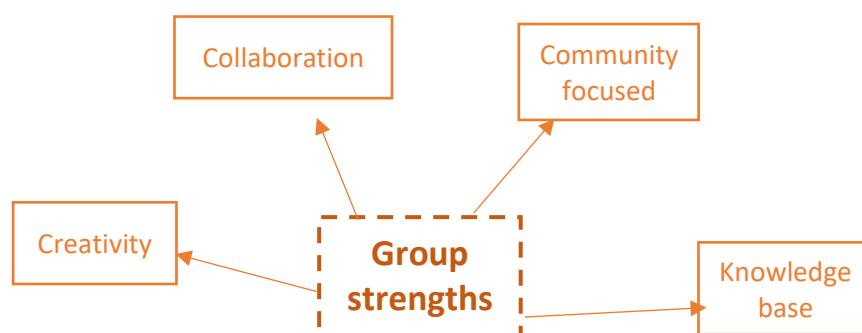


Figure 18: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for 'Group strengths'

#### **4.3.2 Sub-theme: Collaboration**

Collaboration appears again as a key theme in answering research question two, this time it is identified as a strength of the group – to work collaboratively. Participants noted that their peak experiences of ‘successful practice’ were collaborative in nature, as identified in discussion of research question one, and that working collaboratively is therefore a strength of the group. Collaboration with other EPs and TEPs, and collaboration with other professionals working in education settings appeared to be a source of support for managing the needs of the community, with EP 1 noting that

*‘the EPS works well together as a team’ and that it was ‘nice to work with colleagues, share ideas, bounced off each other well. It felt less over whelming’.*

EP 1 went on to note that *‘we have shown what we can achieve as a team. We often work individually before COVID, sometimes delivering pre-packaged training, but this gave us the change to be creative in a novel situation. We’re strong when we come together’.*

#### **4.3.3 Sub-theme: Community focused**

Participants noted that being ‘community-focused’ practitioners was a key theme in their personal strengths as a group. This theme also reoccurs for all three research questions, perhaps reflecting the novelty of this area of the participant’s practice, or the necessity for community-based work during the early pandemic. The peak experiences shared by participants were all felt to be examples of community-based practice, or work which benefited the wider community rather than individual assessment. Participants reflected that

a collective group strength was therefore a drive to be community-focused, as demonstrated by EP 3:

*'Sharing knowledge and understanding of psychology, adapting psychology to different situations / circumstances is one of EPs most effective tools/technique'*

#### **4.3.4 Sub-theme: Knowledge base**

Participants noted their own personal strengths as practitioners and as a group which were felt to be facilitators towards their successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions. All participants shared their perceived strengths as practitioners, such as:

*'Pragmatic and efficient'* (EP 8)

*'See how creative we can be'* (EP 2)

*'Adapting and applying psychology in different contexts'* (EP 3)

Psychological knowledge and the application of psychology emerged as the key theme following analysis of the whole data set; mapping the positive core of the group revealed EP 'knowledge' to be a key facilitator, but participant discussion also captured the tangent strengths related to their knowledge, as described above.

#### **4.3.5 Sub-theme: Creativity**

In addition to being community-focused and collaborative, participants also discussed the creativity and innovation which emerged through new, *'energetic, enthusiastic'* (EP 5)

practices during the early pandemic. Many participants noted how it felt to work on creative projects, such as the development of webinars for parents and schools. Most themes highlighted under group strengths overlap and are interrelated, as demonstrated by the strengths of collaborative working and creativity to produce the 'peak experience'.

The '*opportunity to innovate and create something new*' (EP 6) was noted as a benefit for engagement in work, developing the EPS community role and a sense of wellbeing for EPs themselves. For example, working together to create new resources and experience new ways of working as a team was captured as:

*'doing something different is good and feels like rising to a challenge'* (EP 7), and *'...allows us to be more unique within the LA and counteract the 'check list' and gatekeeper role'* (EP 5).

#### **4.3.6 Main theme: Educational Psychology Service strengths**

In addition to group strengths of the EP practitioners, strengths of the EPS were also captured by participants; see Figure 19. This main theme is described by participants as: the EPS's approach to managing work in the early stages of the pandemic as a facilitator. The description and discussion of key themes here will again illuminate the role of community-based practice as a key driver to 'successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions'.

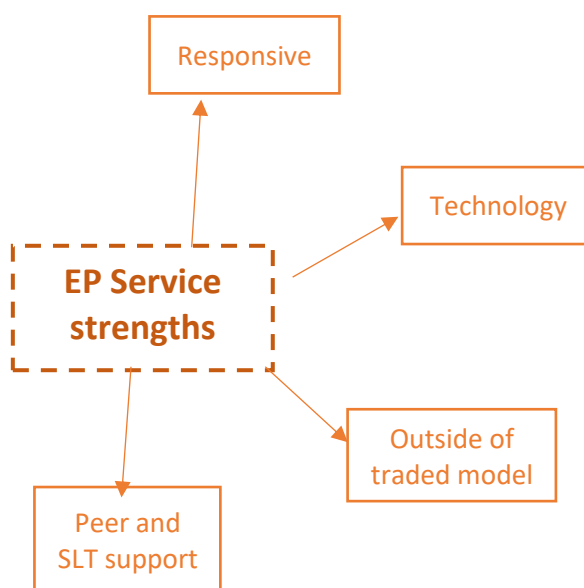


Figure 19: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for 'EP Service strengths'.

#### 4.3.7 Sub-theme: Responsive

Participants captured the service response to community needs during the early pandemic as a facilitative factor for their successful practice. The EP service response to supporting the wellbeing of EPs was also captured within this theme of 'responsive'. For example:

EP 6 noted that *'applying psychology to us as employees felt supportive and validating'*. This is also captured under the theme of 'Peer and SLT Support', where participants acknowledge collegial support as a facilitative factor for their practice under COVID-19.

#### 4.3.8 Sub-theme: Outside of traded model

A key facilitator noted by participants was the time, flexibility and autonomy afforded to EPs by working outside of the constraints of a traded model early in the pandemic. This factor was

felt to be crucial in facilitating the successful practice described by participants, and in enabling EPs to work in a responsive, community-based way. EP 1 describes their first encounter with this flexibility:

*'Our Principal Educational Psychologist gave us time. Everything else was put on hold...we had direction and permission to use that time...to produce wellbeing guidance documents for schools and parents. We were allowed a level of autonomy...there was trust between SLT and what we can bring as an EP...there was a "go for it" flexibility.'*

Having flexibility with use of time and removing the need to deliver traded services was a practical factor which facilitated new approaches to supporting community needs, as noted by EP 3:

*'increased flexibility in working and autonomy to engage creatively and collaboratively with others is what I value most about the EPS. The EPS facilitated free working'.*

#### **4.3.9 Sub-theme: Peer and senior leadership support**

Working with more flexibility and autonomy, beyond the constraints of the traded model was largely facilitated by SLT support. This is acknowledged by participants as a facilitating factor towards their successful practice, but also as facilitating their wellbeing and encouraging connection with colleagues at a time of greater isolation. For example, EP 1 notes that

*'We celebrated when community-based practice had happened in weekly briefings. Sharing and supporting others to think "I could try this". My colleagues are friendly and approachable, helping, and supportive'*

And EP 2 captures this peer support as:

*'Everyone is super, super supportive...we're all learning together and from each other. This is what I miss about not being in the office. You can ask anything; someone is always there.'*

Support from the wider service was also acknowledged as a strength of the service and facilitator for successful practice, such as *'our admin team, they support us so well'* (EP 7). Openness and sharing of resources between EPs and teams in the service was noted as a service strength. Trust to collaborate effectively on community-based projects emerges again here as a theme which could not have occurred without the facilitation of managerial and peer support in a variety of ways.

#### **4.3.10 Sub-theme: Technology**

Pragmatically, access to technology was a factor which facilitated participant's successful practice. For example, enhancing their community-based practice throughout the early pandemic was linked to *'access to resources, especially the technology to work virtually...also enabled collaborative working across teams and helped the EPS to maintain relationships with schools'* (EP 3).

#### 4.3.11 Main theme: Group values

Mapping of the positive core revealed group and service level strengths but also encouraged participants to reflect on the values evidenced in their peak experiences. Results towards research question two also include refinement of themes relating to group values identified and have been finalised into three key themes by participants: community-based practice, purpose, code of ethics and conduct, and teaching and learning; see Figure 20.

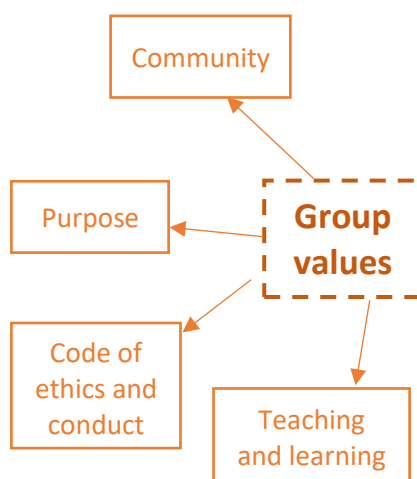


Figure 20: Extract of thematic map demonstrating main and subthemes for 'Group values'.

#### 4.3.12 Sub-theme: Community based practice

Community-based practices occurs again as a key characteristic and strength of the 'successful EP practice under COVID-19'. EP 4 described their peak experience coded for the core value of 'community-based practice', which was echoed by other participants who shared similar experiences:



*'Webinars and document development based on needs of the community...wanted to offer a more therapeutic time, a face-to-face time virtually, focusing on needs of service users and getting the most out of webinars...to make a difference and help others, wanting to make impact within our community. Supporting those in our community in a way which has the biggest impact. Equity/equality – access for all.'*

#### **4.3.13 Sub-theme: Purpose and role**

Most participants spoke of their felt purpose for work and how having a purpose helped their practice to flourish under COVID-19 restrictions. The term 'purpose' was chosen by participants to capture a range of purpose-led work such as:

*'Caring about outcomes for children and families'* (EP 1)

*'The sense of feeling purposeful, positive...the work felt purposeful and meaningful'* (EP 8)

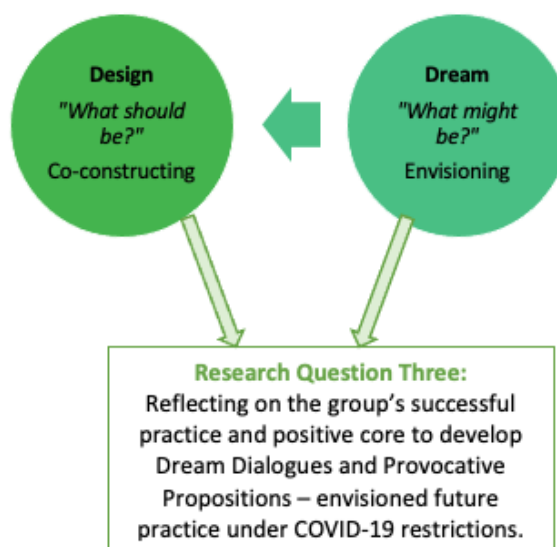
#### **4.3.14 Sub-theme: Teaching and learning**

Participants reflected on the value of education, engaging with learning, and teaching or sharing of psychology. For example, EP 3 noted that *'sharing knowledge and understanding of psychology, adapting psychology to different situations'* was a personal strength, but also a core value reflected in their peak experience story shared. Taking a growth mindset approach was discussed, and valuing being a continual learner.

#### 4.4 Research question three: Presentation of findings

**Based on past successes, in what ways do EPs and TEPs envisage maintaining peak practice under future COVID-19 restrictions?**

The third research question is aiming to understand which features of their successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions would participants envisage maintaining and developing further; see Figure 21. Data towards this aim is taken from the third and fourth focus groups, Dream and Design, as shown in Figure 20 below. At the end of Discover, the group had analysed their second round of appreciative interviews which explored in detail their peak experience stories related to practice which was collaborative, ethically driven and community-based in its approach. Part of the TA during Discovery involved mapping of the groups positive core, including strengths, values and wishes. The group's positive core is below in Figure 22.



*Figure 21: Elements of the AI cycle used in response to research question three*

The positive core also captured the group's wishes for envisioned future EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. The Dream and Design phases of the AI focused on developing shared visions as concepts for future EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. Based on their past successes and identified strengths and values, the group construed 'wishes' for envisioned practice which were felt to exemplify their group values and develop the existing practice.



Figure 22: The groups positive core identified through thematic analysis of Discovery interviews

The purpose of the Dream and Design phases of AI is to generate a positive and concrete vision of the future and to increase the expectations of positive possibilities and opportunities for the group (Cooperrider et al., 2005). Analysis was therefore concerned with exploring the wishes of the group for envisioned future practice. This analysis processes began with the key themes under 'wishes' shared above and explored participant's views on how these wishes could be refined and written as possibility statements for the EP service. This discussion was led by participants and guided by the following key questions:

- Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our community.
  - How are you working differently?
  - How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?
- If you had three wishes to adapt the EPS practice to include more collaborative working, what would they be?
- What will change if the wish comes true?
- What is behind the wish?

Please see Appendix 8 for example completed notes from participant pairs.

The whole group analysis revealed five key themes, which were refined into three Dreams for the group to explore. Participants assigned themselves to one of the three Dreams to engage in a 'Dream Dialogue' and the Design focus group. Figure 23 below shows the five overarching themes present in the 'wishes' of participants. Table 11 following this describes the three Dreams with links to themes with supporting data extracts from participant's own notes.

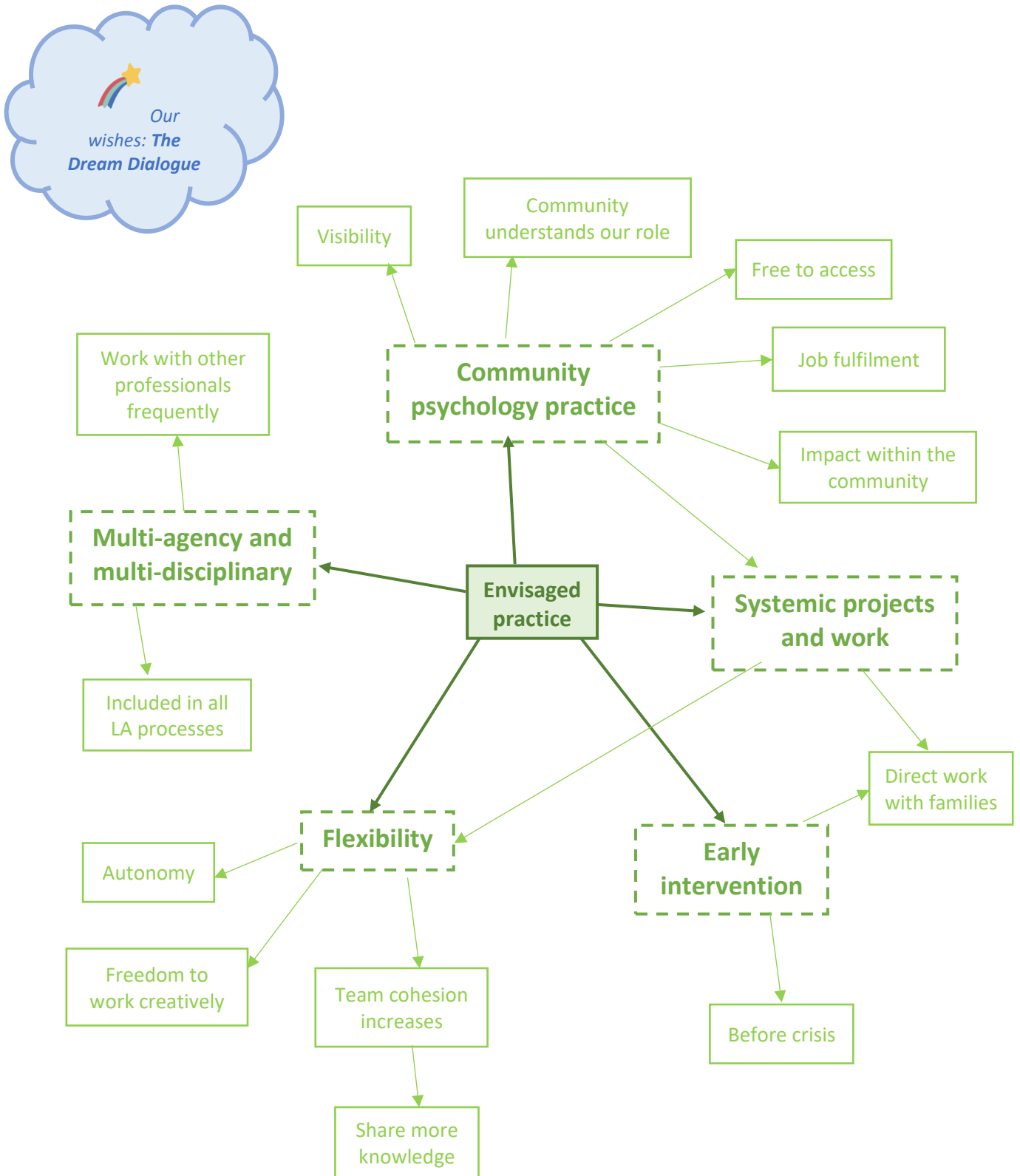


Figure 23: Thematic map of key themes identified by participants in their wishes for envisioned practice

| Dream Team | Dream (refined themes, phase 4)   | Linked themes  | Supporting data extracts  |
|------------|---|--|---|
| 1          | We have increased our community-level impact by increasing accessibility, visibility and understanding of the EP role. This allows us to intervene earlier.                       | <b><u>Community psychology practice</u></b> , increased work with families, impact in the community, free to access, greater visibility and understanding of our role, <b><u>early intervention</u></b> to support families directly.  | <p><i>We have a greater community-based role so can have a bigger impact for more people. This would also give us greater fulfilment in the role too.</i></p> <p><i>Our community understands our role and what we can offer.</i></p>   |
| 2          | We collaborate through multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working on a day-to-day basis to improve outcomes for CYP and families more consistently.                              | <b><u>Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work</u></b> become part of day-to-day practice. EPs included in all LA processes relating to CYP, working closely with families before crisis point, <b><u>early intervention</u></b> .   | <p><i>We are intervening earlier, before a 'crisis point' and can do this because we are working with more families directly.</i></p> <p><i>We are included in all LA processes related to CYP and their families (e.g., early intervention services, social care, health services).</i></p> <p><i>Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work are used more often in our day-to-day work.</i></p> |
| 3          | We have the freedom, flexibility, and autonomy to implement more creative ideas in our practice and are regularly involved in more systemic work rather than individual casework. | <b><u>More flexibility and autonomy</u></b> in the traded model with scope for free trading, increased engagement with <b><u>systemic work and projects</u></b> in collaboration with community partners, enhanced creativity, team cohesion continuous to increase as we work | <i>We have the freedom to implement more creative ideas. We have more flexibility, variety, and autonomy in the work that we do (e.g., systemic project work for the LA, schools and linking with other agencies).</i>  |

| Dream Team | Dream (refined themes, phase 4) | Linked themes                     | Supporting data extracts  |
|------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|
|            |                                 | together more, sharing knowledge. | <p><i>We are involved in less casework and more systemic work.</i></p> <p><i>Our team cohesiveness has increased. We have more opportunities to work alongside one another. This would also enhance our own understanding and practice.</i></p> |

Table 11: Final themes following repeated discussion and exposure to data set shared by participants

#### 4.4.1 Dream and Design task outcomes

Dream Teams worked together to explore their Dreams and make a creative project which captures their Dream to share with the group. Dream Teams also planned their Dream as though it were happening today, writing Provocative Propositions. Following guidance from Cooperrider et al., (2005), participants explored design features for their Dream. To facilitate the discussion of Designs and writing Provocative Propositions, I created the Story So Far overview (see Figure 24) using extracts from our whole group discussion notes and notes made by participants in their Microsoft Teams groups. The Story So Far summarises the outcomes of each phase of the AI up to the Design focus group and provides the ‘gestalt’ of the process so far. This was created in Microsoft Word and then shared with the group via screen share over Microsoft Teams at the beginning of the Design focus group.



The story so far...

**DEFINE**  
**PEAK EXPERIENCE INTERVIEWS**

- Working within a team of EPs to quickly produce guidance documents for COVID-19
  - Parent helpline
  - Virtual training
- Supervision to safeguarding lead group
- Developing webinars: wellbeing, return to school, ACT
  - Coaching role with a new SENCo
    - Webinars for parents
    - Formulation – based casework

**Collaborative**  
Multi-agency, teamwork, systemic, team cohesion

**Ethical**  
Guiding principles, free to access, direct support to families, codes of conduct.

**Community-based**  
Responding to community needs, sharing psychology, systemic work, less individual assessment, community psychology principles applied.

**DISCOVER**  
**POSITIVE CORE FACILITATORS**

**STRENGTHS**

**Collaboration:** working together, community focused, team players, interpersonal skills, SLT support, consultation

**Learning:** growth mindset, knowledge base, critical thinkers, reflection

**Time and resources:** flexibility, autonomy, technology, peer support, reduced trading

**Positive core**

“how can we help?”

“teamwork and team spirit, energy and enthusiasm”

“see a need in the community and reaching out to the community”

Figure 24: Summary produced of the Story So Far

Outcomes of each Dream Dialogue will now be presented in relation to the themes for future practice identified.

#### 4.4.2 Dream Team One: Community psychology practice

This group explored the Dream for greater community-based practice and increasing accessibility, visibility and understanding of the EP role, enabling early intervention (Refer to Figure 25 which shows the creation shared). An extract from the initial themes under group 'wishes' is shown in Figure 25, as these are the themes linked to this Dream.



Figure 25: Thematic map extract demonstrating main and sub-themes used by Dream Team One

This team used a newspaper article like that which is produced already in their local authority. Their visionary headline was 'EPS award for impact in the community!'. When feeding back their Dream, the team members highlighted their wishes for community-based practice rather than a traded model of service delivery with education settings. The team drew on past successes, such as the parent telephone helpline and community outreach through webinars to Design the architecture of their Dream. Their Provocative Propositions (Design statements) were:

- We are utilising interests and knowledge of EPs to build capacity through coaching and collaboration in the service, with colleagues from other services and the wider community (e.g., schools)
- We are working with an increasing range of multi-agency partners (e.g., compass, CAMHS, STS etc.), more frequently.
- Schools / consortia have an allocated amount of core time each term / year. This is used to facilitate equitable support within the community e.g., parent training, support, systemic work.
- The pyramid planning approach has been trialled and is in use with consortiums from pre-school to post-16.
- There has been an increase in the core funding of the EPS to enable a range of activities to be delivered to schools.

Dream Team (1) presents:  
**WORKING 4 GREENSHIRE**

## EPS Award for Impact in the Community



15th September, 2025

Jo Bloggs described how early contact with the EPS following the birth of her son (who has complex needs) was hugely reassuring and enabled forward planning in order to meet his needs in his local school. "Everyone felt confident when he started in reception last September...it is great that he can be successfully included in our local primary" explained Jo.

**EPS links with nurseries in Greenshires and holds regular parent groups in community centers and hubs!**

*The EPS regularly holds workshops and drop-in sessions to share psychological advice with parents of Early Years' children on stages of development, attachment, wellbeing, sleep, play and emotional literacy (amongst other themes).*

*Mrs. Smith who attended the group said "It's been fantastic! We've learnt so much about the importance of sleep and how to understand that my child's behaviour is just a form of communication. I feel much more at ease helping my child when they're upset now".*

*If you want to know more, contact the EPS or your local centre for information about planned sessions.*

**FLASH HEADLINES**

- Doors close on Greenshires last Specialist school as all pupils are now included within mainstream setting.
- All parents/carers in Greenshires have now accessed training in Emotion Coaching.
- Multi-agency pyramid planning meetings now in place across consortiums to support the needs of the local community.

Parents and school staff have been able to access continuous and up to date psychological knowledge and support through webinars on the EPS YouTube Channel and have been hearing about resources through following our twitter account #GCCEPS

**Parent telephone line reaches 10,000 calls**

"I feel so reassured by the conversation I had with EPs and feel that I can well support my child at home – I was even able to share a few ideas with school too"

Read more on P3

Figure 26: Dream Team One presentation to wider group

#### 4.4.3 Dream Team Two: Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary working

This group explored the Dream for greater collaboration through multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working on a day-to-day basis to improve outcomes for CYP and families more consistently. (Refer to Figure 28 which shows the creation shared). An extract from the initial thematic map under group 'wishes' is shown in Figure 27, as these are the themes linked to this Dream.

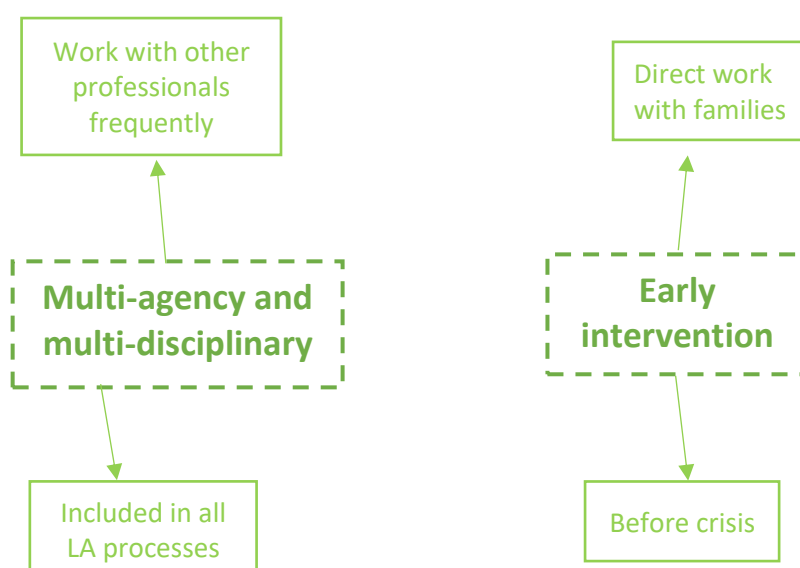


Figure 27: Thematic map extract demonstrating main and sub-themes used by Dream Team Two

This team used a CV template to capture key points and architectural design for their Dream. Their visionary headline was 'EPs will have far greater involvement in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team working. This includes Social Care, Health and Youth Justice'. When feeding back their Dream, the team members highlighted their wishes for multi-disciplinary work to be integrated into the service delivery model for EPs. This would include all sectors in the LA

which support CYP and their families, thereby uniting services to produce more accurate, timely outcomes. Working closely with other agencies formed the basis for this team's Dream. Design features therefore concentrated on which teams to collaborate with, what EPs could offer in multi-agency working and how this could be facilitated in the LA. The team's Provocative Propositions (Design statements) were:

- The EPS has a strong core offer that gives time to multi-agency working
- We use our psychological expertise to bring a different perspective to current models of working (e.g., considering trauma in a residential placement move for a young person)
- We are included in a primary preventative model with Youth Justice and Youth Offending Team, which is triggered by 'entering' into the system
- EPs attend Early Help Meetings, Child in Need, or Child Protection as needed in conjunction with social care (first step is inclusion in the process automatically)
- EPs are part of early intervention with children and young people are flagged to either Youth Justice or Youth Offending Team as an internal function to their restorative / rehabilitative processes.
- EPs are part of an initial referral to CAMHS where a first-stage consultation is held to seek to understand whether clinical or educational based services are best placed to meet therapeutic need. This approach utilises collaborative problem-solving methodology and considers multiple hypotheses.

