"CLIFF EDGES" AND "NEW ADVENTURES": A CULTURAL HISTORICAL ACTIVITY THEORY STUDY OF SUPPORT FOR TRANSITIONS FROM MAINSTREAM SECONDARY TO POST-16 EDUCATION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WITH EDUCATION, HEALTH, AND CARE PLANS

By

Christopher Richard Jordan

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Abstract

The transition to post-16 education can be a challenging period of change for young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. The Children and Families Act stipulates that young people with Education, Health and Care Plans must be supported through planning for transition and preparation for adulthood. This study focuses on how post-16 transitions for young people with Education, Health and Care Plans are supported in one West Midlands Local Authority. There is additional focus on perceptions of support, how preparation for adulthood operates, and the role of educational psychologists in post-16 transitions.

This study uses Cultural Historical Activity Theory as a lens through which to understand support for transitions and identify points of tension (contradictions) within systems that support post-16 transitions. This study of transition support in the Local Authority is viewed as a single-case design, and analysis of semi-structured interviews uses framework analysis to identify themes of interest.

A cross-sectional view of support for post-16 transition was obtained through qualitative data gained from four young people aged 15 to 18. To gain a system-wide perspective a further twelve adult stakeholders, each linked to a young person, were interviewed. This group consisted of school staff, parents, educational psychologists, and other relevant Local Authority professionals. Data were analysed by thematic analysis and organised through the Framework Method.

Key findings were that collaboration and early planning were amongst the most important forms of support. Young people varied significantly in their outlook on transition, but skills for independence and greater freedom were consistently perceived as important transition outcomes. Adult participants offered ideas for expansion of the Educational Psychologist role in post-16 transitions, a significant finding, given the paucity of data in this area. A conceptual model was created from the findings. This delineates a cyclical process of transition support

for young people, showing that successful negotiation of an educational transition leads, in time, to a new transition requiring further support systems.

Dedication and Acknowledgements

I take this opportunity to dedicate this thesis to my amazing wife Sarah and our three wonderful children, Chloe, Sophie, and Miles. I have much gratitude for their fantastic support, love, patience, and sacrifices in the last three years.

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Term	Abbreviation	Definition
Children and Families Act	CaFA	The CaFA is a piece of 2014 legislation that led to the implementation of EHCPs and the publication of the 2015 Code of Practice.
Code of Practice (2015)	CoP	The CoP was published by the Department for Education and Department of Health give statutory guidance for the education of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities.
Critical Skills Appraisal Programme	CASP	CASP is a set of checklists which can be used by researchers for quality assurance of journals and other literature.
Cultural Historical Activity Theory	CHAT	CHAT is an analytical framework used to conceptualise systems in terms of how a subject achieves an outcome through mediation with other parts of the system. CHAT is explored in further detail Section 2.2
Education, Health, and Care Plan	EHCP	Since 2015, EHCPs are statutory documents that outline needs, necessary provisions and sought outcomes that for young people with SEND in their education, health, and care needs.
Educational Psychology Service	EPS	An EPS works within a local authority to support schools, families and young people through the work of educational psychologists (EPs).
E-Theses Online Service	EtHOS	EtHOs is an online database operated by the British Library to search for existing theses that may not be returned by other search databases for published material.
Framework Analysis	FA	FA (Gale et al., 2013) is a method of analysis that organises patterns in qualitative data into codes and themes, using a grid to show which codes or themes are relevant to each participant. FA is explained in detail in Section 3.9.1.
Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis	IPA	IPA (Smith 2009) is a method of qualitative data analysis which emphasises the interpretation of accounts of lived experiences. Other phenomenological approaches listed in table 2.5 share an interest in understanding experiences.
Local Authority	LA	LAs are bodies of local government and administration that cover a designated area such as a city, urban area, or county.
Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses	PRISMA	PRISMA is a process that guides systematic literature reviews through a rigorous funnelling process.

Term	Abbreviation	Definition
Preparation for Adulthood	PfA	The CoP (2015) stipulates that PfA must be included in the planning of provisions and outcomes for young people with EHCPs in Year 9 and above (age 13-14 and older). PfA is based on four areas: education and employment, independent living, participating in society, and healthy living.
Q-Methodology	-	A research method that uses factor analysis to extrapolate factors from a data set. Data is gathered through a Q-sort where statements about topic are ranked in order of relevance by participants (McKeown & Thomas, 2013)
Self-Determination Theory	SDT	SDT (Ryan & Deci, 1985) is a psychological theory of motivation proposing that feelings of relatedness, autonomy, and competence interact to drive self-determination.
Social Identity Theory	SIT	SIT (Tajfel et al., 1979) is a psychological theory of identity and belonging, based around the idea of an in-group identity.
Sociocultural theory	-	Sociocultural theory underpins CHAT and is concerned with the influence of society and culture on how individuals develop and learn.
Special Educational Needs Coordinator	SENCo	All state schools in the UK must have a SENCo. SENCos support young people with SEND and their families. This includes sharing information with school staff, overseeing provision and review of progress for these pupils.
Special Educational Needs and Disabilities	SEND	A child or young person with SEND requires additional support to gain fair access to learning. SEND replaces earlier terminology and has been used since the 2015 CoP.
Stages of psychosocial development	-	A theoretical model of human development and change (Erikson, 1950), divided into eight stages, explored further in Section 2.5
Thematic analysis	TA	TA (Braun & Clarke, 2012 & 2021) is a very popular method of analysing qualitative data to identify patterns of meaning in the form of themes.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introductory chapter provides a backdrop to the study through an outline of academic and professional contexts, rationale, and research aims.

1.1 Academic and Professional Context for Research

This thesis is written as a requirement towards a Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology, the training pathway for qualification as an educational psychologist (EP). The research has been undertaken within a West Midlands Local Authority (LA) where I have worked on placement for the second and third years of the doctorate.

Supporting the transition of young people with educational needs from mainstream secondary school into post-16 education[1] has been a relevant part of my professional background as a secondary school teacher, and an important, challenging issue in the work of a trainee EP (TEP).

Part of my role prior to EP training was as a mentor for young people (YP) identified with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND[2]). I was involved in planning for transitions to post-16 education through looking at course options with YP and their parents. Being involved in post-16 transitions led to me commencing EP training with an interest in how this process is handled by schools and other systems around the young person (YPn).

Two pieces of professional work during the second year of EP training cemented post-16 transitions as an of interest for research. First, I worked with a YPn in their first year at a further education (FE) college and wrote psychological advice for an Education, Health and Care Plan

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[1] Post-16 education encompasses sixth forms within secondary schools, sixth form colleges, further education colleges.

[2] The acronym SEND is used throughout this thesis regardless of historical context e.g. for several decades the term SEN (special education needs) was used. SEND is used here but it is acknowledged that this was not the term used throughout recent history.

(EHCP) assessment. In this case elements of the transition to post-16 education had not gone smoothly. Parents and staff at the secondary school had contradictory views.

Secondly, I worked with a YPn in Year 11 to support transition planning. In this piece of work the school and YPn's carer were working together effectively to forge a successful transition process. These two pieces of work stimulated interest in how the different systems of home, school, and educational psychology services contribute to transitions to post-16 education for young people with SEND. This combination of existing professional experience and new experiences as a TEP therefore provided a context for my motivation to study this area.

1.2 Rationale for this Study

Outlining the rationale and aims for this research involves considering legislation, developmental psychology, sociocultural theory, and educational transitions for YP. The intention here is to clarify why this piece of research is relevant, and what it aims to achieve.

Transitions to post-16 education for young people with SEND have become of greater relevance to the EP role. The Children and Families Act (CaFA, Department for Education [DfE], 2014) requires young people to be supported in their education across the age range of 0-25 years, outlined in the SEND Code of Practice (CoP, DfE & Department of Health [DoH], 2015). Recent literature (Manning, 2018; Atkinson & Morris, 2018) identifies the importance of furthering research and professional understanding of the post-16 transition process with a view to improving educational and life outcomes for YP with SEND.

The CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015, p.28) emphasises consideration of preparation for adulthood (PfA) in planning EHCP outcomes from school Year 9 onwards. PfA is important because it looks beyond education to the broader life outcomes of independence, health, employment, and community inclusion. The rationale for addressing PfA in this research is also rooted in established psychological theory. For example, Erikson's theory of psychosocial development

(Erikson, 1950), relating to psychological and social factors, identifies adolescence as a period where young people experience conflict between identity and role confusion. All these arms of the theoretical context are explored in detail in Chapter 2, where a deeper grounding for the rationale is presented.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The aim of this research is to provide insights into how transition from mainstream secondary school to post-16 education for young people with EHCPs is supported by stakeholders in the transition system, as perceived by YP and adult stakeholders. The study thus involves hearing the views of YP, their parents, key SEND staff at their setting, EPs who have worked with them, a LA SEND post-16 professional, and a representative from a post-16 careers guidance service.

The research process aims to answer the following questions:

Primary research question:

> *RQ 1 - How are young people with EHCPs supported by school, home, and agencies in the transition from mainstream secondary education into post-16 education?*

Secondary research questions:

> *RQ 2a - What are young peoples' perceptions of the transition process and how do these perceptions relate to the perceptions of stakeholders in the systems around them?*
>
> *RQ 2b - How is preparation for adulthood supported in the transition process for these young people?*
>
> *RQ 2c - Do EP services contribute to the transition process, and how can this role be developed?*

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Literature Overview

The purpose of this literature review is two-fold. The first part of the review gives an overview of legislative and theoretical literature relevant to the thesis. These sections ground the thesis in cultural historical activity theory (CHAT, Engeström, 1987) as a theoretical framework, before covering legislative context, conceptualisations of educational transitions, and psychological theory.

The second part of the literature review systematically reviews relevant research on transitions from the last ten years. A systematic literature review summarises, through qualitative synthesis, what has been said in research about transitions to post-16, to develop a strong rationale for the specific questions of this thesis.

2.2 Cultural Historical Activity Theory and Systems

This subsection of the literature review critically considers CHAT and positions it as an appropriate analytic framework for this study. CHAT is a sociocultural framework that integrates historical, social, and cultural factors. CHAT can be argued to be well-placed as an analytical tool to highlight similarities, contrasts, and contradictions in complex human systems. In this case CHAT is used to illustrate and explore how YP and other stakeholders construct and perceive transition experiences and the supports that are being put in place.

CHAT has roots in the work of Soviet psychologists Vygotksy, Luria and Leont'ev, and spread outside of Russia after the Second World War (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). Owing to its delayed dissemination to the West, CHAT has been described as "the best kept secret in academia" (Engeström, 1993, p64).

Vygotsky's work from the 1920s and 1930s began to be published in English during the 1970s, and CHAT grew in its application in educational fields through the 1980s, 1990s and into the

2000s (Roth & Lee, 2007). Nussbaumer (2012) argues that increased awareness of social aspects of learning has identified CHAT as a useful framework to analyse education systems. Jaworski and Potari (2009) also highlight the strength of CHAT for dealing with complex systems such as educational settings. Nevertheless, CHAT is described as under-used in the specific context of SEND (Bal et al., 2020).

Under the umbrella of sociocultural theory, CHAT is concerned with how people interact with their cultural, historical and social contexts (Sannino & Engeström, 2018). CHAT is based on three socio-cultural principles, each with rich implications for understanding how activity systems in transitions to post-16 education are supported. Summarised from Bal et al. (2020), and Daniels (2016), these principles are:

1. *The role of mediation in human development through the interactions between people and 'artefacts' such as tools and language.* For transitions to post-16 education this involves analysing the types of mediation that have occurred within the transition planning and transition experiences of the YP.

2. *The role of historicity in cultural and social practices.* To understand support systems for transitions to post-16 education, a focus on historicity is concerned with how support may have changed over time, and the experiences of YP at different stages in their transition journeys.

3. *The impact of culture on human development in their day-to-day life.* Answering the research questions for this study involves analysis of real-world experiences, not under experimental conditions, and for this reason problems and contradictions across and within systems are often unclear and complex.

CHAT has developed through three models referred to as first, second, and third generation activity theory (Leadbetter, 2017). A fourth-generation model comparing local, regional, and national systems is in an emergent stage (Engeström & Sannino, 2021). First-generation activity theory is a model of the Vygotskian concept of mediation described in point 1, above

(illustrated in Daniels, 2016). This model consists of: a subject, the person or people involved in the activity; an object, the purpose or focus of the activity; and tools, physical or abstract, mediating the activity (Leadbetter, 2017). Each of the three components is connected to the other giving rise to the triangular model below.

Figure 2.1

First generation activity theory model (from Daniels, 2016, p.86)

Mediational means (tools or artefacts, physical or abstract)

Subject(s)   **Object /motive** ⟶ **Outcomes**
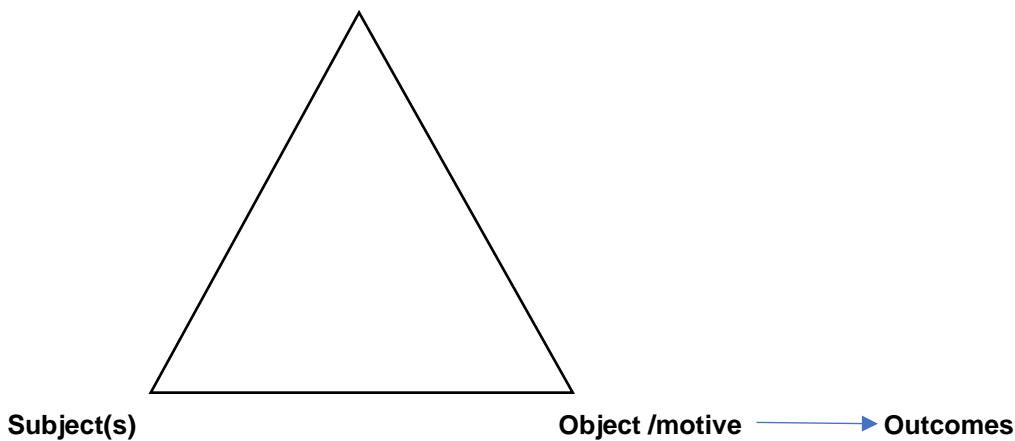
The second-generation model was developed by Engeström (1987), and forms the framework for this research. In the second-generation model the activity triangle is expanded into an activity system (Foot, 2014). An activity system includes a wider range of cultural and contextual factors, adding nodes for: division of labour, how is the work shared; rules, supporting or constraining the work; and community, who is involved. The subject, tools, object, and outcomes nodes remain in place from the first model. Second generation activity theory allows examination of transitions to post-16 education by considering how YP as the *subject*, and the *object* of transition outcomes are mediated through interaction with the other nodes that make up the activity system (Leadbetter, 2017).

Activity systems are described as multi-voiced as they represent the collective activity of numerous people in different roles with differing perspectives (Foot, 2014). Applied to the research aims of this study, a multi-voiced model adds breadth and depth to understandings

of the systems involved in post-16 transitions activity, and how different stakeholders contribute to the process. Figure 2.2 below shows the second-generation model.

Figure 2.2

Second-generation activity theory and node labels (after Engeström, 1987).

.
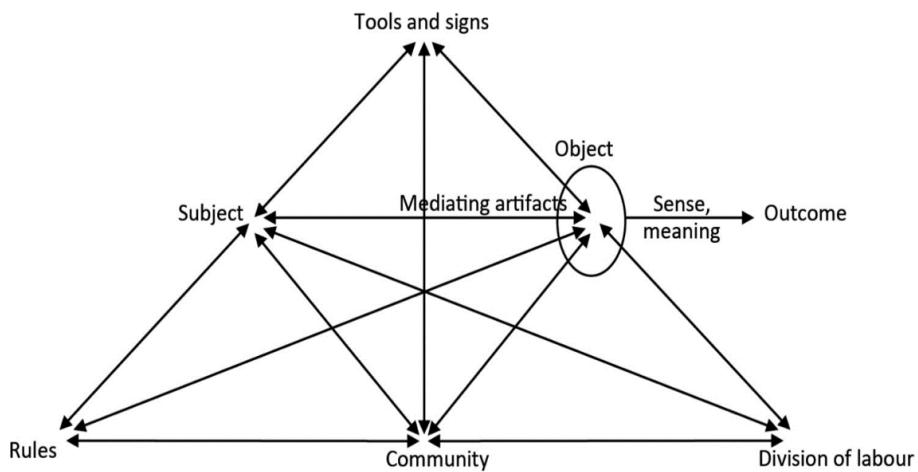
The second-generation model allows exploration of the research questions in more depth than the first-generation model by taking account of a greater range of contexts and voices. Though the roles of other important people in the system are given consideration in the community and division of labour nodes, the activity system does not place them as the subject. The YP remain the *subject* of the activity system.

A brief explanation of the third-generation model gives additional context for the use of CHAT. The third-generation model (Engeström, 1999a) allows for multiple second-generation activity systems to be compared where the object nodes overlap. The third-generation model could be used in research where transition experiences from different education systems are compared such as the UK and Australia.

An integral part of CHAT is the identification of contradictions within activity systems (Engeström, 1987; Kuutti, 1996; Foot, 2001). CHAT contradictions are described as the result of a misfit or clash between or within elements of an activity system (Kuutti, 1996). Contradictions in CHAT are proposed to be opportunities for systemic development, (Foot,

2014) rather than being interpreted as faults. By acknowledging that activity systems are dynamic and complex, contradictions are seen as inevitable within the framework (Kuutti, 1996).

CHAT contradictions are categorised in levels as primary, secondary, tertiary and quaternary (Engeström, 2019), shown below.

Table 2.1

Levels of contradictions in CHAT (after Engeström, 2019, p.71)

Contradiction level	Description
Primary	Contradictions within a (activity system) node.
Secondary	Contradictions between two nodes.
Tertiary	Contradictions between previous models of a system and new ones.
Quaternary	Contradictions between a central activity system, and neighbouring systems.

Other models and frameworks have been used to analyse systems. It is important to clarify why CHAT is appropriate to answer the research questions in this study. Within educational psychology research, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (see Figure 2.3, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) has been frequently used to conceptualise different systemic levels within a young person's life (Toland & Carrigan, 2011). As the present study focuses on systems and the support they provide, comparison of ecological systems to CHAT is necessary.

Figure 2.3

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems model (from Hayes, 2022)
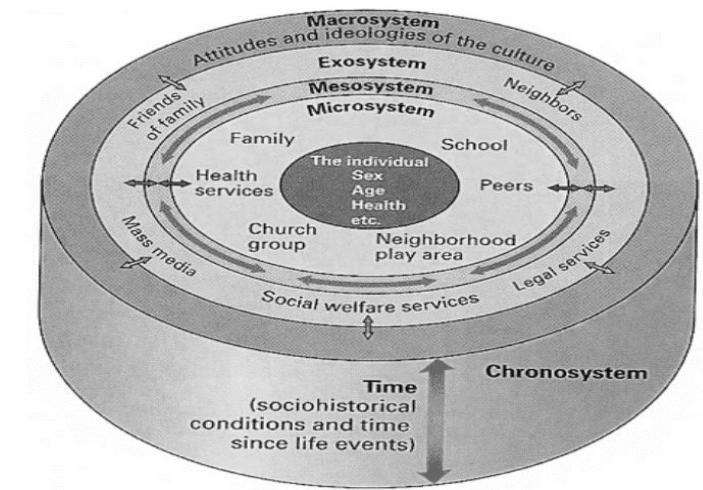
Packer et al. (2022) propose that Bronfenbrenner's model is suitable to conceptualise and understand educational transitions, as the different systems and stakeholders reflect different aspects of model, summarised below:

Table 2.2

Alignment of ecological systems with educational transitions (after Packer et al., 2022)

Dimension of ecological systems model	Aspect of educational transition
Microsystem	The individual learner and their learning journey
Mesosytem	Home and educational environments, stakeholder views and perspectives on transition
Exosystem	Local authority policy and impact upon post-16 education
Macrosystem	National political context and legislation, international trends and research findings surrounding educational transitions.
Chronosystem	Not discussed in Packer et al. (2022), but change in legislation over time, change in a YP's priorities and goals from Year 9 – Year 12 would be suitable here

A distinction between CHAT and the ecological systems model is suggested by Velez-Agosto et al. (2017), who argue that Bronfenbrenner's concept of culture is distinctive from culture in sociocultural theory. In the ecological systems model, culture is theorised to be part of the macrosystem, framing the YP's other contexts such as home, school, and local community. Sociocultural theory by contrast sees culture as underpinning every aspect of human behaviour (Velez-Agosto et al.,2017). In the context of CHAT, culture has been defined as representing a specific time, place, and value system (Foot, 2014). This study probes supports for YP aged 14-18 (time), within a LA (place), in relation to social and educational contexts (value systems). Based on this rationale, CHAT is preferred to the ecological systems model as a framework for this research.