**DREAM  
TEAM  
TWO**

**PROFILE**

**OUR VISION**

**EPs will have far greater involvement in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary team working. This includes Social Care, Health, and Youth Justice.**

**WHAT DOES THE VISION LOOK LIKE?**

**Priority elements**

Attendance at Early Help, Child in Need, Child Protection meetings (Social Care):

- EPS integral to child protection and safeguarding when working with social care, CAMHS, Youth Justice.
- Attending multi-disciplinary team meetings – bringing together a shared understanding of the case.

Far better integration with CAMHS and Health Care:

- EPs are part of mental health teams that generalise skills into a school setting.
- Co-working therapeutically, finding the best place for our work.
- Co-delivering training with other services.

Far better integration with Youth Justice and the Police:

- Sharing psychology with YOT and YJ teams to gain a better understanding of young offender behaviour.

**CONTACT**

---

PHONE:

WEBSITE:  
Website goes here

EMAIL:  
[someone@example.com](mailto:someone@example.com)

Figure 28: Dream Team Two presentation to wider group

#### 4.4.4 Dream Team Three: Flexibility and autonomy

This group explored the Dream for greater freedom and autonomy, working outside of the traded model to enable EPs to implement more creative ideas in practice (Refer to Figure 30 which shows the creation shared). An extract from the initial themes under group ‘wishes’ is shown in Figure 29, as these are the themes linked to this Dream.

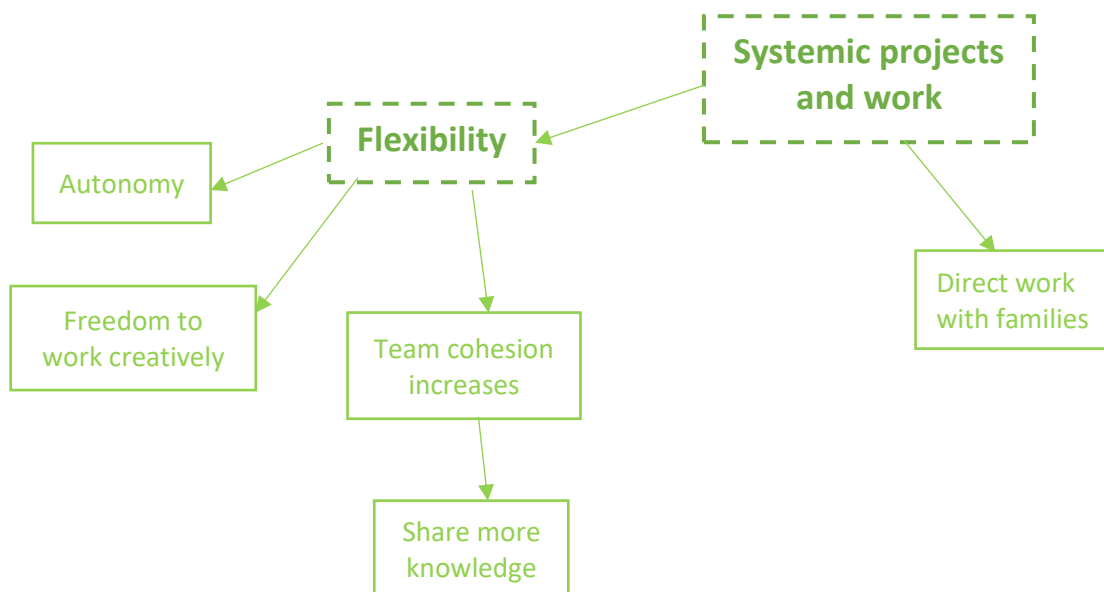


Figure 29: Thematic map extract demonstrating main and sub-themes used by Dream Team Three

This team created a poster to highlight key aspects of their Dream. Their visionary headline was ‘How can I help you?’ – which was originally a ‘quotable quote’ for one group member, identified in the Discovery analysis. When sharing their Dream with the wider group, team members highlighted the wish for EPs to be more flexible, open to different ways of working; to have more autonomy to choose and negotiate collaborative projects; and, to have the



freedom to continue innovating, bringing new ideas and putting them into action. Their

Provocative Propositions (Design statements) were:

- Project-based time is built into LA time allocation system, to enable EPs to use their time as they choose
- EPs are frequently sharing good / exciting practice
- EPs are creating new relationships – with parents, other members of school teams, other services
- EPs are confident in negotiating and offering innovative and creative support
- Schools are receptive to EPs working in creating and news ways
- There are effective and frequently used ways to evaluate EP practice to know more of what works and celebrate (then share) the successes

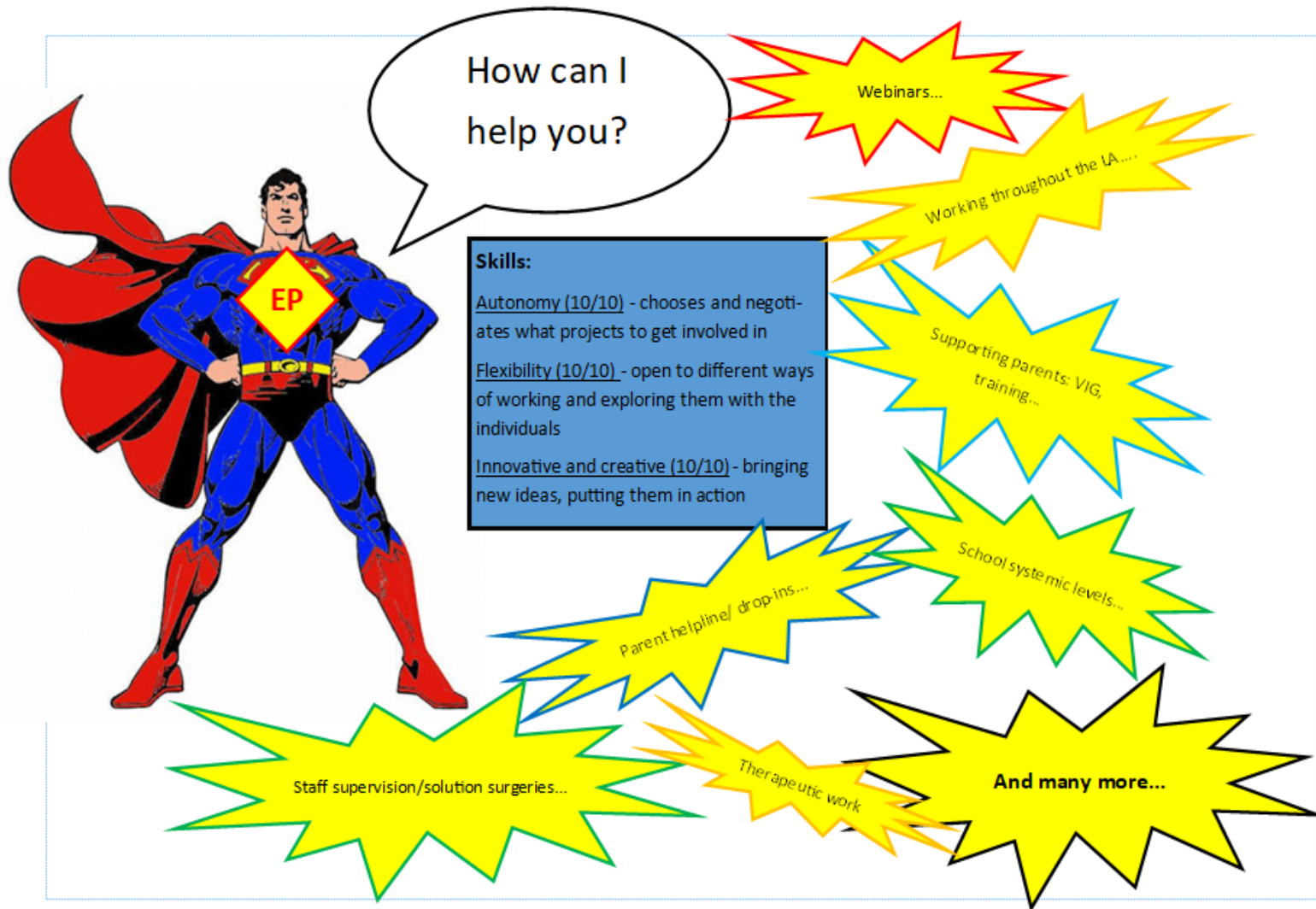


Figure 30: Dream Team Three presentation to the wider group

To conclude the AI process, Dream Teams fed back their Dream Dialogues (discussions exploring the scope of their dreams for future practice based on successes under COVID-19 restrictions) and Provocative Propositions to the wider group. This was captured by me and added to the Story So Far created; see Figure 31.

**DESIGN**  
**PROVOCATIVE PROPOSITIONS**  
**MICRO LEVEL PLANNING**



Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work is used more often in our day to day work.

- The EPS has a strong core offer that gives time to multi-agency working
- We use our psychological expertise to bring a different perspective to current models of working (e.g., considering trauma in a residential placement move for a young person)
- We are included in a primary preventative model with YJ and YoT, which is triggered by ‘entering’ into the system
- EPs attend Early Help Meetings, CiN, or CP as needed in conjunction with social care (first step is inclusion in the process automatically)
- EPs are part of early intervention with children and young people are flagged to either YoT or YJ as an internal function to their restorative / rehabilitative processes.
- EPs are part of an initial referral to CAMHS where a first-stage consultation is held to seek to understand whether clinical or educational based services are best placed to meet therapeutic need. This approach utilises collaborative problem-solving methodology and considers multiple hypotheses.



EPs are more accessible and visible as a service within the LA. The community understands our role and what we can offer.

- We are utilising interests and knowledge of EPs to build capacity through coaching and collaboration in the service, with colleagues from other services and the wider community (e.g., schools)
- We are working with an increasing range of multi-agency partners (e.g., compass, CAMHS, STS etc.), more frequently.
- Schools / consortia have an allocated amount of core time each term / year. This is used to facilitate equitable support within the community e.g., parent training, support, systemic work.
- The pyramid planning approach has been trialled and is in use with consortiums from pre-school to post-16.
- There has been an increase in the core funding of the EPS to enable a range of activities to be delivered to schools.

Figure 31: Provocative Propositions



EPs have the flexibility and freedom to implement more creative ideas through collaborative projects and systemic work

- Project-based time is built into EPARDs, to enable EPs to use their time as they choose
- EPs are frequently sharing good / exciting practice
- EPs are creating new relationships – with parents, other members of school teams, other services
- EPs are confident in negotiating and offering innovative and creative support
- Schools are receptive to EPs working in creating and new ways
- There are effective and frequently used ways to evaluate EP practice to know more of what works and celebrate (then share) the successes.

The findings of the AI process have now been presented. The AI process concluded with the Design phase focus group where Dream Teams shared their Provocative Propositions and reflections on the process and outcomes. Figures 30 and 31 above were produced by me live with participants whilst this open discussion happened.

#### **4.5 Reflection on themes identified by participants**

Data generation and analysis happened simultaneously throughout the paired appreciative interviews and focus group discussions. As outlined in Chapter Three, data collection processes were not audio recorded and data were not analysed by me independent of participants. This meant that the TA was more consistent with notions of collaboration and participation advocated within AI (Morris and Atkinson, 2018), and as described as part of the current research design. Whilst this approach did enable participants to have autonomy within the research process, it does mean that the findings and final themes perhaps do not offer a definitive account or full representation of the data. Section 3.12.2 offers a reflection on the data analysis process and highlights that the themes presented by participants may have been the result of a hybrid inductive-deductive approach to TA. The final themes could therefore be considered an interpretation of peak experience stories, grounded in the participants' experiences and knowledge gained from the AI but also beyond this process.

This is particularly evident in the themes presented by participants for research question one and three. The group analysis for research question two revealed three key themes outlining factors which were felt to be facilitators to the participant's peak experiences. These themes

were grouped as: EP service strengths, group strengths and group values and are grounded in the participant's own stories shared. The key themes presented in response to research question one on what EPs and TEPs considered successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions include: collaborative, community-based and ethical. Participants were instructed to draw on their paired appreciative interviews to seek examples of successful and 'peak' experiences. The three main themes identified by participants are in ways reflected in the data collected. However, participants did not explicitly capture 'ethics' or 'community psychology' within their interview notes, and so specific data extracts are not available for these themes beyond the focus group notes detailing the latter stages of the TA discussion, where the themes are refined by participants.

Community-based practice has the subthemes of 'giving psychology away', 'responding to needs' and 'systemic', which are reflected in the data and supported by extracts from participant's interview notes. The data does indicate that participants chose peak experience stories to capture the best of their practice which showcased examples of community-based work, but defining of the main theme as 'community-based' could have been informed by participant's knowledge external to the AI process, and their interest in developing EP practice in line with community psychology. The sub-theme of 'responding to needs' may better describe the data.

Similarly, the theme presented by participants an 'ethical' is not supported directly by data extracts, but it's subthemes of 'free to access' and 'direct support for families' are. This could suggest that incorporating these elements of free to access services and more direct support

with families felt more aligned to the 'ethics' of the individuals and of the profession, as outlined and guided by publications such as the BPS (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct. The data is arguably well described by the subthemes presented, but also could be interpreted as a desire to retain professional autonomy and the freedom to apply psychology in response to presenting needs. For example, EP 8 shares:

*"This is the first time since I've qualified that I've felt we have been able to go where we want to go and respond to what is needed, as opposed to being told what we're doing (e.g., going into a school to do an assessment). We've been able to survey the landscape, see what needs doing and implement that."*

Which could indicate the participant valued greater professional autonomy and the freedom to apply their psychology in practice in response to what is needed within their community. This may further highlight the tensions identified within the literature review in relation to EP practice under traded service delivery, and the implications for workforce wellbeing and retention of staff where they may feel they are *"being told what we're doing"*.

Research question three group analysis revealed five key themes for envisaged future practice: community psychology practice, multi-agency and multi-disciplinary, flexibility, early intervention and systemic projects and work. These themes were taken from participants 'wishes' discussed in the appreciative interviews, and were refined to three key Dreams for exploration, outlined in Table 11. However, the themes of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary and early intervention were perhaps informed by knowledge external to the AI process on

multi-disciplinary work within the LA, such as that with the Youth Offending Team, as this is referenced within the 'Dream' created by participants but is not evident as a specific reference in participant's appreciative interview notes. This could instead be represented as a theme of 'collaboration', as working across teams, collaborating with other professionals and EPs/TEPs is frequently mentioned within participant's interview notes, and would indicate that this is historical, successful practice to carry forward.



## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY FINDINGS

### 5.1 Introduction

The results of the AI presented in Chapter Four demonstrate a range of responses to the research aims and questions, but also identify patterns in reoccurring key themes. These themes fall broadly under the headings of collaboration, community-based practice, ethically driven practice, flexibility within a traded model, and EP and TEP wellbeing. As these themes occur so frequently in response to all three research questions and the overarching research aims, the discussion of findings has been combined. These themes will now be discussed in turn in relation to the literature identified in Chapter Two.

### 5.2 Collaboration

A primary theme evident throughout the AI cycle is that of collaborative working across EPS teams and multi-agency collaboration with other professionals. When sharing peak experience stories for Define and Discover, participants reported that working with others throughout the early stages of the pandemic was a '*standout memory*' (EP 3) of this time. The notion of collaborative working emerged as a key characteristic of successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions, a key facilitator as a personal and service-level strength and formed the foundation for one of three 'dream dialogues' depicting future envisioned practice under such working conditions. Collaboration and collaborative working with others can therefore be considered an important aspect to EP and TEP practice successes at a challenging time and changing context.

The participants all work, or are on long term placement with, the LA EP service and so are part of a wider group. However, from my personal learning and experience, the EP role appears solitary and typically does not include collaboration as a day-to-day activity. The literature reviewed which captures EP practice during the early pandemic stages is primarily taken from the USA, where the focus of the school psychology appears more related to the assessment role. This is reflected in the research, where the emphasis seems to be on telepsychology, teleassessment, and ensuring quality in standardised assessments delivered in this way (De Witte et al., 2021; Karekla et al., 2021; Song et al., 2020). As highlighted in the literature review, Reupert et al., (2021) offer a multi-country review of school psychology practices before and after the onset of the pandemic. The review captures the shift in frequent practices from psychoeducational assessment to the development and sharing of resources, webpages, and virtual consultation. This offers a similar picture to the current findings in relation to research question one, though the current research explores in more detail the nature of successful practice. More collaborative pursuits are also not explicitly identified in the review conducted by Reupert et al., (2021), though the sharing of resources is highlighted.

In contrast to this, the current research revealed an emphasis on collaborative working in the pursuit of ethical, community-based practice. There are several points to explore around this. Firstly, the role and remit of school psychology will differ between countries and their approach to controlling the spread of COVID-19. Secondly, the aims of the current research are firmly grounded in exploring the strengths and successes of practice through the lens of AI. The participants were therefore exposed to appreciative questioning and discussion in relation to the 'best of what is'. Participants were not asked about the frequency of their peak

experience practice, or the challenges encountered with virtual and remote working. As I was also working within the LA EP service at the time of data collection, I was aware that the participants were engaging in remote assessment of needs for statutory processes and virtual delivery of psychological services where appropriate. It is interesting that these are not aspects of 'successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions' discussed by participants, and perhaps indicates a desire for greater opportunities to collaborate within the EPS traded model in support of staff wellbeing and job satisfaction.

Collaboration between EPs within the service also emerged as a 'facilitator' and key theme under group strengths. Participants noted that *'the EPS works well together as a team'* (EP 1). Although a recognised strength of the group, participants also reflected that collaboration facilitated greater connection and communication between EPs and perhaps also positively impacted their wellbeing. For example, EP 7 notes that *'It felt exciting and very different to work collaboratively...working together in groups we pulled together a robust piece of work very quickly'*.

The BPS (2020b) publication capturing EP and TEP practice in relation to risk and protective factors for supporting wellbeing during the early pandemic revealed the theme of 'personal and professional growth' to be a protective factor. The authors suggest that the pandemic created opportunities for EPs to collaborate with colleagues to find creative solutions to challenges that were energising. Participants commented that they valued the time to get to know colleagues in their own and other fields better. Opportunities to reflect and create in

teams was also noted by participants as a key protective factor supporting their wellbeing (BPS, 2020b).

Connection to other people and a sense of belonging are cited as important attributes of wellbeing (Foresight Project on Mental Capital and Wellbeing, 2008). Perhaps the current study identified collaboration as a facilitator to peak experiences because of the potential impact on wellbeing at a time of isolation and disconnection, but also when community-based, collaborative projects were most needed. This also reflects the BPS survey findings gathered throughout the January-March 2021 national lockdown, in which 14% of UK EP respondents acknowledge the importance of connecting with their colleagues to maintain working relationships and support their wellbeing during national lockdown.

The envisioned practice of collaborative, community-based working, as outlined and designed by Dream Team One perhaps highlights the impact EPs perceive to have when working systemically, supporting communities with a range of practices across different levels. This could also indicate a desire EPs and TEPs may have to work collaboratively more often with a focus on systemic practices as opposed to individual assessment of needs, as described by Dream Team One and the key characteristics of practice under COVID-19 restrictions. This may further reflect the literature discussed in relation to community cohesion and the practice of community psychology within EP practice, in response to the reduction in multi-disciplinary work and tensions around the ethics of traded service delivery as captured within the Workforce Survey (Lyonette et al., 2019).

### **5.2.1 Multi-agency working**

Systems-level and multi-agency working are also highlighted as collaborative practices in the current research. EPs have historically been involved in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary work and so working as part of a multi-agency team is not a new concept to the profession (Alexander, 2018).

Barclay and Kerr (2006) capture a range of benefits to effective collaboration across health and education when working with CYP, such as supporting the implementation of timely, minimal intervention; creating trust between professionals; reducing the likelihood of replication in assessment and intervention; and, offering alternative professional views and constructions of need, thereby enriching professional skills and knowledge available. Multi-agency work has been considered in the literature in relation to EP practice, with some potential challenges to this direction of working identified. For example, Harris (2018) suggests that differences in paradigms for working between disciplines and ideology across several fields could be a barrier to true integration. The findings of the current AI research suggest that EPs perceive value in the pursuit of multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work in achieving positive outcomes for CYP, schools and communities, in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. The key themes of collaboration, ethical service delivery and community-based practice are likely interleaved and co-dependent.

The literature review highlights that the Every Child Matters (DfES, 2003) agenda identified the importance of multi-agency working, and the shift the systems thinking and working came about with the development of the interactionist approach to practice and the application of

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979). Working at a systemic level was felt by participants in the current research to have an impact on the visibility and understanding of the EP service and their role in supporting the community. For example, EP 4 noted that the opportunity to supervise designated safeguard leads *'felt relevant to supporting staff'* and *'allowed me to use positive psychology and explain psychology in layman terms to support'*. EP 3 notes the greater flexibility in supporting school staff to collaborate with the EPS in *'more joined up working within schools to support understanding of needs'* and EP 8 suggests that remote working facilitated multi-agency contact with *'more flexibility with use of time when working with other professionals'*. Increasing visibility and understanding of the EP role through multi-agency and community-level working is also noted by Dream Team One and Two when envisioning future EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions.

The findings of this AI research also highlight the desire for more multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working following the reported success of this practice during this time. This came to form a primary element of envisioned future practice for Dream Team Two who focused on the engagement in multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work as part of the EPS's core offer. The team drew on the facilitating factors identified in the group's positive core, such as group knowledge and skills, altruism, purpose, and the group's peak experiences of collaborating with other professionals during COVID-19 restrictions to support CYP. A primary aim of this envisioned practice was greater EP involvement across LA teams working to support and ensure positive outcomes for CYP in across the county. This included partner agencies with whom the EPS is developing service level agreements with and wider disciplines such as health professions.

This may reflect the tensions described in the literature review around the significant reduction in multi-disciplinary work under the trade context of EP employment (Hill and Murray, 2019). Under the traded context for service delivery, education settings have a role in the negotiation of EP work and so may not prioritise their budget for multi-agency or multi-disciplinary work. The desire to have this element of practice a part of the envisioned future for participants may reflect their use of wider knowledge within the data analysis process, as described in my reflections on the findings, but does suggest that EP views captured here are aligned to those presented by Hill and Murray (2019). The drive for multi-agency work has therefore remained throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and perhaps is further highlighted as necessary practice in response to the community-level crisis posed by COVID-19.

Fox (2015) suggests that the more recent legislative changes brought about with the implementation of the Children and Families Act (2014) provided an opportunity for EPs to reposition themselves to improve their contributions to multi-agency services for CYP with SEND. Perhaps the inclusion of this aspect of EP practice in the current study reflects a discord between the ideal EP practice and that which is experienced on a day-to-day basis, and so collaborative working across disciplines is recognised by participants as a beneficial movement in EP service delivery in pursuit of supporting community needs under the unprecedented COVID-19 context.

Pragmatically, EPs may face constraints restricting multi-agency work, particularly financial restrictions placed on LAs over the last decade resulting in budget cuts and for some, an increased focus on statutory roles (Lee and Woods, 2017). Negotiating multi-agency working

within a traded system may present challenges initially but could offer opportunities to align EP practice closer to that which is 'envisioned' by EPs, as suggested by the current research, in response to COVID-19 disruption.

### **5.3 Community-based practice**

A second overarching theme evident in key characteristics of successful EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions is work which was community-based. Responsiveness to community needs and accessibility of the EP service were perceived as central to community-based practice. The BPS (2015) describe community psychology as being concerned with understanding people in their social context and how wider structural and societal arrangements impact on people's health and wellbeing. In a step away from the 'gatekeeper' role of EPs within a discrepancy model of need, the practice of community psychology emphasises a level of analysis and intervention other than the individual and their immediate interpersonal context (Burton and Kagan, 2003). Feelings of happiness and life satisfaction have been associated with active participation in social and community life, and evidence suggests that reciprocity and 'giving back' to others promotes wellbeing for all ages (Huppert, 2009; Greenfield and Marks, 2004; Harlow and Cantor, 1996).

Responding to community needs also emerged as a key theme when considering EP service strengths which were perceived as facilitators for participants. Participants drew on example practices which were facilitated by the EP service's focus on response to community needs such as *'offering the phonenumber to parents...feeling accessible to parents'* (EP 2) and *'return to school webinar development – tailored it to what felt was most important, shared psychology'*



(EP 5). One participant simply noted that *'it felt there was a big drive in the service to reach out to the community.'* (EP 6). The shift to community-based practice appears key to participants, as a characteristic of successful EP practice, and a facilitator when considering how the EPs were supported by their service to deliver community-based practice. Community-based practice was maintained as a key theme in response to research question three also, where Dream Team One used the group's peak experiences, characteristics of successful practice and positive core dimension to envisage future EP practice which is rooted in the application of community psychology.

This finding reflects some of the literature discussed such as the BPS survey completed in the January-March 2021 lockdown, in which EPs shared adaptations to their practice in response to community-level needs. For example, the development of remote and virtual EP services such as virtual training, webinars, and telephone helplines. As reflected upon in Chapter Four, the inclusion of the 'community-based practice' theme in the findings likely reflects the participant's knowledge and experience external to the AI process. The participant's choosing of this theme could reflect the long standing desire to move towards more preventative work, away from individual assessment, within the wider EP profession (Hill and Murray, 2019).

This may also explain the reoccurrence of 'community-based practice' throughout each phase of the AI, including the focus on responding to community needs throughout the pandemic for Dream Team One in their envisioned future practice. A primary aim of this envisioned practice was equitable access to the EP service and the promotion of community cohesion. The literature review highlights the shift in context for EP practice from clinics to education

settings and the wider community, and the move towards systems thinking, and community psychology as a framework for practice. Dream Team One's focus on the community is evident in their Dream Dialogue and Provocative Propositions. This perhaps reflects the felt need to attend to community-wide needs and the pre-existing community inequalities highlighted by COVID-19. The ongoing restrictions of COVID-19 have likely affected every aspect of our lives, thereby bringing attention to 'community'. Analysis of community dimensions and interactions between individuals and their communities throughout the early pandemic may be important to understanding the impact that COVID-19 has had on people and in formulating guidance for intervention for support services such as EPs (Kleinberg, van der Vegt and Mozes, 2020).

Marzana et al., (2021) identified key themes in community dimensions in the response to the early pandemic including: *emotional sharing*, such as the emotional and affective sharing of the pandemic experience; *connectedness*, which has to do with feeling united and the actions implemented, often using creativity and innovation to counteract the isolation and restrictions imposed; and finally, *solidarity*, which expressed the desire to help others and the wider social and economic life of a country. The envisioned practice for an EPS to be more community-responsive perhaps reflects these community dimensions in response to uncertainty and community-level anxiety created by the pandemic through acknowledgment and sharing of the emotional experience; promoting intergroup connection; and, to model solidarity to the community.

Dream Team One emphasised the need for EPS practice which is helpful and responsive to the community context allowing for connection, increased visibility of the EPS, and inclusion within school communities. This finding also reflects the BPS statement and guidance on the importance of community participation and resilience in response to COVID-19 (BPS, 2020e). For example, throughout the pandemic the BPS set up a Community Action and Resilience Workstream group, who highlight the need to showcase examples of how psychologists can work in ways that address community level needs. The current research offers a range of examples of collaborative practice which aimed to respond to community needs in creative ways, such as the parent telephone helpline and the production of wellbeing resources for CYP and their families. Moreover, the BPS (2020e) guidance on facilitating community resilience during the pandemic recommends building a collective identity between communities and LAs during a crisis response through inclusive practices, communication, and resourcing the community. The present study again offers examples of such practices captured by EPs as 'peak experiences' during the pandemic, and also suggests that the participating EPs and TEPs wish to maintain these elements as part of their envisioned future practice.

#### **5.4 Ethically-driven practice**

The notion of ethics, adhering to professional codes and pursuing ethically-driven practice were also recurring themes across the AI process in response to all three research questions. This is linked to the use of community-based practice and is perceived to have been dependent on leadership support to facilitate working outside of the traded model. When defining this theme in relation to research question one, participants acknowledged the role

of the BPS (2018) code of ethics and conduct upon their professional view of ethics and ethical practice. As noted in section 4.5, this inclusion indicates a deductive approach to the TA with the inclusion of factors influencing theme definitions which were external to the AI process. Participants did however capture their own views on what ethical practice feels and looks like in the context of COVID-19 restrictions. The ethical considerations raised in the current study are concerned with the advocacy efforts of EPs, ensuring an anti-oppressive approach to practice and equitable access to service delivery for all.

The group's values were construed from the analysis of peak experiences and mapping of the positive core. Participants captured their values under the themes of community-based practice, purpose, and role, and teaching and learning. In response to research question two, several participants referred to values of *'efficiency'* (EP 8), *'advocacy'* (EP 5), *'empathy'* (EP 1) and *'impact'* (EP 5) in relation to their purpose and role for working. The literature review highlights the need for EPs to consider anti-oppressive practice in their approach to supporting communities under COVID-19 restrictions. For example, Solerno et al., (2020) and Webb et al., (2020) argue that structural racism and other forms of intersectional oppression precludes equitable access to educational and psychological support services for CYP and families who hold minoritized identities, especially at times of social unrest where social inequalities are frequently amplified. Working at a systemic level, with consideration and understanding of oppression and intersectionality is likely a vital feature of EP practice moving forwards. The current research highlights core values under 'purpose and role' in line with a focus on systemic working.

The BPS (2018) guidance on ethical trading offers a framework to support the thinking and decision making around ethical practice and the delivery of traded services. The guidance outlines several recommendations for ethical traded service delivery including access to regular reflective practice and supervision and senior leaders or managers of EPS's who can understand, pre-empt, and resolve ethical practice issues. The current study highlights these factors as facilitators to the peak practice experiences shared, especially support from senior leaders and protected time for supervision or reflection with peers.

The BPS (2018) guidance also captures TEP views on work in traded services. Interestingly, all but one of the TEP participants felt that trading enabled more opportunities for EPs to be creative and innovative, leading to a wider variety of work, for EPs to tailor work to school's needs and to have more control on how the profession is viewed and so raise the EP's profiles (BPS 2018). This contrasts to the current study findings which suggest that the pursuit of community-based practice with flexibility in the traded service delivery model are desired to encourage creativity, innovation, and more tailored EP practice to meet the needs of the community. This could however reflect the research context and the unique impact COVID-19 will have on our communities, rather than a shift in ethical considerations. This finding may also align to previous literature discussed around the tensions within the EP workforce prior to the pandemic, such as loss of EP professional identity through the need for traded service delivery and ethical concerns about the structure of traded EP services in the climate of austerity (Lee and Woods, 2017; Hill and Murray, 2019).

#### **5.4.1 Flexibility in a traded model**

The themes identified so far are in some ways dependent on the model of service delivery adapting to fulfil the envisioned practice outlined in response to research question three. Flexibility within the traded model currently in place was identified by participants as a key characteristic and facilitator towards their examples of successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions. This notion of greater core funded work alongside a traded model of service delivery was also developed into a key theme as part of the groups' envisioned future practice. This perhaps raises questions to explore around the ethics of traded service delivery when responding to community-level crisis and change, as participants noted the shift towards community-based practice being facilitated by the opportunity to deliver more services as part of the core model. The sustainability of this community-based practice may therefore be challenging within the context of a traded service. This may indicate that participants in the current study continue to share the concerns for the EP profession in relation to the move towards more traded working and the impact this can have on fair and equal access to EP support for vulnerable CYP and their families (Hill and Murray, 2019).

The literature review highlights the social and political changes throughout the early 2010's to present day which have resulted in the introduction of traded EP services. For example, the Localism Act (2011) and Children and Families Act (2014). Several ethical considerations are discussed in the literature in relation to implications of traded EP time for work with schools, such as the consideration for priority access to EP services when schools have a role in negotiating EP work (Hass and Leung, 2020; Hill and Murray, 2019; Lee and Woods, 2017). The current research highlights the creative, community-based practice which was enabled and

necessitated by the unusual working context under COVID-19 restrictions and flexibility to engage in a greater variety of core services, which perhaps negated this ethical query somewhat for EPs whilst working remotely, as practice was largely free to access.

This may offer an insight into the potential impact EPs can have in supporting community needs through crisis and uncertainty through greater core funding and centralisation of specialist support services rather than the trading of EP time with stake holders. This research reveals values of inclusion, altruism, and equity for the group of participating EPs and TEPs, and so it is perhaps not surprising that working in a system which is able to be more flexible and engage with systemic projects, free to access services, and creative intervention feels more aligned to group values and ideal working under the current context. Dream Team Three capture this in their envisioned practice as more flexibility and autonomy, highlighting the breadth of possible EP practice when supported centrally rather than working mostly through trading with education settings.

The inclusion of 'flexibility and autonomy' as factors which describe the participant's peak experiences in EP practice during COVID-19, and as aspects of practice to maintain in the future, could reflect the workforce tensions previously discussed. For example, Lyonette et al., (2019) outline a number of supply and demand-side drivers of the EP recruitment and retention concerns. A key mechanism suggested in the report to increase retention and recruitment of EPs over time is for EP services to seek more varied work opportunities. The current findings support this suggestion to increase workforce capacity, as EP and TEP participants identified flexibility and greater professional autonomy in their practice as 'peak

experiences' when facing the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions. This may be indicative of a wider professional drive for work which is preventative, community-based, and less directed by education settings, (Lee and Woods, 2017).

In addition, when considering recovery efforts to support community needs and next steps in the fall out of the pandemic, it may be helpful for EPs to revise and reflect on the ways of working that maintain flexibility in responding to community-level needs and maintain EP interest, enthusiasm, and engagement. EPs have experience and knowledge of their communities, and the micro-communities of individual schools so can be effective in supporting change or transition with appreciation for cultural diversity, inclusion, and anti-oppressive practice.

Flexibility in traded service delivery is reported by participants to have afforded more time to implement creative ideas and innovation through collaborative working. Participants cited successful practice examples which showcased these characteristics of their practice as 'peak experiences' and 'life-giving factors' of the EPS. These factors could be considered central to the development of attractive, satisfying EP practice within a LA service which is largely traded in its delivery. This could offer a model of community EP practice which incorporates elements of systemic, multi-agency, and collaborative working more frequently. This may also support staff wellbeing within EP services, as a result of more satisfying, collaborative working practices. Though this could also reflect the specific research context under COVID-19 restrictions.



## 5.5 EP and TEP wellbeing

The wellbeing of the community and EPs themselves is also acknowledged throughout the AI findings. The wellbeing benefits to community-based practice for the community and practitioners are reflected upon by participants in their notes capturing comments such as *'supporting staff wellbeing'* and *'sharing ideas together...it felt less overwhelming'* (EP1). Participants also noted that collaborative, community-based practice gave them a *'sense of actualisation and growing competencies and in confidence'* (EP 8), highlighting the potential wellbeing benefits. This could reflect the positive role for psychologists highlighted by the BPS (2020b) in response to the pandemic, as psychology has arguably been put into the spotlight, increasing public understanding of the role of psychology and of psychologists working in various disciplines.

Further to this, the current research highlights continual learning and sharing of psychology as shared group values felt to facilitate the groups' successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions. Supporting one another and learning together were identified as subthemes in relation to navigating virtual and remote working, developing pre-recorded webinars, and implementing the parent helpline. The BPS (2020b) identified aspects of CPD such as training webinars to increase understanding of adaptations to work, peer networks and group reflective spaces as protective factors for EP's wellbeing during the early stages of the pandemic. The group value of continual learning and sharing of psychological knowledge may reflect this protective factor for EPs in the current research. This is also noted in the edpsy

blogs published which emphasised the collectiveness of the profession through sharing of resources and experiences (Green, 2020; O'Connor, 2021; Ruane 2020).

The act of identifying group values together within the AI process may have provided the reflective space and time for participants to connect with one another and be reminded of their joint cause, purpose, and values. It is interesting to note that although participants completed the initial phases of TA in pairs via Microsoft Teams, all pairs shared very similar themes when with the wider group. This perhaps highlights the common characteristics of individuals drawn to the EP profession, or the nature of training and experiences of EPs in one service or could reflect the challenging times being experienced by a group of people faced with similar challenges. Considering group values and strengths of the EP service may offer a means for services to capture their experiences of the pandemic as advised by the BPS (2021a), but also a way of understanding how to make successful practice sustainable; that which is aligned to the core values and strengths of the team. This perhaps highlights the strength in AI as an organisational development model.

The key themes discussed above are derived from the AI process and represent the views of eight TEPs and EPs working in one service. The key characteristics of successful work in a changing context, facilitators to this practice and hopes for future ideal working practices could be developed into a model of service delivery which actively supports and promotes the wellbeing of EPs themselves. For example, through the application of wellbeing principles to EPs themselves, senior management support, collaborative working, and involvement in community-based work aligned to service values, could support employee retention and

recruitment. This is especially important to consider as a key reflection point and implication of these findings in the context of the EP Workforce Report which indicates that the number of EP vacancies across the UK are noted to be increasing, with both the public and private sectors reporting difficulties in filling vacancies (Lyonette et al., 2019; NAPEP National Executive Committee, 2015). The Research on the Educational Psychologist Workforce report states that recruitment into the EP profession is a *“recurring concern, as are problems of uneven recruitment across England”* (p.9). The report notes that the most cited mechanism by Principal EPs to addressing staff shortages in EPSs is increasing the workforce capacity and improving the variety of work undertaken by LA EPs, thereby improving the attractiveness of the job. Integrating the key characteristics of successful practice captured in the present study, alongside the perceived facilitators could improve the attractiveness of working in a service and increase the variety of community-based and collaborative working.

Through the application of an AI process and live TA with participants, this research is felt to have captured practitioners' views in relation to the research aims in the hope that successes and strengths of EP practice can be distilled for critical reflection or used to inform future service delivery models. Implications of this research and reflection points for EPs and EP services will be considered in the following chapter.

## **5.6 Implications and points for reflection on Educational Psychology practice and service delivery**

### **6.3.1 Reflections for Educational Psychologists**

This research highlights the benefits of collaboration in supporting the wellbeing of EPs indirectly through greater connection and teamworking towards a shared goal, and potentially through reducing the isolation of lone working. A possible implication of this would be to create opportunities for EPs to come together more frequently to develop collaborative practices. This would potentially enable a more cohesive approach to EP service delivery, save time on the development of resources due to greater sharing of knowledge and experience and maintain the sense of *'actualisation'*, *'purpose'*, *'meaning to work'* and *'continually learning from others'* as core values to the EPs in this study. Examples of this could also be taken from this research, in relation to research question one results where participants identified peak experiences under the theme of Collaboration, for example: working in teams to create wellbeing documents for families and schools; working in small groups to plan and deliver wellbeing webinars to be accessed freely by the community, working together to develop virtual training packages in response to community needs.

### **5.6.2 Reflections for Educational Psychology Service delivery**

This research highlights perceived facilitators to successful EP practice in one LA under COVID-19 restrictions, and how these factors could be maintained within envisioned EP practice under future COVID-19 restrictions. The EP service which provided the context for this research, and other similar EP services across England may see an opportunity for reflection on the maintenance of the facilitators identified in this research. For example, EP services may look to support the EP service strengths captured such as: being community-responsive, ensuring access to technological support and resources, providing a network of peer and

senior leadership support to colleagues, and creating opportunities for EPs to work outside of the traded model constraints to provide a community-based service.

One implication for future practice of EPs and wider service delivery indicated in this research is the continuation of more collaborative, community-based practice. Community-based practice is identified in the literature review as an approach for EP service delivery which is developing prominence, with a greater need for community psychology application since the introduction of legislation such as the Localism Act (2011). The pandemic has impacted every aspect of life and the community, thereby reinforcing this need for community-based practice. Community responses to the pandemic are emerging in the literature, and some EP practice has been identified in relation to supporting local and national initiatives (Karekla et al., 2021), though this is not UK-based. Whilst a broad implication, community-based practice appears as a key theme in response to all three research questions and is evidenced as 'successful practice' from participant perspectives.

Schaffer et al, (2020) note that EPs are well positioned through knowledge, skills, and experience to support systemic level transition and change, such as the recovery efforts needed on a community-wide level to restore or re-align life to the 'new normal'. Whilst EPs are engaging with individual casework and assessment of needs as required by the Children and Families Act (2014), this research highlights the breadth and impact of EPs working systemically, supporting communities with a range of practices.

This finding could also indicate the desire for EPs to work more systemically as part of their practice, as this was identified as a peak experience for multiple participants. Prior to the onset of COVID-19, my experience of the EP role is that it was solitary and largely independent of collaborative working with some exceptions such as co-delivery of training. The opportunity to create and apply psychology in groups appears to be the 'peak experience' and is also captured as a facilitative factor under the themes of collaboration and peer support. This also aligns to the findings reported by Lyonette et al., (2019) in the EP Workforce Survey which highlights the tensions within the workforce as a result of increasing statutory demands resulting in fewer opportunities for EPs to apply skills in preventative or strategic work. The findings in the current research therefore add to this recent snapshot of the profession and further highlight the need to maintain variety in EP practice for community wellbeing and greater job satisfaction.

The focus on collaborative and community-based practice in the AI findings could offer an opportunity for the development of a service delivery model which is more aligned to both community and EP needs. As previously discussed, the key characteristics of successful practice captured in the present study, alongside the perceived facilitators could improve the attractiveness of working in a service and increase the variety of systemic and collaborative working. Using the views of EPs and TEPs on what they have found to be engaging work practices and supporting factors at a group and wider service level could be an informative starting point for a model of service delivery which supports the needs of its EP practitioners and therefore retains staff over their career. This would potentially add to the findings of Lyonette et al., (2019) and Hill and Murray (2019) in offering an alternative mechanism to

support demand-side drivers of EP shortages; through the development of service delivery models which aim to account for the breadth of EP skills and interests. EPs work closely with schools and are often cited as being well positioned to affect change within such settings because of their skills, experience and understanding of those systems. Drawing on these characteristics to inform SEND reforms and consultations, such as the present SEND Review (2022), could have a significant impact on workforce resilience, impact, and equity. For example, gaining EP feedback through consultation on the SEND Review (2022) could indicate to policy makers the state of education settings and those practices which are known to be supportive but limited by the ever-increasing number of statutory assessments.

In addition, it will be important moving forwards to evaluate the impact of collaborative and systemic work from the perspectives of all stake holders to further understand which aspects of this successful practice the EPS could aim to maintain in the recovery efforts. For example, gathering views of CYP, parents, carers, education staff, EPs and TEPs and other LA education support services. A further consideration is how to operationalise a service delivery model which implements the characteristics of EP practice identified as successful and facilitative within this research as education settings return to their 'new normal'. The current research did not gain participant views directly on next steps for implementation within the current traded service delivery model. This would require the felt need for organisational change to come from the service leaders, as agents of authentic change for the whole EP service.

### **5.6.3 Reflections for Educational Psychology Service delivery in the post-pandemic context**

The current research highlights aspects of practice under early COVID-19 restrictions which EP and TEP participants perceived to be successful, peak experiences. Facilitative factors which enabled the example practices are also shared as mechanisms for continued 'peak' experiences. COVID-19 disrupted life as a whole for everyone and continues to have a lasting impact within our communities. Whilst there are a number of challenges identified within the literature to ensuring access to education and SEND support during this time, the national lockdowns perhaps offered a momentary pause and point for reflection for the EP profession.

The shift in context and modality of EP service delivery changed suddenly as schools partially closed. EPSs were able to take a step back away from the pace of school-driven traded work to assess the community level needs and respond creatively, timely, and systemically. This research captures the fulfilment this brought to participants in that they felt better able to work collaboratively within a community crisis. EPs were also more able to apply a greater range of skills through increased consultation, research, training, and multi-agency working, as also captured within the multi-country reviews of school and educational psychology practice during COVID-19 restrictions (BPS, 2022; Reupert et al., 2021; Karekla et al., 2020). This created a more even spread of workload over different skills and functions of the EP role, stepping away from the pathway to statutory assessment and individual casework. Capturing the success of more varied practice in response to COVID-19, where core offers are centrally funded, and EP service delivery is not traded fully with education settings presents helpful user feedback for the development of a service delivery model that is perhaps more closely aligned to values and motivations of EPs.



The impact of COVID-19 is far reaching and could be considered a critical incident in that it was sudden, unexpected and has had a significant impact. Beeke (2011) conducted a review of policy and literature around critical incidents in relation to school settings and defined it as:

*'A sudden or unexpected event that has the potential to overwhelm the coping mechanisms of a whole school or members of the school community. A serious or significant event, it is likely to be outside the range of normal human experience and would be markedly distressing to anyone in or directly involved with the school community'.* (Beeke, 2011, p.13)

If we consider COVID-19 as a community-wide critical incident, the current research could add to the theory of EP practice and response to such events. Cameron (2006) suggests that EPs should use their knowledge of applied psychology in creative and innovative ways in response to critical incidents. For example, in recent years in England, EPs have supported community responses to the Grenfell Tower fire incident, (Dunsmuir, Hayes and Lang, 2018), and the terrorist attack at Manchester arena (Hind et al., 2021). Similarities can be seen EP service responses between these critical incidents and the practice of EPs captured in the current research. For example, Dunsmuir, Hayes, and Lang (2018) reported that school leaders valued the professional liaison, high quality support for parents, pupils and staff, and collaboration with staff to develop systems in relation to talking to others about death, trauma, and normalising experiences.

The current research reflects and builds upon this theory of EP response to critical incidents in highlighting the significance of supporting families, sharing psychology through guidance

and training and free to access services for the community. The findings may therefore support the development of a conceptual framework for EPS responses to community level crises or critical incidents, and further support the need for greater core funding within LA services to enable the flexibility to implement this framework.

The current research also offers reflection on the professional identity of EPs. The participants included were a mixture of EPs, TEPs, senior EPs and newly qualified EPs. Throughout the AI participants completed their appreciative interviews in pairs away from the wider group, which may have meant less influence of 'group think'. Participant's individual analysis of their stories had similarities in key themes, which were strengthened during the later whole group phases of data analysis. It is interesting that despite the initial analysis being completed in pairs, the wider group key themes were consistent for each research question. This could be for a number of reasons but does suggest a shared understanding of 'successful practice' in this one context and factors which are felt to be supportive of this practice.

EPs have varied experiences prior to the training course but are perhaps closely aligned as a profession in their core values or motivations for pursuing a career in applied psychology. Identifying professional values and motives could offer an insight into aspects of the profession which have been identified as 'peak experiences' and hopes for future practice by EPs themselves in a post-pandemic context. When considering the identified demand- and supply-side drivers for EP shortages, it may be helpful for the profession to consider their shared strengths, skills, values and knowledge to drive a change in practice which better aligns

to the identity of EPs captured here. This also highlights the value in continued inclusion of EP and TEP views in developing the role identity post-pandemic.

Further to this, the current research was conducted at a specific time point under conditions that the majority of nations were subject to at the same time. This means that there is scope for this research to add to the international narratives on EP practice and impact across countries around the world, thereby strengthening practice for all. The national lockdowns saw an increase in EP communities sharing resources and experiences from practice informally, such as through social media platforms and the edpsy resource page and blog, but also at a profession-wide level through the creation of guidance documents published by the British Psychological Society throughout 2020 and 2021. This meant that EPs were able to maintain and build contact with colleagues and harness virtual communities to share resources and practice more widely.

## CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

### 6.1 Overview

This final chapter will present conclusions drawn from the findings of this research, identify implications and points for reflection for EPs and EP services, critically evaluate the research design and offer my reflections. Future directions for research in this area are identified.

### 6.2 Concluding points

Through exploration of participants peak experiences of successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions, the group were able to define this practice with examples and key themes, in response to research question one. The three overarching themes were collaboration, community-based and ethically driven. The nature of AI is that data collection is an iterative process which looks at broadly the same data repeatedly to inquire about the present and explore the future. The meant that these initial core themes remained prominent in participant discussions and therefore the data analysis.

Research question two was concerned with which factors participants would identify as facilitators to their successful practice. Factors identified fell into three broad themes: EP personal strengths of the group, strengths of the EP service and values felt to be core to the group and their practice. Themes of community psychology, ethics, equity, collaboration, and teamwork were again evident. Discussion around working beyond the constraints of the traded model in place to facilitate greater collaborative, community-based practice was also highlighted as a key theme and explored further in data collection for research question three.

Research question three sought to explore envisioned EP practice under future COVID-19 restrictions based on previously successful practice and identified facilitating factors present. Again, the core themes of community-based practice, collaborative working with multi-agency partners and ethically driven work beyond the traded model to enable flexibility and creativity arose. When exploring their Dreams, participants did not focus on efforts to return to individual assessments of need or restoring practice to pre-COVID-19 systems, but rather took their strengths and peak experiences to develop visions of practice which were felt to be needed by the community and in support of recovery efforts. Acknowledging the experiences of COVID-19 for the whole community is likely going to be a necessary step to understanding how best to help and problem solve.

Beyond the reoccurring themes of collaboration, community-based practice, and ethical working, a secondary discussion was captured by participants throughout the AI which was around maintaining and supporting their own wellbeing. This was captured as *'connection'*, *'collaboration'*, *'checking in'*, *'supervision'*, *'support from peers and line managers'*, and *'time for reflection'*. This acknowledgement of the need to connect and belong perhaps reflects the literature around emotional responses to crisis and community dimensions in the response to the early pandemic, such as emotional sharing, connectedness, and solidarity (Marzana et al. 2021). Seeking connection in the virtual, remote world seems to be at the core of participants reported successful practice and facilitating factors, whether that be connection personally with colleagues and peers or connection within the community to support recovery.

### **6.3 Critical reflection on strengths and limitations to this research**

#### **6.3.1 Strengths**

The chosen methodology of AI allowed participants to explore elements of their practice under COVID-19 restrictions through a strengths-based lens. Based on the literature review, it appears that this research is the first which endeavours to capture strengths on this topic to inform future directions for practice. The key stages of AI were used to explore EP practice, understand perceived facilitating factors, and plan desirable future practice to maintain the groups' positive core and support the EPS response to COVID-19. The overall suggestion in this thesis is that when EP practice is collaborative, community-based, and ethically driven, EPs can respond more effectively to community-level needs and support recovery from crisis or support uncertain transitions.

The nature of the AI methodology, generativity, and appreciative questioning throughout the process of data collection has resulted in a collection of positive experiences and strengths at the level of individual EPs and the EP service. The selection of AI also encouraged positive language and reflection on practice when this has previously been described negatively or with uncertainty. A strength of this research is therefore the application of AI.

Although the methodology is not explicitly evaluated in this research process, it was applied virtually and remotely with success through Microsoft Teams, as evidenced by the completion of the AI cycle and response to research questions. The resources created, informed by Cooperrider et al., (2008) guidance, were important for the cohesion of the virtual activities

and focus group discussions and would enable a replication of the research with a wider participant group within an EPS, or at a later point to demonstrate changes in practices.

A second methodological decision was to make data collection and analysis participatory. In line with the aim to maintain participant wellbeing, it was a balance to consider the quantity of work asked of participants with the research aim of gathering participants' own views. An methodology is concerned with construction of reality and considers the act of appreciative questioning to be enough of an intervention to generate momentum for change. Using the participants' own notes, captured by themselves, was felt to be a helpful compromise between asking participants to engage in lots of written tasks and recording the most salient examples. As participants were completing all elements virtually, I was mindful of creating a safe space and maximising interaction between participants. Allowing them to lead discussions and directions for inquiry felt a reasonable option to encourage interaction and ownership over the research. Participant's individual discussions (e.g., Define and Discover appreciative interviews) were not video or audio recorded to allow participants to feel unrestricted when storytelling.

To increase trustworthiness of the data collected, especially given the virtual and remote nature of participation, consistent member checking was used as an important quality criterion in the study. For example, participants captured their views in their own words, group discussions and live analysis of data were captured live through screen share for all participants to see, and more structured member checks were built into the start and ending of every focus group session. Furthermore, visual thematic maps were created live with

participants. Elliot et al., (1999) suggest that this contributes to the internal coherence and narrative of the data.

### **6.3.2 Limitations to this research**

This research offers a helpful insight into the strengths and facilitators of EP practice in one context under COVID-19 restrictions, it is not however without limits which should be acknowledged.

For example, the purposive sample of eight trainee and qualified educational psychologists is small and not entirely representative of the whole organisation, as suggested by Cooperrider et al., (2008) as criteria for selecting a steering group. However, as outlined in Chapter Three, the sample is felt to be representative of the group of EPs practicing within the LA.

Similarly, whilst aspects of rigour, and reliability of data are important to consider, it is not an aim of this research to provide replicable results or a model for practice to be generalised across EP services. AI frameworks are used within the research context to support organisational change in-situ, and so outcomes are personal and specific to the participants and their organisation. This allows context-specific next steps to be identified which are rooted in the organisation's positive core and historical successes.

Criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in data can be approached through considering aspects of the data such as positionality, triangulation, validity, and sampling (Thomas, 2017); section 3.12 in Chapter Three outlines the steps taken to implement measures. However, the current



research design does not afford many opportunities for triangulation of data from multiple data points. The data collection and analysis methods do allow for repeated exposure of raw data and discussion at different time points with different participants through paired interviews and focus groups but does not include a researcher perspective. For example, a second facilitator analysis of key themes or researcher reflections and views captured within the analysis process rather than as a reflexive account at the end of the research could be included in the collection of data to better triangulate findings.

Positionality of both the researcher and participants is important to consider. Although I was the researcher and AI facilitator, I was also a trainee EP on placement working alongside participants for two years, and I was a future colleague in the service. Relationships between participants were also pre-existing. This means that both my own and participants' interests, relationships, and experiences would have shaped the nature of the research and cannot be separated from the results.

AI as a methodological choice also presents some limitations, such as the frequent criticism that it focuses solely on the positive and that it is not always possible to reframe experiences in relation to the 'best of what is'. However, the aim of AI is often misunderstood, and is more about generating momentum for change, based on the identification of strengths, values and previous successes (Cooperrider et al., 2005).

#### **6.4 Reflection on the use of AI as a research methodology**

AI is both a theoretical and methodological approach with clear assumptions and driving principles (Calabrese and Cohen, 2013). Watkins (2019) describes AI as a research tool and philosophy which harnesses collaborative, co-constructing processes to find the 'best' in people, environments, and organisations. As previously discussed throughout Chapter Three, AI has a focus on identifying the positive in what is being studied, in contrast to more traditional problem solving methodology.

Whilst historically AI has been applied as an organisational change model within business and industry, it has more recently had varied use in higher education research as a methodology. For example, as a dialogic approach within teaching to encourage student participation (Croux, 2019) and as a method for self-evaluation within school improvement (Willoughby and Tosey, 2007). In their critique of AI as a research methodology, Clouder and King (2015) suggest that it has appealed to a range of disciplines as a methodological approach including psychology, nursing, economics and more recently education. Similarly, Griggs and Crain-Dorough (2021) explore AI's potential as a research methodology and note strengths and benefits to the approach within research. For example, AI encourages conversation and collaboration amongst participants by creating an environment where they are able to speak openly about their experiences. Information gained through AI is often extensive, rich, and unrehearsed because of the focus on story-telling, which is noted to be supportive in the pursuit of capturing marginalised voices through emancipatory research (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003).

Within AI, goals and understanding of past successes are shared and participants voices are captured, often resulting in greater participation to move towards the positive, evidence-based possibilities that could be. This does however mean that AI processes need participants and researchers to be committed to the principle of co-created data and, where appropriate, change.

The National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) conducted a study of AI to investigate its potential use in education research. The main strengths of an AI methodological approach were identified as: providing a new outlook on a particular topic, avoiding stereotypical answers, empowering participants through the high level of involvement, and identifying good practice already in place. Shuayb et al., (2009) also identify AI as a useful methodological approach when conducting education research that is focused on:

- Organisational development
- Participative research
- Identifying examples of good practice
- Research wishing to record young people's voices
- Evaluation and developing initiatives in education settings and local authorities.

As a research tool, AI is noted to align with a number of other qualitative research methods and data analysis processes. For example, Griggs and Crain-Dorough (2021) state that AI most aligns with narrative approaches in which the focus is on storytelling, the voices of participants and the creation of narratives. Ethnography, phenomenological methods, as well as case study and grounded theory approaches are all too complimentary approaches to AI methods and

methodology, where the focus is on yielding rich data and exploring participant's constructions of reality in a context. Action Research (AR), as described in Chapter Three, was an influence on the development of AI as a change process and so can offer a research framework in which to harness the methods of AI to promote a positive way to explore solutions to presenting needs through the Dream and Design phases. AI is a flexible collection of methods, but also can be used as a methodological framework through which participant stories can be collected to reveal the complexities of the subject of study, whilst also empowering participants through reflection on their own practice.

Trajkovski et al., (2013) conducted a meta-analysis of researcher experiences of using the 4D AI cycle in health care and suggest that the flexibility and transferability of AI as a method can result in unclear methodology and make evaluation of its effectiveness difficult to assess. Bushe (2011) adds to this in stating that research which employs AI methodology should take into consideration contextual variables within the research and adapt the AI process with this in mind, such as the virtual and remote delivery adaptations needed in the present study.

Trajkovski et al., (2013) also note that AI as a methodology has the potential to raise false hope for participants in instances where the Destiny phase is not acted upon as a result of key stake holders missing from the process.. The most widely criticised aspect of AI as a methodological approach is the focus on positive story-telling. For example, Golembiewski (2000) states that AI rejects all problem-solving approaches and ignores the balance that so often occurs in real life, meaning that data gathered through an AI method may misrepresent the subject of study and diminish other significant narratives within the research. In response,

AI researchers suggest that appreciative tasks within AI methodology should be balanced with critical thinking and reflection, to acknowledge the broader context of the research. Cooperrider (2013) too acknowledged the debate among AI researchers in relation to whether AI is about positivity and strengths-based inquiry, or generativity (Gergen, 1978), and suggested that AI could be the pursuit of either, depending on its application and purpose.

### **6.5 Future research directions**

Identifying limitations to research can be helpful when considering future research directions. For example, gathering participant views on the process of AI could be helpful in further understanding the impact of such methodologies on identifying next steps for an organisation. The inclusion of more stake holders from the organisation could also be a helpful consideration for future research and would be more aligned to the AI criteria outlined by Cooperrider et al., (2008). This could enable the Destiny phased to be more tangible, with actions to take away and implement with the support of senior leaders within the EP service.

Beyond methodological considerations for future research, other areas of interest related to this research include the identification of challenges to service delivery, or to the maintenance of the successful practice outlined in this study. For example, this study repeatedly identified practice which was responsive to community needs as 'peak' and 'successful' practice but did not directly explore how this could be maintained. The importance of collaboration and teamworking were identified as strengths of individual participants but also of the service in enabling this approach to working. Fostering a sense of belonging within teams through collaborative working could be a topic for future inquiry, which would shed light on how teams

are working in this way and how they might envisage this looking in the future. Similarly, more detailed exploration of how to implement community-based practice within a traded service could be of value to this research context, considering how highly valued this seems to be for the group.

### **6.6 Personal reflections as researcher, AI facilitator and TEP**

This final section of the conclusion chapter outlines my personal and professional reflections on the research process and findings, as a reflexive account. Reflexive accounts allow the researcher opportunities to reflect on their own personal perspective.

This was the first AI I had been a part of and facilitated. Cooperrider et al., (2008) suggest allowing maximum time when facilitating your first AI summit or process, to ensure the pace is not rushed and participants are enabled to fully explore their stories of peak experiences. This was possible to some degree, but it felt more important to me to plan session dates and timings with participants and stick to these agreed timings, so not to impose on their other commitments.

The process of data collection and analysis was rewarding and enjoyable for me. I feel this is in part attributable to the application of positive psychology and the focus on strengths and successes following a time of significant challenge. Just the act of the first Define appreciative task brought participants together and generated a feeling of positive energy, which is perhaps not explicitly captured in the results. I noted at the end of this phase and the Discover phase that participants presented more enthusiastically at the end in comparison to the

opening few minutes of these sessions. Momentum seemed to develop quickly when participants re-joined the wider group to feedback and discuss their personal peak experiences. This felt a success, as one of my concerns was whether there would be enough discussion and momentum to enable positive reflection when all interactions were virtual. The 'feel' of the room was harder to gauge, though I think this was mediated somewhat by the familiarity between participants and myself. I wonder to what extent this would have been different with an external facilitator, or with a group of participants from across different professions in the LA.

The findings of the AI offer situated knowledge on the peak professional experiences of EPs and TEPs during the early pandemic. As the knowledge is contextual, it could offer the participants and wider service practical wisdom and food for thought when negotiating their role within traded service delivery. There is clear interest in community-based practices which bring together EPs and other professionals to work collaboratively; this could form a unique aspect to the EP role within this LA.

The model of AI used for virtual data collection could also work well as a reflective tool for the wider service to enhance their understanding of their successes at a particular point in time. It would be interesting to see the participants develop their Dreams and Design statements into action points with senior management support, as a pilot to gauge impact of offering more collaborative, community-based work as part of the EPS core offer.

As the researcher and AI facilitator observing the process, it seems important to acknowledge the value of engaging with EPs on issues in their community in answering the research questions and meeting research aims. A driving force in this research was maintaining the wellbeing of participants through participatory research methodology. Another reason for engaging with participatory methods was to allow participants to share their knowledge, skills and experience when reflecting on their successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions to then use this first-hand data collected and analysed to inform future training and service delivery directions. EP training is extensive and includes experience with research planning, methodologies, analysis, and interpretation; drawing on these skills to shape their own views and hopes for next steps could be used more frequently in local and national contexts. Policy makers, for example, could better draw on this as a resource for informing community-level recovery plans.

The process of this thesis and research has been interesting and contributed greatly to my professional and personal development. My learning from the application of AI has influenced my consultation practice, for example, and strengthen my understanding of positive psychology. Working virtually and remotely throughout the research process presented challenges at times, such as the organisation of groups for discussion and note-taking through Microsoft Teams, and the development of resources which were accessible to participants without overloading them with information. However, working virtually for this research did strengthen my skills and confidence with working in the context, which I will likely draw on for some time.



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**Appendices**

**Appendix 1** Overview of final 11 articles identified through the systematic literature review.

| Article reference  | Context    | Key notes   | Further reading from reference list   |
|--|------------|---|---|
| <p>Song, S., Wang, C., Espelage, D. L., Fenning, P. and Jimerson, S. R., (2020) COVID-19 and School Psychology: Adaptations and New Directions for the Field. <i>School Psychology Review</i> 49 (4) 431-437</p> | <p>USA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Article covers dissemination of innovations and adaptations in research, training and practice that help to inform and advance the field during the COVID-19 pandemic. Provides a succinct synthesis of several recent research developments focused on key issues.</li> <li>• Outlines telepsychology practice and efficacy in service provision. Acknowledges telepsychology and assessment needs further understanding in context of school psychology and application to different developmental age groups.</li> <li>• Notes the advocacy role in school psychology assessments and ethics underpinning work, and highlights agenda of social justice within the school psychology field.</li> <li>• Acknowledges how the abrupt change to online learning has illuminated the vast inequalities in access to technology and the need for school psychologists to advocate for students to have equitable access to resources and support.</li> </ul> | <p>American Psychological Association (APA) joint task force for the development of telepsychology guidelines for psychologists. (2013). Guidelines for the practice of telepsychology. <i>American Psychologist</i>, 68(9), 791–800. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035001">https://doi.org/10.1037/a0035001</a>.</p> <p>Backhaus, A., Agha, Z., Maglione, M. L., Repp, A., Ross, B., Zuest, D., Rice-Thorp, N. M., Lohr, J., &amp; Thorp, S. R. (2012). Videoconferencing psychotherapy: A systematic review. <i>Psychological Services</i>, 9(2), 111–131. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027924">https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027924</a></p> <p>Hilty, D. M., Ferrer, D. C., Burke Parish, M., Johnston, B., Callahan, E. J., &amp; Yellowlees, P. M. (2013). The effectiveness of telemental health: A 2013 review. <i>Telemedicine Journal and e-Health: The Official Journal of the American Telemedicine Association</i>, 19(6), 444–454. [special section</p> |

| Article reference | Context | Key notes | Further reading from reference list  |
|-------------------|---------|-----------|--|
|                   |         |           | <p>teamental health].<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1089/tmj.2013.0075">https://doi.org/10.1089/tmj.2013.0075</a></p> <p>McCord, C., Bernhard, P., Walsh, M., Rosner, C., &amp; Console, K. (2020). A consolidated model for telepsychology practice. <i>Journal of Clinical Psychology</i>, 76(6), 1060–1082. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22954">https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22954</a></p> <p>Salerno, J. P., Williams, N. D., &amp; Gattamorta, K. A. (2020). LGBTQ populations: Psychologically vulnerable communities in the COVID-19 pandemic. <i>Psychological Trauma : theory, Research, Practice and Policy</i>, 12(S1), S239–S242. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000837">https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000837</a></p> <p>Webb, M. H., Nápoles, A. M., &amp; Pérez-Stable, E. J. (2020). COVID-19 and Racial/Ethnic Disparities. <i>JAMA</i>, 323(24), 2466–2467. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.8598">https://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2020.8598</a></p> |

| Article reference   | Context    | Key notes  | Further reading from reference list   |
|---|------------|--|---|
| <p>Stifel, S. W.F.,<br/>Feinberg, D.K.,<br/>Zhang, Y., Chan,<br/>M-K., and Wagle,<br/>R. (2020)<br/>Assessment<br/>During the<br/>COVID-19<br/>Pandemic:<br/>Ethical, Legal, and<br/>Safety<br/>Considerations<br/>Moving Forward,<br/>School<br/>Psychology<br/>Review, 49:4,<br/>438-452, DOI:<br/>10.1080/2372966<br/>X.2020.1844549</p> | <p>USA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notes contentious issue for school psychologists during the pandemic as being the need to ethically conduct a valid psychoeducational assessment without placing anyone's health at risk.</li> <li>• Acknowledges the difficulties faced by schools in providing adequate services to students with special needs while maintaining social distancing requirements, leaving these students and their families to navigate the COVID-19 crisis with less support.</li> <li>• Notes that school psychologists are often experienced and trained to support organisational change and to navigate high-stakes decisions around access and evaluation of SEND support. Planning the assessment, intervention and review of impact for the most vulnerable learners in education is still a requirement of the EP role throughout COVID-19 restrictions.</li> <li>• Authors aim to assist school psychologists to plan how to move forward with SEND assessments in light of what is currently known about COVID-19, tele-assessment and other countries' experiences.</li> <li>• Highlights a range of barriers to virtual working and ethics around telepsychology and teleassessment throughout the pandemic. for example, the tele-administration effect, things lost in virtual translation (nonverbals). Notes that school psychology practice moving to tele-assessment and communication may mean that guiding ethics and practice around equitable access may not be met.</li> <li>• Proposes a hybrid model of virtual/remote and in person school psychology practice.</li> </ul> | <p>American Psychological Association (APA). (2014, August). <i>What are telehealth and telepsychology?</i> American Psychological Association. <a href="https://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/publications/telepsychology">https://www.apa.org/pi/disability/resources/publications/telepsychology</a></p> <p>Bayrakdar, S., &amp; Guveli, A. (2020). <i>Inequalities in home learning and schools' provision of distance teaching during school closure of COVID-19 lockdown in the UK</i>, ISER Working Paper Series.</p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020a, May 19). <i>Considerations for schools</i>. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html</a></p> <p>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020b, July 31). <i>How to Protect Yourself &amp; Others</i>. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html</a></p> |

| Article reference   | Context    | Key notes  | Further reading from reference list   |
|---|------------|--|---|
|   |            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors detail critical components and corresponding suggestions for EPs to consider when conducting SEND assessments during this pandemic</li> </ul>   | <p>Lavy, V. (2015). Do differences in schools' instruction time explain international achievement gaps? Evidence from developed and developing countries. <i>The Economic Journal</i>, 125(588), F397–F424. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12233">https://doi.org/10.1111/eoj.12233</a></p> |
| <p>Krach, S. K., Paskiewicz, T. L. and Monk, M.M. (2020) Testing Our Children When the World Shuts Down: Analyzing Recommendations for Adapted Tele-Assessment during COVID-19. <i>Journal of Psychoeducational Assessment</i>, 38(8) 923-941</p> | <p>USA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors analysed recommendations from entities including professional organisations, test publishers, and governmental offices.</li> <li>• COVID-19 pandemic has forced the use of instruments designed for traditional, standardised F2F testing in a tele-assessment environment, thus increasing the risks of testing errors</li> <li>• Research related to generic tele-assessment is scarce.</li> <li>• The term “telehealth” includes distance-based mental health and physical health services in the areas of assessment, prevention, and intervention. The sudden increased need for distance services resulted in an exponential surge in telehealth implementation for all clients. Tele-assessment is no longer limited to the few individuals who were receiving telehealth services before the pandemic.</li> <li>• At the time of data collection and writing, COVID-19 was still considered a public crisis. Decisions by individual psychologists</li> </ul> | <p>Krach, S. K., &amp; Sattler, J. M. (2018). Computer-based administration, scoring, and report writing. In J. M. Sattler (Eds.), <i>Assessment of children: Cognitive foundations</i> (6th ed., pp. 47-50). San Diego, CA: Jerome M. Sattler, Publisher, Inc.</p>                               |

| Article reference  | Context    | Key notes   | Further reading from reference list  |
|--|------------|---|--|
|  |            | <p>regarding adapted tele-assessment are ongoing and every-changing. This lack of clear direction puts both practitioners and the public at risk.</p>   |  |
| <p>Schaffer, G. E., Power, E. M., Fisk, A. K., &amp; Trolan, T. L. (2021). Beyond the four walls: The evolution of school psychological services during the COVID-19 outbreak. <i>Psychol Schs</i>, 58, 1246–1265.</p> | <p>USA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors aimed to evaluate the perspectives of school psychologists on their roles and responsibilities before and during the initial months of the COVID-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• School closures assist in containing spread of viral outbreak, but such long-term closures are not without consequences.</li> <li>• Also impact children’s mental health due to lost opportunities to socialise with their peers, witnessing parental stress and anxiety and observing members of their family and wider community become ill or pass away, or even becoming ill themselves.</li> <li>• Offers a brief overview of the breadth of school psychology work. Suggests before the pandemic, most participants reported that assessment was their top-ranked role in terms of services provided followed by consultation and collaboration. IEP meeting attendance third. After the pandemic, top three areas of service were ranked as: consultation and collaboration; IEP meeting attendance; counselling.</li> <li>• Most ppts indicated that they had ‘quite a bit of difficulty’ in delivering services online; balancing their own work-life; the child/family not having an adequate internet connection. Results appear to support and further expose problems encountered by families, especially those facing financial hardship, obtaining internet connection or being online for services</li> </ul> | <p>Christakis, D. A. (2020). School reopening-the pandemic issue that is not getting its due. <i>Journal of the American Medical Association Pediatrics</i>, 174(10), 928.<br/> <a href="https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2766113">https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2766113</a></p> <p>Blustein, D. L., Duffy, R., Ferreira, J. A., Cohen-Scali, V., Cinamon, R. G., &amp; Allan, B. A. (2020). Unemployment in the time of COVID-19: A research agenda. <i>Journal of Vocational Behavior</i>, 119, 1–4.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103436">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103436</a></p> |

| Article reference  | Context | Key notes   | Further reading from reference list   |
|--|---------|---|---|
| Hass, M. R., and Leung, B. P. (2020) When you can't R.I.O.T, R.I.O.: Teleassessment for School Psychologists. <i>Contemporary School Psychology</i> 25 33-39   | USA     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RIOT = Reviewing Records, Interview, Observation, Test. A well-known tool for conceptualising a comprehensive assessment. Approach needs reconsidering in light of COVID19 and the limitations of virtual assessment.</li> <li>• Authors recommend compensating for the limitations of one approach to data gathering by cross-validating the findings with data gathered using other methods. i.e., triangulation.</li> <li>• Legal and practical dilemma for school psychologists as they are faced with doing some if not all their assessments remotely rather than F2F (due to lack of guidance).</li> <li>• School psychologists will need to revisit their approach to assessment where standardised tests would have typically been used to support formulation of strengths and needs. Thinking more about what can be done using record reviews, interviews, and observations to gather useful and valid data if remote evaluations of need are needed.</li> <li>• Suggests school psychologists should use historical records, interviews and consultation and observation as key information gathering methods.</li> </ul> | Hiramoto, J. (2020). Mandated special education assessments during the COVID-19 shutdown (California Association of School Psychologists position paper)  |
| Farmer, R. L., McGill, R. J., Dombrowski, S. C., Benson, N. F., Smith-Kellen, S., Lockwood, A. B., Powell, S., Pynn, C. and Stinnett, T. A. (2020). Conducting | USA     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors suggest that the field of education is now beginning to emerge from a period of triage. EPs and stakeholders are now beginning to address substantive questions about how best to deliver educational support and psychological services to CYP in the present context. Uncertainty remains around what is expected and needed of EP practice across the nation and to what extent EP services can be fully delivered.</li> <li>• Lack of evidentiary literature associated with the reliability, validity and equivalence of the scores obtained from remote assessment with conventional ability and achievement</li> </ul>  | Hiramoto, J. (2020). Mandated special education assessments during the COVID-19 shutdown (California Association of School Psychologists position paper). |

| Article reference   | Context | Key notes  | Further reading from reference list                                    |
|---|---------|--|--|
| psychoeducational assessments during the COVID-19 crisis: The danger of good intentions. <i>Contemporary School Psychology</i> , 1–6. |         | measures; this literature is presently accumulating and emerging in light of the sudden need to engage in tele-assessments. Empirical evidence to suggest that a remote administration of a norm-referenced cognitive or achievement test yields equivalent information to an in-person administration, regardless of the protections employed, has yet to be furnished. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors raise concern around lack of legal clarity at this time of potential scope of practice limitations with respect to school-based professionals operating under state-level department of education credentials engaging in teleassessments.</li> <li>• Much of what is known about the impact of remote administration is based on research with adults.</li> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic introduces a litany of stressors that may result in transient anxiety or mood disorders in children, caregivers, and psychologists. While an individual’s response to stressors may vary, it logically follows that the universal increase in stressors will result in an increased                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• prevalence of adverse reactions.</li> <li>• Emotional distress, such as anxiety or depression, may alter performance on standardized tests</li> <li>• Perhaps the greatest uncertainty at the present time are the unresolved legal and ethical issues that examiners will have to confront in determining under what circumstances testing may proceed</li> <li>• School psychologists need to keep in mind existing codes and guidelines governing the practice of applied psychology</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |  |
| Szulevicz, T. (2021) COVID-19   | Denmark | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and deepened global and educational inequalities.</li> </ul>  | Blundell, R., Costa Dias, M., Joyce, R., & Xu, X. (2020). COVID-19 and |

| Article reference  | Context       | Key notes  | Further reading from reference list  |
|--|---------------|--|--|
| and Educational Consequences for Vulnerable Children from the Perspectives of Educational Psychologists. <i>Springer Nature</i> .  |               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on interviews with Danish EPs, this article sheds light on some of the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic regarding vulnerable children and educational inequalities from the perspectives of educational psychologists.</li> <li>Considers the pandemic as a sociocultural phenomenon which is exposing and amplifying existing inequalities, and making tacit structures of power and control more visible.</li> <li>Author suggests that schools can often reproduce existing inequalities and contribute to social reproduction, but they can also help to reduce these effects by providing a structured setting – this was not accessible during school lockdown.</li> </ul>   | <p>inequalities*. <i>Fiscal Studies</i>, 41, 291–319. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12232">https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-5890.12232</a></p> <p>Lupton, D. (2020). Contextualising COVID-19: sociocultural perspectives on contagion (July 27, 2020). Lupton, D. and Willis, K. (eds) <i>The COVID-19 crisis: social perspectives</i>. London: Routledge, Forthcoming., Available at SSRN: <a href="https://ssrn.com/abstract=3661226">https://ssrn.com/abstract=3661226</a> or <a href="https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3661226">https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3661226</a></p> |
| Karekla, M, Höfer, S., Plantade-Gipch, A., Neto, D D., Schjødt, B., David, D., Schütz, C., Eleptheriou, A., Pappová, P. K., Lowet, K., McCracken, L., Sargautyte, R., Scharnhorst J., Hart, J. (2021) <i>The role of</i> | Multi-country | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Study is a survey of European member associations of European Federation of Psychologists' Association (EFPA), carried out the understand the current contributions and the impact those psychology contributions have had on the COVID-19 pandemic response, to share lessons learned, and to propose a roadmap for the future.</li> <li>Suggests that although digital means of assessment and the delivery of psychological services have been around for a few years now, their need and use became apparent during the present pandemic, when patients could not see their providers in person</li> <li>Captures initiatives and example areas where school and educational psychologists are using their expertise to respond to the pandemic, such as: working with government, working</li> </ul> | <p>De Witte, N. A. J., Carlbring, P., Etzelmueller, A., Nordgreen, T., Karekla, M., Haddouk, L., Belmont, A., Øverland, S., Abi-Habib, R., Bernaerts, S., Brugnera, A., Compare, A., Duque, A., Ebert, D. D., Eimontas, J., Kassianos, A. P., Salgado, J., Schwerdt-feger, A., Tohme, P., Van Assche, E., &amp; Van Daele, T. (2021). Online consultations in mental healthcare during the COVID-19 outbreak: An international survey study on professionals' motivations and perceived barriers. <i>Internet Interventions</i>, 25.</p>   |



| Article reference  | Context              | Key notes   | Further reading from reference list   |
|--|----------------------|---|---|
| <p>psychologists in healthcare during the COVID-19 pandemic. Lessons learned and recommendations for the future. <i>European Journal of Psychology Open</i> 1-13.</p>  |                      | <p>with local and regional authorities, psychology association led initiatives, providing support to the public, transferring assessments to digital/remote methods, conducting research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suggests that limits to application of EP work and expertise in the pandemic may stem from how valued the profession is to governments in power.</li> </ul> <p>Recommendations for EP practice and training moving forwards are offered.</p>   | <p><a href="https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2021.100405">https://doi.org/10.1016/j.invent.2021.100405</a></p> <p>Vonderlin, R., Biermann, M., Konrad, M., Klett, M., Kleindienst, N., Bailer, J., Lis, S., &amp; Bohus, M. (2021, March). Implementation and evaluation of a telephone hotline for professional mental health first aid during the COVID-19 pandemic in Germany. <i>Der Nervenarzt, Europe PMC</i>.<br/> <a href="https://doi.org/10.1007/s00115-021-01089-x">https://doi.org/10.1007/s00115-021-01089-x</a></p> |
| <p>Reupert, A., Schaffer, G. E., Von Hagen, A., Allen, K.-A., Berger, E., Büttner, G., Power, E. M., Morris, Z., Paradis, P., Fisk, A. K., Summers, D., Wurf, G., &amp; May, F. (2021, August 12). <i>The Practices of</i></p> | <p>Multi-country</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors aimed to identify ways in which psychologists working in schools supported students' mental health during school closures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Data from USA, Canada, Germany and Australia. A multi-country comparison has the potential to highlight generalised statements about how school psychology services pivoted during this time and identify what we might learn from each other.</li> <li>• Also looked at how EP/school psychologist practices changed during COVID-19 and potential differences between countries concerning difficulties supporting students' mental health during this time.</li> <li>• Broadly, there was a shift toward a greater provision of consultation (including consultancy to school leadership) during</li> </ul> |   |

| Article reference   | Context    | Key notes   | Further reading from reference list |
|---|------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| <p>Psychologists Working in Schools During COVID- 19: A Multi-Country Investigation. <i>School Psychology</i>. Advance online publication.</p>                                      |            | <p>COVID-19, and a reduction in psychoeducational assessments, compared to non-COVID-19 times</p>   |                                     |
| <p>Chenneville, T., and Schwartz-Metter, R., (2020) Ethical considerations for Psychologists in the time of COVID-19. <i>American Psychological Association</i>. 75 (5) 644-654</p> | <p>USA</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Authors aim to review potential ethical issues and to provide guidance to psychologists for ethical conduct in the midst of the current crisis and its aftermath.</li> <li>• Psychologists are in a position to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic through research, practice, education, and advocacy. However, concerns exist about the ethical implications associated with transitioning from face-to-face to online or virtual formats as necessitated by stay-at-home orders designed to enforce the social distancing required to flatten the curve of new COVID-19 cases.</li> </ul> |                                     |

## **Appendix 2**                      Eight core assumptions of Appreciative Inquiry

Bushe (2011) suggests that AI is best applied when acknowledged as a set of principles rather than a framework or process to work through, guided by the following eight core assumptions:

1. In every society, organisation, or group, something works.
2. What we focus on becomes our reality.
3. Reality is created in the moment, and there are multiple realities.
4. The act of asking questions of an organisation or group influences the group in some way.
5. People have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when they carry forwards parts of the past (the known).
6. If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past.
7. It is important to value differences.
8. The language we use creates our reality, (Coghlan et al., 2003, p.10).