This subsection has introduced CHAT and the levels of contradiction that it can identify. Subsequent sections of the review take place against the backdrop of this theoretical framework.

2.3 Legislative Context

To contextualise this study, consideration is given to legislative context, exploring how legislative changes influence transitions to post-16 education for YP with SEND. In this account, some analysis of how the legislative environment relates to a CHAT modelling, is undertaken.

Transitions to post-16 education are governed by Section Three of the CaFA (DfE, 2014), which forms the basis for much of the 2015 CoP, and has direct implications for YP with EHCPs and their transition to post-16 education:

> "For children and young people with EHC plans, discussions about post-16 options will be part of the preparing for adulthood focus of EHC plan reviews, which **must** be included as part of the review from Year 9 (age 13-14). The local authority **must** ensure these reviews take place, and schools and colleges must co-operate with the local authority in these reviews."

(DfE & DoH, 2015, p129).

Prior to 2014, the Education and Skills Act (2008) made being in education or training compulsory until a YPn's eighteenth birthday. This act had significant implications for transitions to post-16 education, and led to the now obsolete Connexions Service to supporting YP who were unsure of their best pathway (Cullen et al., 2009). From 2008 onwards it was necessary for FE settings to provide a greater number of places for YP with SEND, who may previously not have continued in education post-16.

Aspects of the 2014 CaFA legislation can be mapped onto second generation CHAT activity system nodes, see figure 2.2. Foot (2014) notes ambiguity between *tools* and *rules* in an activity system. To clarify the functions of statutory processes it will be important to determine when EHCPs and PfA guidance function as *rules* and when as *tools*. Consideration of historical factors within a transition is also important as statutory processes may fulfil different functions at different points in time.

This 2014 legislation also connects with the *community* and *division of labour* nodes. The CaFA proposes that YP with SEND are educated in mainstream education unless it goes against parental wishes or is incompatible with the learning of other YP. At a *community* level, previous experiences and values of parents and carers will influence their position on the suitability of mainstream or special education settings. For *division of labour*, the decision between mainstream and specialist post-16 settings marks a crucial junction in determining in who will have a role in supporting the YP in their post-16 education.

Critique of the CaFA highlights systemic tensions when considering its implementation through the 2015 CoP. Lehane's (2017) discourse analysis of the 1994, 2001, and 2015 Codes of Practice concludes that all three lack clarity on what "what inclusion should look like" (Lehane 2017, p.63). Regarding the 2015 CoP, Lehane (2017) notes that the graduated model of practice, Assess, Plan, Do, Review, gives limited detail as to what the plan and do

should involve. Similarly, Castro and Palikara (2016) the highlight the lack of evidence-based frameworks in the 2015 CoP for implementing key elements of the legislation such as integrated services. Lack of implementation clarity (Lehane, 2017) therefore adds further rationale for studying the systems that are involved, and the roles they play in supporting YPs' educational journeys.

2.4 Concepts in Transitions

To position the significance of post-16 education transition, considerations from pertinent educational and psychological theory are weighed. Lawson and Parker (2019, p.156) define transitions as "the movement from one state or place to another". To expand on this literal definition, contrasting views on transitions from existing literature are presented below.

Transitions have been described as an ongoing part of life-course development (Hutchison, 2005), and by contrast, a rupturing experience (Zittoun, 2009). Gravett et al. (2020, p.1170) describe a "grand narrative" of transitions, presenting transition as a risk, and something to be bridged. Exploring the nature of change in transitions, Manning (2018) sees educational transitions as challenging, exciting and uncertain, whilst Fayette and Bond (2018a) emphasise a need to cope with new environments and adapt to new demands.

It is important to consider why transitions are particularly challenging for YP with SEND, as they form the focus for this study. Gravett et al. (2020) argues that transition literature has attributed challenges in transition to deficits within the YP. On the other hand, Downes (2019) suggests that transitions for YP with SEND are challenging because the systems involved do not provide consistent support.

Atkinson and Morris (2018), and Cockerill and Arnold (2018) highlight variability in the quality of transition planning between and even within LAs. Craig (2009) specifies that inconsistent information sharing within one LA sometimes led to work being duplicated or omitted (Craig 2009, p.49). Fayette and Bond (2018b) also highlight the importance of collaboration between

schools and LAs, by presenting post-16 transitions for autistic YP as a three-part framework of pre-transition, transition, and post-transition phases. Fayette and Bond's (2018b) framework emphasises the importance of a combined input from LAs and educational settings across all three phases.

2.5 Transitions and Psychological Theory

This subsection explores how psychological theories can aid understanding of transition processes in this thesis. Hviid and Zittoun (2008), distinguish between life-course transitions such as those between childhood, adolescence, adulthood, or parenthood, and those that occur between institutions (schools, colleges, and workplaces).

The concept of life-course transitions resonates with Erikson's theory of psychosocial development (1950). Each of the eight stages in Erikson's theory sees the individual faced with a new internal conflict to be overcome (Graves & Larkin, 2006). Appendix 1 shows all eight of Erikison's stages, for context.

The adolescent stage, encompassing transition to post-16 education, is identified as a period of conflict between identity and role confusion (Carducci, 2020) . This stage is significant, as the transition to post-16 education involves new situations in which a YP will need to build new relationships and adapt to new routines. Successful transitions could lead the successful modulation of their identity, whereas a difficult transition could disrupt YPs sense of identity, leading to role confusion. Role confusion has been defined as causing a YP to "seriously question one's essential personality characteristics, one's view of oneself, and the perceived views of others." (Sokol, 2009, p.142).

Theories of identify and belonging have informed understanding of how the psychosocial adjustment involved in transitions may influence, or be influenced by, adolescent development. Social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel et al., 1979) is related to Erikson's adolescent stage through shared emphasis on identity. Concerning SIT, Tanti et al. (2011) highlight associations

between strong group identity, self-esteem, personal identity and coping with problems in adolescence. Tanti et al. (2011, p.556) propose that transitions between educational institutions involve opportunities for "new social group memberships, roles, expectations, and responsibilities." Equally, disruptive, or poorly managed transitions could lead to lack of social and academic engagement and lower attendance (Cockerill & Arnold, 2018; Gaona et al., 2019).

Andrews et al. (2021) identify changes to the social brain during adolescence that can be positioned alongside the older theories of Tajfel and Erikson. The social brain has been described as "the network of brain regions that are involved in understanding others" (Blakemore 2008, p.267). Changes to the social brain are relevant to post-16 transitions as they are theorised to occur at a similar point in the YPn's life.

Comparing adolescents to adults, Andrews et al. (2021) notes heightened sensitivity to peer rejection, and a greater influence of peers on pro-social and risk-taking behaviours. In addition to identifying changes in social priorities, social brain development also offers an understanding of *why* social priorities change during adolescence, in terms of physical changes in parts of the adolescent brain (the medial prefrontal cortex, and superior temporal sulcus, see appendix 2). Blakemore (2008) acknowledges the complexity of this work, with the possibility that, rather than changes to the adolescent brain influencing social priorities, new social situations in adolescence, and concurrently the transition to post-16 education, could drive social brain development.

Successful educational experiences, including transitions, have been associated with improvements in self-determination (Alsaeed et al., 2023). Self-determination theory (SDT, Ryan & Deci, 1985), hypothesises that self-determination is a product of combined feelings of: relatedness, connection to others and a sense of belonging; autonomy, choice and freedom

in activities; and competence, feeling effective (Ryan & Deci, 2020). Relatedness in this context could align with the concept of group identity.

Feelings of autonomy, through which a YP feels able to undertake tasks with independence or a sense of control, might relate in an educational setting to a personalised approach from staff. An example of support for autonomy would be a setting where a YPn is given an appropriate level of support to have educational needs met, whilst at the same time having sufficient opportunities to make choices about their educational journey (Hussey & Smith, 2010; Domen et al., 2020). The autonomy component of SDT is therefore significant for the statutory requirement for YP to be involved in the decision-making processes of transition to post-16 education (DfE & DoH, 2015).

The theories of Erikson (1950), Tajfel et al., (1979), and Ryan & Deci (1985) all contribute to an understanding of educational transitions. Brief review of these theories, alongside more recent social neuroscience, highlights an intertwinement of life-course and institutional transitions. The relevance of both types of transition gives cause to re-evaluate the PfA framework as it seems to be focused primarily on the life-course transition to adulthood. Skills for independent living make up majority of the PfA framework, perhaps not giving sufficient emphasis to some issues involved in future institutional transitions such as new social situations and changes in expectations for learning.

To clarify the relevance of theories discussed in this subsection, it is important to position them within the CHAT activity system. Changes in belonging and identity during transition to post-16 education can be positioned at the *outcome* node, as such developments are the results of mediation between the *subject* and other nodes. For example, peer relations are mediated by the *community* node, whilst support from key members of staff is mediated by the *division of labour node*

2.6 Transitions to Post-16 for YP with SEND – a Systematic Review

Themes introduced above, that is, CHAT, legislation, conceptualisations of educational and lifespan transitions, and psychological theories for transition, provide a base from which to further explore literature that has undertaken study of transition experiences. This deeper focus was achieved through a systematic review with qualitative synthesis. Relevant studies were identified through database searches, based on the ten steps described by Boland et al. (2017, see Appendix 3). Guidance for literature reviews indicates that Boland et al.'s ten steps need not be linear (University of Southampton, 2023). Steps from Boland et al., (2017) are therefore used as a loose framework rather than strict instructions. Key points from identified studies are collated through data extraction tables which then undergo qualitative synthesis to summarise the findings.

2.6.1 Research questions for systematic search

The systematic literature review aims to the following questions.

What are the key findings from research into the transition from secondary to post-16 education for young people in the UK with SEND?

How have these transition experiences been investigated in terms of data analysis, participants, and focus of study?

2.6.2 Planning and Scoping Searches

Planning and initial scoping searches took place early in the project, from September to December 2022. The purpose of scoping searches was to develop a rationale for the thesis and investigate the extent to which CHAT is used in transition research. Publications of interest were initially found using google scholar and downloaded. Concurrently, doctoral theses involving post-16 transition research were searched for through the British Library E-Theses Online Service (EThOS) repository.

2.6.3 Search Strategy

The review process was planned with post-it notes, shown in Appendix 4, and discussed in supervision. A systematic search was used to obtain a thorough view of what has been said about post-16 transitions in empirical studies, appropriate to doctoral level research. The type of literature in the review was doctoral theses, and peer reviewed studies in journals. The search was guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) flowchart (Page et al., 2021) shown in figure 2.4.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed to guide the search for relevant post-16 transition literature across a range of needs and research methods. Search criteria are shown in Table 2.3 along with an explanation of why each criterion was used.

Table 2.3

Inclusion and exclusion criteria used to guide searches

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Reason for criterion
Published since 2014	Published prior to 2014	Support for transition process and EP role is redefined since the CaFA / CoP (2015), so studies prior to 2014 are less relevant
Studies that researched the transition process from secondary education to post-16 education.	Literature reviews / meta analyses / book chapters.	This literature review process seeks to identify the findings of empirical research and to collate this to inform the current thesis
Based on studies in UK schools	Studies from outside of the UK	2014 legislation does not apply outside of UK. Thesis looks to identify local practice and explore this against the backdrop of the national context
1. Peer reviewed studies *Or* 2. Doctoral level theses	Blog posts, government reports, newspaper articles, other non-peer reviewed publications. M, or UG level theses	Evidence to inform this thesis needs to be rigorous, and of a high ethical standard. Peer reviewed articles and D level theses *should* meet this aim
Participants are YP identified with SEND, or have another distinctive	Studies where participants do not have an identified need.	This research seeks to explore support for the transition process in systems where the young person may be expected to find

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion criteria	Reason for criterion
need impacting their education.		transition to post 16 education more difficult than YP without identified needs.

The databases used were ERIC (Education Resources Information Centre), Pro-quest, and

Scopus for peer reviewed journals, along with EtHOS for theses. The search details and

terms used are shown below.

Table 2.4

Database search results

Database	Filters	Exact terms used	Number of results
ERIC	2014-present Peer reviewed Abstract search UK	Transition AND post-16 OR college OR sixth form OR further education	81
Scopus	2014-present UK	Transition AND "post-16" OR "college" OR "sixth form" OR "further education"	168
ProQuest	2014- present Peer reviewed Title search (abstract search 100,000+ results)	Transition AND "post-16" OR "sixth form" OR "further education"	131
EtHOS	2014-present Title search	Transition AND post -16 OR college OR sixth form OR further education	100

2.6.4 Screening and Selection

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were used to screen abstracts and titles from the search

returns. Papers and theses meeting the criteria were retrieved in full text (Boland et al., 2017,

step five) and read to determine if were suitable to be reviewed (Boland et al., 2017, step six).

These steps identified seven EP doctoral theses, one PhD study, and five peer reviewed journal articles. The PRISMA Figure below shows how the literature was screened to reach this point.

Figure 2.4

PRISMA process for identifying studies of post-16 transitions
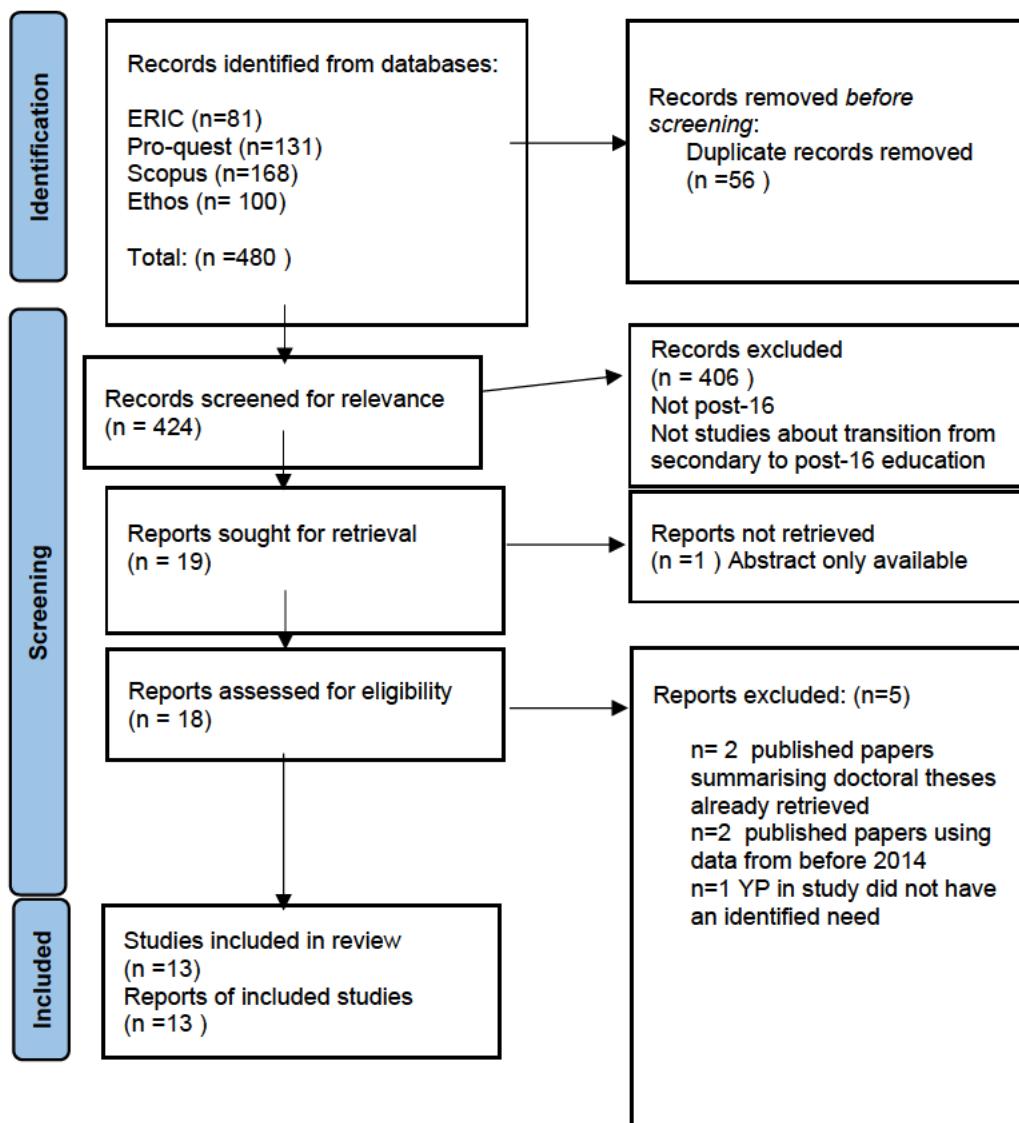
2.6.5 Data Extraction

The papers and theses selected for review are summarised through data extraction, shown in Tables 2.5 and 2.6.

2.6.6 Critical Appraisal

A critical appraisal process was used, the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme qualitative checklist (CASP, 2018). This was chosen as it is recommended for relatively inexperienced researchers owing to brevity and clarity (Majid & Vanstone, 2018). Twelve of the 13 studies met the CASP primary criteria of answering yes to the first two questions: *Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?* and *Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?* Further consideration was given to one doctoral thesis that used Q-methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis. The Q-methodology thesis was retained as it met all other inclusion criteria and made a relevant contribution to the review.

There were secondary points in the CASP prompts that studies were unable to meet in full, for example, it was not possible for all studies to utilise a second analyst to triangulate findings. However, the closely supervised nature of the work supported rigour in review. All the CASP questions along with comments on CASP prompt points that were queried are shown in Appendix 5.

2.7 Search Results

2.7.1 Data Extraction Tables

The results of the literature searches are presented through data extraction in Tables 2.5 and 2.6. Table 2.5 gives the basic details of each study through the data, origin (university or journal), transition focus, participants, and method of analysis. Table 2.6 provides further details of each study or paper, summarising the research questions, key findings, limitations, and implications for the present study.

Table 2.5

Study type, focus, participants, and method of analysis

Author	Year	Institute / Qualification	Post 16 Transition Focus and *setting type*	Participants	Method of analysis
Shepherd, J.	2016	Sussex PhD	Autistic YP *Secondary special ed. – mainstream FE college transition*	6 Autistic YP, parents, teacher / lecturers, careers advisors	Thematic Analysis (TA, Braun & Clarke, 2006)
Esbrand, T.	2016	Tavistock EP doctorate	YP with MLD (Moderate Learning Difficulties) , transition from *special 6th form provision to mainstream FE college*	3 YP, 3 parents	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith, 2009)
Hickey	2016	UCL EP doctorate	YP with SLD (Severe Learning Difficulties). *Special to mainstream with special unit*	5 YP with SLD (e.g. processing difficulties, language difficulties, autism, National Curriculum 'P' level attainment typically)	TA (Braun & Clarke, 2012)
Greenidge, D,	2016	UCL EP doctorate	Autistic YP from variety of settings transition into FE college. *Mainstream and special to mainstream*	7 Autistic YP, 6 parents, 7 professionals	TA (Braun & Clarke, 2012)
Manning, J.	2016	Sheffield EP doctorate	YP with EHCP – mainstream secondary – FE college transition (2 MLD, 1 autism). *Mainstream to mainstream*	3 YP with EHCP	IPA
Edwards, A.	2017	Birmingham EP doctorate	Transition for YP with SEMH needs. *Mainstream to mainstream*	6 Secondary staff, 7 FE staff, 5 EPs	Activity Theory & TA (but not called cultural historical activity theory)
Lawson, K.	2018	Newcastle EP doctorate	Experiences of YP with SEN in the transition to FE. *Special to special*	4 YP who transitioned to FE in the last two years. SEN needs MLD, inc. autism and down syndrome.	IPA

Author	Year	Institute / Qualification	Post 16 Transition Focus and *setting type*	Participants	Method of analysis
Longden, M	2019	Sheffield EP doctorate	What is important to YP with SEND in transition to post-16. *Mainstream to mainstream*	31 YP in post-16 education who are identified with SEND (not EHCP)	Q-methodology (McKeown & Thomas, 2013)
Mortune, C	2021	UCL EP doctorate	How supportive relationships facilitate transition to post-16 Education, Employment or Training (EET), for care experienced YP *Mainstream to mainstream*	12 care experienced YP, 5 professionals who have worked with them	TA (Braun & Clarke, 2013)
Essex, J., & Melham, P.	2019	Support for learning, 34 (10)	Experiences of autistic young women and staff who support them *Mainstream to mainstream*	4 autistic female YP 4 members of staff who have supported the YP	Phenomenological psychology. Semi-structured interviews coded into 12 categories
Packer, R., Abbinett, E. &, Morris, E.	2022	British Journal of special education 49 (3)	Exploration of stakeholder voices in the transition from secondary to FE for YP with 'ALN' (additional learning needs) *Mainstream & special to mainstream*	5 YP at FE college 5 members of staff at the college	Case study design, interpretative methodology (Coe et al., 2017) Online questionnaires, descriptive statistics. Focus groups and interview: TA (Braun & Clarke, 2006)
Gaona, C., Palikara, O. & Castro, S.	2019	British Education Research Journal, 45	Views and experiences of autistic YP in their transition from secondary to post-16 education *Mainstream and special to mainstream*	12 autistic YP (10 in Year 11, 2 at FE college) (11 special, 1 mainstream)	Semi-structured interviews, 'inductive thematic analysis with phenomenological approach' (Cresswell, 2013)

Author	Year	Institute / Qualification	Post 16 Transition Focus and *setting type*	Participants	Method of analysis
Park, J. & Mortell, J.	2020	Educational psychology in practice, 36(2)	Transition experience of autistic YP into FE *Mainstream and special to mainstream*	4x autistic YP at mainstream FE college	Grid elaboration method (Joffe & Elsey, 2014) TA (Braun & Clarke, 2014)

Table 2.6

Summary of research questions, findings, and limitations specified by authors

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
Shepherd, J.	2016	1. What are the aspirations, interests, capabilities and concerns of autistic YP as they leave school? 2. How well prepared are autistic YP for transition from special school to mainstream college? 3. How do autistic YP and their parents experience this transition?	1. Autistic YP have aspirations, interests and concerns as they progress towards adulthood; 2. That they seek and enjoy social interaction 3. That young people *and parents* need support during and after transition. 4. Some made reasonably smooth transitions to college, for others there were difficulties and challenges, almost entirely within the area of social interaction. 5. For autistic YP and learning difficulties to progress both academically and socially, needs greater understanding of autism within the whole college community 6. Attention needs to be given to personalising the transition process to ensure that these	Longitudinal research to carry out effectively difficult even within a PhD time scale. Research design could have been more participatory and involved ASD voices at this stage. Some of the data gathering methods proved not to match with comprehension and communication levels of the participants.	Multiple case design gives cross sectional views across a wider time scale, but with different participants (e.g. y10-13) An intentionally broad sample of needs to create broad picture of LA experience rather than spotlight on one area of need. Focus on support systems rather than experiences Mainstream secondary perspective

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
			young learners can realise their capabilities.		
Esbrand, T.	2016	1. What are the experiences of young people with moderate learning difficulties as they transition from a special educational needs school to post-school educational provision?	Three key themes found across all cases: 1. Adjusting to Change 2. Involvement and Support 3. Moving Towards Adulthood.	No limitations explicitly stated in text – *this is a limitation in a sense as it shows a lack of reflexivity*	Will outline limitations as part of reflexive approach
		2. What are parents/carers' experiences and understandings of their son or daughter's experience of transition to post-school educational provision from a special school for children and young people with learning difficulties?	"Research demonstrates the need for EPs to support professionals' understanding of emotional impact of transition and support for this."	IPA process thrives on rich data, which was not always obtained from Ps. In-depth exploration of implications for EP work, but without any EP voice in the study	RTA and CHAT more flexible tools in this regard. Brings in EP voice, even if contact with YP is limited in post 16 transition
Hickey, S.	2016	1. How do young people experience the initial transition to FE?	1.Friendship at college as a key experience and supportive factor.	Small sample limits generalisability.	Explore the contextual nature of qualitative research, acknowledge generalisability not an aim.
		2. What did the young people identify as supportive and challenging factors when beginning college?	2. Positive feelings about learning and social opportunities available once settled 3. Family supports identified as significant in the transition to college. 4. Sense of loss experienced in missing their friends from school.	Additional adults present in some interviews was felt to impact YP openness Does not include pre transition experiences	This may also be necessary and form a limitation, however may also be unavoidable for ethical reasons Plans to look at pre and post transition experiences cross sectionally.

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
			5. Tiredness as a challenging factor in their experiences of college		Mainstream secondary perspective rather than special education
Greenidge-Scott, D.	2016	1. What are the views and experiences of YP w/ASD transitioning to FE 2. What are the views of parents regarding this transition? 3. What supports or hinders access and the successful transition of YP w/ASD into FE college 4. What are the roles of professionals in supporting YP w/ ASD with their transition to FE college. 5. What are the views of parents and professionals on national local initiatives that exist in the relation to this process.	1.Transition from SE more successful than transition from mainstream 2. Co-ordination between professionals improves transitions 3. Opportunities to visit FE college prior to transition improve the process 4. Adults making decisions without considering YP needs / views hindered transition 5.Better understanding of ASD is needed for professionals working with this age-group 6. EPs need to work more closely with FE providers to help support this age group/	Small sample size owing to several factors mainly GDPR related limitations on communications and information in recruitment. Gender imbalance in sample, which reflects ASD diagnosis rates Longitudinal (e.g. two time point interviews) not possible Member check not carried out and felt that this would have strengthened validity EP voice not included but acknowledged this would be useful Would have liked views of healthcare professionals Language barrier limited the depth of answers in one case	This limitation has been mirrored in the recruitment for this thesis. Gender appears less of an issue as of July owing to a broader sample base Potential benefit of multiple case design with cross sectional element (see above) Checking main findings with participants could be used in this study, credited to Greenidge-Scott (2016) EP voice is an important part of this research This is not currently planned owing to anticipated difficulties in recruitment

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
Manning, J.	2016	1. How do young people who have an EHCP experience their preparation for a post-16 transition from secondary school to FE College? 2. How is the post-16 transition experienced by young people and what does it mean to them?	Key themes *1. Self determination* - Self understanding - Agency in decision making - Self-belief *2. Supportive relationships* - Personal support - Systemic support - Belonging - Experiencing friendship *3. College as enabling* - Course-centred opportunity - The college environment *4. The experience of change* - Being prepared - Managing change	YP experiences came after only 1 year at college Issue with IPA with this population as rich data can be hard to obtain and therefore the interpretative elements harder to access as a double hermeneutic Using more creative data collection techniques in addition to spoken word may have helped	Aiming to speak to YP in Year 13 as well as Year12 Multiple systemic layers being sampled so YP voice is only one part of this activity systems. Using TA over IPA is also more flexible. Non-spoken answer formats are being offered to participants where this is identified as helpful
Edwards, A.	2017	1. What supports the transition of young people with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs into further education? 2. What constrains the transition of young people with SEMH into further education? 3. What is the role of the EP, if any, in the transition process? 4. How are secondary schools and FE colleges working	Recommendations: 1. Developing clear role definitions within the transition process, 2. promote support and continuity for young people in the time between leaving school and beginning college, 3. developing new tools to support learners at the level of SEN support 4. ensuring aspirations and targets set for young people are realistic and achievable.	Possibility of researcher bias acknowledged. YP voice was not obtained and would have been a useful addition to the data	This research is not claiming to be positivist or objective – the words of the participants have to be interpreted through the analysis process to generate themes that can be mapped onto CHAT framework YP voice will hopefully be obtained across the Year 10-13 age-range.

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
		together in the transition process?			
Lawson, K.	2018	1. How do young people with EHCPs make sense of relationships during transition to further education? 2. How might young people's constructions of relationships help to prepare them for adulthood?	1. Importance of relationships with other YP & staff: relationships in FE are different to those in school pre-transition 2. College seen as a stepping stone to adulthood, with increased levels of independence 3. YPs voice is crucial in improving & understanding transition processes.	Generalisability & IPA – see above Gatekeeping approach from college principal was at odds with the ethically driven aim of giving young people autonomy throughout.	See above re. subjective / interpretative / contextual research This issue mirrored in current thesis recruitment process.
Longden, M.	2019	1. What do young people find important in their transition to post-16 educational placements	Q methodology yielded 5 factor solution to the RQ 1. People at the college were helpful and caring 2. Adults helped YP to prepare for new experiences 3. YP felt respected and supported emotionally but did not always need help 4. Mental health support was key 5. College was a fresh start	One, instead of two focus groups were used to generate the Q-sort items Q-methodology was found by some participants to be restrictive in terms of how they expressed their views	Looks at a wider systemic perspective rather than a YP centric approach Semi-structured interview schedule aims to give participants chance to be heard and not directed in their answers.
Mortune, C.	2021	1. What are the concerns, needs or anticipated needs of care experienced YP during	1. SEMH identified as the biggest need for CE'd YP in transition to post 16	Would like to have included more views from people with	It is hoped that the support systems focus will involve people who have worked most

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
		transition from KS4 to post-secondary participation in EET 2. What factors facilitate young people's active participation in EET and how do they attribute these to their own outcomes? 3. What are professional partner's views on supporting young people to successfully participate in EET	2. Foster carers and school mentors most valued sources of support 3. EPs are an untapped resource in this transition	whom the YP have the closest relationships such as foster carers, social workers, support workers. 17 Ps means a large data set which was at times unwieldy using TA, and perhaps actually narrative accounts from a smaller sample could have better answered the RQs.	closely with the YP, even if this means extra data collection Framework analysis is being used as a tool to inform the CHAT analysis, so there will be a similar issue here with interview transcripts to analyse
Essex, J., and Melham, P,	2019	What factors facilitate a smooth transition for young women with High Functioning Autism (HFA) as they move between secondary school and post-16 education?	1. Transition planning is primarily academically focused 2. Ad hoc transition processes can place undue burden on parents / carers 3. Transitions should be systematically planned over an extended period to include social, and organisational aspects 4. 'Taster' experiences are important 5. Post transition, support should be maintained until YP is settled	None explicitly mentioned Some recruitment challenges seemed to be linked to school concerns about parent-school relation / capacity for YP to undertake interview at many of the schools who were contacted Acknowledged as a small sample (normal in qualitative studies)	A broader range of needs being considered and therefore would expect broader range of transition experiences. Parental voice also sought.
Packer, R., Abbinett, E., & Morris, E	2022	Are current planning and practices in one FE setting effective in supporting learners	1. Value of strong learner-practitioner relationships 2. Importance of peer support networks	None explicitly mentioned	

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
		with Additional Learning Needs (ALN) ? What are the experiences of YP with additional learning needs ? What role do education professionals play in the transition process?	3. Benefits of central safe space for pupils with ALN, accessible at all times	Focuses on Bronfenbrenner as a guide to analysis but does not seek parental (e.g home system views)	
Gaona, C., Palikara, O. and Castro, S.	2019	Not stated – inferred from study aims What are the experiences of autistic YP in their transition to FE? What are the meanings of these lived experiences in the light on 2014 SEND legislation in England.	1. YP in study ambivalent about change and transition 2. YP in study also seek increased independence at this stage 3. YP in study have strong awareness of peer, school and family supports, though some of these are push / pull at times. 4. Strong links between secondary and FE are critical to transition processes.	EHC only, so views of non EHC pupils could also be useful. Only one YP in mainstream, research skewed to specialist settings. Views of other SEND than ASD might also be useful	Contrast by only recruiting within mainstream, though this comes with some limitations of its own. Seeking to look at broad cross section of needs
Park, J., Mortell, J.,	2020	Not explicitly stated. Study aims to empower the voices of autistic YP regarding their transition experiences. What do they say about transition and what we can learn and understand from this.	6 themes identified: 1. Resilience – overcoming challenge 2. Growth and development - new experiences and independence 3. Relationships – positive bonds with staff 4. Mental well-being -access to support with this can be difficult in new setting	Passage of time recall could mean inaccuracies Not generalisable, though this research is not meant to be Follow up interviews may have provided opportunities to gather	Partially addressed through the different time points of different participants. This would also be useful in the present study but was not possible due to time constraints.

Author	Year	Research Questions	Findings	Limitations identified by authors	Implications for this study
			5. Agency – feelings of increased autonomy and knowing strengths 6. Understanding difference – feeling misunderstood / judged	more information about important experiences.	

2.7.2 Participants

Sections 2.7.2 - 2.7.5 expand the search results with further information about participants, transition type, methods of analysis and limitations. Section 2.7.6 explains the process of synthesis, illustrated through mind mapping in Figure 2.5.

From the 13 studies identified, 12 had YP as participants, and the study that did not (Edwards, 2017) identified this as a limitation. Table 2.5 shows that autism was the most common need among the studies, with four studies seeking the voices of autistic YP (Shepherd, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Essex & Melham, 2019; Park & Mortell, 2020). Six of the studies involved school staff (Shepherd, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Edwards, 2017; Mortune, 2021; Essex & Melham, 2019; Packer et al., 2022) whilst three involved parental views (Shepherd, 2016; Esbrand, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016). One study in the review sought the views of EPs (Edwards, 2017).

In the reviewed literature two studies used EHCPs as a participant criterion (Manning, 2016; Gaona et al, 2019). Participants in Hickey (2016) all had Statements of Educational Need, an older equivalent to an EHCP, indicating that the needs of these YP were assessed before 2014. Packer et al., (2022) used Additional Learning Needs as a criterion (ALN), a Welsh category equivalent to an EHCP.

2.7.3 Transition Type

Transitions from mainstream secondary to mainstream further education settings took place in five of the studies, with a further four involving transition from mainstream secondary to a mixture of mainstream and specialist further education settings. Three studies involved transitioning from a specialist secondary setting to a mainstream post-16, and one study involved transition from specialist secondary to specialist post-16. Table 2.7 shows information about the types of transitions that were studied in the reviewed literature.

Table 2.7

Transition types and studies across the literature review

Transition type	Studies in literature review
Mainstream secondary to mainstream post-16	Manning (2016); Edwards (2017); Longden (2019); Mortune (2021); Essex & Melham (2021)
Mainstream OR specialist secondary (mixture within study) to mainstream post-16	Greenidge-Scott (2016); Packer et al. (2022); Gaona et al.(2019); Park & Mortell (2020).
Specialist secondary to mainstream post-16	Shepherd (2016); Esbrand (2016); Hickey (2016)
Specialist secondary to specialist post-16	Lawson (2018)

2.7.4 Limitations

Ten of the 13 studies specifically identified limitations. Three did not, though some limitations could be inferred (Esbrand, 2016; Essex & Melham 2019; Packer et al, 2022).

Not being able to conduct longitudinal research was identified as a limitation in four studies (Shepherd, 2016; Hickey, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Park & Mortell, 2020). For three studies a lack of generalisability was noted (Manning, 2016; Lawson; 2018; Park & Mortell, 2020). Relatedly, four studies noted a small or narrow sample as a limitation (Hickey, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Goana et al., 2019; implied as an issue in Essex & Melham, 2019).

In qualitative studies, findings are often embedded in context and therefore generalisability is less relevant (Schwarz-Shea & Yanow, 2012). An unnecessary focus on sample size and generalisability in qualitative research has been referred to as "positivism creep" (Braun & Clarke, 2022, p.7) as it involves imposition of positivist ideals onto research that is interpretative in nature

2.7.5 Method of analysis

Five of the studies used Thematic Analysis (TA, Braun & Clarke, 2006; Braun & Clarke, 2012). A further three used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith et al., 2009) with two studies using hybrid approaches described as phenomenological thematic analysis. Q-methodology (McKeown & Thomas, 2013), Grid Elaboration Method with TA (Joffe & Elsey, 2014), and CHAT with TA were each used once. Table 2.8 summarises types of analysis that were used.

Table 2.8

Analysis methods across the reviewed literature

Method of analysis	Studies in literature review
TA	Shepherd (2016); Hickey (2016); Greenidge-Scott (2016); Mortune (2021); Packer et al. (2022);
IPA	Esbrand (2016); Manning (2016); Lawson (2018)
Hybrid "Phenomenological TA	Essex & Melham (2019); Gaona et al. (2019)
Q-methodology	Longden (2018)
Grid elaboration with TA	Park & Mortell (2020)
Activity Theory with TA	Edwards (2017)

2.7.6 Synthesis

A mind map (Figure 2.5) was created to visually represent synthesis of the data extraction tables. Wheeldon and Ahlberg, (2017) propose mind mapping to be a valuable visual tool for the analysis, synthesis, and presentation of qualitative data. Freehand maps initially summarised information into strands representing participants, methods of analysis, limitations, transition type, and key findings. The strands were then developed a single mind map summarising all the data.

The key findings of the studies illustrated in the main mind-map (Figure 2.5) were extracted from the discussions and implications of studies, as this was where the studies summarised their findings. Larger mind map bubbles were created by bringing together similar findings that could be represented by a single idea. For example, support from peers and support from staff were subsumed into the larger notion of the importance of support in transition. In this process the larger mind map bubbles in the findings sector are equivalent to themes in a thematic analysis process: Braun & Clarke (2022, p.77) define a theme as "A pattern of shared meaning organised around a central concept".

Figure 2.5

Synthesis mind map of systematic search results
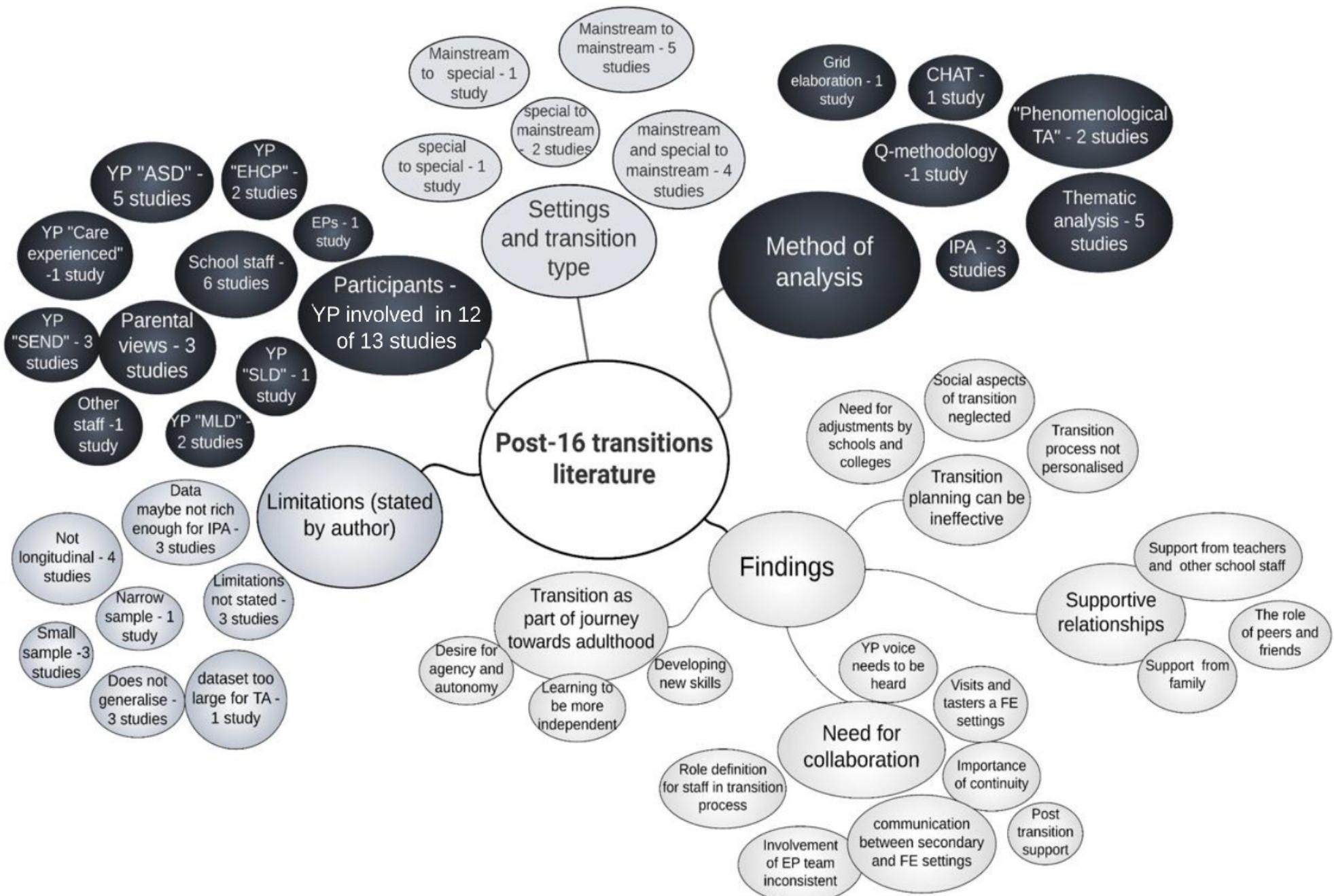
2.7.7 Findings Across the Studies

Through the synthesis process, findings in the studies that shared underlying meanings were combined to identify four primary findings:

1.) Transition as a journey towards adulthood.