### **Appendix 3** Additional description on the 5-D Appreciative Inquiry phases

#### ***Define***

Cooperrider's (1986) original model captures Discovery, Dream, Design and Destiny. The initial stage is outlined here as 'Define' to highlight the emphasis placed on the selection of an affirmative topic choice by Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2005). The topic choice becomes the focus of the intervention and begins with the constructive discovery and narration of the organisation's life-giving factors or story so far. Cooperrider, Stavros and Whitney (2005, p.35) suggest that initially, the topic choices are "bold hunches about what gives life to the organisation".

Topics can be pre-selected and defined by a group from the organisation or by the researcher. In these cases the AI initiative is usually driven by an identified area for organisational development. Alternatively, Cooperrider et al. (2005) outline the process of selecting a topic choice using the four AI foundational questions within mini-interviews which involve all members of the organisation. The four foundational questions are:

1. What was a peak experience or "high point"?
2. What are the things valued most about...
  - a. Yourself?
  - b. The nature of your work?
  - c. Your organisation?
3. What are the core factors that "give life" to organising?
4. What are three wishes to heighten vitality and health?

The idea being that all organisations move in the direction of the images of their future, and that their images of the future are first informed by the conversations had and stories told. Bushe (2011) notes that the way topics become defined is unclear in contemporary AI literature, but agrees with Cooperrider et al., (2005) emphasis on the importance of getting this right to steer the change effort.

### ***Discover***

The task of this phase is to discover positive exceptions and past successes in the organisation to identify the life-giving factors of the organisation. This is completed through paired participant interviews where participants interview one another to understand their own peak experiences in relation to the affirmative topic. Ideally, these interviews involved all members of the organisation to maximise contributions and story-telling of the organisation at its peak. Cooperrider et al., (2005) suggest that at this stage a recognition should be shared with participants that organisations are not always operating at their peak, but Discovery is about seeking to uncover and learn from times and situations where the organisation is at its best.

The organisation's positive core is identified in this stage but is also woven throughout the entire cycle. The hope is that empowering conceptions of the organisation will emerge from the story-telling which is grounded in participant's reality and experience of the organisation operating at its best. AI differs from other organisational change models in this phase as every question asked is positively framed and seeking to inquire about how to affirmative topic choice can help develop the organisation towards its ideal future.

### ***Dream***

This stage enables participants to explore the outcomes of the Discovery paired interviews and extract key themes from the peak experiences shared. This process amplifies the positive core of the organisation, allowing core values and strengths to be identified within the organisation's peak experiences shared. The primary aim of this stage is to expand participant's sense of what is possible for the organisation through exploration of the organisation's history. This means that the envisioned dream is practical and grounded in the evidence shared by participants of the organisations past strengths. This space is also generative, in that it extends the organisation's potential whilst remaining mindful of the voices and hopes of all members. Often, a concrete or visual representation of the dream is created in small groups, such as a graphic display or vision statement to help members of the organisation to visual the direction and focus for change, based on their own evidence. This

process is typically described in the literature as ‘invigorating’ for individual participants and the organisation as an entity (Cooperrider, Whitney & Stavros, 2005).

### ***Design***

This phase involves the creation of the organisation’s “social architecture” (Cooperrider et al., 2005, p.45) by generating Provocative Propositions which capture and represent the Dreams previously explored. According to Cooperrider et al., (2005), Provocative Propositions are statements written in the present tense and describe the ideal organisation in relation to an aspect of the organising such as leadership, decision making, communication etc. Successful designing identifies which parts of the social architecture need to be designed and communicate this through the Provocative Propositions which also integrate the ideals shared in discovery and dream. The design should help to move the group towards positive action.

### ***Destiny***

Once the design for organisational change is complete, the Destiny phase supports the organisation in delivering their designs over time. By this point in the AI cycle, momentum for change and potential for change through implementation are high. Individuals in the organisation commit to actioning next steps towards the realisation of the organisation dreams as capture in the Provocative Propositions.

Cooperrider et al., (2005) note that the key to sustaining the momentum felt at this time is for the organisation as a whole to develop an “appreciative eye” into the systems and social architecture of the organisation. Destiny is an ongoing process which should bring the organisation back to the discovery phase overtime. Cooperrider et al., (2005) suggests that sustaining the appreciative eye is linked to the development of appreciative learning cultures through the four areas of competency development:

1. Affirmative competence
2. Expansive competence

3. Generative competence
4. Collaborative competence.

Cooperrider et al., (2005) note again that there is no one best way to carry out the Destiny phase, with each organisation needing to choose a different approach to implementing and sustaining the design from the dreams that were collectively discovered.

**Appendix 4** PowerPoint created for pre-recorded webinar to share with interested EPs and TEPs.

# Appreciative Inquiry

- ▶ **Olivia Rogers:** Trainee Educational Psychologist  
The University of Birmingham  
[email](#)
- ▶ **XXXX XXX:** Academic Research Supervisor  
The University of Birmingham  
[email](#)



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**What is already known  
about AI?**

**Have you been involved  
in an AI before?**



(1) Appreciative Inquiry

(2) The 5-D model

(3) My research

(4) Creating a timeline



## (1) Appreciative Inquiry

### Definition

AI...

- Focuses organisations or groups on their most positive qualities
- Leverages those qualities to enhance the organisation or group

**Appreciative Inquiry is the study of what works well.**



Ask  
questions!

## (1) Appreciative Inquiry

### Appreciate

*"...to value or admire highly; to judge with heightened understanding; to recognise with gratitude."*

### Definition

### Inquire

*"...to search into, investigate; to seek for information by questioning."*

Ask questions!

## (1) Appreciative Inquiry

### Appreciate

- ✓ Purposefully positive
- ✓ Builds on past successes
- ✓ A top-down approach
- ✓ Highly participative

### Definition

### Inquire

- ✓ Nurtures a positive inner dialogue
- ✓ Stimulates vision and creativity
- ✓ Accelerates change

Ask questions!

## (1) Appreciative Inquiry

### Principles and assumptions

Ask questions!

| AI is underpinned by the principles of... | AI assumes that...   |
|---|--|
| Constructionism                           | In every organisation or group, something works<br>What we focus on becomes our reality  |
| Simultaneity                              | Our reality is created in the moment and there are multiple realities  |
| Poetic                                    | The language we use creates our reality  |
| Anticipatory                              | We have more confidence and comfort to journey to the future (the unknown) when we carry forward parts of the past (the known) |
|   | If we carry parts of the past forward, they should be what is best about the past  |
| Positive                                  | The act of asking questions of an organisation or group influences the group in some way.                                      |
|   | It is important to value differences   |

## (2) The 5-D model

Ask questions!



# Define

## (1) Define

"What is the focus of inquiry?"  
Clarifying

| Phase      | Activity   | Outcome                                      |
|------------|--|--|
| (1) Define | Topic(s) for inquiry defined through mini interviews.<br>Interview schedule outlined as a group. | Topic(s) identified through mini interviews. |

### The Four Foundational Questions:

1. What was a peak experience or high point?
2. What are the things valued most about...  
yourself?  
the nature of your work?  
your organisation?
3. What are the core factors that give life?
4. What are three wishes to heighten vitality and health?



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Ask  
questions!

# Discover

## (2) Discover

"What gives life?"  
Appreciating

| Phase        | Activity   | Outcome                                      |
|--------------|--|--|
| (1) Define   | Topic(s) for inquiry defined through mini interviews.<br>Interview schedule outlined as a group.   | Topic(s) identified through mini interviews. |
| (2) Discover | Paired appreciative interviews within the group.<br>Peak experiences analysed seeking to identify underpinning values, strengths and wishes. | Mapping of the positive core.                |

### Answering the question:

*"when we are at our best, what makes work exciting, interesting, invigorating, motivating and productive?"*



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Ask  
questions!

# Dream

**(3) Dream**  
"What might be?"  
Envisioning

| Phase               | Activity   | Outcome                                      |
|---------------------|--|--|
| <i>(1) Define</i>   | Topic(s) for inquiry defined through mini interviews.<br>Interview schedule outlined as a group.                           | Topic(s) identified through mini interviews. |
| <i>(2) Discover</i> | Paired appreciative interviews<br>Peak experiences analysed seeking to identify underpinning values, strengths and wishes. | Mapping of the positive core.                |
| <b>(3) Dream</b>    | Share peak experiences. Identify key themes and compelling quotes.<br>Visioning the future.                                | Visions outlined.                            |

**Ask questions!**



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# Design

**(4) Design**  
"What should be?"  
Co-constructing

| Phase               | Activity  | Outcome                                      |
|---------------------|---|--|
| <i>(1) Define</i>   | Topic(s) for inquiry defined through mini interviews.<br>Interview schedule outlined as a group.                            | Topic(s) identified through mini interviews. |
| <i>(2) Discover</i> | Paired appreciative interviews<br>Peak experiences analysed, seeking to identify underpinning values, strengths and wishes. | Mapping of the positive core.                |
| <i>(3) Dream</i>    | Share interview analyses. Identify key themes and compelling quotes.<br>Visioning the future.                               | Visions outlined.                            |
| <b>(4) Design</b>   | Select a vision which most aligns with your interests.<br>Create Provocative Propositions for their vision.                 | Provocative Propositions.                    |

**Ask questions!**



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**(3) My research**

**Appreciative Inquiry: Capturing peak experiences of EP and TEP practice under early COVID-19 restrictions in England.**

| Research Question   | Phase            |
|---|------------------|
| What do EPs and TEPs perceive to be facilitative factors which have enabled an aspect of their practice to flourish under COVID-19 lockdown restrictions? | Define, Discover |
| How do EPs and TEPs perceive this aspect of their practice to continue flourishing in the future?   | Dream, Design    |



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Ask  
questions!

## Please remember...

- Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary!
- This research will be written up as part of a university thesis and will be made available to academic staff for assessment purposes. It will also be shared with EPS members upon completion
- Notes co-created during data collection sessions, audio tapes, transcriptions will be kept in a secure, password protected online file.
- All participants will be anonymous; no personal details will be gathered (e.g. name, age)
- You are able to withdraw from this research without explanation
- Your contributions to group tasks and discussions will be kept confidential and all data will be collected anonymously, by Olivia
- All Microsoft Teams group sessions will be recorded and stored within a secure, password-protected data management system at the University of Birmingham.

Ask  
questions!

(4) Creating a timeline





**Appendix 5**      Informed consent and information sheet for participants

## **Appreciative Inquiry: capturing peak experiences of Ep and TEP practice under early COVID-19 restrictions in England.**

*Please read each statement and circle your response (Y = yes, N = no). If you are unsure about the meaning of any of these statements, please ask.*

|   |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|
| <b>I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions</b>  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>Right to withdraw..</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I agree to take part in this study, and I understand that my role in this research is entirely voluntary.</li> <li>• I know that if I want to, I can withdraw from the study without explanation.</li> <li>• I understand that all of the data I contribute may not be able to be withdrawn as a result of the group discussion methodology.</li> </ul> | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>Compensation...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand that I will not be compensated for participating in this study.</li> </ul>   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>Confidentiality...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand my contributions to group tasks and discussions will be kept confidential and all data will be given to Olivia anonymously.</li> </ul>  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>Data usage and storage...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I understand how the results of this study will be used and who will see them.</li> <li>• I understand computer records will be kept on a secure network for 10 years. My contributions will not be identifiable in this record.</li> <li>• I agree to focus group 5 being audio recorded</li> </ul>  | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |
| <b>Contacts...</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I know who to contact if I decide I want to withdraw my data from the study.</li> <li>• If I have any questions or concerns about the study, I know who I can contact.</li> </ul>   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> |

**Name**.....

**Signed**.....**Date**.....

**Please return to Olivia Rogers**

If you have cause for any complaint about this study please contact \*\*\* \*\*\*, Principal Educational Psychologist (contact details) or \*\*\*\* \*\*\*, University of Birmingham Research Supervisor (contact details).



## **Participant information sheet**

### **What is this research about?**

The primary aim of this study is to apply Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a strengths-based organisational change process, in a local authority Educational Psychology Service (EPS), in order to share and reflect on peak professional practice during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research also aims to:

- To identify perceived facilitating factors which allow EPs and TEPs to practice in one local authority, during the COVID-19 pandemic
- To offer the EPS a model outlining possibilities for the future to support EPs service delivery under COVID-19 restrictions

### **Who is conducting this research?**

I will be conducting all elements of this research as part of my doctoral thesis. I am currently a second-year trainee educational psychologist on placement at XXX local authority. My research supervisors at the University of Birmingham are Dr \*\*\* \*\*\*\*\* and XXX XXXX.

### **How long will the research last?**

This research will take place via Microsoft Teams. You will be invited to an initial 30-minute information webinar, where you can find out more about Appreciative Inquiry and my research. You will then be invited to 4 further webinars, each one and a half hours in length, where you will be asked to contribute to group tasks or discussions.

### **What will I be asked to do?**

You will be part of a focus group discussion that elicits your views on what is working well within your own practice and the EPS, during this unprecedented time. You will be asked to contribute to four different 'Appreciative Tasks' over five webinar sessions. All tasks and discussions will be completed with the sessions. You will be given examples, guidance and supporting information to help you complete the group tasks.

### **Am I obliged to take part in this study if I do not want to do so?**

No. the decision whether or not to take part is yours. Once the research activity begins you are free to leave at any point and need not give a reason for doing so. However, due to the group discussion format of the data collection, it will not be possible to remove all of your

data from that which has been recorded. All data recorded will be done so anonymously and with confidentiality.

### **How will my comments be recorded?**

You will record your views and discussions with other group members and share this with myself and the wider group. I will also record group-level discussions via Microsoft Teams 'screen share' to allow all participants to see what I am recording.

### **How will these records be stored?**

Audio tapes, transcriptions and notes made during focus groups 1 – 4 will be kept in a secure file at the researcher's home address and on a password-protected USB storage system. If data is used in the write-up of a published paper, records will be destroyed ten years after the paper's publication date.

### **What about confidentiality?**

This research will be written up as part of a university thesis and will be made available to academic staff for assessment purposes. It will also be shared with EPS members.

At a later date, the information gathered may be used to write a paper for publication.

Some direct quotes may be used when writing up.

Your name and the name of the EPS **will not** be used in any write-up and it will not be possible for readers to trace any direct comments or data back to you.

### **Will I be made aware of the findings of the research?**

Yes, if you would like to learn more about the findings of this research, I would be happy to meet / via Microsoft Teams with you at any point during the project to discuss the research and findings. You will also be invited to a feedback meeting for the whole EPS after the research has been completed. I will also provide a written summary of the findings if requested.

### **Who can I contact to find out more information?**

You are able to contact me at any point before, during or after the research. You are also able to contact my university supervisor, \*\*\*\*\*, who will be happy to answer any questions you still have.

My email address: XXXXX

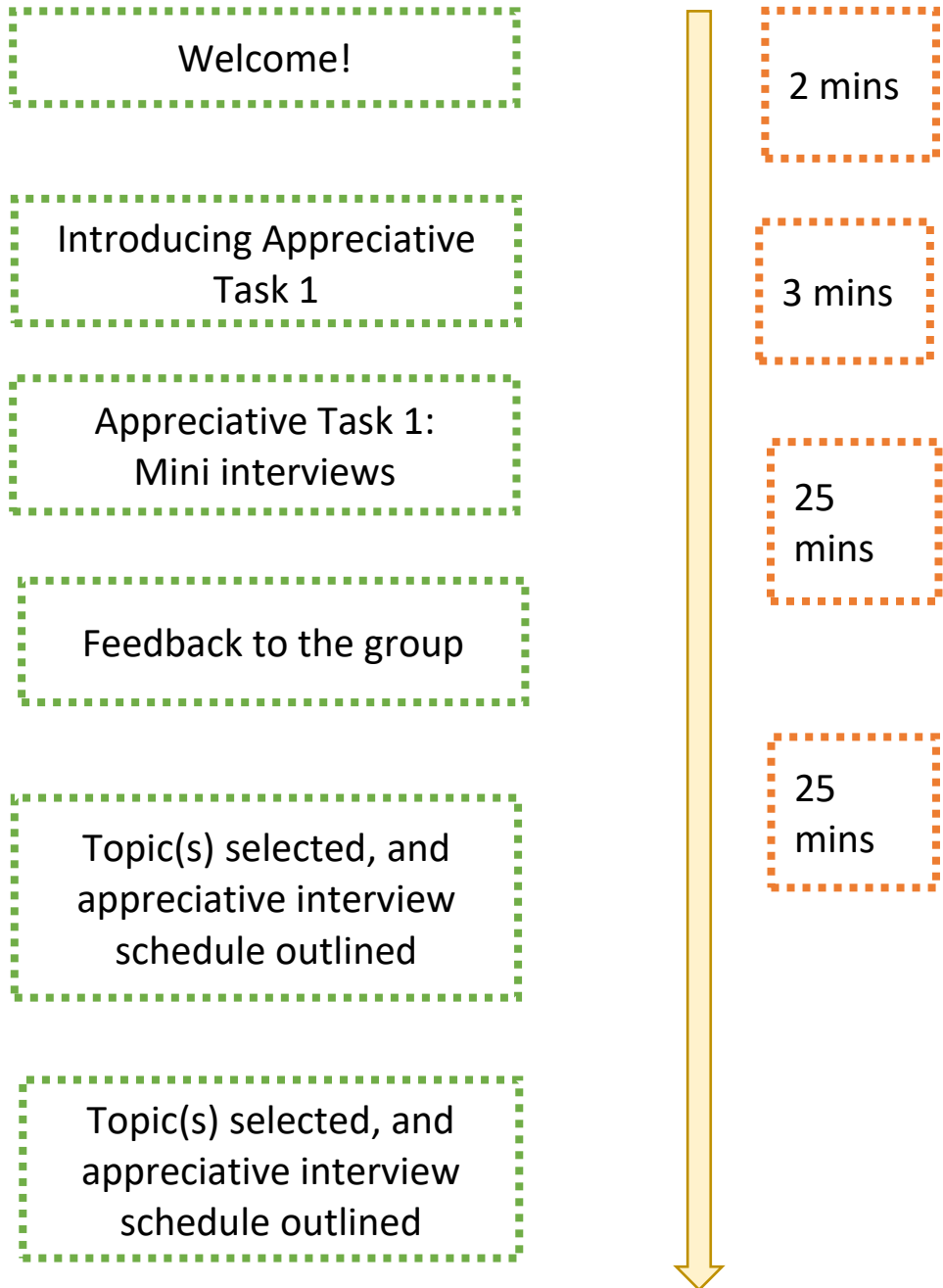
\*\*\*\* email address: XXXX

**Appendix 6** All documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Define phase.


**Whole group notes shared at the beginning and end via screen share on Microsoft Teams**

**Define: defining our topic for enquiry**


**28/07/2020**





**Peak EP and TEP practice throughout the COVID-19 pandemic**

 Our peak experiences

 Life giving factors

 Key themes

 Topics for inquiry

 Interview schedule



### Joining information for mini paired Define interviews:

Here are some groupings for our first session together.

Please find your pair and 'group' on Microsoft Teams! (you don't need to 'meet' yet)  
There should be a word document on: Teams → OR thesis research → Group A, B, C or D → files → word document: 'Define\_ppt notes\_Group A/B/C/D'

You will both be able to work on the document at the same time and be able to see each other's notes. If not, we may have to download the document and screen share within the pairs.

I'll be able to join each group at throughout the interview time for questions.

| Group | Participants |
|-------|--------------|
| A     | 1 & 2        |
| B     | 3 & 4        |
| C     | 5 & 6        |
| D     | 7 & 8        |

We will have about 25 minutes for the activity before we come back together as a group.  
To 'meet' with your partner, We need to....

1. **Not** end the whole group call
2. Find your 'Group A/B/C/D' on the left hand side of your Teams
3. Click on your Group A/B/C/D
4. Click 'Meet now' (camera symbol in the top right-hand corner of the page)

Hopefully you can now see your partner!

5. Go back to your Group A/B/C/D page
6. Click Files → Define\_ppt notes\_Group A/B/C/D (word document) to open the activity page.
7. Check that you can both type and see each other's notes simultaneously.
8. Begin your mini interviews, around 10 minutes each. You do not need to record your discussions as a video/audio.
9. Be ready to share some key points from your mini interviews with the group (**4-6 mins for each pair**)

**Supporting notes shared with participants in their group Microsoft Teams file**

**(1) Define**  
 “What is the focus of inquiry?”  
 Clarifying

| Phase             | Activity   | Outcome                                      |
|-------------------|--|--|
| <b>(1) Define</b> | Topic(s) for inquiry defined through mini interviews.<br>Interview schedule outlined as a group. | Topic(s) identified through mini interviews. |

**Key information:**

- The **first step in the AI process is selecting the affirmative choice.** This is the selection of a topic(s) that will become the focus of the inquiry.
- Selecting the affirmative topic choice begins with the constructive discovery and narration of the organisations “life giving” story. **The topic(s), in the initial stages, are bold hunches about what gives life to the organisation.** Most importantly, the topics represent what people really want to discover or learn more about. The topics will likely evoke conversations about the desired future.
- **Mini interviews** are used to guide selection of topic(s). **The goal is to get diverse opinions and to create dialogue.** The mini interview is an opportunity to create a genuine 1:1 relationship with a partner. A simple rule is to have someone interview someone else that he or she has not spoken to before or barely knows.

**Two key aims within the mini interviews:**

1. Seeking to **discover what the EPS has done well throughout the COVID-19 pandemic** and is doing well in the present.
2. **Identify possibilities and opportunities** for more vital, successful and effective forms of EP practice during the COVID-19 pandemic

## Mini interviews:

### General tips

- Be like an ‘interested friend’ hanging onto every detail.
- Capture key words and phrases (choose ‘7’ or ‘8’ for each person)
- Ask questions as they are written...you do not need to use all of the prompts.
- Let the interviewee tell his or her story. Try to refrain from giving yours. You will be next.
- Take notes to capture key points to feed back to the group.
- Listen attentively. Be curious about the experience, the feelings, and the thoughts. Allow for silence. It is OK if you partner does not want to or cannot answer a question.
- Try to relax and have fun!
  