2.) Supportive relationships and their importance.

3.) A need for collaboration and continuity.

4.) Transition planning can be ineffective.

2.8 Discussion of main findings in the reviewed studies

2.8.1 A Journey Towards Adulthood

Perceptions of post-16 transitions as part of a journey towards adulthood were identified in the synthesis of studies. Experiencing a journey towards adulthood was identified as a feature of successful post-16 transitions, typified by descriptions of college as a fresh start (Manning, 2016) and college as an enabling environment (Longden, 2019). Subthemes of the journey to adulthood were: YP's desire for greater independence (Gaona et al. 2019); YP's increased feelings of autonomy (Park & Mortell, 2020; Lawson, 2018); increased self-determination and agency in decision-making (Manning, 2016; Park & Mortell, 2020).

YP seeking greater independence in a journey to adulthood (Goana et al., 2019) may also drive their involvement in transition processes. There were examples where schools and colleges facilitated YP to be involved in their transitions (Longden, 2019), segueing into the next key finding below, concerning the importance of relationships.

2.8.2 Supportive Relationships

Supportive relationships were identified as an important aspect of transitions to post-16 education, subdivided into: support from school staff and other professionals (Manning, 2016; Lawson, 2018; Mortune, 2021; Packer et al., 2022; Gaona et al., 2019; Longden, 2019); support from friends and peers (Hickey, 2016; Manning, 2016; Packer et al., 2022; Gaona et al., 2019); and support from family and home (Hickey, 2016; Mortune, 2021; Gaona et al., 2019). The importance of supportive relationships connects with the exploration of psychological theories and social brain development as discussed in Section 2.5.

2.8.3 A need for Collaboration and Continuity

Collaboration between families, schools, and other professionals was a topic discussed across the reviewed literature. The importance of the YPn's voice in the transition process was raised specifically in Greenidge-Scott, (2016) and Lawson, (2018), and was inferred in other studies: for example, Shepherd (2016) highlights the need for a personalised transition plan, which is not possible without attending to the YPn's voice. Greenidge-Scott (2016) noted that transitions were hindered when decisions were made by adults without adequate consideration of the YPn's views.

The importance of the YPn's voice is, again, inextricable from 2014 legislation (DfE & DoH, 2015, p126). Studies where the YPn's voice is underrepresented in transition planning are thus reflective of practice that is at odds with statutory requirements for YP with EHCPs.

The role of EPs in collaborating to support post-16 transitions was discussed in studies by Esbrand (2016), Mortune (2021), Greenidge-Scott (2016), and Edwards (2017). A consistent message was that EPs are underused in the post-16 transition process. On reflection, the EP role brings transferrable skills that could be beneficial to transition planning, such as consultation and problem solving for challenging situations. The Atkinson and Morris (2018) review of EP involvement in post-16 transitions concluded that increased EP involvement

could bring greater consistency in transition planning. Nevertheless the situation can be summarised by a quote from a participant in Edwards (2017, p.90) "EPs in college is not a thing".

Effective communication between secondary schools and post-16 settings was found to benefit the transition process (Essex & Melham, 2019; Goana et al., 2019), and the benefits of continuity in transition are highlighted (Essex & Melham, 2019; Longden, 2019; Edwards, 2017; Greenidge Scott, 2016; Packer et al., 2022). These two areas seem linked, as a smooth transition with good continuity is unlikely to occur unless there is sound communication between settings. For example, Essex and Melham (2019) note the success of taster days at colleges, however these are only effective if there is sufficient organisation between settings to enable YP to access these. Longer term continuity in transitions is explored by Packer et al. (2022, p.463-4), who call for educational transitions to be treated as an "on-going process" and not a "one-off event" . Similarly, Essex and Melham (2019) suggest that transition support should remain in place for as long as necessary until the YPn is settled.

2.8.4 Transition Planning can be Ineffective

Parts of the reviewed literature emphasised less successful aspects of transition to post-16 education. Among six YP, Shepherd (2016) found contrasting examples of smooth and disrupted transitions. Difficulties in transition included feelings of isolation and loss (Hickey, 2016), as well as anxiety and lower attendance (Shepherd, 2016). Review of the included studies revealed a range of hindrances which were opposites of the facilitators described in the sections above e.g. *lack* of: collaboration, continuity, communication, and *unsuccessful* relationships across different areas.

Barriers to smooth and successful transitions were also described. Barriers included insufficient focus on social, emotional and mental health aspects of transition (Mortune, 2019; Park & Mortell, 2020); inadequate staff awareness of educational needs (Greenidge-Scott,

2016); *ad hoc* and impersonalised transitions (Essex & Melham, 2019; Shepherd, 2016); unclear roles for staff involved in transition processes (Edwards, 2017); tiredness and social isolation experienced by YP (Hickey, 2016). These barriers contribute to the rationale for further research into post-16 transitions to identify how they can be better supported in the context of one specific LA. Under the CHAT framework the identification of contradictions within and across systems will be a key part of the analysis of ineffective aspects of transitions in the current thesis.

It is notable that inconsistencies in transition processes highlighted in earlier literature reviews also remain present. In a review of transition literature spanning 2000-2014, Carroll (2015) identifies a similar profile of facilitators and barriers in 15 studies across Europe. A summary of relevant findings is presented below.

Table 2.9

Summary of barriers to transition, 2000-2014 (after Carroll, 2015)

Aspects of successful transitions	Aspects of difficult transitions
Friendships highly valued as a support (Palikara et al., 2009)	Social relationships difficult for autistic YP in transition (Whitehouse et al., 2009)
Successful relationships with key school staff a significant contribution to smooth transition. Some YP thriving post-transition. (O'Riordan, 2011)	Support for transition not adequate, YP not involved in process. Ward et al. (2003).
YP taking an active role in their transition experiences (Carroll & Dockerell, 2012)	Transition can be rushed and with less continuity for YP with higher needs compared to non-disabled YP. (Caton & Kagan, 2007).
Family support highly valued (Carroll & Dockerell, 2012; Billstedt et al., 2011), as well as other local support systems (Aston et al., 2005).	Resources for transition at social and personal levels not sufficient for YP with educational needs (Dyson et al., 2002).

Despite examples of successful experiences in the papers reviewed in this synthesis, there is also evidence that the 2014 legislation (DfE, 2014, DfE & DoH, 2015) may not have made

the intended impact on the process of transition to post-16 education. Specifically, the consistent involvement of YP in planning their transition and provision of appropriate supports may be key omissions.

2.9 Literature Review Conclusion

Through data extraction, mind mapping and discussion, this systematic review of literature highlights key themes in research into post-16 transitions: a journey towards adulthood; supportive relationships; collaboration and continuity; ineffective aspects of transitions.

The review also illuminates an arguable gap in the body of research. Very little literature looks at post-16 transitions from a multiple systems perspective that includes the voices of YP, parents, school and college staff, and EPs or other LA professionals. To comprehensively analyse the complex activity system of post-16 transitions through CHAT, these systems need to be given voice.

In particular, the synthesis above identifies post-16 transitions as an area where EPs can make an increased contribution (Esbrand, 2016; Mortune, 2021; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Edwards, 2017). The remit of EPs has been to work with YP aged 0-25 since 2014 (see Atkinson et al., 2015) and post-16 work is yet to become embedded as a consistent part of the EP role, a decade later. This study therefore includes exploration of the EP role in post-16 transitions, and factors that might contribute to a lack of EP involvement.

Chapter 3: Method

3.1 The Research Journey

The purpose of Chapter 3 is to explain and rationalise decision points in the research process. To guide researchers, aspects of research are visually represented in the *research onion* (Saunders et al., 2019, p.130), reproduced in Figure 3.1. This chapter presents each layer in turn. The driver behind research decisions is the suitability of each decision to answer the research questions. The research onion does not contain a section relating to ethical considerations, so this has been inserted below, as ethical issues had to be accounted for in planning the research.

Figure 3.1

Research onion diagram, from Saunders et al., (2019, p.130)
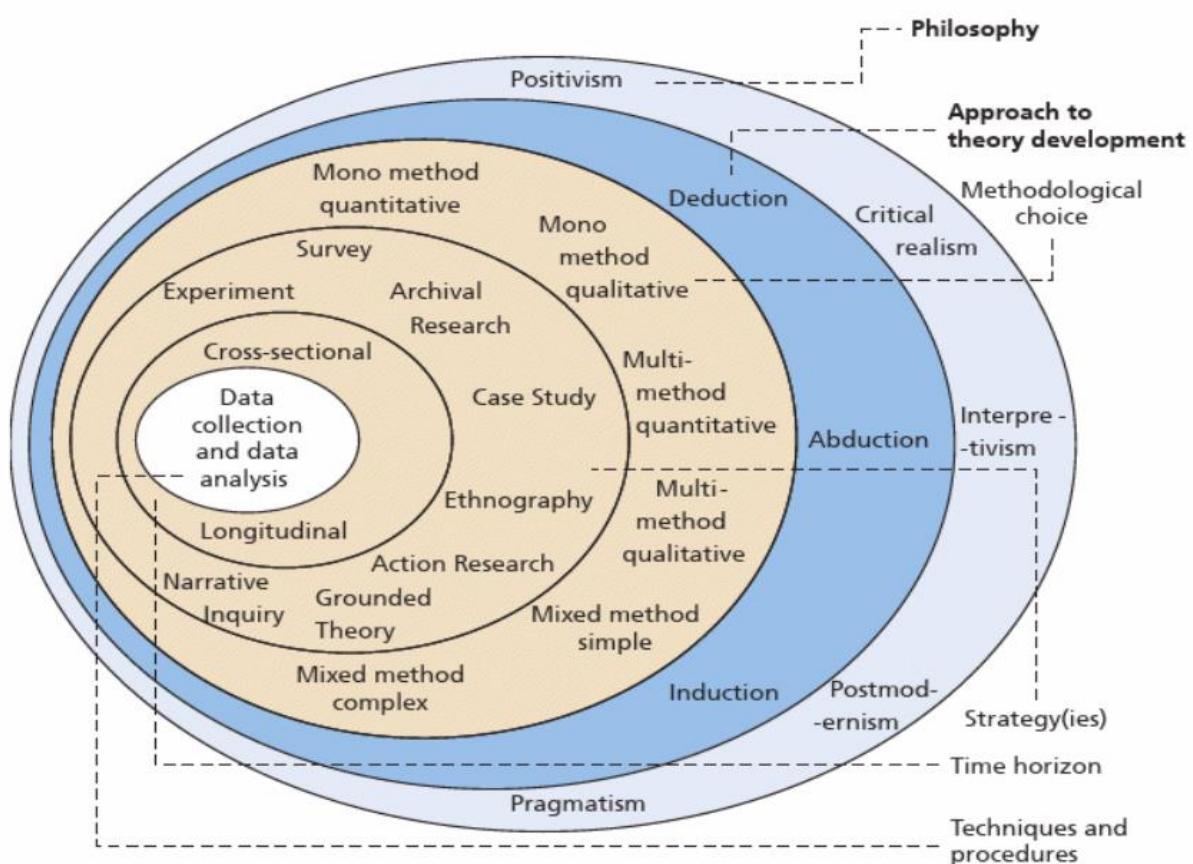
3.2 Research Philosophy

CHAT has been rationalised as a suitable framework through which post-16 transitions can be explored, as outlined in Section 2.2. The philosophical implications of using CHAT are explored below, and a position for the study is defined.

CHAT is described as a meta-theory (Igira & Gregory, 2009), not wedded to a specific ontology or epistemology. For clarity, ontology refers to a position on the nature of reality, whilst epistemology refers to a position on the nature of knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2012). A philosophical position in CHAT is instead guided by research questions. In this study CHAT analyses post-16 transitions as a single activity system across a LA context. The role of the researcher involves interpreting the accounts of the participants and giving voice to the breadth of the activity system, addressing the research questions about how transitions are supported.

This study can be aligned with a social constructionist epistemology, and an interpretivist ontology. A social constructionist position accepts that our knowledge of the world is understood through specific historical and cultural contexts, rather than universal truths (Burr, 2015). The post-16 transitions LA activity system constructed in this research is culturally and historically unique, because if different people had been recruited, there would be differences in how the system is represented.

In social constructionism, a culturally and historically constructed view of the world is proposed to be constructed through language. Accordingly, interpretative study of socially constructed phenomena is tied to understanding the meanings of people's accounts (Sullivan 2010). A historical perspective is key to CHAT, and interviewing the same participants at different stages in their educational, professional, or parenting journeys would also change how the system is constructed.

Engeström (2000) defends a social constructionist, interpretivist position for CHAT through a metaphor about umpiring baseball games that compares different philosophical positions (Simons, 1976). The umpiring metaphor is developed below in Table 3.1, preferring tennis to baseball, with the purpose of clarifying social constructionism through a CHAT lens. Table 3.1 is important, because consideration of other philosophies and what they can and cannot bring to the research helps cement the position for this study.

Table 3.1

The 'four umpires' research philosophy illustration (after Simon,1976, and Engeström, 2000).

Umpire	Umpire's view on scoring	Umpire's ontology	Umpire's epistemology	Equivalent for post-16 transitions and CHAT.	Suitability for this research
1 The positivist	Points are awarded to the player who wins them. Points exist irrespective of the umpire. Their job is just to announce the score.	Realist – points are real measurable events	Positivist – knowledge of the score comes from measuring it objectively	Using a questionnaires or psychometric inventory to measure levels of support in post-16 transitions: scores are mapped on to different nodes of the CHAT system.	This philosophical position does not answer the research questions which are about how transition are supported happens, not how much they are supported
2 The critical realist	Points are awarded if the umpire perceives a player has won them. Points are real in the game but depend on the umpire's unique perspective to decide them.	Critical realist – other views such as the line judge or hawk-eye technology are valid, but the umpire uses their own perceived reality to call the point	Contextualist – the umpire's knowledge of the score is derived from their perspective in the umpire's chair	Each participant will have their own valid perspective so is the subject of their own CHAT system. Edwards (2017) adopts this view by using separate CHAT systems for each type of stakeholder.	This philosophical position does not answer the research questions at a LA systemic level, and is based more on a series of individual systems.
.3 The social constructionist	Points do not exist, until the umpire awards them.	Interpretivist – the umpire interprets the course of play and then reifies the point based on this interpretation.	Social constructionist – knowledge of the point is created through the umpire's words or gestures.	The CHAT system for post-16 transitions is constructed by the participants and what they say about, it and the researcher interprets what is said to define the system.	This position is suitable to answer the research questions but does not a holistic view of the activity system –the researcher themself is sheltered in the division of labour node of the CHAT system.
4 The CHAT umpire	**Umpire 4 sees the points in the same way as umpire 3 , but further understands tennis holistically and is aware that rules for scoring is different in doubles tennis, wheelchair tennis, and that rules have changed over time.**	**Interpretivist, and with a strong awareness of how cultural and historical aspects of the game may influence scoring systems within the game.**	**Social constructionist, and with a strong awareness of cultural and historical elements of the game.**	**The researcher still defines the system but also sees post-16 transition as a complex multi-voiced system, which needs a multi-voiced representation that takes different cultural and historical positions into account**	**This position allows an exploration the research questions across the entire CHAT framework.**

Drawing on Engeström's argument, this study adopts the position of the fourth umpire, seeing activities as complex and multi-voiced systems.

3.3 Approach to Theory Development

In this subsection the deductive and inductive elements of the research process are explained. Consideration is given to how this study builds on the findings of the literature review.

Using CHAT as a framework brought deductive elements to the research, as the nodes created a deductive frame with pre-imposed areas of analysis. McDonald et al. (2023) present a precedent for a hybrid deductive framework that is analysed inductively. Framework analysis, as used in this study, (see Section 3.9) can involve predetermination in the initial coding categories (Gale et al., 2013).

Subthemes were identified under each CHAT node inductively. The semi-structured interview schedule (see Section 3.8) is oriented to the research questions, rather than the CHAT nodes, and the CHAT nodes were not explained to participants. Codes in the analysis process were allocated to CHAT nodes, and the grouping of these codes based on patterns of reference was an inductive process.

This study develops existing theory by looking at support for post-16 transition across a LA system. Where the findings of this study added new perspectives to the outcomes of the literature review, theoretical models were synthesised to represent these findings.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

The research was conducted with reference to the British Psychological Society (BPS) code for Human Research Ethics (BPS, 2021). Ethical planning of the research involved taking steps to address risk, valid consent, and issues of confidentiality and data protection. The

study received ethical approval from the University of Birmingham on May 31st 2023, see

Appendix 6. The ethical issues and potential risks arising are summarised in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2

Ethical issues, actions, and outcomes in the research process.

Ethical issue identified	Actions taken	Outcome
Some participants are classed as vulnerable by BPS as they are under 16, and have special educational needs. (BPS, 2021, p.10)	Rigorous consent process and consideration of capacity to give consent.	All participants were deemed to have capacity to give consent.
Capacity to give consent (BPS, 2021, p.18)	Capacity to give consent was based on a definition by Lewis & Porter (2004). To have capacity to give consent a YP must: - Be able to understand what they are required to do in the research. - Be able to communicate decisions either verbally, by pointing, or by marking a yes or no box on the consent form. - Be able to retain what they are asked to do and understand their rights during the interview.	
Valid consent needs to be obtained. (BPS, 2021, p.12-16)	See Appendix 7.1 and Appendix 7.2 for sample consent forms, which were shared and explained again prior to interview.	Participants were deemed to have understood the consent process and consented or not consented to participate. Consent was considered robust – one YPn aged 18 gave consent independently, whilst those under 18 gave consent and a parent also gave consent for them to be involved.
Research with YP and parents potentially involves an unequal / unbalanced relationship (BPS, 2021, p.24).	Gatekeeping letters (7.3) were sent to SENCos which were shared with school leadership for approval of the research.	The selective process meant that recruitment numbers were small. Some settings never replied to the initial gatekeeping letters.
There is a risk that recruitment and consent could feel coercive	SENCos used their knowledge of YP and families to identify potential participants for	There was no indication that the process was coercive: for example, One YPn, one LA professional, and

Ethical issue identified	Actions taken	Outcome
	distribution of information letters (appendix 7.4). This was based on the SENCo's professional opinion on the likelihood of YP and parents engaging in the research.	two parents who were contacted did not consent to participate.
I have a role in some LA settings as a TEP, so establishing my identity as a researcher in this process was important. For example, I did not want my interviews with YP to mistaken for an intervention or assessment.	My role as a researcher was clarified in the letters.	
Talking about previous experiences could cause distress for YP and other stakeholders (BPS, 2021, p.9).	Clarification of right to pause or terminate interview at any point to all participants. STOP card for YP to indicate wanting to stop. Interview schedules (see Section 3.8) had reminders incorporated that the interviews could pause or stop at any time. I made a conscious effort to apply active listening skills in the interviews to attune to any signs of distress.	YP people remained in a positive mood and were engaged throughout the interviews. Parents talked about systemic frustrations at various points, but did so in a calm reflective way and did not present as upset or emotional in the interviews.
Participants should not be identifiable through their data. (BPS, 2021, p.19.	All participants and locations were given pseudonyms and participant numbers.	Risk of identification was minimalised.
There is a risk that EPs and LA professionals and College staff might be identifiable through their job titles. Identification of YP and parents was a minimal risk due to the size of the LA.	Specific role titles were changed to be less identifiable and more generic.	EPs from the LA reading the research might be able to identify one of the other EPs or LA professionals. The ethical standards to which EPs are expected adhere further minimises this risk.

Ethical issue identified	Actions taken	Outcome
Data should remain confidential (BPS, 2021, p.21). There is a risk that information concerning names and contact details could be linked to participant data. Consent paperwork and audio recordings contain the names of real people and schools.	Audio recordings were made on Teams with a LA device, which had the additional protection of having an encrypted hard drive. Recordings were transcribed onto a personal laptop using pseudonyms and stored on OneDrive and backed up on BEAR, the University's secure online portal. Data with real names was not stored in the same location as anonymised data. Paper copies of consent forms are stored in a locked drawer and will be shredded in confidential waste after the study is completed. The analysis of transcripts and subsequent write-up took place only on personal laptop, separate from LA devices.	The risk of anonymised data being linked to real names and schools was minimised.
Participants need to understand their right to withdraw their data from the study. (BPS, 2021, p.7)	Consent forms (see appendices 7.1 & 7.2) and conversation on the day of the interview explained that data could be withdrawn without giving a reason up to two weeks after the interview.	None of the participants asked for their data to be withdrawn.
There is value in debriefing participants following the research. The research did not involve deception or withholding information so an immediate debrief was not deemed necessary. (BPS, 2021, p.26).	When thesis findings and implications have been clarified (study completion) anonymised key findings will be shared with participants, with the opportunity for further conversation offered.	Participants will have clear idea of what the study findings were, and will be able to relate the findings to their individual contexts.

Transparency is needed about the steps that were taken to ensure valid consent for

participation. In addition to reading and signing an initial information letter to express interest,

all participants also completed a consent form with me in our initial conversation prior to

interview (see appendices 7.1 & 7.2). Each point on the consent form was also explained

verbally to ensure understanding. The consent form reiterated the purpose of the research,

how the data would be used and stored, the right to withdraw, the confidential nature of the research, and the use of anonymity.

To account for a range of educational needs, additional information forms were prepared using simplified language and visual supports (see appendix 7.5). In the case of pupils under 16 parental consent was also needed for them to take part in the study. Because parental interviews took place prior to YP interviews, this was built into the conversation with parents and obtained using a parental consent form.

3.5 Methodological Choice

3.5.1 Rationale for Qualitative Methods

This subsection briefly clarifies rationale for the approaches to data collection used in this study. Well-established key differences between qualitative and quantitative research are summarised below.

Table 3.3

Qualitative and quantitative research summary, after Braun and Clarke (2013)

	Qualitative research	Quantitative research
Purpose	Answer "how" and "why" questions	Answer "how much" and "what" questions
Data type	Words, other symbols, observation	Numerical
Approach	Interpret	Measure
Analysis	Grouping of common data based on patterns of meaning	Statistical analysis

A qualitative methodology seeks to generate rich data, insights, perspective, and meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Willig, 2008). This is done through the analysis of words and textual information. A qualitative methodology is used in this research as it is appropriate to the research questions, which are concerned with how things are happening. *How* transitions are supported, *how* can the EP role be developed, and *how* support is perceived were all important parts of the research questions.

The discussion of research findings takes place through discussion of subthemes identified under each of the CHAT nodes. The prominence given to subthemes is based around two factors: the relevance of the sub-theme to the research questions, and the density of coding around that theme.

This study also uses numerical information to support the data analysis. Sandelowski (2001, p.230) describes the avoidance of numbers in qualitative research as "the anti-number myth", whilst Todd et al. (2004) explain that using numbers to support and illustrate qualitative data is different from using quantitative measurement to claim an understanding of a phenomena. In this research a heat map (Table 4.2), highlights numerically which participants were talking the most about particular issues.

3.5.2 Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research

This subsection highlights trustworthiness and rigour as essential considerations in qualitative research, as lack of rigour can lead to research that is misleading (Enworo, 2023). Lincoln and Guba (1985) define trustworthiness through four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Stahl & King, 2020). Table 3.4 below explains how this study took account of Lincoln and Guba's (1985) criteria.

Table 3.4

Criteria for trustworthiness and how they were addressed in this study

Citeria	Key issues for rigour and trustworthiness (Enworo, 2023; Stahl & King, 2020)	Evidence in this study
Credibility	Do the reported findings represent truthfully and accurately what the participants said?	Maintaining reflexivity helped to refine and keep in mind the meaning of what participants were saying across the weeks of interviewing and analysis.
	Are the findings believable – do they stand up to critical scrutiny?	A reflexive approach was taken by memoing throughout the data analysis. See appendix 10 and Section 3.9.2
		Initial thoughts were also noted in the original transcripts as they were typed See Appendix 9.1
		The findings and discussion chapter uses participants' own words in illustrative quotes to support the reported findings and discussion.
Transferability	To what extent could the findings apply to other settings or other stakeholders?	This study acknowledges that other stakeholders may have had different experiences and that other LAs may have different systems in place for transitions to post-16
		Readers are invited to reflect on whether the findings in the contexts from this study resonate with other contexts that they, the reader, are familiar with.
Dependability	Could the study be replicated if the conditions and settings remained constant?	There is a documentation of the analysis process through audit trails (see Section 3.9.2, and Appendix 9.1-9.9)
		Explanations are given for ethical considerations (Section 3.4,), recruitment, (Section 3.6.3) interview schedules (Section 3.8), and data analysis steps (Section 3.9.3).
		A replication study would still expect to vary as the participants will have moved further forward in their transition journeys.

Citeria	Key issues for rigour and trustworthiness (Enworo, 2023; Stahl & King, 2020)	Evidence in this study
Confirmability	Could the findings be confirmed by other researchers?	The following key points from above support confirmability:
	To establish confirmability requires the above three criteria to be met (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).	- A reflexive approach through memoing - Thorough use of participant quotes to illustrate inferences - Documentation of data gathering and analysis -Acknowledgement that the data gathered represents a place in time for participants. -Contextual information for participants, settings, and LA.

3.6 Study design and context

This section explains why a case-study design is appropriate to the research aims, and what type of case study design is used in this study. Context is a crucial feature of a case study (Yin, 2014), so an overview of the LA is established and explored. To add further context, details are given about who the participants were.

3.6.1 Case Study Design

Yin (2014, p.4) explains that case studies are used to "contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational social, political, and related phenomena." Rationale for using a case study is explored in Table 3.5 below by comparing this study with the five defining features of a case study (Willig, 2008, p70-71).

Table 3.5

Features of case studies, after Willig (2008)

Case study feature	Summary	Relevance to research aims
Ideographic perspective	Concerned with the features of a case rather than generalisation to a wider population	The activity system is positioned as particular to the unique contributions of the participants and is built from their contexts.
Attention to contextual data	Takes a holistic view of a case: there is a focus on how the features of case interact with the context such as local environment.	This study explores a LA context, and different perspectives within the LA.
Triangulation	Brings together data from a range of sources to probe the area of research	The YP's transition and EP role are central to the research questions, however the activity system needs to be multi-voiced and this research brings in the voice of schools, parents, and the LA.
A temporal element	A concern with how situations change over time through processes of change and development	This study looks at past present and future experiences for participants and has a cross sectional element as YP of different ages are interviewed
A concern with theory	The importance of generating theory, or of clarifying or extending existing theories	This study reflects on how psychological theory is relevant to the transition process and looks to contextualise theories from the literature review

Four initial types of case study that were considered, outlined by Yin (2014, p.50). These are summarised below in Figure 3.2, followed by a brief example of how this might be reflected in post-16 transition research in Table 3.6.

Figure 3.2

Basic types of design for case studies, from Yin (2014, p.50)
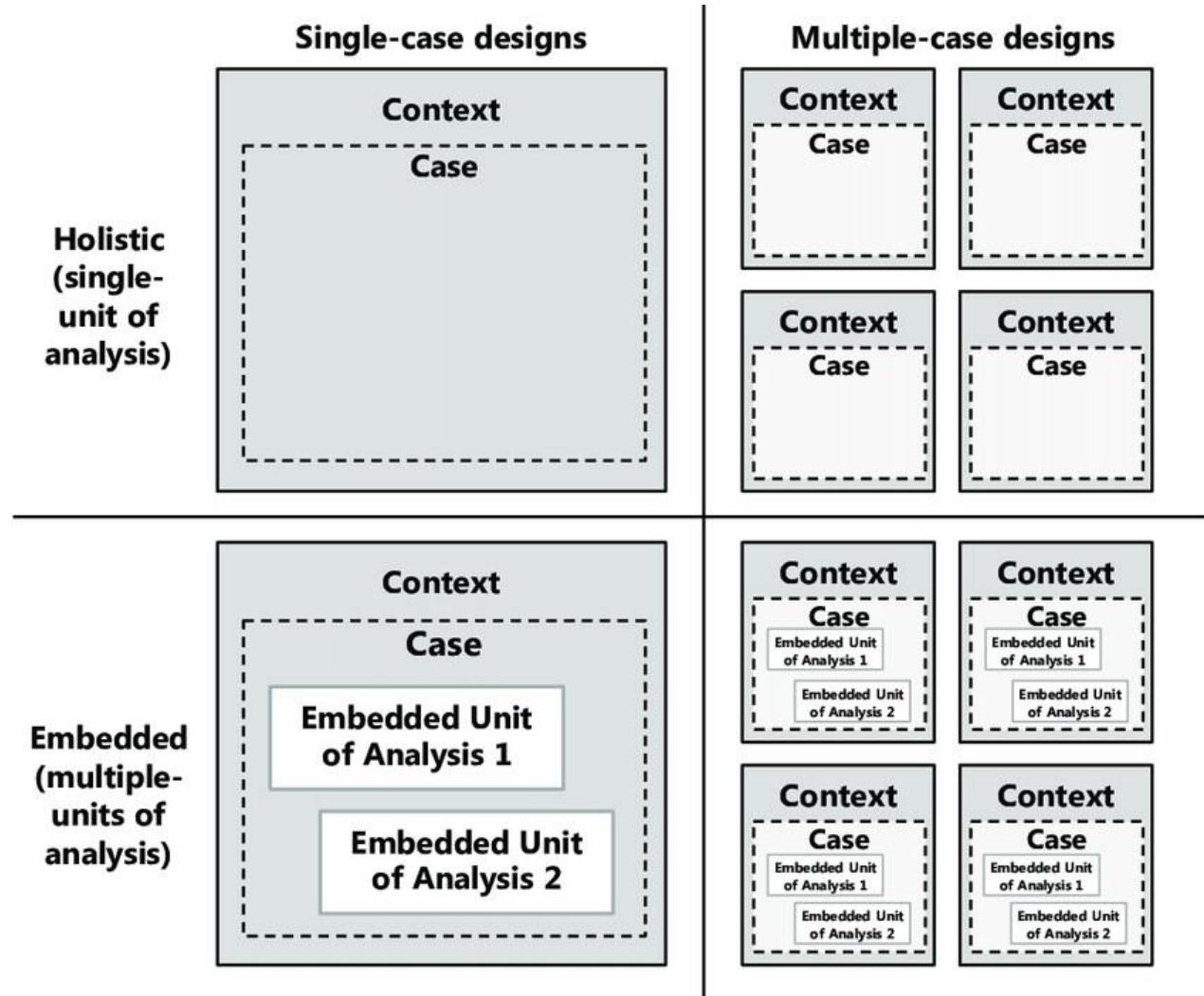
Table 3.6

Types of case study design from Figure 3.2

Type	Description	Example in post-16 transition research
1	Single-case holistic design, top left	The journey of one YP in their transition to post-16
2	**Single-case embedded design, lower left, used in this study**	**Multiple transitions studied with a single context, the LA activity system. The case study analyses this context**
3	Multiple-case holistic design top right	Multiple transitions studied, each written up as separate cases with separate contexts
4	Multiple-case embedded design	Within multiple contexts such as in different local authorities or countries, each context contains multiple transitions that are studied

This study adopts the design of a type 2 case study, shown in lower left quadrant of Figure 3.2, as the case context contains 16 embedded units of analysis which are the accounts of the participants. These accounts all contribute to the understanding of a single activity system.

Yin (2014) identifies limitations for single-case embedded designs. Focus on individual experiences of participants may become a series of comparisons between them and not address the LA activity system holistically. Wider limitations of case study design such as subjectivity and lack of generalisability (Coolican, 2004; Willig, 2008) can be mitigated by acknowledging and accepting the grounding of the research in its context.

3.6.2. Local Authority Context

The LA where the research took place is an essential context for the case study design. A brief overview of the LA is necessary to clarify this context.

The LA is a West-Midlands urban area with approximately 345,000 inhabitants (Office for National Statistics, 2021). Just under half of the school-aged population come from an ethnic minority background (Office for National Statistics , 2021). In comparison to the West-Midlands

region, the LA has a higher-than-average proportion of pupils identified with SEND (15.8%, with regional average of 13.7%, England average 13.0%), and a lower-than-average proportion of pupils with an EHCP (2.3%. with regional average of 3.0%, England average 3.1%) (DfE, 2023).

In the LA, a multi-professional SEND support service contains the following teams:

- Complex communication
- Educational psychology service
- Early years SEND
- Sensory team
- Social, emotional, mental and health for learning (SEMH-L)
- LA SEND Support Service

The LA has 32 mainstream, state-sector secondary schools with 22 mainstream sixth form provisions and one large college of further education. The College has over 5000 students, over 100 with EHCPs. The participants included YP from two mainstream secondary schools, one sixth form provision, and two from the College: this narrow representation of the whole LA further strengthens the rationale for seeing the activity system as a snapshot view.

3.6.3. Recruitment Process

This subsection explains how participants were recruited. Recruitment was purposive, as the study only includes YP with EHCPs in mainstream education who represented the research questions (Coolican, 2004). Participants with differing needs were sought so that a broader range of supports would hopefully be identified in the data. Of the five YP whose experiences were studied, two had similar needs (autism) with the other three having different needs. The steps in the recruitment process are summarised below.

Table 3.7

Summary of recruitment process

Phase	Actions	Reflections
Gatekeeping	SENCO forwards a letter explaining research to school leadership (SLT) to gain permission for research to take place (see appendix 7.3)	SLT slow to reply and needed reminders in all cases. For three settings there was no reply at any point.
Family contact	SENCo sends letters to families of YP with EHCPs in Years 10 and 11 and secondary school, or Year 12 and 13, at sixth form and college (see appendix 7.4)	SENCos were keen to help but typically only sent letters to a small number of parents who they thought would engage
Parental reply	Parents reply to SENCo or to me directly	There were 5 replies in all including after follow-ups from SENCos.
Stakeholders contacted	School staff and EPs who knew the YP were sent letters by email or spoken to in person. Other LA team members were also recruited in this way.	This had fewer delays. One school was able to commit to an interview as the TA who knew the YP was off work long-term.
Interviews with parents	These took place through Teams and were prior to the interview with the YP.	Two parents did not wish to be interviewed but their daughters both consented to be interviewed as they were over 16
Meet with YP	Informal conversation. Outline of the consent form and completion of form if YP agreed (see appendices 7.1, 7.2, & 7.5)	One YP was not interviewed as they did not want to engage but were agreed for me to speak to their parents.
Interview YP	This took place on the same day as initial meeting in 2 cases and in 2 other cases was arranged for a different day	There was not always time to do the interview on the same day as the initial meeting, but it was done where possible.

3.6.4 Participants in the Study

Table 3.8, below, summarises who the participants were and how they are connected to each

other along with other key information.

Table 3.8

Participant information summary

Participant number	Pseudonym and gender f=female m=male	Category*	Role / needs / other information
1	Ab (f)	Young Person 18 years 7 months	Ab has global developmental delay, and an EHCP since primary school. She attends a large further education College, in Year 13.
2	Ginny (f)	Young Person 16 years 1 month	Ginny has complex life-limiting medical needs and dyslexia. She has had an EHCP since Year 8 (age 12-13). She attends mainstream secondary school, in Year 11.
3	Eddy (m)	Young Person 14 years 10 months Year 10	Eddy is autistic and has had an EHCP since Year 7 (age 11-12). He attends a mainstream secondary school, in Year 10.
4	Serena (f)	Young Person 17 years 2 months	Serena has speech and language difficulties, dyslexia, and complex medical needs. She has had an EHCP since Year 6 (age 10-11). She attends a large further education College, in Year 12.
5	Hannah (f)	College staff	Learning Needs manager at the College. Has worked with Ab and Serena. 1 year in post.
6	Olivia (f) / Roberta (f)	School staff	SENCo and Inclusion Manager at Serena's secondary school – interviewed together. Experienced in post.
7	Joanne (f)	School staff	SENCo at Ginny's secondary school. Experienced in post.
8	Sarah (f)	School staff	Pastoral Lead at Liam's school. 2 years in post.
9	Nicky (f)	Parent	Nicky is Liam's mother.
10	Bryony (f)	Parent	Bryony is Ginny's mother.
11	Cath (f)	Parent	Cath is Eddy's mother.
12	Penny (f)	EP	An Educational Psychology Service (EPS) Manager in the LA. She has worked with Liam.
13	Kaz (f)	EP	A main grade Educational Psychologist in the LA. She has worked with Serena.
14	Ted (m)	EP	A specialist Senior Educational Psychologist. He has worked with Eddy.

15	Raj (f)	'Aspire' Careers	An Operations Manager for LA and neighbouring Shire county LA – works with YP and other stakeholders to help identify suitable provision for post-16 education
16	Rich (m)	LA SEND service	Post-16 EHC Plan Coordinator (PLANCo). Experienced in post.
N/A	Liam (m)	YP 16 years 9 months	Liam is autistic. He did not wish to be interviewed, however he was happy for me to speak to Nicky, his mother, and Sarah, Pastoral Lead at his school. He attends a sixth form in Year 12, attached to a mainstream secondary STEM[3] Academy (Years 10-13).

*Ages at time of interview

Table 3.9 illustrates that there were gaps in the overall picture for each participant, reflecting challenges in the recruitment process. Nevertheless, as an overall dataset the views of stakeholders across the activity system were covered.

Table 3.9

Illustration of gaps in recruitment

Category	P1	P2	P3	P4	P N/A
YP	Ab	Ginny	Eddy	Serena	Liam (**not interviewed)**
Parent	**Not interviewed**	Bryony	Cath	**Not interviewed**	Nicky
School staff	Hannah	Joanne	**Not interviewed**	Olivia / Roberta	Sarah
EP	**Not interviewed – no longer in LA**	**Not interviewed – no longer in LA**	Ted	Penny	Kaz
Other	Raj Careers staff relevant to entire system	Rich (Post-16 PlanCo) relevant to entire system			

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[3] A mainstream setting that focuses on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths

This table adds to the rationale for looking at the entire activity system as a single case. Viewed as five individual cases, each YP had at least one stakeholder view missing. However, viewed across all participants, a system-wide view began to be assembled. The flexibility of the CHAT framework and single case embedded designs facilitated the building of an overall picture when elements of individual datasets are missing.

3.7 Time Horizon

The YP were interviewed at different stages in their transition to post-16, so it is necessary to look at implications for the timeframe of the research.

This study planned to interview YP before and after transition to post-16 education. Delays in the ethical approval and recruitment meant that this was not possible. Instead, the sample is cross-sectional with participants from Year 10, 11, 12, and 13. This allows for perspectives to be gathered from YP at different stages in their transition to post-16. As a result, some accounts involve retrospection, and others involves projection into the future.

Participants were interviewed at different dates. The mother of one YPn was interviewed early in September, and some supports for transition had not had time to come into effect at that point. However, an interview with a school representative took place later in October and filled in some of the gaps from the parental interview[4].

A wider reflection on timeframe in this research involved conversations with LA stakeholders who were able to reflect on how the activity system has changed over time. The history of a system is important in CHAT as a key feature of tertiary contradictions, as explained in Section

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[4] The parent was also contacted for a second interview to further triangulate this information but did not respond.

2.2. The of historical context for a case is also defining feature of case study designs, as outlined above in Table 3.4.

3.8 Data Collection

Data collection took place through semi-structured interviews. All the parents were interviewed online, and all the YP were interviewed in person, with professionals being a mixture. Semi-structured interviews typically use an interview schedule with a relatively small number of open-ended questions (Willig, 2008). The purposes of the semi-structured interviews were as follows:

- To break down the research questions in to smaller, discrete questions that were relevant to the status of each participant.
- To infuse (rather than explicitly mention) nodes from the CHAT framework, keeping an inductive dimension in the research.
- To further explore findings from the systematic literature review, but with flexibility to move to new areas.
- To bring historicity into the data gathering process through reflecting on past experiences, the present situation, and how things might be in the future.

The topic areas, and the types of questions that were asked are summarised in Table 3.10 below. Differing question schedules were developed for the interviews with each stakeholder group as there were different experiences being explored. Examples of complete interview schedules are shown in Appendix 8.