- **\*COVID-19 pandemic here is defined as the time between March 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 and the present day.**

| Question  | 1 | 2 |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>Tell me about a peak experience (a real high point) you have had in your work during the COVID-19 pandemic*....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why was that experience important to you?</li> <li>○ What made it remarkable?</li> <li>○ What was your contribution?</li> <li>○ What did you value most about the experience?</li> </ul> |   |   |




|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ What do you think was really making it work?</li><li>○ What helped you? What contributed to your success?</li><li>○ How has it changed you?</li></ul>  |  |  |
| <p><b>Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, what factors do you feel have <i>given life</i> to the EPS?</b></p> <p>When has the EPS felt most</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ alive,</li><li>○ successful, and,</li><li>○ effective</li></ul> <p>throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> |  |  |

**Whole group feedback notes captured**



| Phase                              | Synthesis   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Our peak experiences</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Virtual training</b> – resilience, getting the psychology out there; supporting staff wellbeing. Opportunity to do something a little different (technology). Impact on staff wellbeing. Collaboration with other EPS.</li> <li>2. <b>Coaching role with a new SENDCo</b> – to recognise their strengths. Time to build a relationship with the school &amp; SENDCo. Applied a coaching framework. Collaborative, joint problem solving. Positive feedback (empowered). Active listening, solution focused questioning. Enjoyment in using coaching psychology. Good experience in building relationships with SENDCo and how to support.</li> <li>3. <b>Pre-recorded webinar for parents &amp; school staff</b>. Ethical – free to access. Useful application of psychology. Public speaking experience. Collaborative working with other EPs – gaining new skills. Creative ways of working outside of the traded model. Enhanced creativity and confidence in using technology. Support from senior management for virtual service delivery.</li> <li>4. Shadowing colleague who delivered <b>supervision to safeguarding lead group</b>. Broad range of topics covered e.g. MH, resilience, transition on return to school, staff training (SEMH focus). Support network. <b>Value in seeing the role of the EP differently</b>. Use of positive psychology. Positive feedback from staff; opened to new ideas of working. Able to have a big impact despite small amount of time.</li> <li>5. <b>Formulation-based casework</b>. Limited EP involvement (no consultation / observation). Involvement therefore focused on synthesising information from other reports to build a picture of the YP and their current needs. Report centred around a psychological formulation; a valuable piece of work to engage with literature and theory (attachment/trauma). Time spent</li> </ol> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>reading, formulating, reflecting was valued (e.g. IFF created). Strategic and systemic work.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. <b>Parent helpline.</b> (there have been many peak experiences!) Ethical way of working – free access to all, no limits. Space and time to listen to parents and apply psychology e.g. emotion coaching (sharing of practice). A new way of working, but it felt a success! Time to reflect. Immediate uptake from parents &amp; positive feedback. EPS flexibility in responding – acknowledging needs of community and responding with bigger offer. Continue use of telephone line. <b>Community psychology as an approach to work.</b></li> <li>7. (there have been several!) Team asked to create <b>guidance documents for COVID</b> (LA). Demonstrated strengths of the team; high motivation and productive “on fire!”. Showed off our talents; working under pressure and achieving together. Collaborative. Facilitation from line managers. <b>Working together as a team = a standout experience.</b> Not just the outcome, the process (responding to a particular need very quickly).</li> <li>8. <b>Developing wellbeing webinars.</b> Lots of aspects – exciting, brainstorming initial ideas then it becoming a part of our work. Sense of actualisation and growing in competence and confidence in own skills. So many people valued this piece of work; lots of positive feedback and interest. There was a real need for this work. The work felt meaningful and with purpose. A rollercoaster; get to the top...feeling apprehension...but then everything took off!</li> </ol> |
|  <p><b>Life giving factors</b></p> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Open mindedness;</b> able to try a new way of working; feedback from service users (parents, staff, LA) = boost to motivation! Chance to hear about the work of others.</li> <li>2. <b>Space to be creative.</b> Opportunity to come up with ideas and try new things. Bringing out the strengths of others. Negotiate role more = variety in ways of working. <b>Collaborative working.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Support from colleagues and collaborative working.</b> Checking in with one another – wellbeing. Service briefings and celebrations of webinar training, knowing what other EPs are working on.</li> </ol>   |

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
|                           | <p>Developing more webinars with autonomy; this being acknowledged across the LA.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. <b>Engaging and challenging work.</b> Lots of innovation. Regular briefings = able to recognise other’s work. EPs approachable. <b>Team spirit and positivity.</b></li> <li>5. <b>Supervision and support from peers,</b> line manager, supervisor. Responding to the current challenges and new ways of working. EPS briefings have felt valuable and offered an understanding.</li> <li>6. <b>Team spirit and collaborative working</b> – collective, initial motivation to <b>share psychology</b> (e.g. guidance docs, webinars, phone line). Lifting of constraints of EP time management system – able to dedicate working time to projects of interest = development of skills and sharing of skills with each other. (PPS – valuable CPD). Technology at the right time (surface pro, MS).</li> <li>7. When the <b>work reflects our core beliefs;</b> our skills are being used to support our community. And in a way that is accessible to others; our role is better understood as a result. The EPS being recognised and growing in response to COVID because others are now aware of what we can do. <b>Collaborative working.</b></li> <li>8. <b>Peer support and collaboration.</b> First time since qualifying we are feeling that we can respond to what is needed; we can survey the landscape, see what needs doing and then put this into practice. And we’ve had positive feedback from working in this way; result is a better core model.</li> </ol> |
| <p><b>Key themes?</b></p> | <p><u><b>Collaborative working</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Support within the EPS</li> <li>○ Peer support</li> <li>○ Team spirit, enthusiasm and positivity</li> <li>○ Technological support allowing for easier collaboration</li> </ul>   |



|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p><b>Ethics – our guiding principles and values</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creativity in sharing psychology across different mediums and with different colleagues.</li> <li>○ Work reflective of, and grounded in, our principles, beliefs and values as practitioners.</li> <li>○ BPS (2018) Code of Ethics and Conduct. Four primary ethical principles:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- respect</li> <li>- competence</li> <li>- responsibility</li> <li>- integrity</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><a href="https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20%28Updated%20July%202018%29.pdf">https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/BPS%20Code%20of%20Ethics%20and%20Conduct%20%28Updated%20July%202018%29.pdf</a></p> <p><b>Community Psychology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Creativity in service delivery</li> <li>○ Attuning to what is important for our community right now and responding to the identified needs</li> <li>○ Community level support</li> <li>○ Time and freedom to respond to community-level needs.</li> <li>○ Working collaboratively to delivery a more community-focused psychological service across the LA.</li> <li>○ Positive feedback from LA and service users, informing our core model and service delivery.</li> </ul> |
| <p><b>Topics for inquiry</b><br/>Based on our peak experiences and possible</p> | <p><b>Collaborative working</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Driven by ethics, values, and principles</li> <li>➤ Within a framework of Community Psychology (ethics within the community)</li> </ul>   |



opportunities...  
 what do we  
 want to find out  
 more about?

**A topic can be anything that the group considers strategically or humanly important**


**Topics chosen should be:**

- **Affirmative** or stated in the positive
- **Desirable.** They identify the objectives people want
- The group is **genuinely curious** about them and wants to learn more
- The topics **move in the direction the group wants to**

**Our purpose:**

Our group will use Appreciative Inquiry to reflect on our collaborative, community-based practice under COVID-19 restrictions. This reflection will inform our understanding of peak experiences and shape our dream service delivery when working under future COVID-19 restrictions.

**Appendix 7** Interview schedule for appreciative Discovery interviews, created with participants and reference to Cooperrider et al. (2005) guidance for appreciative Discover interviews

| Questions  | Notes |   |
|--|-------|---|
|  | 1     | 2 |
|  <p><b>Topic: Collaborative working (7 minutes)</b></p>   |       |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Describe a time when your practice / work felt most collaborative, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell me a story that stands out for you which best embodies this ideal.</li> <li>○ Add detail to your story. What were you doing? How were you feeling? Why did you feel that way?</li> <li>○ What was most noteworthy?</li> <li>○ What was the EPS doing that helped you do this / have this experience?</li> <li>○ How has this experience changed you? Or your practice?</li> </ul> |       |   |



**Topic: Driven by my ethics, values and principles to meet the needs of our community (5 minutes)**

- What are one or two of the EPS’s most effective tools / techniques for enhancing community-based practice?
- In your own experience, how has the EPS best strengthened community resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, so far?
- Without being modest...what do you value most about yourself as an T/EP?
- What is it about the EPS that you value the most?
- How has the EPS kept these values alive during the COVID-19 pandemic?




**Topic: Envisioning the future (2 minutes)**

- Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our community.



|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; How are you working differently?</li><li>&gt; How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?</li><br/><li>○ If you had three wishes to adapt the EPS practice to include more collaborative working, what would they be?</li></ul> |  |  |
|---|--|--|

**Appendix 8** Example Discover interview summary sheets completed by participants 1 and 2.


| Questions  | Notes   |   |
|--|---|---|
|  | 1   | 2   |
|  <p><b>Topic: Collaborative working (7 minutes)</b></p>   |   |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Describe a time when your practice / work felt most collaborative, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell me a story that stands out for you which best embodies this ideal.</li> <li>○ Add detail to your story. What were you doing? How were you feeling? Why did you feel that way?</li> <li>○ What was most noteworthy?</li> <li>○ What was the EPS doing that helped you do this / have this experience?</li> <li>○ How has this experience changed you? Or your practice?</li> </ul> | <p>20<sup>th</sup> March (start of pandemic) brief from seniors to pull information together about well-being to be shared with schools and parents/carers.</p> <p>4-5 working together. Produced 2 documents – productive shared with LA. Small teams – working quickly, planning. Used Teams (first try using platform/technology). Did alright job – new way of working – fast response. Created useful documents.</p> <p>Proud – strong sense of direction (previously unclear) - really defined task. Purposeful. Re-energised us.</p> <p>Pulling information together for community – helpful. Tangible shared and out there. Be of use to people of that</p> | <p>ACT webinars in the North Team – task group to support wellbeing as response to pandemic. 8 colleagues. Nice to have chance to come together and all put heads together and support the wider community- felt different. Something that could be embraced by everyone – exciting.</p> <p>Really nice as TEP to be in the thick of it alongside colleagues with great experience and knowledge</p> <p>Learned more about ACT and how it can be used in the community – seeing it on the ground. Really nice to see how theoretical knowledge can be applied. Seeing how creative people can be</p> <p>Feeling really positive, important, felt worthwhile compared to muddling through remote assessment.</p> |

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  | <p>time, keeping contact with community whilst distance working.</p> <p>Worked well together as a team – nice to work with colleagues, share ideas, bounced off each other well. Felt less overwhelming = shared responsibility and ownership. Felt supportive in unknown situation.</p> <p>Effective team work. Offering support. Thinking about what service could offer. Gave hope could offer something during Covid-19. Producing helpful document.</p> <p>EPS – Principal gave time – put everything else on hold. Friday schools were shutting – made most of the day. Direction and permission to use time in that way. Having lovely colleagues who are creative, open and sharing.</p> <p>Shown what can be achieved as a team – often working individually – sometimes deliver pre-packaged training- chance to be creative in a novel situation. Strong when we come together.</p> | <p>Enjoyed to not be constrained – SLT let us run with it / not led by schools. Felt very creative. Learning new skills together was enjoyable.</p> <p>Noteworthy – merging teams e.g. with Centre team and sharing/celebrating what was doing</p> <p>EPS – flexibility, actively encouraged to be creative, supported with being given time and the technology to enable it. The EPS kept us all connected. It came from the ground up and from the literature</p> <p>More confident/comfortable now during collaborative work e.g. sharing views. Good opportunity to work in a small group. Really enjoyed the fact we can do things, away from just child led – more systemic work and supporting wellbeing. Would like to do more of this.</p> |
|--|--|---|



**Topic: Driven by my ethics, values and principles to meet the needs of our community (5 minutes)**

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are one or two of the EPS's most effective tools / techniques for enhancing community-based practice?</li> <li>○ In your own experience, how has the EPS best strengthened community resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, so far?</li> <li>○ Without being modest...what do you value most about yourself as an T/EP?</li> <li>○ What is it about the EPS that you value the most?</li> <li>○ How has the EPS kept these values alive during the COVID-19 pandemic?</li> </ul> | <p>Allowing a level of autonomy. Give opportunity to take things in direction – trust between SLT and what bring as EP. Open and encouraging of new initiatives.</p> <p>Afforded flexibility - 'go for it'. Communicating and celebrating when community-based practice has happened e.g. in briefings. Sharing and others thinking I could try this.</p> <p>Stand out – work with parents and telephone helpline. Evaluation seems overwhelmingly valued by parents who accessed it. Parents perhaps not aware of things previously.</p> <p>Value most EP – I genuinely care about outcomes for children and families. Trying to make sure people get the support they need. Authentic.</p> | <p>Very flexible service, no expectation you will do things in a prescriptive way. SLT give constructive feedback but let you scope way you like. Important when considering how we move into the community and exploring new ways of working. Way the EPS is promoting itself e.g. Twitter/website and trying to get out there in the community and helping others understand what we do / increase our visibility.</p> <p>Jumped in and took risk (e.g. parent line) and everyone went for it.</p> <p>Offering the phonenumber to parents so not a barrier to accessing. Able to help support in a different way with parents, important in terms of feeling accessible to parents. Phonenumber is good/ fair/ least restrictive way of contacting (e.g. not every parent has internet)</p> <p>TEP – try to be inclusive and try to gather views of everyone involved – one main</p> |
|---|--|--|

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <p>Value most EPS – colleagues. Friendly and approachable – helpful and supportive everyone is.</p>  | <p>reason really like the idea of parent helpline and promoting the voice of child /young person – or voices of those that aren't heard in complex situation</p> <p>EPS – everyone is super super supportive, approaching, we're all learning – we all learn from each other. This is what I miss about not being in the office. You can asking anything, someone is always there. Service values what you can bring, service brings out the best in you and are open to ideas/suggestions moving forward, perhaps more so since the pandemic. Value that the service is responsive to situations and needs of the community</p> |
|  <p><b>Topic: Envisioning the future (2 minutes)</b></p>  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our community.</li> <li>&gt; How are you working</li> </ul> | <p>Working differently – only point of access not only schools. Not the only drivers of how we work. More community led; working more at multi-agency level. More time to do joint working with other services/parents/community projects. Less feel of being on treadmill for assess, plan, do,</p> | <p>I would hope that I would be working with different stakeholders e.g. parents, training in the community, working with other services and joint working – be showing our unique contribution</p> <p>Early intervention work – be nice to do more of this and empowering people in the</p>   |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>differently?<br/>                 &gt; How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ If you had three wishes to adapt the EPS practice to include more collaborative working, what would they be?</li> </ul> | <p>review. Not just SEN but broader area of needs. Much earlier intervention.</p> <p>Feel accessible, fair access. Know what we do and how we can support. People now know what we do and what we offer. Engaging with us more.</p> <p>3 wishes: reflection = on fire if we could tag team complex cases – real value. More flexibility around time and in the EP time management system. More opportunities to do shared projects. New initiatives. Really having to advocate in challenging meetings – having a peer – value. Services do drop in consultations 2 EPs there between both could manage a lot more. Keeping alive collaboratives = phone-line.</p> | <p>community e.g. parents about how they can support their child; be good to work on a wider levels</p> <p>3 wishes: more time to work as a team e.g. time on the EP time management system to continue with project work. Working with different stakeholders and more multidisciplinary projects/working alongside giving a community approach to problems. Greater flexibility to check in for follow-up/review not just a one stop point</p> |
|---|--|--|

## Paired Appreciative Interview: The interview analysis

| Task  | Ask yourselves...   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <b>Identify strengths and enabling conditions</b> for each of your stories.</p>   | <p>What strengths, assets or resources made the achievements / best moments / experiences possible?</p>                                       |
| <p>2. Deepen the analysis by asking probing questions to reveal <b>underlying values, strengths, factors and elements that led to the success</b>. Typically, stories, if probed, reveal individual and group resources, values, strengths and aspirations.</p> | <p>What values do the stories reflect?</p> <p>What external conditions existed that contributed to the peak experiences within the story?</p> |
| <p>3. Explore what is behind individual <b>wishes</b>.</p>  | <p>What will change if the wish comes true?</p> <p>What is behind the wish?</p>   |
| <p><b>4. Note the strengths, values, wishes and any compelling quotes (the “quotable” quotes!) from both of your interviews together, in the boxes below. Make sure they each link back to your stories.</b></p>  |   |

★ Our Positive Core ★



*Our strengths*

Supportive colleagues  
Knowledge base and experience of others  
Flexibility and sense of autonomy afforded  
Space to be creative  
Access to practical resources such as technology and time  
Effective communication EP-EP and SLT-EP



*Our values*

Inclusion  
Making a difference  
Having an impact  
Teamwork  
Responsiveness



*Our wishes*

Working more ethically in terms of access – for all of our stakeholders

More early intervention work before things reach crisis

We would be more visible, and others would understand our role/what we can offer



*Compelling quotes*

***“How can we help?”***



## **Appendix 9** Mapping the positive core: Research question two audit trail

**Research question two: What are the perceived facilitating factors supporting successful EP and TEP practice under COVID-19 restrictions introduced in March 2020?**

**Data derived from focus group 2 (Discovery)**

**Phase one: initial feedback shared by participants following Discovery paired interviews and familiarisation with their own data set.**

### **Strengths**

1. Flexibility
2. Advocacy
3. Care
4. Collaboration across the service
5. Creativity
6. Access to technology
7. Support from line managers
8. Project work and other creative initiatives
9. Working outside of the traded model
10. Researchers
11. Interpersonal skills
12. Supportive
13. Consultation

### **Values**

14. Responding to the community
15. Collaboration
16. Sharing psychology
17. Always learning
18. Equitable access
19. Listening and advocating
20. Community-based practice

**Phase two: codes generated through whole group reviewing of stories and themes presented by pairs, seeking patterns and familiarity with data.**

**Group strengths evidenced in the peak experience stories shared**

1. Supporting colleagues
2. Friendly and approachable
3. Helpful and supportive
4. Advocating for CYP
5. Supportive colleagues

6. Approachable managers
7. We're all learning
8. Feel valued by the service
9. Miss the office for informal peer supervision
10. Responsive service to needs of the community
11. Access to practical resources – technology
12. Effective communication within the service
13. Flexibility
14. Autonomy
15. Sharing knowledge
16. Sensitively challenging views to strengthen community resources, not colluding
17. Sharing psychology
18. Openness between EPs to pool knowledge and resources
19. Encouraged to diversify
20. Project work
21. More time for systemic work
22. Less individual casework
23. Regular contact with whole service in briefings
24. Willingness to participate
25. Applying psychology to ourselves
26. Focus on wellbeing
27. Flourishing
28. Variety in work – opportunities for specialisms
29. Service level agreements
30. Fantastic business support team
31. Opportunities to work together
32. Encouraged collaboration
33. Trust
34. Collective standards for quality of work
35. Flexibility in working
36. Task group working
37. Strong relationships with schools
38. Working outside of the traded model
39. Creating opportunities for collaboration
40. Care about outcomes for CYP and families
41. Authentic
42. Intelligent
43. Good researcher
44. Evidence-based practice
45. People skills
46. Organisational agility
47. Innovation
48. Energy and enthusiasm
49. Good interpersonal skills
50. Synthesis skills

51. Open mindedness
52. Pragmatic
53. Efficient
54. Strong ethical drive
55. Balancing evidence-based practice with practice-based evidence
56. Problem solver
57. Critical thinker
58. Supportive
59. Wanting to make a difference
60. Consultation skills
61. Active listening
62. Empathy
63. Reflective
64. Solution focused

### **Group values**

1. Equitable access to our service
2. Inclusion and being inclusive in my practice
3. Making a difference
4. Teamwork
5. Having an impact
6. Responsiveness
7. Continuous development
8. Learning
9. Sharing knowledge
10. Disseminating psychology to help others
11. Growth mindset
12. Importance of regular communication
13. Effective team worker
14. Accessible information that is fit for purpose
15. Spending time being creative
16. Keeping needs of individuals at heart
17. Advocacy
18. Wanting to be purposeful
19. Desire to care for others
20. Giving psychology away
21. Altruism
22. Wanting to bring clarity
23. Problem solving
24. Supporting the community
25. Access for all
26. Non-judgmental approach
27. Listening

### **Compelling quotes from peak experience stories**

1. "how can we help?"
2. "gave me a positive focus at the start of the pandemic"
3. "we see a need that we need to reach out to the community"
4. "keeping young people's interest at heart"
5. "teamwork and team spirit, energy and enthusiasm"
6. "we were able to work together intuitively"
7. "wanting to make a difference, wanting to help"
8. "changing the way in which EPs are viewed within the community...not gate keepers"

**Phase three: whole group becoming familiar with peak experiences and analysis for strengths and values shared. The group is now seeking themes together which capture strengths values and compelling quotes from Discovery interviews.**

**Group personal strengths evidence in peak experience stories shared:**

1. Autonomy
2. Creativity
3. Trust
4. Collective standards – quality of work
5. In tune with colleagues
6. Facilitators
7. Problem solvers
8. Critical thinkers
9. Systemic perspectives
10. Supportive colleagues
11. Knowledge
12. Flexibility
13. Practical resources
14. Effective communication in the service
15. Listening
16. Responding to our community needs
17. Teachers
18. Consultation
19. Empathy
20. Reflection
21. Solution-focused
22. Enthusiasm
23. Sharing knowledge
24. Team players
25. Organisational agility
26. Managerial support

**EP Service strengths evidenced in the peak experience stories shared**

1. Effective teamwork

2. Flexibility
3. Time
4. Technology
5. Peer support
6. SLT support
7. Autonomy
8. Trusted to find direction for work
9. Encouraged me to be creative
10. No constraints
11. Collaborating across teams
12. Connection
13. Communication
14. Supportive colleagues
15. Learning from one another
16. Open to ideas
17. Responsive to needs of community
18. Facilitated free working outside of traded
19. Accessible
20. Energetic
21. Good relationships with schools
22. Adapting psychology to different circumstances
23. Team cohesion

#### **Group values evidence in the peak experience stories shared**

1. Wanting to be purposeful
2. Care for others
3. Sharing psychology
4. Altruism
5. Bringing clarity
6. Problem solving
7. Inclusion
8. Impact
9. Responsiveness
10. Collaboration
11. Community psychology
12. Equity
13. Non-judgmental
14. Continuous development
15. Growth mindset
16. Advocating
17. Child and family led

**Phase four: review, refine and describe themes as a group to map the positive core and identify facilitating factors which are perceived to have enabled the peak experiences.**

**Group strengths**

Collaboration  
Community focused  
Knowledge base  
Creativity

**EP Service strengths**

Responsive  
Flexibility and autonomy – working outside of the traded model  
Technology  
Peer and SLT support

**Group values****Teaching and learning**

Sharing psychology  
Accessibility  
Growth mindset

**Community**

Responding to community needs  
Inclusion  
Equity  
Altruism

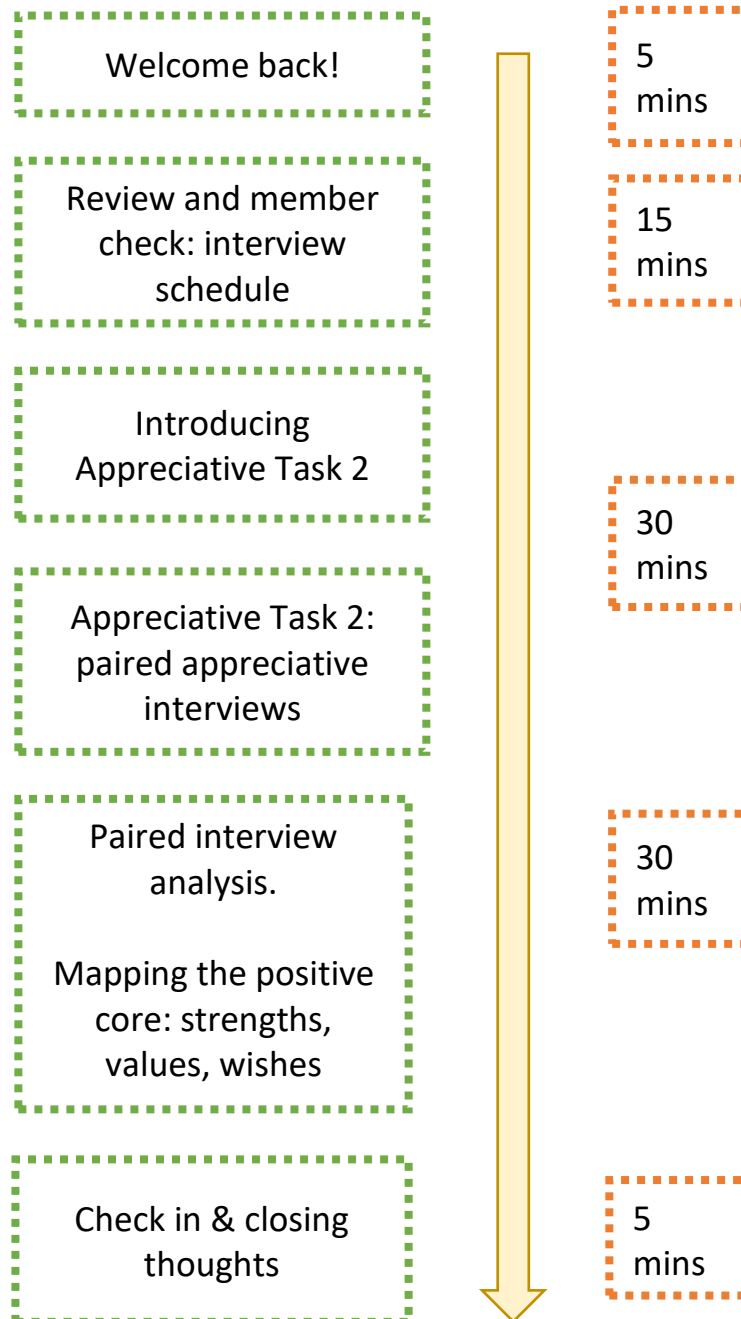
**Purpose**

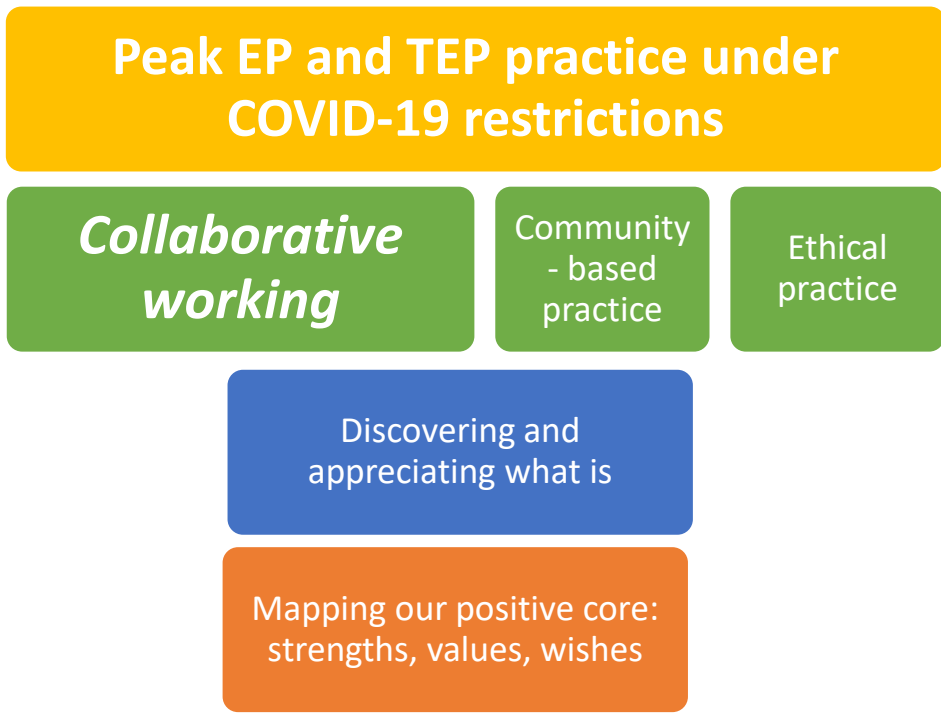
To help  
Unconditional positive regard  
Empathy  
Impact  
Efficient  
Advocacy

**Appendix 10** Supporting documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Discover phase.

**Discover: appreciating what is**

**04/08/2020**









### Key information:

- The task in the Discovery phase is to **uncover, learn about and appreciate the best of what is**. Recognising that an organisation is not always at its best, AI seeks to discover rich accounts of when it is at its best and use those accounts as a foundation for the future.
- **Paired interviews are conducted, stories shared within and key themes analysed**. This data helps us to identify, illuminate and understand the distinctive strengths that lend the organisation life and vitality when it is functioning at its best.
- **Data collection and analysis represent the core of the inquiry process in this phase**. These processes are mutual learning processes for both interviewer and interviewee; they learn as they both explore the interviewee's values, peak experiences and aspirations for the organisation's future.

### Key aims

1. **Discover the best of 'what is'** in relation to collaborative working and community psychology, for you and your practice.
2. Identify key themes around your **strengths, values and wishes for the organisation** as a group. These will be linked to the stories you share in the interviews.

## **Paired Appreciative Interview: The interview schedule**

### **Thank you for participating in this interview!**

You will be working in pairs to interview one another, collect a story of a peak experience and analyse the information shared to identify your strengths, values and wishes for the EPS moving forwards.