Table 3.10

Interview schedule topics, and question examples

Question topics (and link to CHAT)	Example questions (selected examples from pre and post transition interview schedules)
• Establish context for each participant: subject node	**YPn (pre transition) –** What are your perceived strengths and challenges in current setting? how is Year 10 / 11 compared to Year 7-9 ? **Parent (post transition)-** How is YPn finding post-16 education compared to their Year 11 secondary setting? **School SEND staff & EPs** How have you been involved in working with the YPn?
• Transition journey of the YPn: object & rules nodes, CHAT historicity.	**YPn (post-transition) –** How did decide what you would do in post-16 education **Parent (pre-transition) -** How was the transition from primary to secondary education? How will they choose what to do at post-16? **School SEND staff (post transition) –** How do you think YPn is managing their work in post 16 setting? **EPs –** How did your work with the YPn support the process of transition to post-16 education?
• Support from schools and LA (communities, division of labour and tools node).	**YPn (pre transition) -** Who supports you in school? What support might you need when moving to post-16 education? **Parent (post transition) -** How has then YPn been developing skills for adulthood and independence? **School SEND staff (pre-transition) -** How will the YPn be supported in planning their transition to post-16 education **EPs –** What are the barriers and facilitators to working with older YP.
• Social supports (communities node).	**YPn (post transition) –** How have friends / peers supported you in the transition to post-16 education?

Question topics (and link to CHAT)	Example questions (selected examples from pre and post transition interview schedules)
	Parent (pre transition) – What supports are important to the YPn, outside of school? How might these help in the transition to post-16 education
	School SEND staff (pre transition) – What is your perception of how YPn is supported by their friends and peers? How might this change in the transition to post-16 education.
	EPs/ other LA professionals – How do you work with families or other communities to support transitions to post-16 education
• Aspirations of the YPn, with SEND in the LA (outcomes node).	**YPn (pre-transition) –** What do you want your post-16 education to lead to? What supports might be needed to help you achieve your goals in post-16 education?
Aspirations of adult stakeholders, for supporting YPn.	**Parent (pre transition) –** What positive changes might come from the transition to post-16 education? What might the challenges be?
	School SEND staff (post-transition), EPs, other LA staff– What skills and continuing professional development might benefit you in working with YP in their transitions from secondary to post-16 education?

In planning interviews, it was anticipated that some participants could have needs that included speech, language, and verbal comprehension. Some questions in the interviews had second versions planned using simplified language to make the content more accessible.

3.9 Data Analysis: The Framework Method

3.9.1 Steps of the Framework Analysis Process

A thorough explanation and audit trail of how findings were drawn from the data is a crucial part of establishing trustworthiness in the research process (see Section 3.5.2). This

subsection introduces framework analysis (FA, Gale et al., 2013) as a data analysis method, and explains why it was considered suitable in this study.

FA is closely allied with thematic analysis (Gale et al., 2013). In FA, codes based on patterns of meaning within qualitative data are combined into subthemes that represent a particular issue of interest. Subthemes were collated under the CHAT nodes that they related to, using Nvivo 14 software (Lumivero, 2023), as CHAT nodes were pre-designated as over-arching themes (see Section 3.3). Concurrently a CHAT activity system diagram was constructed. The purpose of organising the subthemes around the nodes of the activity system triangles was to visually bring to the fore the network of connections between the nodes, and how they mediate each other towards the *object* and *outcome* nodes

An example of the FA analysis process, as applied to a sample theme, is shown in Section 3.9.3, and illustrated step-by-step in Appendices 9.1-9.10. First, the general steps of the FA are explained, following the outline in Gale et al., (2013).

1.) *Transcription of the audio recordings*. The data was transcribed verbatim, but did not include annotations to illustrate pauses, inflections, or other features of speech. This is because FA is concerned with the content of the data rather than analysis of the discourse.

2.) *Familiarisation with the interview*. During the transcription process, memoing in the margins took place when data resonated with the research questions or CHAT nodes. In this context a memo can refer to anything in the transcript of interest.

3.) *Coding the transcripts*. All transcripts were transferred to an Nvivo file to enable data analysis by software. Coding took place through reading a transcript and labelling short passages of interest (codes). Each code was allocated to a relevant node of the CHAT framework. Further memos were also added in Nvivo whenever a query or point of interest arose, explored further in Section 3.9.2 below. When a passage

in the transcripts resonated with existing codes, they were collated, evolving into subthemes.

4.) *Charting and refining the framework matrix.* FA is characterised by a matrix where coded data is allocated to cells. In the matrix each row represents a participant, whilst columns represent themes, organised by CHAT node. The FA grid facilitates quick referencing within a relatively large dataset (Srivastava & Thomson, 2009). The initial *all data matrix* was generated automatically by Nvivo to contain all codes and subthemes. There were iterative steps to refine the *all data matrix* into a *summary matrix* that could be reported and used to guide the reporting of findings. Table 3.10 (below) serves as a flow chart encompassing charting and refining, with examples of all steps illustrated in Appendix 9. The process of generating a summary matrix with Nvivo is further explored in Parkinson et al. (2016).

5.) *Mapping.* In mapping, themes from the *summary matrix* are written up as an analytical narrative (Gale et al., 2013). Through discussion of illustrative quotes, mapping connects the main subthemes from each activity node with the research questions, literature–review findings, psychological theories, and CHAT systemic contradictions.

3.9.2. Memoing for Reflexivity

The importance of a reflexive approach to research is highlighted in Section 3.5.2, and has been proposed as an important aspect of credible qualitative research. Memoing took place throughout the analysis process, with memos recorded in Nvivo to keep all the analytical information organised in the same location. Memos were used in lieu of a research journal to record my thoughts and ideas during the analysis process, helping to inform the coding and mapping steps. Memos were categorised according to their topic.

There were discrete sets of memos for reflections on participant interviews, CHAT contradictions, themes that could be combined or divided, codes that came to mind to re-

check for in the data, and specific subthemes. Memos varied in their length and level of detail. Appendices 10.1-10.3 show three exemplars, connected post-interview memos relating to Ginny (YP), Joanne (SENCo at Ginny's school), and Bryony (Ginny's mother). Appendix 10.4 shows much shorter reminder-style memos for code checking.

3.9.3 Framework Analysis Audit Trail

The purpose of this subsection is to illustrate how the analysis process distilled data from the transcribed interviews to arrive at the subthemes that are discussed in the findings chapter. This is done firstly through an audit trail that illustrates analysis steps for an exemplar subtheme, *Importance of the SENCo role,* within the *division of labour* node, shown in Table 3.11. Secondly, a thematic hierarchy, moving from a CHAT node, to subthemes and descendent themes is illustrated through examples from the *outcome* node, shown in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.11

Data analysis audit trail for the 'Importance of the SENCo role' subtheme

Appendix	What is shown in Appendix 9 illustrative examples	What was done in the analysis
9.1	Initial highlighting of comments in word transcript	Comments were highlighted and identified as codes during the transcription process
9.2	Further examples of SENCo subtheme highlighted in transcript in Nvivo	The complete transcript was read and re-read, with codes highlighted and organised in the coding structure. Coding stripes show which lines of text were designated to each code. The example shown is from Bryony [Ginny's mother]
9.3	Collected codes for SENCo subtheme are shown from across different participant transcripts	Nvivo collates all the codes for a particular subtheme from so they can be read together
9.4	Illustration of SENCo subtheme in the Nvivo coding structure	The SENCo theme is shown in relation to the other subthemes in the Division of Labour node.

Appendix	What is shown in Appendix 9 illustrative examples	What was done in the analysis
9.5	Collected codes for SENCo role subtheme as shown in sample from the *all data matrix* generated by Nvivo, with all the coded data	The *all data matrix* is very large with 46 columns (all subthemes) and 16 rows (all participants). It was automatically generated from codes and cases in Nvivo. The example shows data from Kaz [EP], Bryony [Ginny's mother], and Nicky [Liam's mother]
9.6	Sample from 'master matrix' . Subthemes of each CHAT node are brought together in a column as illustrative quotes.	The *master matrix* has 7 columns (1 for each CHAT node) and 16 rows (all participants). The example given shows the division of labour data for Nicky, [Liam's mother] with the SENCo role summary quote highlighted. It was created by hand from the 'all data matrix' by re-reading and refining the data.
9.7	Sample from 'summary matrix' (body text, Table 4.2)	The *summary matrix* is a summary of the *master matrix*, and is used to report the findings in the thesis text. Subthemes are summarised under each of the main CHAT nodes.
9.8	Excerpt from thesis Section 4.3.4.2, discussion of SENCo role subtheme	The discussion is brief and concise with two quotes illustrating the support parents have had from SENCo. The subtheme is part of the wider discussion of the division of labour node.

Some subthemes contained distinctive codes, which I further divided into separate themes, referred to here as descendent themes. Descendent themes remain representative of their parent subtheme, however they have a purpose of illustrating more nuanced patterns in the data. Figure 3.3 below shows one example of the analytical hierarchy. Appendix 9.9 shows the same hierarchy in the Nvivo coding structure.

Figure 3.3

Example hierarchy of CHAT node, subtheme, and descendent theme
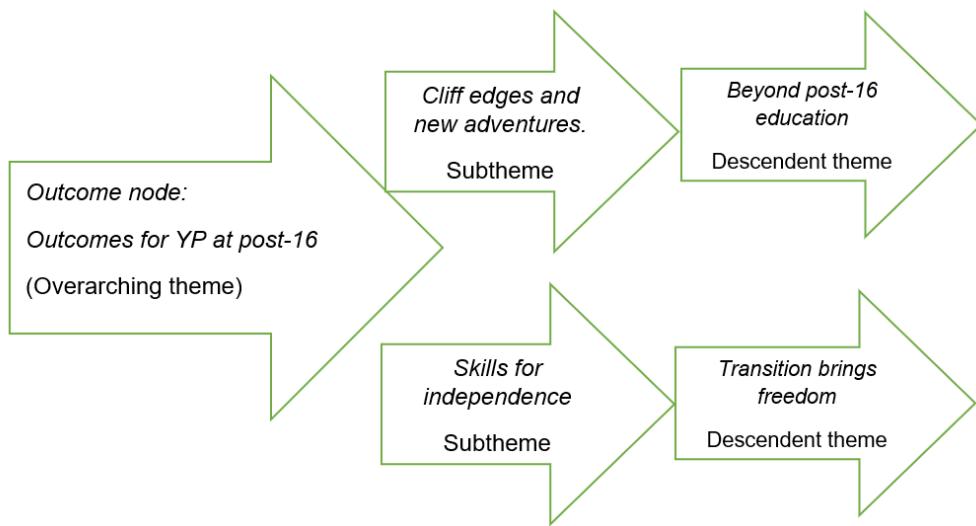
In comparison to the themes reported in the findings, there was initially a larger number of candidate descendent themes. However, review of the codes led to the conclusion that some candidate themes did not represent ideas that were significantly different from their parent subtheme and were subsumed back into the subtheme in the reported findings.

Chapter 4: Findings, Discussion and Synthesis

4.1 Findings and Discussion Overview

The research findings are presented with an integrated discussion, relating an interpretive account of the data analysis to the theoretical considerations and context for this study. Braun and Clarke (2022) note that separation of results and discussion in the traditional scientific method assumes results are reported as an objective set of findings. Conversely, qualitative research is often embedded in a particular applied and theoretical context. An integrated discussion therefore allows the researcher's interpretation of data to be reported in the context of relevant theory and literature (Braun and Clarke 2013), recontextualising existing ideas to build new understandings of a topic.

The discussion and synthesis of the findings has the following aims:

1. Explore the findings of the research in the context of the research questions:

- RQ 1: *How are young people with EHCPs supported by school, home, and other agencies in the transition from mainstream secondary education into post-16 education?*

- RQ 2a: *How do young peoples' perceptions of the transition process relate to the perceptions of stakeholders in the systems around them?*

- RQ 2b: *How is preparation for adulthood supported in the transition process for these young people?*

- RQ 2c: *Do EP services contribute to the transition process, and how can this role be developed?*

2. Discuss the research findings against the backdrop of the systematic literature review conclusions to add depth to existing understandings of post-16 transitions for YP with EHCPs.

3. To consider the findings in view of psychological theories relevant to transition in this phase of education, and to draw upon these where appropriate to present a synthesised conceptual model of transitions.

4. Highlight activity system contradictions, and discuss the scope for these to inform systems developments in the LA.

The presentation of findings is organised as follows:

- The CHAT activity system diagram is presented first, to illustrate subthemes and descendent themes that were categorised under each node of the CHAT framework (Figure 4.1).

- A table of themes (Table 4.1) gives a brief definition of each of the subthemes and descendent themes.

- A thematic heatmap (Table 4.2) highlights where certain themes were of greater relevance in the data. This is done by showing coding density across all participants, allowing for patterns in thematic references to be easily recognised.

- The framework matrix summary (Table 4.3) provides a rigorous qualitative overview of the data for each participant, mapped on to the activity system nodes. The summary in Table 4.3 is derived from participant quotes, recorded in a much larger master matrix organising the full data set. Section 3.9 and Appendix 9 explain the analysis process in detail.

- The order of discussion for the activity nodes is explained in Section 4.3.

- Analytical commentary covering each node of the activity system is offered in Sections 4.4-4.10.

4.2 The Activity System.

The CHAT activity system summarising the study findings was constructed through the analysis process outlined in Section 3.9. The final subthemes and descendent themes identified within each overarching activity node are illustrated in Figure 4.1 below.

Figure 4.1

Activity system diagram
representing study findings

Node: Tools

Subthemes: Support from EHCP. PfA is inconsistent.

Descendent themes:

Assessment and intervention. Support from technology.
Accessibility at setting.

Node: Object.

Subthemes:

Making decisions for transition.

Academic goals for transition.

Descendent themes:

Transition planning and timeframe.

Communication for relationships.

YP's basic needs.

Node: Subject

Subthemes:

YPn's profile of strengths and needs.

YPn's journey towards transition.

Descendent themes:

Obtaining YPn's voice.

Primary to secondary transition.

Node: Outcome

Subthemes:

Skills for independence

Cliff edges and new adventures

Descendent themes:

Transition to post-16 brings greater freedom

Thinking beyond post-16

Node: Rules

Subthemes:

Statutory processes for EHCP.

School rules.

Descendent themes:

2014 legislation.

Funding for SEND.

Parents and YP construct their own rules.

Node: Community

Subthemes:

Peer group: support and challenge. Parents and families.

Descendent themes:

SEND community. Medical community

Node: Division of Labour.

Subthemes:

Collaboration across and within systems.

Defining the EP role in post-16 transitions.

Importance of SENCo role.

Descendent themes:

Strategic and reactive EP work.

Barriers to EP involvement with older YP.

Specific supports in schools.

Table 4.1, a table of themes, presents all the identified themes along with a short definition. The purpose of Table 4.1 is to summarise the thematic structure that was identified, expanding on the audit trails and hierarchy examples given in Section 3.9.2.

In the analytical commentary (Sections 4.4-4.10), only those subthemes and descendent themes that resonate most closely with the research questions, literature review, and relevant psychological theories are presented. This approach allowed some of the major subthemes to be explored in greater depth. The table of themes is therefore a useful preview for the interpretive analysis to follow (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

Table 4.1

Table of nodes, subthemes, and descendent themes

Node	Subthemes (S) and *descendent themes* (D). Themes featuring in later analysis are in **bold**	Definition
Subject	**YPn's profile of strength and needs(S).**	This subtheme highlighted contrasts between the YPn's strengths and what they find challenging. Information about the nature of the YPn's SEND.
	LA obtaining YPn's voice (D).	In this descendent theme LA professionals emphasise the importance of gathering Ypn voice in planning for transitions.
	YPn's journey towards transition (S).	This subtheme illustrates some of the changes and adaptations YP have encountered in their education so far.
	Primary to secondary transition (D).	In this descendent theme, previous transition experiences were explored. All the YP found the primary to secondary transition challenging.
Outcome	**Developing skills for independence (S)**	This subtheme encapsulates the skills that YP have developed through their transition to post-16 education, and skills that YP anticipate a need to develop
	Thinking beyond post 16 (*D*).	This descendent theme explores YPns aspirations for their education or career after post-16 education, and is incorporated into *skills for independence*

Node	Subthemes (S) and *descendent themes (D).* Themes featuring in later analysis are in **bold**	Definition
	Cliff edges and new adventures (S).	This subtheme represents the contrast between transitions where change is minimalised compared to those where a new and different situation is embraced
	Transition brings freedom (D).	This descendent theme explores how transition to post-16 education led to perceptions of increased autonomy and freedom
Object	**Making decisions for transition (S).**	This subtheme explores how YP and made decisions about transition to post-16 education, and how other stakeholders were involved in these decisions.
	Transition planning and timeframe (D).	This descendent theme highlights the importance of early planning for post-16 transitions, and some of the issues that lack of timely planning can cause
	Academic goals for transition (S).	This subtheme is focused around the academic requirements for transitions to post-16, and the potential barriers that academic requirements created
	Communication for relationships (D).	This subtheme highlights some of the impact of successful and difficult communication between YP and stakeholders, and overlaps with *transition brings freedom* in outcomes
	YPn's basic needs (D).	This descendent theme encompasses basic needs such as routines for sleep, well-being, and personal safety
Division of labour	**Collaboration across and within systems (S).**	This subtheme examines and compares collaboration and support in different parts of the activity system.
	Importance of SENCo role (S). *Specific supports in school / college (D).*	This subtheme and descendent theme examines the SENCo role and other specific types of support that stakeholders perceived.
	Defining the EP role in post-16 transitions (S).	This subtheme analyses the role of LA EPs in working with YP across the transition process, including pre and post transition.
	Strategic and reactive EP work (D).	This descendent theme critically compares two contrasting ways that EP work is commissioned with YP.

Node	Subthemes (S) and *descendent themes (D).* Themes featuring in later analysis are in **bold**	Definition
	Barriers to EP involvement with older YP (D) *.*	This is a further descendent theme that explores factors that might lead to EPs not working less with older YP
Tools	**Support from EHCP (S).** *Assessments and interventions (D).* *Support from technology (D).* *Accessibility at setting (D).*	This subtheme and the associated descendent themes illuminates the way that EHCPs and other statutory processes facilitated support for post-16 through different provisions.
	PfA: an inconsistently applied tool (S).	This subtheme explores inconsistencies in how PfA is delivered in educational settings and the degree to which YP developed PfA skills outside of school.
Community	**Peers: support and challenge (S).** *SEND community (D).*	This subtheme and descendent theme highlighted the importance of peer supports to the YPn who were interviewed, including those located specifically within SEND provision.
	Parents and family support (S).	This subtheme examines the support from parents and families, and the impact of this on transition to post-16
	Medical community (D).	One YPn identified ongoing support from medical teams alongside their educational supports. This descendent theme overlaps with *skills for independence.*
Rules	**Challenges with EHCP processes (S).** *2014 legislation (D).*	Subthemes and descendent themes relating to rules considered how statutory processes such as EHCP reviews, and EHCP applications facilitated or constrained planning for transition to post-16 and the transitions themselves.
	School rules and their impact (S). *Parents and YP construct rules (D).*	School rules were also found to constrain and facilitate transition processes, and in some cases parents and YP constructed their own rules in order to navigate situations where school or LA rules were constraining.

This study takes the social constructionist position that the activity system of transition to post-16 education is a multi-voiced construction. The system comes into being through the words of the participants (Engeström, 2000). Making sense of the activity system required my interpretation of what had been said, in the context of existing theory and literature. To gain insight into how the activity system was interpreted, Figure 4.1 and Table 4.1 (above) should be considered alongside Table 4.2, the thematic heatmap, and Table 4.3, the framework matrix summary.

Crucially, Table 4.3 summarises how the CHAT nodes and subthemes are relevant to each participant. Summary of the data in Table 4.3 is a vital stepping stone between the processes of analysis and inference. From this, conclusions that can begin to be drawn about support for post-16 transitions in relation to the research questions. The analytical commentary then uses illustrative quotes to re-anchor inferences to the participant data, to present a credible account.