Often in interviews we ask questions about things that are not working well so that we can fix them. In this interview today, we are going to explore an experience of success so that we can find ways to create more of these types of experiences within your practice and EPS. When the interviews are complete, everyone's input will be synthesised to identify qualities of collaborative working, driven by our ethics and values, within a framework of community psychology, that make working in our EPS unique. With those qualities as a foundation, we will envision a future and create possibility statements to build on our strengths.


During the interview, we will be exploring your experiences in four key areas:


1. Collaborative working
2. Community-based practice
3. Ethical practice and guiding values
4. Envisioning the future.

**General tips:**

- Be like an ‘interested friend’ hanging onto every detail.
  - Capture key words and phrases (choose ‘1’ or ‘2’ for each person)
  - Ask questions as they are written...you do not need to use all of the prompts.
  - Let the interviewee tell his or her story. Try to refrain from giving yours. You will be next.
  - Take notes to capture key points to feed back to the group.
  - Listen attentively. Be curious about the experience, the feelings and the thoughts. Allow for silence. It is OK if your partner does not want to or cannot answer a question.
  - Try to relax and have fun!
- **\*COVID-19 pandemic here is defined as the time between March 17<sup>th</sup> 2020 and the present day.**

| Questions   | Notes |   |
|---|-------|---|
|   | 1     | 2 |
|  <p><b>Topic: Collaborative working (15 minutes)</b></p>  |       |   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Describe a time when your practice / work felt most collaborative, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Tell me a story that stands out for you which best</li> </ul> |       |   |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>embodies this ideal.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Add detail to your story. What were you doing? How were you feeling? Why did you feel that way?</li> <li>○ What was most noteworthy?</li> <li>○ What was the EPS doing that helped you do this / have this experience?</li> <li>○ How has this experience changed you? Or your practice?</li> </ul> |  |  |
| <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;">  <p><b>Topic: Driven by my ethics, values and principles to meet the needs of our community (5 minutes)</b></p> </div>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are one or two of the EPS's most effective tools / techniques for enhancing community-based practice?</li> </ul>   |  |  |

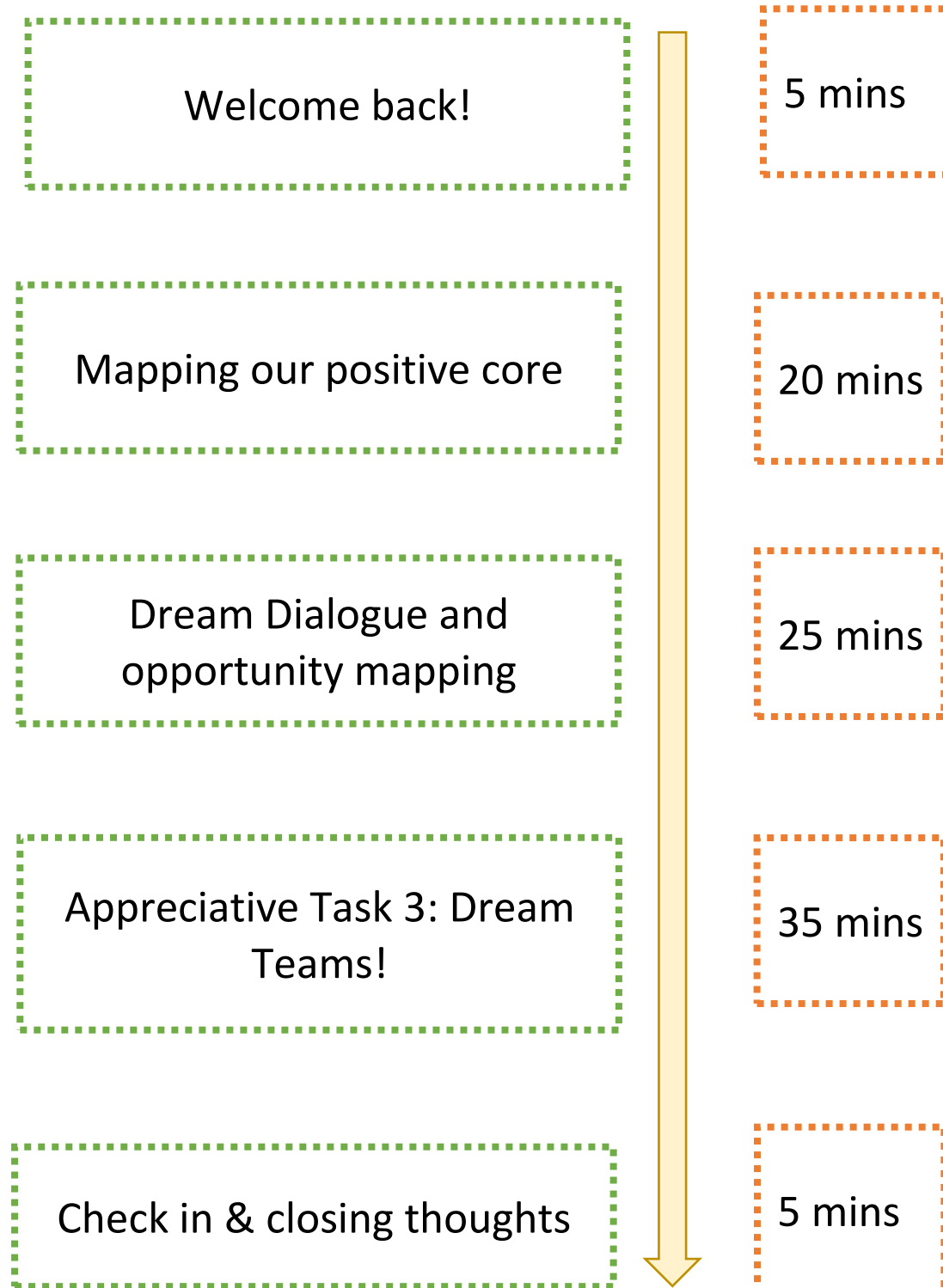
|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ In your own experience, how has the EPS best strengthened community resources during the COVID-19 pandemic, so far?</li> <li>○ Without being modest...what do you value most about yourself as an T/EP?</li> <li>○ What is it about the EPS that you value the most?</li> <li>○ How has the EPS kept these values alive during the COVID-19 pandemic?</li> </ul> |  |  |
|  <p><b>Topic: Envisioning the future (2 minutes)</b></p>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our</li> </ul>   |  |  |

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <p>community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; How are you working differently?</li><li>&gt; How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?</li></ul><br><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ If you had three wishes to adapt the EPS practice to include more collaborative working, what would they be?</li></ul> |  |  |
|---|--|--|

**Appendix 11** All documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Dream phase.

**Dream: Envisioning the future**

**6/08/20**



### (3) Dream

“What might  
be?”

Envisioning

#### Key information:

- The objective of the previous interviews was to understand *when* and *why* the EPS has operated at its best throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The interview processes seek to identify the *positive core* that contributed to this peak operation. **The goal now is to identify themes within this data to discover how to do more of what worked well. The meaning of this data forms the foundation of ‘Dream Dialogues’ that inspires the dreams based on our concrete experiences.**
- **Amplify our positive core** by imagining possibilities for the future that have been generated through the Discover interviews. Talk about and **dream about not what is, but what might be for a better EPS**, wonder about the EPS’s greatest potential.
- **Challenge the status quo of the organisation**, creating synergy and excitement. Acknowledge the possibility of greatness to channel focus and use the positive core...

#### Key aims

- **Map our positive core**
- **Create a Dream Dialogue** to identify opportunities within our wishes.
- Represent our wishes and opportunities in creative ways with a **Dream Team**.





The focal question for this phase is taken from our Discovery interviews. We are going to share our responses to generate a rich, creative ‘Dream Dialogue’ (a verbal picture, or vision, of the desired future).

*“Imagine that it is now 2025. We have been able to preserve our values and core strengths as an EPS and we have innovatively transformed our service delivery to best meet the changing needs of our community.  
> How are you working differently?  
> How would you describe the relationship between the EPS and the community?”*



- **Choose a wish that most aligns with your interests.** This will form our Dream Teams who will be working together to represent their 'dreaming' about the opportunity of interest to them.
- Get creative in your Teams! **Create a collective picture of the desired future for your wish.** Capture what it is that you would see; what would be different; how would you describe the EPS; what are the headlines? What is your vision for the opportunity?
- Some choose to represent their 'dreaming' in pictures, as a newspaper article, a poster, a song, a skit or a poem...there are no rights, wrongs or limits (except that it needs to be presented over Microsoft teams!)
- Your creation will give us an 'Appreciative Report' from our dream session. This will be **presented to the wider group at the beginning of our next session together.**
- *This is a really **energising**, uplifting part of the AI cycle that is often reflected upon as the most enjoyable by participants!*

**DREAM**

**Dream  
dialogues**

What might be?

### **Dream envisioning checklist...**

- **Think big** about your dream and imagine bold possibilities.
- Where do you want to go with this dream?
- **What is your headline?**
- What are the **priority elements** of your dream?
- Who, and how, will you **share your dream** with the wider group? (5 minutes maximum!)

Templates...

**DREAM TEAM (NUMBER) PROFILE**

**OUR VISION**  
 Your vision statement for the EPS working:  
 collaboratively,  
 within the community, and  
 driven by our ethics,  
 in 5 years time...

**WHAT DOES THE VISION LOOK LIKE?**  
 Priority elements  
 What would we see?

**CORE STRENGTHS AND VALUES**  
 How does your vision link to our positive core?

**CONTACT**  
 PHONE:  
 WEBSITE:  
 Website goes here  
 EMAIL:

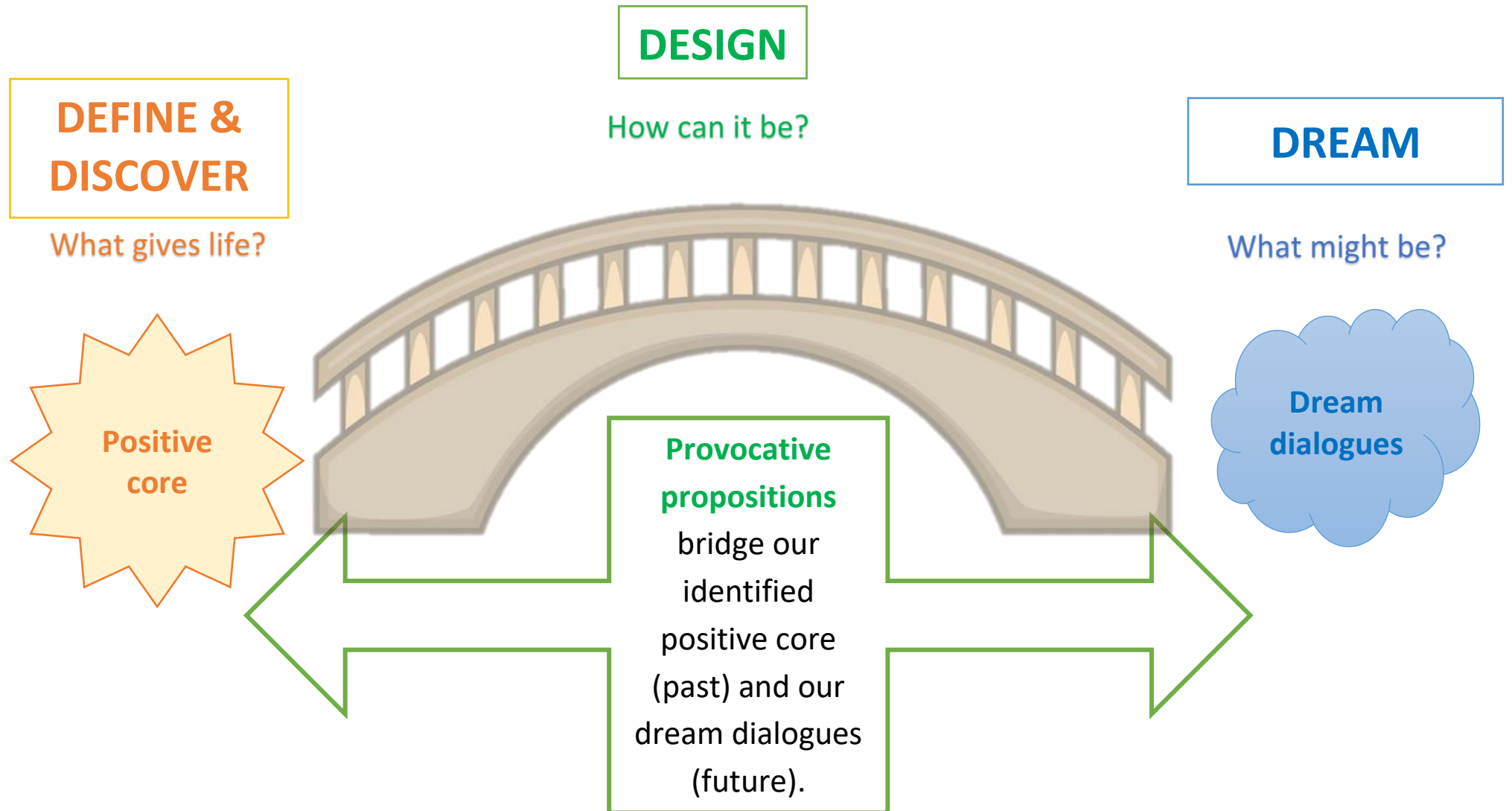
1  
 Dream Team (number)

2  
 The opportunity

3  
 Our vision statement / Headline

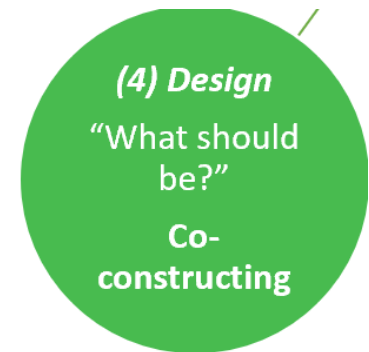


**Appendix 12** All documents and resources created to facilitate activities in the Design phase.



## DESIGN

### How can it be?



#### ***Our vision statement:***

Taken from your dream – a summative sentence for you to hold in mind during this activity

#### ***Key design elements to consider:***

Building the social architecture for your dream; consider elements such as leadership/management structures, systems, key relationships

#### ***Linking our dream design to past successes:***

How does your dream represent the best of the past? (the positive core). Which elements of the positive core are you bringing forward in the design of your dream, for example, which strengths and values are present?

#### **Provocative Propositions bridging past successes with dream possibilities**

- You can write as many as you feel your dream needs! Use the checklist.
- Think about how to feed back to the wider group – are your links to the positive core, the best of the past, and your dream clear?

### Provocative Propositions checklist...

- ✓ **Provocative** - does it stretch, challenge, or interrupt the status quo?
- ✓ **Desired** – do you want it as a preferred future?
- ✓ **Affirmative** - is it positively framed, about what you want rather than what you don't want?
- ✓ **Stated in the present tense** – as if the statement is already true and happening?
- ✓ **Grounded in real-life examples** of the best of your current practice (peak experiences) and our positive core?



**Appendix 13** Comparison of Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros (2008) requirements for Appreciative Inquiry applied to the EPS AI steering group project.

| Phase  | Defining stages (Cooperrider, Whitney and Stavros, 2008)        | How this phase was operationalised in the current research  |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Define:</b> introducing, defining and planning the AI | 1. Gain an overview of the purpose of the AI                    | I met first with the area senior of my team within the EPS. I shared my research proposal and ethical considerations for the project. I proposed two options: a pre-selected topic, informed by the senior leadership team in the EPS to enable a focus to align to EPS priorities, or a participant-led inquiry topic whereby EP participants are facilitated to generate their own topic for inquiry through the AI 'define' process. We decided on the latter to give more participatory emphasis on the research. |
|  | 2. Define whom or what in the organisation to be change         | The AI cycle was participant led from the beginning stages.   |
|  | 3. Negotiate who will lead the process and who must be involved | The project was facilitated and managed by me. I did not participate in interviews, storytelling, topic selection, theme generation, mapping of the positive core, envisioning or designing beyond my role as facilitator. This approach was agreed with the senior leadership team, with participatory AI held in mind as the research design framework.   |

| Phase | Defining stages<br>(Cooperrider, Whitney<br>and Stavros, 2008)  | How this phase was operationalised in the current research  |
|-------|---|---|
|       | 4. Identify the participants / steering group responsible for giving voice to the organisation.           | I researched and read around the theory of AI, took guidance from the handbook referenced above and created a short webinar for all potential participants based on my knowledge of AI. The webinar aimed to present the theory, principles and process of AI and gauge interest in the participant pool (whole EPS) for a participant-led AI cycle. I then led a remote virtual introductory workshop for all potential participants via Microsoft Teams to enable questions to be asked. Eight potential participants attended this introductory session and all eight completed the informed consent form to participate as a steering group for the AI. Participants were a mixture of TEPs, EPs, newly qualified EPs (NQEP), specialist EPs and senior EPs from across all five area bases in the EPS. |
|       | 5. Introduce AI to the leadership, organisation or community. Kick off the project and maintain momentum. | AI proposed to area senior EP who fed back to the wider SLT team for the EPS. Approval was granted to go ahead with recruitment within the EPS. The information webinar and introductory workshop as previously described were then created / hosted via Microsoft Teams.   |

| Phase | Defining stages<br>(Cooperrider, Whitney<br>and Stavros, 2008)   | How this phase was operationalised in the current research  |
|-------|--|---|
|       | 6. Identify the best form of engagement for the organisation: whole systems inquiry or steering group? | A steering group inquiry approach was used because the project was participant-led and so would represent a topic of mutual interest to the specific group rather than the wider systems and organisation. The participants recruited represented a range of practitioners in experience and specialisms within the EPS. Permission was granted to complete the AI project by SLT and area senior EP on the condition that participants would be donating their time outside of traded service and statutory role demands.  |
|       | 7. Select affirmative topics: home grown or pre-selected?  | Home grown: The AI cycle was participant led from the beginning stages to enable autonomy and vested interest in the project to develop. The Define phase focused on supporting participants to reflect on a time that they had felt most successful under COVID-19 restrictions, to steer the decisions on topic focus to be based on evidence of the group's historical successes. Participants hoped to capture the best of their practice in these extraordinary times to inform more collaborative, community-focused EP practice moving forwards.   |
|       | 8. Design an interview guide: who will create, pilot, refine, finalise and implement the interview?    | The participants designed the interview schedule together following whole-group feedback from mini-interviews in the Define session. Momentum developed as the sharing of positives and successes in EP practice were shared by all. I facilitated this discussion and noted down participant's contributions to capture the language used which then informed the questions created as a group. To create a sense of togetherness and collaboration, I used the screen share function in Microsoft Teams in all sessions to capture participant's feedback, quotes, and reflections for all to see. This also enabled in the moment member checks to ensure accuracy in capturing their discussions. |

| Phase                       | Defining stages<br>(Cooperrider, Whitney<br>and Stavros, 2008)  | How this phase was operationalised in the current research  |
|-----------------------------|---|---|
| Discovery: what gives life? | 9. Develop an interview strategy: who will be interviewed? Who will conduct the interviews? How many will be done? Over what time period? | No formal strategy was developed, but all participants took part in Discovery interviews within a 1-hour time frame. Each participant was randomly paired with a partner from the steering group to interview one another. We then came back together as a group to feedback back key themes and quotes from the interviews.  |
|                             | 10. Interviewer training.   | All participants are either qualified EPs or second and third year TEPs. This means that participants have some research experience and knowledge, primarily in qualitative design and approaches such as interviewing or focus group scheduling. Because of this expertise and experience, I did not deliver specific training on interviewing to participants. We did however look at the interview schedule together as a starter activity and determine the approach to take e.g., active listening, recording of key information on the virtual worksheets provided. |
|                             | 11. Story collection, sharing, meaning making: how will stories of best practices be shared among the team?                               | Through Discovery appreciative paired interviews via Microsoft Teams break out rooms, as previously described. Stories were captured on virtual documents created by participants and put together by me in between sessions so that each session could be directly informed by the previous session. Stories were then shared by participant pairs to the wider group via Microsoft Teams group video call and captured by me via screen share.  |

| Phase                 | Defining stages<br>(Cooperrider, Whitney<br>and Stavros, 2008)   | How this phase was operationalised in the current research   |
|-----------------------|--|--|
|                       | 12. Mapping the positive core: how will this be done? Who will do this? How will it be communicated to the rest of the organisation? | As above.<br><br>Participants themselves analysed their own and their partner's stories shared for themes in strengths and values of their organisation, evidence in their stories. These were then fed back to the wider group following the sharing of peak experience stories, and captured by me via screen share.   |
| Dream: what might be? | 13. Envisioning a better future: how, when, what questions will stimulate bold and playful dreaming? Who will be involved?           | All members of the steering group were involved in envisioning future EP practice, informed by the learning from peak experiences of effective and ethical EP practice under COVID-19 restrictions. The group collated and analysed the outcomes to identify and represent three distinct opportunities for development based on the group's positive core.<br><br>Participants worked together to identify key themes in their peak experiences which were felt to represent the areas of EP practice they would most like to develop moving forwards. Participants then affiliated themselves with a dream and created 'dream teams' to explore the possibilities of the dream to its furthest extent. |

| Phase | Defining stages<br>(Cooperrider, Whitney<br>and Stavros, 2008)  | How this phase was operationalised in the current research   |
|-------|---|--|
|       | 14. Opportunity mapping: how will ideas from the dream phase be collated? Who will determine which will be pursued? | By me via screen share during whole group feedback sessions. As described above, participants then chose a dream to pursue in dream teams. |

|                               |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Design:</b> how can it be? | 15. Design possibility statements: who will write them? How will they be shared and validated by the community? | Dream Teams shared their dream with the wider group and then worked together to develop their Provocative Propositions (possibility statements).   |
| <b>Destiny:</b> what will be? | 16. Create innovation teams   | Dream Teams were founded and became Design Teams. Had the participants involved been in a position of authority to pursue the structural, systemic, and wider practice changes of the EPS, these teams would have become Innovation Teams responsible for the implementation of next steps. This was not possible in the current context, but did enable participants to experience the AI cycle and build momentum for transformative change in their own practice. |

**Appendix 14** Additional potential risks to participants identified and participant debrief sheet.

| Potential risk  | Measures taken to reduce risk   |
|---|---|
| <p>Participants feel the research adds additional stress at a challenging time for practice.</p>  | <p>Virtual, remote delivery split into shorter sessions to enable movement breaks and short, snappy input/participation. Built in time for member checks, reflection and debrief at the end of every focus group session together.</p> <p>Focus topic for inquiry was home grown to be of interest and participant-led.</p> <p>Data collected over the school summer holiday period to ensure reduced school visit or virtual working with schools.</p> <p>The AI focus groups began with the creation of ground rules around the nature of information being shared (e.g., confidentiality and active listening to other's views) and with an acknowledgement of the challenging work context.</p> |
| <p>All research activity was collected virtually/remotely due to the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. This would have likely altered group dynamic, interactions and perhaps impacted participant wellbeing by adding an additional factor to manage.</p> | <p>The current study is not aiming to make changes to EP/TEP practice, but is hoping to harness the five principles of AI. The virtual/remote nature could have impacted group interactions, and the ability to relate to one another and built momentum as we are not in a room together. Creating additional information sheets and resources was helpful in supporting participant's understanding of the AI process.</p> <p>Participants were familiar with one another, and had some experience with virtual working by summer 2020.</p> <p>Additional member checks and opportunities to reflect on participation were built in to create a sense of togetherness.</p>                        |
| <p>Participants may initial find the methodology challenging to engage with as a process as ait may be an unfamiliar method, and it will be delivered virtually.</p>  | <p>Outline of data collection and workshop/webinar timelines was shared with all participants.</p> <p>Efforts were be made to make participation in the focus groups easy and enjoyable for participants, by harnessing methods which allow their views and experiences to be shared in a safe, confidential space.</p> <p>Questions and / or activities will be strengths-based to</p>   |



| Potential risk  | Measures taken to reduce risk   |
|---|---|
|   | <p>reduce the possibility of the study negatively impacting on participants and were focused on gathering their views, rather than outcome based.</p> <p>There as time built in at the end of each focus group for participants to ask any questions / share concerns. Participants were also given a debrief sheet see below o keep at the end of the AI process which provided contact details for myself, should they wish to ask further questions.</p> |
| <p>Focus group discussions may gather information that could identify the EPS or LA, or participants in the study. Information may shared by participants that may present these services and settings in a negative light.</p> | <p>Any identifiable information will be excluded from the feedback to participants and this thesis so that the participants, EPS, and LA remain anonymous.</p>  |

**Appendix 15** Define paired mini-interview data produced by EP1 and EP2

| Question   | 1   | 2   |
|--|---|---|
| <p><b>Tell me about a peak experience (a real high point) you have had in your work during the COVID-19 pandemic*....</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Why was that experience important to you?</li> <li>○ What made it remarkable?</li> <li>○ What was your contribution?</li> </ul> | <p>Virtual training<br/>16-20 times<br/>Psychology out there<br/>Resilience<br/>Supporting staff well-being<br/>Positive feedback – valued<br/>Relevant<br/>New technology and ways of presenting<br/>Helping role, making a little bit of a difference<br/>Purposeful and beneficial<br/>Working with different colleagues (4 different colleagues – joint co-working)</p> | <p>Coaching/new to role<br/>SENCO training<br/>Trying to empower and recognise own strengths of SENCo – very strength-based<br/>Lovely feedback from SENCo<br/>If not for COVID, would not have been able to work in this way (I.e. individual casework previously)<br/>Felt co-constructed / collaborative / joint problem-solving</p> |

|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What did you value most about the experience?</li> <li>○ What do you think was really making it work?</li> <li>○ What helped you? What contributed to your success?</li> <li>○ How has it changed you?</li> </ul>   | <p>Open-minded – not the same as face to face but trying new things</p> <p>Embracing the change</p> <p>Own CPD – given time to identify key themes e.g. loss and trauma. Tangible experience of resilience.</p>   | <p>Created a safe place for the SENCo</p> <p>Valued the time to work in this way and opportunity to relationship build – not feeling rushed</p> <p>Utilised a clear coaching framework to help structure thinking / applying psychology</p> <p>My contribution - Open, active listening, helping to empower, solution focused questioning</p> <p>Learned what might be helpful in terms of narrative with SENCos / relationship building</p> <p>Enjoyed coaching psychology!</p> |
| <p><b>Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, what factors do you feel have <i>given life</i> to the EPS?</b></p> <p>When has the EPS felt most</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ alive,</li> <li>○ successful, and,</li> <li>○ effective</li> </ul> <p>throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?</p> | <p>Feedback from people around us (e.g. parents/staff/LA)</p> <p>Shout-out feel effective and appreciated. Valued Boost to keep going and try new things</p> <p>Keeps motivated</p> <p>Opportunities to hear what everyone has been doing (e.g. service meetings) collaborating across teams. Cross-team working.</p> | <p>Space to be creative, unique ideas to do and try things</p> <p>Bringing out people's strength and sharing what they have done</p> <p>More time to do things</p> <p>More opportunity to negotiate role, not just one-off assessment</p> <p>Being able to demonstrate wide range of functions and skills that EPs can do e.g. training, consultations</p> <p>Enjoyed listening to feedback about what others have done</p> <p>Good opportunity for more working together</p>    |

## **Appendix 16** Define: Research Question One audit trail

**RQ1: What do EPs and TEPs in one LA EP Service perceive to be key characteristics of successful practice under COVID-19 restrictions?**

**Data derived from focus group 1 and 2 (Define, Discovery)**

**Phase 1: initial feedback shared by participants following Define paired interviews and familiarisation with their own data set.**

1. Virtual service delivery – training and webinars
2. Coaching and consultation frameworks
3. Supervision for school staff
4. Time for reflection and formulation
5. Parent helpline
6. Responding quickly to community needs identified
7. Flexibility in service delivery and use of time
8. Creating psychologically informed guidance documents for families and schools
9. Collaboration
10. Teamwork
11. Learning
12. Wellbeing

**Phase two: codes generated through whole group reviewing of peak experiences shared by pairs, seeking patterns and familiarity with data**

1. Virtual training
2. Getting the psychology out there
3. Using technology differently
4. Having an impact on staff wellbeing
5. Collaborating with other EPs and EPSs
6. Coaching SENCOs
7. Supporting staff to recognise their strengths
8. Collaborative problem solving
9. Enjoyed using different psychological frameworks and approaches e.g., coaching psychology
10. Creating webinars for parents and school staff
11. Ethical, free to access services and resources
12. Public speaking experience through virtual work
13. Collaborative group work with other EPs in the service
14. Enhancing creativity with use of technology
15. Support from senior managers for virtual service delivery
16. New shadowing experiences as a TEP
17. Value in seeing the role of the EP differently

18. Supervision of other professionals working in schools
19. Applying positive psychology in practice
20. Formulation based casework rather than assessment
21. Reports centred around a psychological formulation of need
22. Engagement with more literature and research in practice with children and families
23. More time for reflection and using an Interactive Factors Framework with schools.
24. More strategic and systemic working with schools
25. Parent helpline
26. There are many peak experiences when we think about it!
27. Ethical, equitable service delivery through parent helpline
28. Free to access services more available
29. More time to listen to parents
30. Sharing psychological theory and practice with parents e.g., emotion coaching
31. Time to reflect
32. Positive feedback from parents
33. More flexibility in service delivery and able to respond to community needs
34. Community-based practice through parent webinars and helpline
35. Flexibility in traded service offering
36. Creating guidance documents for schools, parents and carers on COVID-19 and wellbeing
37. Highly motivating and productive working in teams with other EPs
38. Collaborating with other colleagues from across the service
39. Facilitation from line managers to free up time to work with other colleagues
40. Working together as a team is a standout experience
41. Able to respond to community needs very quickly with more service flexibility
42. Developed wellbeing webinars
43. Lots of aspects to webinars, an exciting experience
44. Sense of actualisation and growing in competence and confidence in own skills
45. Lots of positive feedback from parents and schools
46. A real need for webinar work to focus on wellbeing
47. Work felt meaningful
48. Work felt purposeful
49. A rollercoaster ride.