Table 4.2

Heatmap illustrating distribution of coding across the participants

Core node	Sub theme / descendent	YP Ab	YP Ginny	YP Eddy	YP Serena	Staff Hannah	Staff Olivia / Roberta	Staff Joanne	Staff Sarah	Parent Nicky	Parent Bryony	Parent Cath	EP Penny	EP Kaz	EP Ted	Careers Raj	PLANCo Rich
Subject	YP strengths and needs	4	6	2	1	0	6	4	4	5	4	3	2	0	1	3	0
	YP journey to transition	4	3	0	1	0	2	1	0	1	4	2	1	3	0	3	1
	YP voice	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	3	0	0	2	6
	YP primary to secondary	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Outcome	Skills for independence	5	4	2	1	4	1	1	4	3	2	3	0	2	0	0	2
	The 'cliff edge'	7	1	2	1	2	0	0	1	1	5	1	0	0	0	2	2
	Beyond post-16	6	2	3	4	1	0	0	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Transition and freedom	1	1	0	2	0	0	0	8	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Object	Making decisions	3	3	3	0	0	5	1	1	2	2	3	3	1	0	4	0
	Academic goals	3	2	1	3	4	2	2	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
	Transition planning and time	0	1	0	1	7	5	2	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Comms. for relationships	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	8	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	YP basic needs	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	2	2	0	0	0	0	2	0
Division of Lab.	EP role (combined themes)	0	0	0	0	3	1	6	0	0	1	1	7	12	12	1	5
	Collaboration in systems	1	6	0	2	5	6	4	2	0	4	3	5	9	4	7	5
	Specific supports in school	4	2	2	3	1	3	3	2	0	3	1	2	4	2	2	0
	SENCo role	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	3	5	0	0	3	1	0	0
Tools	EHCP support	2	1	0	1	8	1	4	3	1	5	4	1	1	1	1	3
	PfA varied / incons.	1	1	3	2	1	0	2	2	0	1	1	1	2	3	0	1
	Assessment / Intervention	0	3	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	2	0	2	3	1	0	0
	Technology	2	2	2	0	0	0	2	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
	Accessibility	1	3	3	0	0	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Community	Peers: support and challenge	4	2	6	0	0	2	1	2	1	2	3	2	0	0	0	0
	SEND community	1	1	2	0	0	2	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
	Parents / family	0	4	4	0	0	3	0	0	1	6	1	1	0	1	0	1
	Medical community	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	4	1	0	1	1	0	0
Rules	Challenge and EHCP	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	1	0	3	1	0	3
	2014 legislation	0	0	0	0	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	3
	School rules and impact	0	2	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	2	0	0	2	2	0
	Parents and YP construct rules	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0

Table 4.3

Framework matrix summary

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
Ab (YPn, College, Year 13)	Ab reflected on her journey to post-16 , from her primary transition, missing her secondary school support and then having to leave her first post 16 setting due to injury.	Initially Ab found friendships hard at her college setting as it was a new situation for her. As she made friendships and connections on her course, she was able to gain support from the community of photography students which helped her with task planning.	Ab has drawn on a range of supports in her transition to post-16, mentioning from the course tutor, the wellbeing centre where she as been assigned a key person, support from class teachers, and support with independence from family members	*Ab did not make references to rules within the system that stood out in the coding process*	Ab explained that through school she had a high level of 1:1 support, which is now reduced in college, and she uses a mix of technology, friends (see **community**)**,** and college support systems (see **division of labour**) which have replaced the mediation from 1:1 TA support, but the PfA unit currently doesn't fit with her timetable	Ab's main objective for post 16 was to do a course that she found interesting and enjoyed. She also reflected on the project work that needed to be done to complete her course successfully	Ab explained that she felt she had more freedom in post 16 education and also talked about her options for beyond post 16, with university, travel, and some reservations about independence when it comes to university.
Ginny (YPn, Year 11)	Ginny explained some of the successes and challenges she faces in her day to day school life as she approaches transition to post 16. She is managing the workload well. Friendships have been hard for her	Ginny explained about the support that her new friend group gives to her. Seeing her cousin apply to sixth form has also been helpful. Other dimensions of Ginny's learning community are explored in the	A key source of support has come from Mrs M, from LA social emotional and mental health for learning team. Additional learning support has been divided between dyslexia and maths interventions.	Ginny was concerned about the rules for carrying on into sixth form in terms of the GCSE grades she would need to achieve	The EHCP for Ginny has allowed for various levels of mediation: through technology, adaptations to the learning environment, changes to accessibility in the school, learning interventions. These contribute to Ginny's	The dominant transition objective for Ginny is to achieve the grades to be able to stay at her secondary school in sixth form.	Ginny discussed options for staying at her school for A levels and ideas about her career beyond post-16 education, alongside development of PfA skills.

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
	in the past, along with needing to manage her energy levels very carefully and having support from parents with these things.	**division of labour** column			choice to stay at the school post-16	.	
Eddy (YPn, Year 10)	Eddy explained issues that he finds challenging or has struggled with in the past, as he explored his educational journey. These included getting angry with peers, worries about the future, and his parents separating. He also noted some of his strengths in history.	Eddy gets a lot of support from the SEN base at his school (the P centre), where he is supported by community of SEN peers and helpful staff. His extended family is large and he draws support from this community too, including PfA skills.	Eddy feels well supported at school, and explains a combination of peers and staff at the SEN base contribute to this.	Eddy disagrees with some of the school rules, to the extent that he will make his own rules about homework,	Eddy talked about supports he has in school and supports that he would like to have. Some of these are academic, others are to help him with overwhelming situations. These provisions are tools for mediation, likely to be important to Eddy as he progresses through to post 16 education.	Reflecting on his future transition to post 16 education and preference for 6th form over college, Eddy was at first a little unclear on what some of his options might be.	Eddy indicated that he has given some thought to his plans beyond post 16 education. His reflections on skills for independence were mixed – he understands financial situations but does not like to leave the house.
Serena (YPn, College, Year 12)	For Serena the idea of starting college was similar to starting secondary from primary as new	Serena had been able to make new friends quite early in the college course, including one who had all	Support pre transition was mainly from the SEN team, esp. Olvia and Roberta but also teachers	Serena did not refer to rules in the data	Serena referred to use of past papers and exam practise to help her prepare for her GCSEs which she was a key part	Serena reflected on the academic and social processes of transition – building new relationships and new academic	Serena saw transition to college as part of a longer journey to a career goal / dream in paediatric nursing. A lot of her reflection focused

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
(Serena)	situations were nervous for her, but in both cases she managed to overcome this	the same classes, but she still sees her old school friends too. She knows who the support staff are at college, but has not needed to access this community much so far. Serena showed that she feels a connection to the medical community through her career aspirations	more widely. Similarly at college Serena perceives a mixture of support available – on hand directly through teachers, but also available at the ALS through Hannah and her team		of transition preparation. PfA as a support was not perceived by Serena at a school level, but more at home or from her own independent learning	skills. The grades for 6th form were problematic and so a realistic approach was taken to transition	on this and what it would take.
Hannah (college Learning Needs Manager)	Hannah discussed some ways that the Yps voice was gathered in their transition to post 16 education such as early transition planning and consultation with schools during y11.	Hannah summarised how the ALS team at the college supports transition to post-16 for YP with EHCPs, and their link with the Aspire careers guidance service.	DoL was a dominant topic in this case: Hannah talked about the continued work to develop transition to post 16 in the ALS team, working with the LA and parents, the roll out of a new PfA initiative at the college, and the EP role in post 16 education.	Rules in the discussion with Hannah were mainly focused on the EHCP status of YP, annual reviews, and the rules surrounding taking on new students with EHCPs.	Tools mediating the transition to post 16 education that arose were the EHCP and its statutory status, the goals of skills for independence through a new PfA programme, and advice for EHCP students for future education and careers.	A recurring issue for the objective of a successful transition to post-16 education was timeframe and the drive towards early planning for transitions (which can be disrupted by the **rules** surrounding EHCP students choosing courses at the last minute.	It was reflected that for Ab the move to the college had been a positive transition despite it being a big step for her. Having a key person to access as and when on her own initiative was seen as a big step towards independence.
Olivia /	As Serena moves	The elements of	Olivia and Roberta	Statutory reviews	Staff training for	Planning and	Through her work in pre-

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
Roberta (SENCo / Inclusion Manager)	to post -16 education Mrs F and Olivia had a lot of positive traits to reflect on, especially relating to work ethic and resilience. Some challenges for transition were still noted in her needs in understanding instructions and questions.*"*	Serenas learning and social community that Mrs F and Roberta discussed were her work with Aspire, her friends and family supports, particularly her mum's influence on her course choices. Similar to other cases friendships when younger posed some challenges.	talked about who has provided support for Serena in terms of intervention, careers support, and what support might look like for her at college.	have taken place regularly for Serena and have involved careers advisors and the EP team at the end of y11 review.	speech and language intervention has been a tool that has helped in interventions for Serena. Additional support with assessment tasks as mapped out in her EHCP were also referenced.	decision making for Serena's transition to post 16 was a major theme in the interview, with possibilities for earlier transition planning and more preparation highlighted.	transition Serena has already developed some independence skills which have facilitated her in attending the College.
Joanne (SENCo)	Joanne reflected similar views to Ginny about strengths and challenges in the pre-transition years, but with more insight into Ginny's increased independence	Joanne was again consistent with Ginny's account about friendship difficulties, and was again able to offer little more insight into these challenges with the peer community. Additional members of the learning community are discussed in the **division of labour** column.	Joanne shared thoughts about the different professionals who have worked with Ginny, with some reflections on the EP role in her school and at post 16 transition level.	*Joanne did not make references to rules within the system that stood out in the coding process*	Joanne referenced interventions for literacy and social and emotional intervention. She also explored possible developments for supportive IT. In discussing PfA in planning for Ginny, there was limited evidence it being used explicitly used in planning.	For Joanne there were clear objectives for Ginny in approaching transition: academic support, social and emotional support, and a third level of support for physical wellbeing,	Joanne reflected on some of the independence Ginny would need for successful transition outcomes, and returned again to physical wellbeing and energy management as important outcomes.

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
Sarah (school staff)	Sarah triangulated info from EP and mum about Liam's challenges with communication. This made intervention work in the pre transition years difficult to engage. Sixth form so far has seemed far more preferable to Liam	Similar to mum and EP, a community of friends for Liam was confirmed, but little is known by school about Liam's peer interactions as he is very closed about it.	Sarah explained that a lot of the work pre transition had been done collaboratively between home and school as Liam was at home a lot. With improved attendance so far in sixth form there is a plan for new team members to build a working relationship with Liam	For Sarah the main issue concerning rules was the school rules, their rigid application to Liam and the impact this had on his engagement and attendance	Pre transition and early in the sixth form term, adaptations to expectations and learning environment are key tools to mediate Liam's experience. Past papers and exam practice were also a very practical tool that helped Liam prepare for GCSEs whilst he was at home	The primary objective for Liam in transition was to achieve the grades that he needed to attend sixth form. GCSEs were a means to an end for Liam in his journey to post 16. Communication has been an ongoing challenge for Liam in his transition journey, but in sixth form there is reduced conflict.	Sarah perceived that Liam had started his sixth form courses with much greater success compared to his engagement in school pre transition, This was attributed to, less pressure and more relaxed rules, combined with only studying what he enjoyed. Liam is beginning to take responsibility but still needs to learn to access help for academic needs as Liam still doesn't always communicate these
Nicky (Liam's parent)	A significant theme for Nicky was the difficult transition from primary to secondary School, and a perceived lack of collaboration / support. There was also reflection on some of Liam ASC traits such as communication challenges, and fixed mindset.	It was reflected that Liam does have a community of peers with whom he is comfortable, but that low attendance has given him limited access to them. Family have also provided a community support for him in discussing future	Nicky raised the importance of the SENCo in Liam's journey to post 16, which chimes with the **"SENCo role theme"** and the difference this had made. Further difficulties were raised in terms of how parents navigate the SEND system with this division of labour	Nicky explained that the school rules had felt very inflexible for Liam considering his needs, and that this had had a significant impact on his situation. Secondly, the rules surrounding EHCP applications and SEND support were also opaque to Nicky as	Assessment and subsequent intervention through reduced timetable and increased support were useful tools in mediating Liam's school experience. Working from home in COVID was an earlier change in learning environment that was successful and similar to his	The academic process of obtaining GCSEs was a key objective in Liam's journey to transition as they were a requirement for his continuation into 6th form – moving to a new setting was not preferred. A challenge in this area was Liam's cognitive ability which led to high	Nicky reflected on Liam's goals for beyond sixth form, and her support for that. The issue of sameness and preferring current setting was raised**.** Although Liam hasn't engaged in PfA skills at school he has developed a number of key independence skills through home support

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
		opportunities (see also **outcomes**)	falling to them with less support than they felt needed.	someone who does not work in the education sector	reduced timetable plan in essence. Tools available to support parents were (similar to in **rules**) were hard to navigate from Nicky's perspective.	expectations from school, which were too demanding for Liam	
Bryony (Ginny's parent)	Bryony gave a broad overview of Ginny's journey so far and what she sees has the main challenges for her approaching transition to post 16 education: Ginny has improved in many areas, but still faces challenges with managing energy and focus, balancing her educational and medical needs, and navigating the social world.	There is a strong community supporting Ginny's learning and medical journeys. Supports in the school community include dyslexia support, the SEMH-L Team, and coordinated support from the SENCo (see **division of labour**). Out of school family provide significant support with learning and medical needs through major decisions since of relocating to the same street as the school.	Division of labour highlighted the importance of the SENCo in Ginny's journey towards transition and school experience more widely. A high level of collaboration across the system was clear.	Several areas arose regarding rules: The statutory elements of the EHCP meant the school environment needed to be adapted to meet Ginny's needs; the school rules for grades and sixth form; rules surrounding EHCP applications were challenging for Bryony and led to frustrations with the system.	Bryony highlighted the improvements for Ginny with EHCP support, with the EHCP support being a crucial tool to mediate her experience. This included adaptations to environment, school trips, and access to additional interventions (see division of labour).	Objectives for Ginny's journey to post -16 were perceived to be related to ensuring that the EHCP support is consistently implemented, and also to planning for Ginny's basic health needs, as this is the foundation on which anything else has to be built. Parents support significantly with this. Academic requirements for transition are also a key objective	Bryony's description of transition outcomes was very much focused on the familiarity and routine of Ginny's current setting. Their description of a 'bubble' connects strongly with the **cliff edge theme**
Cath	Cath explained a range of	Cath outlined Eddy's how the	Cath talked about some of the	Cath expressed the challenges she had	Eddy's EHCP is a crucial tool in his	Cath discussed whether Eddy's	Cath explained that Eddy's skills for

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
(Eddy's parent) **(Cath)**	challenges that Eddy experiences in school and needs support with, mostly highly typical of autistic young people. Adapting to change will be an important issue for Eddy as he begins to approach post 16 education.	community in the P centre supports Eddy, but that he does not access a peer community outside of this provision	different professionals who had worked with Eddy, and how she had accessed these .	experienced in navigating the EHCP system and its rules. Both Cath and have shown that they are willing to make their own rules to mitigate difficult situations.	educational journey – Cath expressed that it hadn't been implemented effectively initially. Other tools referred to supports that Eddy would hopefully have access to going into key stage 4 and in preparation for transition to post 16 education. PfA was also noted as a tool in this area	choices were the best options for him at key stage 4, but was a little unsure on what these courses would lead to for him.	independence were limited currently, from this it is inferred that well planned PfA outcomes would benefit Eddy in his journey towards post 16 education (see also **tools** column). There was also a reflection on what would be best for Eddy at post 16.
Penny (EPS Manager)	Penny highlighted some of the challenges for Liam, which were more social and emotional than academic. Penny also explained that it was challenging to gain his voice, but this had been done through his mum as much as possible	Penny described the status of Liam's friendships, other areas where support might be beneficial. More widely she mentioned connection between different elements of system that are needed, and the relative rarity of EP involvement in post 16 work	Penny shared frustrations that contacting Liam's school had been difficult. Penny shared a range of thoughts about the barriers for EP work around the age of transition to post 16, raising the issue of proactive vs. reactive approaches to schools using EPs	Penny mentioned that Liam had been involved in a managed move as a reflection of school rules. Another case mentioned how an EHCP was needed to support certain YP because of the rules it is able to put into place.	EHCP recommendations are used as tools with Liam to make his learning environment more accessible, including use of technology and tools learned from COVID. PfA as a tool was less familiar / less useful in this case, and the use of the EP team as providers of mediating tools is dependent on a cycle of EP knowledge being kept in use.	The process of how Liam had chosen his post-16 objectives was not clear to Penny due to difficulties in communicating with the school. More widely the benefits of further training for EPs to support YP in their journey towards transition were reflected on	Penny's many concern for transition outcomes was that Liam would be able to access a suitable course and remain in full time education

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
Kaz (EP)	Kaz reflected on EP involvement / lack of involvement early in the Yps journey to post 16, and why this doesn't happen sometimes owing to school priorities for EP work	Kaz mentioned a variety of roles that of contributed to the community of professionals involved in supporting YP	Kaz explored the EP role at post 16 with some reflections on her involvement with Tia and then wider reflections on barriers and facilitators for EP involvement with YP as they approach transition to post 16.	Kaz referred to rules within the system relating to EPs involvement in statutory processes	Kaz talked about targeted interventions and their use as a tool at a school she knows. Kaz reflected that the use of PfA outcomes as a tool is not always consistent. Further training at EP service level would improve the range of tools that EPs have in this area, especially for PfA.	Kaz reflected on how her involvement would be used in planning for transition to post 16 education	Kaz reflected on the use of PfA outcomes to promote outcomes for post 16 transition.
Ted (EP)	Ted reflected on the low literacy levels that Eddy had when he first worked with him, and whether the primary school had difficulty in putting suitable interventions in place for literacy at that school.	Ted referenced a few professionals who can form part of the community of practice around a YP transitioning to post 16 education – these had not been mentioned by the other team members I had spoken to.	Ted explored the EP role in depth, with particular emphasis on some of the barriers to EP work at the age of transition to post 16. The dichotomy between reactive and strategic EP work is an important point also raised **by Joanne** Senco.	Ted referred to well known rules such as the need for annual review of a EHCP, and also rules relating to PfA outcomes which are also statutory but less commonly referenced in the dataset.	Ted reinforced a previous point about PfA having a relatively low profile as a tool to support transition in view of its statutory status. EP role in assessment and intervention was also explored. Using training as a tool to solidify EP knowledge of post 16 work was acknowledged but had not taken place	Ted reflected on the benefits of having an EHCP when it came to helping plan for the transition to post-16 education	*Ted didn't talk about topics that stood out as relevant to the outcome node.*

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
					in recent memory for Ted.		
Raj (Careers service) (Raj)	Raj offered a perspective on other YP for whom the transition is harder or uncertain, contrasting the dataset but providing important context YP in the current study	Raj gave an 'in a nutshell' account for the work that Prospect does and how they fit in with the learning community	Raj explored how Aspire works collaboratively with the LA and what some of the factors for successful partnership are.	Financial restrictions were identified by Raj as a major factor for local authorities in supporting YP in transitions to post 16. Raj described this as a national, not local problem	For Raj, having an EHCP is not always a functional tool through which to obtain the suitable for support and learning environment for the YP – mainstream settings with insufficient support for YP with EHCP are an example here.	In contrast to the dataset, there are YP who haven't planned or made decisions about their transition to post 16 education, who make up a lot of the workload for Aspire.	Raj continued to explain that transition outcomes can be challenging for YP especially where the needs are quite high but the choices of provision are limited to large FE colleges.
Rich (Post 16 PLANCo)	Throughout the interview Rich returned to the importance of the YP voice in planning educational transitions.	The EHCP team and the colleges that they do most of their work are the main communities that Rich works with – he described the involvement of his team in helping find appropriate post-6 settings for YP with EHCPs	Rich discussed his team's work with schools and other professionals. In particular there was reflection on aspects of the EP role and how their being more involved in some post 16 transition cases could benefit the process.	Rich explained a range of statutory implications for his role and also for schools, parents and young people. Limitations within the system include: timescale and deadlines for statutory decisions, funding, and challenges for parents in navigating the SEND system.	Rich reflected that for YP approaching transition to post 16 the PfA outcomes are a prominent tool to plan the process for YP	The process of planning and decision making with a September deadline in mind is an important objective for post 16 transitions. Rich reflects on the impact that time constraints and statutory deadlines can have on the objective.	The main outcome that Rich discussed was the idea of the **cliff edge** and the point at which parents and YP accept the idea of independence or at least a change in setting.

4.3 CHAT Nodes: Presentation of Findings

This section explains a rationale for the order in which the CHAT nodes are discussed. Reporting research findings should have a clear direction, following a "golden thread" that is always oriented towards the research questions (Frost & Bailey-Rodriguez, 2019, p.77). To set the scene for the analysis, the *subject* node is presented first, to provide important contexts for YP in the study. Thereafter the presentation of the CHAT nodes is teleological, putting the end goals and purposes of the transition process as the initial focus of the account, before then exploring how those goals and purposes were achieved.

Table 4.4 lays out the CHAT nodes in the order that they are presented in this chapter, with a short rationale for the position of each node in the discussion.