**Phase three: whole group becoming familiar with peak experiences shared and now seeking themes together which capture a description of EP practice under COVID19 and the life giving factors in their stories.**

1. Open mindedness – able to try new ways of working
2. Feedback from service users (parents, families, schools, other LA professionals)
3. Space to be creative
4. Freedom to negotiate EP role more
5. Collaborative working enabled by more time
6. Support from colleagues
7. Weekly service briefings

8. Celebrating successes and adapting practice together
9. More autonomy
10. Engaging
11. Team spirit and positivity
12. Innovation and creativity
13. High challenge, high support
14. Supervision and support from peers
15. Collective
16. Motivation to share psychology
17. Lifting of traded service constraints
18. Good technology available
19. Excellent business support team
20. Work reflects core values – community psychology
21. Skills being used to support our community
22. Accessible service delivery for parents and families
23. EPS being recognised in the LA and community
24. Peer support
25. Responding to what is needed
26. Improving our core model

**Phase four: group review of life giving factors and themes from peak experiences to finalise production and definition of themes**

1. **Collaborative** – within the EPS, with families, with schools, with other LA support services. Peer support and supervision. Teamwork.
2. **Community-based practice** – responding to community-specific needs quickly, demonstrating EPS strengths, application of psychology and sensitivity to the community context
3. **Ethically driven** – work is fulfilling and purposeful when it is driven by our personal and professional ethical codes of conduct and principles. this is linked to the application of community psychology, where we advocate for community needs and equitable access to our service.

## Appendix 17 Dream Team Dream Dialogue: Research Question Three audit trail

**RQ3: Based on past successes, in what ways do EPs and TEPs envisage working effectively under future COVID-19 restrictions?**

**Data derived from focus group 3 and 4 (Dream, Design)**

**Phase 1: initial themes shared by participants following Discovery paired interviews and paired data analysis coding for strengths, values and wishes (mapping the positive core of the group). Envisaged future practice based on past successes under COVID-19 restrictions:**

1. Increased visibility in the community
2. Our community knows us and how we can help
3. Our community (families, CYP) can access us regularly
4. We have less individual casework and time allocated for systemic developments in the LA
5. We work with other agencies to secure understanding and collaborate across education, health, and social care.
6. Flexibility with time, resources, and working outside of the traded and core models
7. Early intervention is prioritised and multidisciplinary
8. We are included in all LA processes relating to CYP and families
9. Our service is equitable and ethical in terms of access for all our stake holders

**Phase two: codes generated through whole group reviewing of 'wishes' presented by pairs, seeking patterns and familiarity with data**

Based on the peak experience stories shared and identified strengths and values, participants envisaged future practice under COVID-19 restrictions to include:  
**(wishes to opportunities notes)**

1. Increased visibility of the EPS
2. Increased understanding of our role in the community
3. Less individual child casework
4. More early intervention
5. Fewer EHCNAs
6. Doing more free access as this feels more ethical
7. Increase EP availability
8. More systemic work
9. Merged within the community – we become a regular 'go to' service
10. No longer seen as gatekeepers
11. Reduced stigma of parents involving an EP
12. Enable the community to have greater influence in our service delivery
13. Webinars continually being developed e.g., once a half term for schools and parents

14. Parent consultation line available e.g., one day a week
15. EPS Youtube channel for webinars
16. We are flourishing in the community
17. Fewer limitations on parent and family access to our service
18. Working more with parents directly
19. Project work remains outside of traded model
20. Continue working virtually to enable collaboration across EPS bases
21. Better core offer for multi-agency working across health, social care and education
22. Better collaboration with other services
23. The EPS is central to the LA
24. Working closely with other teams and helping them to use psychological practice
25. Community psychology work e.g., independent guidance, living
26. Driven by the needs of children
27. No such thing as an EHCP
28. Everyone understands what we do and how we can be used
29. Space within our time allocation system to work on service developments
30. More working groups (e.g., early years, ASD)
31. More time to continue being flexible
32. EPS included in all processes relating to CYP and families
33. Families can access us directly
34. Community led
35. Working at a multi-agency level
36. More time for collaborative working with professionals, parents, and community projects
37. Early intervention
38. Tag team complex cases
39. Shared project opportunities
40. Drop in consultations with two EPs
41. Maintain new collaborative projects e.g., telephone helpline
42. Empower the community e.g., supporting parents in the home to support their child/ren
43. Time to work as a team in the traded model
44. Multidisciplinary projects and collaboration
45. Flexibility for more reviews and follow-up
46. Collaborating with schools more
47. Continued task groups to recognise community needs and respond appropriately
48. Flexibility and autonomy to respond to community needs
49. More systemic work to have a bigger impact on a larger population
50. Community participation
51. Increase community awareness of our role
52. Preventative working
53. Time for task groups and interest groups to implement new ideas
54. Free services offered to meet community needs

**Phase three: Refining codes into key themes which capture the dreams to envisage and design:**

1. We are included in all LA processes related to CYP and their families (e.g., early intervention services, social care, health services).
2. Multi-agency and multi-disciplinary work are used more often in our day-to-day work.
3. We are intervening earlier, before a 'crisis point' and can do this because we are working with more families directly.
4. We have a greater community-based role so can have a bigger impact for more people. This would also give us greater fulfilment in the role too.
5. We are more accessible (for example, some services are free at the point of access for families) and visible as a service.
6. Our community understands our role and what we can offer.
7. Our team cohesiveness has increased. We have more opportunities to work alongside one another. This would also enhance our own understanding and practice.
8. We have the freedom to implement more creative ideas. We have more flexibility, variety, and autonomy in the work that we do (e.g., systemic project work for the LA, schools and linking with other agencies)
9. We are involved in less casework and more systemic work.

**Phase four: Dream dialogues to opportunities for design**

Dream 1: We have increased our community-level impact by increasing accessibility, visibility and understanding of the EP role

Dream 2: We collaborate through multi-disciplinary and multi-agency working on a day-to-day basis to improve outcomes for CYP and families more consistently.

Dream 3: We have the freedom to implement more creative ideas in our practice and are regularly involved in more systemic work rather than individual casework.



## Appendix 18

Research Question One: example codes and supporting data extracts for each theme.

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Collaboration and linked sub-theme Collaborating across teams.</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Collaboration;<br>Collaborating<br>across teams  | Collaborating<br>with other<br>colleagues from<br>across the service<br>Flexibility in<br>traded service<br>offering<br>Highly motivating<br>and productive<br>working in teams<br>with other EPs<br>Working together<br>as a team is a<br>standout<br>experience<br>Work felt<br>purposeful<br>Work felt<br>meaningful | <p><i>“not working in silos, collaborative team work to pull together COVID-19 wellbeing and information documents to be shared freely with schools and families.”</i></p> <p><i>“virtual training in pairs and small groups. Felt purposeful and meaningful. Cross-team working for the first time, working with different colleagues and joint co-working”</i></p> <p><i>“able to work outside of traded model gave us more time to work across teams collaboratively. Broadened ideas and creativity for project work. Also meant we could check in with one another, supporting wellbeing”</i></p> <p><i>“information sharing within the service and much more collaborative working. Possibly even an increase in communication within the service. Had the new technology at the right time”</i></p> <p><i>“more communication between teams and EPs with weekly briefings to bring the whole service together. Helped me to understand the direction of the service.”</i></p> <p><i>“we are most effective when we are working collaboratively”</i></p> <p><i>“joint projects were an opportunity to get to know the team and feel closer to the topics. “</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Multi-agency working</b> |              |                                |
|--|--------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b> | <b>Supporting data extract</b> |

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Multi-agency working | <p>More strategic and systemic work with schools</p> <p>Flexibility in the traded offering</p> <p>Working collaboratively</p> <p>Highly motivating and productive working in teams</p> <p>Collaborative problem solving</p> | <p><i>“Greater understanding of our role, who we are and what we can do.”</i></p> <p><i>“Serving community of professionals in the LA (ACT webinars) free to access.”</i></p> |
|----------------------|---|---|

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for themes of Systemic projects and Systemic working.</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Systemic projects; systemic working  | <p>Giving psychology away</p> <p>More strategic and systemic work with schools</p> <p>Flexibility in the traded offering</p> <p>Collaborative group work with other EPs</p> <p>Applying positive psychology</p> <p>Support form senior managers to deliver virtually</p> <p>Enhancing creativity with use of technology</p> | <p><i>“Webinar development – working beyond traded model and individual casework. Project to reach and help whole community in response to community-level needs. SLT support. Lots of momentum to keep developing webinars. Autonomy of service acknowledge by higher levels of the authority.”</i></p> <p><i>“COVID documents development. Seen for who we are as a service, role better understood by the community, and we grew as a service because of that. We have fewer boundaries.”</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Community-based practice</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Community-based practice   | <p>Positive feedback from parents</p> <p>A real need for webinar work to</p> | <p><i>“COVID documents development. Seen for who we are as a service, role better understood by the community, and we grew as a service because of that. We have fewer boundaries. Ethically driven with core beliefs at the centre of this work – it was</i></p> |

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|  | <p>focus on wellbeing<br/>Able to respond to community needs quickly<br/>Flexibility in service delivery<br/>Purposeful and meaningful<br/>Sense of actualisation and growing in competence and confidence in own skills</p> | <p><i>driven by our community entirely and used our skills. Our service can be remembered more for the things we did to support the community.”</i></p> <p><i>“Wellbeing webinar delivery– first time since I’ve qualified that I’ve felt we have been able to go where we want to go and respond to what is needed, as opposed to being told what we’re doing (e.g., going into a school to do an assessment). We’ve been able to survey the landscape, see what needs doing and implement that. People have liked what we’ve done! It’s made us relevant, rather than being gatekeepers. This could lead to a better core model.”</i></p> <p><i>“Webinar development – working beyond traded model and individual casework. Project to reach and help whole community in response to community-level needs. SLT support. Lots of momentum to keep developing webinars. Autonomy of service acknowledge by higher levels of the authority.’</i></p> |
|--|--|--|

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Responding to needs</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Responding to needs   | <p>Positive feedback from parents<br/>A rollercoaster ride<br/>A real need for webinar work to focus on wellbeing<br/>Exciting experience<br/>Community-based practice<br/>New shadowing experience for TEP<br/>Supervision of other professionals</p> | <p><i>“supporting staff wellbeing through virtual training”</i></p> <p><i>“coaching SENCo new to role, a good opportunity to be a support for them. Wouldn’t have been able to offer this much F2F (virtual) time if not for COVID as would have meant travelling to the school. Was able to respond to need flexibly and timely.”</i></p> <p><i>“ACT webinar development allowed us to share psychological theory and practice with a wide-ranging audience. We brought the psychology to life and made it accessible. Feeling of actualisation and growing competencies and confidence with virtual/remote working.”</i></p> |

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|  | working in schools. |  |
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| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Giving psychology away</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Giving psychology away   | Flexibility in service delivery<br>Sharing psychological theory and practice with parents<br>Community-based practice<br>Equitable<br>Parent helpline<br>Formulation based work<br>Applying positive psychology in practice<br>Coaching SENCos<br>Having an impact on staff wellbeing<br>Getting psychology out there<br>Virtual training | <p><i>“virtual training, supporting staff wellbeing, helping role and making a little bit of a difference”</i></p> <p><i>“sharing psychological theory and practice with parents via webinars and telephone helpline. Collective initial motivation to share psychological knowledge – in any medium.”</i></p> <p><i>“DSL supervision – psychology explained in layman terms as felt relevant to supporting staff, especially positive psychology for CPD. Felt innovative and got to see EPs working in different ways”</i></p> <p><i>“psychological formulation work rather than assessment of needs as unable to work directly with child. Synthesised information, important in the context to establish a clear picture for the young person given their complex situation. Trauma informed psychology. Felt more strategic and systematic in formulation and shared this with class staff.”</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Ethically driven</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Ethically driven   | Sharing psychological theory and practice with parents<br>Getting psychology out there<br>Equitable<br>Time to work with families | <p><i>“Webinars for example gave us opportunity to work outside of traded model”</i></p> <p><i>“Lifting of constraints of the traded model – able to dedicate time to meaningful and purposeful projects.”</i></p> |

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|  | Time to reflect |  |
|--|-----------------|--|

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Direct work with families</b> |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Direct work with families   | Parent helpline<br>Free at point of access<br>More time to listen to parents<br>Responding to community needs quickly<br>Positive feedback from families<br>Guidance documents for families<br>Getting psychology out there<br>Using technology differently | <p><i>“Webinar development, both live and pre-recorded. To school and families this was free to access. A new area of work, ethical practice, felt rewarding piece of work. Lots of positive feedback from families and school staff about accessibility”</i></p> <p><i>“Working more openly and freely with parents felt very ethical, with no limits on how many times they could call, no criteria for phone call. Free at point of access – equitable”</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Free to access service</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Free to access service   | Getting the psychology out there<br>Ethical, free to access services and resources<br>Ethical, equitable service delivery<br>Parent helpline<br>Free at point of access<br>More time to listen to parents<br>Community-based practice<br>Work reflects our core values – community psychology<br>Flexibility in traded service offering | <p><i>“There was huge diversity and range of work throughout the early pandemic stages. E.g., guidance documents, virtual training, webinars, parent telephone. Working more openly and freely with parents felt very ethical, with no limits on how many times they could call, no criteria for phone call. Free at point of access, felt more equitable”</i></p> <p><i>“We had fewer boundaries. Work felt ethically driven with core beliefs at the centre– it was driven by our community entirely and used our skills. Our service can be remembered more for the things we did to support the community”</i></p> |

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|  | Meaningful and purposeful work<br>Using technology differently |  |
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## Appendix 19

Research Question Two: example codes and supporting data extracts for each theme

## Group strengths:

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Collaboration</b> |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Collaboration   | Supportive colleagues<br>Sharing knowledge<br>Openness between EPs to pool resources<br>Energy and enthusiasm<br>Innovation<br>Encouraged collaboration | <i>'The EPS works well together as a team – nice to work with colleagues, share ideas, bounced off each other well. It felt less over whelming. Shared responsibility and ownership. Felt supportive in unknown situation. Effective teamwork. Offering support.'</i><br><br><i>'More confident/comfortable now during collaborative work e.g., sharing views. Good opportunity to work in a small group. Really enjoyed the fact we can do things, away from just child led – more systemic work and supporting wellbeing. Would like to do more of this.'</i> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Community focused</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Community-focused   | Open mindedness<br>Solution focused<br>Good interpersonal skills<br>People skills<br>Authentic<br>Care about outcomes for CYP and families<br>Strong relationships with schools<br>Sharing psychology<br>Advocating for CYP<br>Friendly and approachable | <i>'Sharing knowledge and understanding of psychology, adapting psychology to different situations / circumstances is one of EPs most effective tools/technique'</i><br><br><i>'Learned more about ACT and how it can be used in the community – seeing it on the ground.'</i><br><br><i>'Energetic, enthusiastic, not fazed by pressure to deliver webinars quickly. Everyone took a role; everyone pulled their weight. This was satisfying – working with different people and the end-product produced was shared widely. Allowed us to be more unique within the LA and counteract the 'check list' and gatekeeper role.'</i> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Knowledge base</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Knowledge base   | Knowledge<br>In tune with colleagues<br>Facilitators<br>Problem solvers<br>Critical thinkers<br>Systemic perspectives<br>Teachers<br>Empathy<br>Reflection<br>Sharing knowledge<br>Team players<br>Consultation | <p><i>'Responsive webinars, information that we have provided. Improved relationships with schools through direct links into the community.'</i></p> <p><i>'Pragmatic and efficient. Try to balance evidence-based practice with practice-based evidence. Good at synthesising a lot of information. 'Getting things done'.'</i></p> <p><i>'Application of knowledge and psychology in context is an effective EP tool/technique for enhancing community-based practice.'</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Creativity</b> |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Creativity   | Innovation<br>Facilitators<br>Collective standards of work<br>Trust<br>Knowledge<br>Flexibility<br>Solution-focused<br>Enthusiasm | <p><i>'We have shown what we can achieve as a team. We often work individually before COVID, sometimes delivering pre-packaged training, but this gave us the change to be creative in a novel situation.'</i></p> <p><i>'Webinar development was successful and has opened a new way of working for us to develop further pre-recorded webinars for schools'</i></p> |

#### **EP Service strengths:**

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Responsive</b> |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Responsive   | Effective teamwork<br>Flexibility<br>SLT support<br>Trusted to find direction for work<br>No constraints<br>Communication | <p><i>'Value that the service is responsive to situations and needs of the community'</i></p> <p><i>'Offering the phonenumber to parents, so not a barrier to accessing. Able to help support in a different way with parents, important in terms of feeling accessible to parents. Phonenumber is</i></p> |



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|  | <p>Connection<br/>Responsive to community needs<br/>Facilitated free working<br/>Accessible<br/>Adapting psychology to different circumstances</p> | <p><i>good/ fair/ least restrictive way of contacting (e.g., not every parent has internet). Nice to have chance to come together and all put heads together and support the wider community- felt different.'</i></p> <p><i>'Taking time to hear and understand the needs within the community and responding appropriately'</i></p> <p><i>'Big drive felt in the service to reach out to the community.'</i></p> |
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| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Outside of traded model</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>   |
| Outside of traded model   | <p>Responsive to community needs<br/>Adapting psychology to different circumstances<br/>Energetic<br/>Accessible<br/>Autonomy<br/>SLT support<br/>Time<br/>Flexibility</p> | <p><i>'Return to school webinar development. Tailored it to what felt was most important. Shared psychology. EPS time made available, could prioritise this work over traded casework with schools.'</i></p> <p><i>'Time made available to work outside of trading to create training packages. Allowed TEPs across all bases to work collaboratively. Allowed us to work as a group to respond to service needs – creating training. Opened up routes for more training collaboratively across bases.'</i></p> <p><i>'PEP gave us time. Everything else was put on hold. Friday 20<sup>th</sup> schools were shutting so we made the most of this day. We had direction and permission to use that time in that way (to produce wellbeing guidance documents for schools and parents). we were allowed a level of autonomy.'</i></p> <p><i>'Increased flexibility in working, autonomy to engage creatively and collaborate with others (colleagues but also schools/other professionals) is what I valued most about the EPS. EPS facilitated free working – not traded work.'</i></p> |

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| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Peer and senior leadership support</b> |
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| <b>Theme</b>         | <b>Codes</b>  | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
|----------------------|---|---|
| Peer and SLT support | Peer support<br>SLT support<br>Flexibility<br>Trusted to find direction for work<br>Encouraged me to be creative<br>Collaborating across teams<br>Effective teamwork<br>Energetic | <p><i>'Team in the service is what I value most about the EPS - People and the relationships – my team and how cohesive and how in tune we are. I feel very safe in the EPS and supported.'</i></p> <p><i>'We celebrated when community-based practice had happened in weekly briefings. Sharing and supporting others to think "I could try this"'</i></p> <p><i>'We were able to get on with free work very quickly without a huge amount of planning and 'naval gazing', coming up with something coherent without having to spend a long-time planning. Facilitated by SLT support and creation of time.'</i></p> <p><i>'Lovely colleagues who are creative, open and willing to share.'</i></p> <p><i>'Everyone is super, super supportive, approachable. We're all learning together and from each other. This is what I miss about not being in the office. You can ask anything; someone is always there. Service values what you can bring, service brings out the best in you and are open to ideas/suggestions moving forward, perhaps more so since the pandemic.'</i></p> <p><i>'Openness between EPs in the service, pooling resources more. Energy and enthusiasm from colleagues. EP briefings bring us together regularly to share and ensure we know what's happening, ask questions, ask for assistance with project work.'</i></p> <p><i>'Applying psychology to us as employees felt supportive and validating. Teamwork and team spirit kept energy and enthusiasm high. '</i></p> <p><i>'Our admin team support us so well.'</i></p> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Technology</b> |              |                                |
|--|--------------|--------------------------------|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b> | <b>Supporting data extract</b> |

| <b>Theme</b> | <b>Codes</b> | <b>Supporting data extract</b> |
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|--------------|--------------|--------------------------------|

|            |   |  |
|------------|---|--|
| Technology | Technology<br>Flexibility<br>Team cohesion<br>Communication<br>Connection | <p><i>'Access to resources, especially the technology to work virtually is an effective tool we have for enhancing community-based practice. Also enabled collaborative working across teams (task group working) and helped the EPS to maintain relationships with schools.'</i></p> <p><i>'Webinar development successful after initial proposal and live session. Technology enabled this.'</i></p> <p><i>'Return to school webinar development enabled by technology' technology enabled EPS to enhance their community presence and practice under restrictions.'</i></p> <p><i>'Microsoft TEAMS allowed us to share files – could all add in and all able to see at the same time. Good to have contact with other trainees across bases – social side as well as work.'</i></p> |
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### Group values

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Community based practice</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Community-based practice   | Equitable access to service<br>Inclusion and being inclusive in my practice<br>Making a difference<br>Having an impact<br>Sharing knowledge<br>Dissemination psychology to help others<br>Supporting the community<br>Access for all<br>Non-judgemental approach<br>Advocacy | <p><i>'Stand out work was with parents and the telephone helpline. Evaluation so far seems overwhelmingly positive and that parents who accessed it found it valuable. Parents were perhaps not aware of things previously.'</i></p> <p><i>'Webinars and document development based on needs of the community. Mindful of multiple documents / websites and overloading the community with more information. Wanted to offer a more therapeutic time, offered a face-to-face time virtually, focusing on needs of service users and getting the most out of webinars. Able to make a difference and help others, wanting to make impact within our community. Supporting those in our community in a way which has the biggest impact. Equity/equality – access for all.'</i></p> |

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|  | Accessible information that is fit for purpose<br>Altruism | <i>'EPS strengthened community resources during COVID-19 with critical incident responses and bereavement support. Also keeping CYPs interests at heart.'</i> |
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| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Purpose and role</b> |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Theme</b>   | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Purpose and role   | Advocacy<br>Having an impact<br>Efficient<br>Effective<br>Keeping needs of individuals at heart<br>Wanting to be purposeful<br>Listening | <i>'Unconditional positive regard and empathy – taking a non-judgemental stance in work to facilitate others to share views and be heard.'</i><br><br><i>'Having an impact and share psychology widely through return to school webinars. Tailored to school staff audience.'</i><br><br><i>'The sense of feeling purposeful, positive, nice to get the feedback from working with other people and bounce ideas off each other. The work (return to school webinars) felt purposeful and meaningful.'</i><br><br><i>'Able to offer sensitive challenge to strengthen community resources (not collude). Being a critical friend. Good interpersonal skills to understand and interpret service user views and wishes then represent and share them. Advocating for CYP.'</i> |

| <b>Codes and supporting data extract for theme of Teaching and learning</b> |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <b>Theme</b>  | <b>Codes</b>   | <b>Supporting data extract</b>  |
| Teaching and learning   | Growth mindset<br>Learning<br>Continuous development<br>Sharing knowledge<br>Disseminating psychology to help others | <i>'Sharing knowledge and understanding of psychology, adapting psychology to different situations/circumstances. Working through COVID-19 gave me an increased awareness of what the challenges in the work and community were – so we could then be solution focused.'</i><br><br><i>'Used more positive psychology, bringing psychology to a problem-solving scenario'</i><br><br><i>'Webinar development shared understanding of psychology. Initially felt overwhelmed, but later excited / passionate as being able to reach a wide</i> |

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|  |  | <p><i>audience. A different way of working and sharing psychology.'</i></p> <p><i>'Learning to adapt to virtual working and became more confident as we developed more webinars. Also learnt from other EP services who were also delivering webinars – made it seem possible for us, we just needed to make it relevant for our local context'</i></p> |
|--|--|---|