Table 4.4

CHAT nodes as presented through Chapter 4

Activity node	Rationale for the position of each node in the findings
Subject	The *subject* node is presented in table form to build on the demographic information laid out in the participants table (Section 3.5.3). The *subject* node sets the scene for the thread of the results.
Outcome	The analytical discussion starts with the *outcome* node is because this is closest to representing the end goal of the activity system. The outcomes are what transitions to post-16 have led to. The *outcome* node is unique in the CHAT system diagram as it is not mediated by nodes other than the *object* node
Object	This is the source of motivation in the activity system, and is aligned with its purpose. The *object* node mediates the between the rest of the activity system and the *outcome* node. The *object* node is reported near the start of the analysis, as the CHAT framework indicates that all the other nodes feed into it.
Division of labour	This node has a high level of relevance to the research questions regarding how transition is supported. Examining *who does what* in the activity system follows on logically from the outcome and object discussion.

Activity node	Rationale for the position of each node in the findings
Tools	This node follows the thread from the *division of labour* discussion as it adds a *how* to the *who does what* in *division of labour*.
Communities	This covers the additional supports in the system that are not part of the division of labour, representing support at a community level rather than as part of professional systems
Rules	Participants included only those YP with EHCPs, so there are statutory implications for their education and rules that support and constrain the activity system.

4.3.1 Discussion of CHAT Contradictions

The purpose of identifying CHAT contradictions was to illuminate points of tension within the activity system (see Section 2.2). In this study, contradictions were memoed in Nvivo alongside the coding of data. Discussion of contradictions is embedded in the analysis of subthemes in this chapter and interpreted in relation to the research questions. CHAT contradictions also inform parts of Chapter 5.

4.4 Subject Node: Young People with EHCPs.

The YP in the study are positioned as the subjects in a multi-voiced activity system. However, it should be noted that there were occasions when data from other participants such as EPs veered away from the specific experiences of the specific YP in the study to address questions of the EP role within the *division of labour node*. Nevertheless, the YP remain predominantly central to the activity system.

The analysis of codes relating to the *subject* node captured that YP in the study had a range of strengths and challenges in keeping with a multi-voiced system. These are tabulated below to provide a grounding for the analytical commentary, incorporating the subthemes *strengths and challenges,* and *The YPn's journey so far.*

Table 4.5

Subject node key information

Participant	Age Years: months	Stage	Challenges	Strengths	Educational background
Ab	18:7	College Year 13	Managing workload, planning, overthinking / work related anxiety.	Willingness to try new things, ability to work, learn, and access support independently.	Attended primary and secondary education in nearby Shire LA , and undertook 1 year college placement in a Shire LA before changing to the College.
Serena	17:2	College Year 12	Speech and language needs, literacy needs.	Works very hard to compensate for learning needs.	Attended mainstream primary and secondary school in LA. College course chosen to align with career goals.
Ginny	16:1	Year 11	Friendships and social skills, managing energy levels, managing medical needs.	Highly resilient and has made many adaptations over the years.	Mainstream primary and secondary school in the LA, has missed a lot of time at school due to medical needs. EHCP initially turned down and appealed.
Eddy	14:10	Year 10	Social communication, emotional regulation, sensory processing, changes to routine.	Good at history, has identified challenges and begun to make plans for his future.	Mainstream primary and secondary school in the LA. Missed a block of time at the start of Year 7. EHCP initially turned down and appealed.
Liam, not interviewed)	16:9	Sixth form (Year 12)	Social communication, demand avoidant behaviours	Capability in science subjects and ability to manage own workload. Competent with life skills.	Mainstream primary and secondary in the LA. Moved to a 14-19 STEM Academy but was absent for much of Year 11. Stayed at STEM Academy in 6[h] form.

The five YP whose experiences form the basis for much of the dataset had characteristics in

common through all having attended mainstream settings, and all having EHCPs, as part of

the inclusion criteria for the study. The YP were varied in terms of their profile of educational

needs, their current setting, and their stage in the transition process, which ranged from Year 10 through to Year 13. By having variety in these domains, a broad perspective of post-16 transitions is obtained, contributing to trustworthiness in the research (see Section 3.5.2).

Each of the five YP has a distinctive context. Differences in the YP's aspirations, attitude to transition, family and school environments were identified through analysis of subthemes at each node of the CHAT framework.

4.5 Outcome Node: Transition Outcomes for Young People

The *outcome* node encompasses subthemes generated from two types of codes. First, there were codes from which I inferred aspirational outcomes for post-16 education for YP in secondary school. Second, there were codes that contained reflections on actual outcomes for YP who were in college or sixth form.

4.5.1 Cliff Edges and New Adventures

Cliff edges and new adventures was a major subtheme in the outcome node that concerned points in a YPn's journey where significant changes were anticipated. Analysis of this subtheme also incorporated and highlighted the descendent theme *thinking beyond post-16,* which was a relevant consideration for participants at points in the data.

The term cliff edge comes from a quote from an LA professional's interview:

> "The phrase that's…very appropriately used is about a cliff edge, that families are always working towards this point where the security of education will eventually come to an end."
>
> (Rich, post-16 PLANCo, lines 128-130)

The notion of a cliff edge reflects a view in transition literature that transitions can represent a risk (Gravett et al., 2020). A finding from the data analysis was that some participants avoided the cliff edge by planning transitions that involved limited change, referred to here as a *static* transition. Others undertook transitions that involved significant change, reframing transition as a "new adventure" in Ab's words, rather than a risk, referred to here as a *dynamic* transition.

Connections between adventure and risk can relate to many human experiences. Nichols, (2000) explores a theoretical model (from Priest, 1991) in which adventurousness is facilitated by feelings of competence, mitigating risk perception. Nichols (2000) connects to the present study through the role of competence in SDT (Deci, 2000, see Section 2.5) and the association of self-determination with smooth transitions (Webster et al., 2022). A summary interpretation is that YP who experience higher levels of perceived competence may be more likely to perceive a new situation as an adventure rather than as a risk. The identification of *static* and *dynamic* transitions forms a key part of a transitions conceptual model that summarises the study findings in Section 4.11.

A parent participant reinforced the idea of a cliff edge in post-16 transitions through a bubble metaphor, whilst also alluding to the subtheme *beyond post-16 education:*

> "At the minute we live in a bubble which works really well for us, but we are aware that our bubble is getting kind of ready to pop with post-16 in September. We have Year 11 and we have potentially sixth form, but then past there…that will have to be planned because Ginny has expressed that she would like to go to university…. So I'll be supporting her to live independently."
> (Bryony, Ginny's mother, lines 711-722)

Staying on in sixth form can be interpreted as way of maintaining the bubble, with fewer changes in routine. School staff triangulated a bubble maintenance interpretation, explaining

that Ginny and her family moved to live very close to the school, simplifying issues with transport and wheelchair use:

> "Her parents moved house to live four doors up the road so that she could be more independent. So when she's using her wheelchair, she would independently go home and come to school."
>
> (Joanne, secondary school SENCo, lines 121-123)

Analysis here resonates with RQ 1, which asks how transitions are supported. Ginny's transition to post-16 education is directly supported by parental choices and priorities.

For Ab, a Year 13 college student, college was an exciting opportunity for something new, and the familiarity of staying at the same setting was something she was happy to move on from:

> Ab: "I was thinking it [sixth form] would be stressful, it would be like school, I dunno."
>
> Interviewer: "So you wanted something different?"
>
> Ab: "Something different, something new and fresh, a new adventure kind of thing."
>
> (Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 213-215)

In her institutional transition, Ab forged a new identity at the college, and embraced the change that this represented, not perceiving a cliff edge in this context. However, in the context of life-course transitions, considerations for *beyond post-16 education* still form a cliff edge looming further in the future, which became evident when discussing university:

> "Ab: I want to stay at home. I know that for now, in my life, I don't want to go and live on my own just yet."
>
> Interviewer: "What would be the tricky things about living away from home?"
>
> Ab: "I think, missing my parents a lot. And mainly making me look after myself. Yeah I'm not really at that stage where I feel I could look after myself like laundry and cooking for yourself."
>
> (Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 319-324)

Embracing a new educational setting whilst maintaining reservations about living away from home aligns with the conflict between identity and role confusion in Erikson's (1950) theory of psychosocial development (see Section 2.5). At college Ab developed an identity as an adventurous learner engaging in new experiences, however at home she is not ready for the identity of an independent young adult. Ab seems not to have experienced role confusion in her post-16 transition, but rather, anticipates it in moving away from her familiar home environment.

Analysis and interpretation of Ab's context therefore identifies contrast between an independent learner and a young person who has not yet developed the skills for independent living *beyond post-16*. Skills for independence and references to this topic coalesced into sizeable further subtheme in the outcome node, explored below.

4.5.2 Developing Skills for Independence

This subtheme reflects skills for independence that have been developed by YP during the transition to post-16 education, and skills that would be desirable for YP who are currently in Year 10 and 11. An important implication for RQ 1 is how transitions are supported through skills for independence. Analysis identified that different skills for independence were relevant to different YP in the study.

YP reflected on the development of skills for independent learning. Here Ab, the participant with the most complete experience of transition to post-16 education, reflects on the change from close teaching assistant support to a more independent learning style through her transition to the College:

> Ab: "Every lesson in school I've always had teacher there next to me helping me with the writing things down."

Interviewer: "So how did you find it? When, when you went to college. Do you have that as well?"

Ab: "No, I now do it independently….It was hard at first. I had to like, do all my stuff by myself. Without anyone there. At the start of course they actually gave me someone just to get me a bit started. But after that, I kind of like got in the groove a bit. I got into it. Now I'm used to it."

(Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 387-400)

Hannah, (a college Learning Needs Manager) gave further insights to how skills for increased independence are supported in post-16 transitions, through reducing one-to-supports:

"That's something I'm trying really hard to move away from….Again it ties in with PfA, going into work, going into jobs, work experience and higher education. You don't have somebody sitting with you holding your hand. And often like with this individual [Ab], they do have these skills….They don't need that extra layer of support there, and actually its quite empowering for them to not have that."

(Hannah, college SEND staff, lines 169-173)

In addition to the College supporting skills for independent learning, there was further anticipation of skills for independence being needed in future environments such as workplaces and higher education. This aspect of the College support system can be interpreted as removing some levels of support, to increase independence overall.

The need to undertake tasks independently as an adult, and the reduction in support that this may entail, was further reflected in how YP manage their medical needs. For Ginny, skills for independence were linked to managing appointments and medication. Ginny explained that the transition towards independently managing medical needs thus was tricky for both her and her mother:

Interviewer: "Do you feel independence is something you could develop more of ?"

Ginny: "Yeah, and so a lot of the hospitals at the minute obviously, I take a lot of medication because of my medical background, they're also, like on the independent side because obviously at the age of 18 in theory, I'm meant to be able to do all of it myself. But Mum's been so used to doing it. It's both of us having to learn."

(Ginny, YPn,, 16 years, line 308-313)

In a further reference to skills for independence Eddy reflected on the need for financial independence and money management, projected as a future life-course transition rather than an educational one:

"A stable financial future is very important for adult life….I think about it all the time. Because, when I am planning my birthday and Christmas presents I always think how much is this going to cost, how will this affect us financially?"

(Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 321-326)

Analysis across the participants highlighted overlaps between skills for independence associated with institutional and life-course transitions. In particular, RQ 2a, is probed by considering YP's perceptions of support for independence alongside views of school staff.

4.5.2.1 Transition to Post-16 Brings Greater Freedom. YP and other stakeholders perceived (or anticipated) a sense of freedom in the transition to post-16 education. The perception of greater freedom post-transition was a descendent theme identified from codes originally allocated to the *skills for independence* sub theme.

For Liam, who is in Year 12 (sixth form), outcomes were explored by his mother Nicky and a Pastoral Leader, Sarah. This was because Liam did not consent to be interviewed but was happy for me to speak to others involved in his education. Sarah explained how the onus on

students to complete their work in sixth form had helped Liam develop independence in post-16 education:

> "It's a bit more, you know, you've got to take ownership now if you're not doing your work, that's your, you know, issue really and I think that independence has also helped him."

> (Sarah, secondary school pastoral staff, lines 69-71)

In Year 11 Liam had extended non-attendance, but a settled start to Year 12. Liam's Year 11 timetable involved many lessons where inflexible school rules, seemingly, led to him disengaging in areas of his learning. Liam's disengagement is discussed further in the *rules* node. Once in Year 12, Liam was able to study subjects he enjoyed in a less demanding environment:

> "So he can come in, feel comfortable. He doesn't have to do the subjects like English that he doesn't enjoy. He can get on, go straight into his work and we've had no issues or anything flagged up at all. So his attendance and everything's really good."
> (Sarah, secondary school pastoral staff, lines 131-134)

Freedom in post-16 education was also coded in Ab's interview:

> "College here is a bit more freedom, more independence. They act like you're adult. Kind of thing. It's like more, I dunno, more independent."
> (Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 84-86)

Similarly, Roberta (an Inclusion Manager) explained a perception that Serena approached transition to post-16 education with a desire for independence. This was reflected in her attitude to the college interview she attended:

> " [Serena's mother] said 'I'll come with you, I'll take the time off work', and she was like
>
> 'no, I'm gonna do it myself, I'm gonna go on the bus by myself'….Serena is the kind of
>
> person, she'll just overcome it, she'll challenge herself to overcome that hurdle."
>
> (Roberta, secondary school inclusion manager, lines 209-212)

Once at college, Serena perceived noted independence and freedom in the college environment:

> "You can go anywhere. You can just walk out of college if you want to. But not in
>
> lesson. So you've more sort of freedom."
>
> (Serena, YPn, 17 years, lines 45-46)

Analysing the views of YP and stakeholders in the *skills for independence* subtheme and *transition brings freedom* descendent theme infers that experiencing independence in post-16 education comes not just from being supported in developing skills for independent learning and living, but equally from an environment that promotes and fosters autonomy.

4.6 Object Node

The *object* node mediates between the *outcome* node and the rest of the activity system. Prominent object node sub-themes here encompass academic goals for transition, and the decision making involved. The object node resonates with RQ 1, support for transition, through a focus on transition planning.

4.6.1 Academic Goals for Transition

For YP wanting to stay on at sixth form, academic requirements for staying were a key issue in transition planning. For one participant, achieving the grades to attend sixth form has been a source of stress:

> "To get into this sixth form you have to get, at the minute it's 6s. But they've lowered
>
> that after COVID. So they're debating whether they would now bring that back up to

7s ....I hope they'd look at that and I think they'd take account of the fact that sometimes...I'm a bit smarter than I am on paper."

(Ginny, YPn, 16 years, lines 82-85, 93-94)

Ginny's concern about her grades is based on the knowledge that if she does not get the grades for sixth form then her education will need to continue elsewhere. A change of setting would have considerable implication for changes to routine, and circles back to the "bursting of the bubble" that Ginny and her family are avoiding.

4.6.2 Decision Making for Transitions

This subtheme analytically compares some of the decision-making processes for transitions to post-16 education, as discussed by YP and other stakeholders. In line with the idea of a *static transition*, Eddy had a preference for staying at a setting where he knew people and routines. Eddy anticipated that post-16 education at sixth form would be straightforward, but after that he would face greater changes that would be difficult for him. This is similar to Bryony's uncertainty about what comes after sixth form for Ginny:

> "I think I will stay here at sixth form...because it would be the easiest thing to do, wouldn't it? ....I already know plenty of the teachers, so it would probably be the easiest. But where I am worried is my future after."
> (Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 313-315)

Memoing during the data analysis identified a primary *(within node)* CHAT contradiction between what Eddy and his mother Cath considered to be the best path to post-16 education for him.

> "He doesn't wanna be writing things down or anything like that. He just likes to learn and he's a bit more practical with things. Um, so we haven't said that probably we

thought that maybe when he leaves school, it might be to do something in something in college or something like that."

(Cath, Eddy's mother, lines 201-202)

Eddy clarified his awareness of their difference in views:

"I don't think she's got much hope for my future. As far as I can tell she doesn't think I'll get into university because of my handwriting".

(Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 266-267)

In contrast to Ginny and Eddy's preference for a *static transition*, Ab and Serena both chose their college courses based on what they thought that they would enjoy. For Serena this choice was also linked to a clear career goal that she had identified for herself, connecting with a preferred future identity, and bridging back to the *thinking beyond post-16* descendent theme. Having a clear goal for the future seems to drive Serena in a *dynamic transition.*

> Serena: "Well because in Year 10, that's when I started doing health and social care….Because I want to be children's nurse so…"
> Interviewer: "So it's working towards a goal you've got for the future."
> Serena: "I've always wanted to be a children's nurse, but I never pushed myself to do it, but then I think, like starting in Year 10 or Year 9, I wanted to it."
> (Serena,YPn, 17 years, lines 24-30)

Olivia, who worked closely with Serena at secondary school, also explored this motivation towards a particular career:

"She's really enjoyed that and I think for her, it's probably changed her sort of career outlook….I think the last two years have made her realise that she can achieve her

dreams and go off to do what she wants, and I think the health and social has helped her to realise that, you know, she can be successful."

(Olivia, secondary school SENCo, lines 25-31)

4.6.2.1 Transition Planning and Time-Frame*. Timely planning for transitions was a system-wide issue that was particularly relevant for the College. The size of the college meant that the SEND team must plan for a high number of YP with EHCPs. The difficulties posed by unplanned transitions at the College are epitomised by "walk-ins" where YP with EHCPs enrol at the college at the start of the term with no prior engagement:

"In an ideal world you get that EHCP through, you know spring term, start doing the transitions.…In reality we see a lot of students coming into us as walk-ins. We have to request the EHCP after they're already with us. In some extreme cases when we can't meet need, that's then led to a withdrawal.…So it just shows that that planning of that transition is absolutely crucial."

(Hannah, college SEND staff, lines 216-224)

For Raj, a Careers Service Operations Manager, YP with SEND form part of a group that may be vulnerable to having unsuccessful transitions and becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training):

"Unfortunately, though, if you look at it from a young person's point of view who is NEET and didn't have all of the options or, or wasn't engaged, or my personal opinion is, is that that school structure didn't work for their learning.…We have a group which we call the vulnerable group: looked after children, children with SEND support, then there's EHCPs. You will find that some NEET young people will fit into a lot of those categories."

(Raj, careers service manager, lines 206-210)

Walk-in transitions were contrasted by the experiences of YP who were interviewed. Serena's secondary school had maintained on-going contact with the College in Year 11, and she had visited the college for a taster day. Packer et al. (2022) highlights the importance of continuity in transitions rather than transition being a one-off event: the contrast between Serena's experience and that of a walk-in transition typifies Packer et al.'s (2022) stance.

Unplanned transitions for YP with EHCPs created significant challenge for the college in providing suitable courses. In relation to the CHAT framework, YP with an unplanned transition process are interpreted to be part of a strained and unbalanced activity system with reduced support. There is still a *subject* (YPn) and an *outcome*, but the mediating influence of the *community, tools,* and *division of labour* nodes are minimalised through a lack of engagement with potential sources of support. The *rules* node remains in a mediating role, however, as there is statutory guidance on post-16 education for all YP, which acts as a cultural norm (see Section 2.3).

Interpretation through the CHAT framework can be taken further. Transitions with limited support and limited planning raise a quaternary CHAT contradiction when compared to the YP in the dataset, all of whom are currently engaged in their education and attending a setting. A quaternary contradiction means there is a conflict between different versions of an activity system (Engeström 2000). Although *all* YP at the College are part of the LA system, it should be borne in mind that this study positions the activity system of support for post-16 transitions as uniquely constructed by the participants and my interpretation of their data. The experiences of other YP in different situations are therefore interpreted as different versions of the activity system.

YP enrolling at a setting with limited planning between institutions seems to be a notable difficulty for post-16 settings to overcome and reflects findings in the literature review that

transitions can be *ad hoc*, poorly planned, and inconsistent across an LA (Craig, 2009; Essex & Melham, 2019; Shepherd, 2016).

4.7 Division of Labour Node

The division of labour node explores *who does what* to support transitions in the activity system. This subsection discusses subthemes relating to collaboration, the SENCo role, additional support in school, and the EP role in post-16 transitions. For clarity, in this discussion, the term support is interpreted as meaning assistance given by a stakeholder to help solve a problem or improve a situation. The term collaboration is interpreted as work done between individuals to move towards a common aim.

4.7.1 Collaboration Across and Within Systems

The identification of collaboration as a prominent subtheme connects with studies highlighting the importance of collaboration in transitions (Essex & Melham, 2019; Goana et al., 2019). Analysis found that collaborative practices were important to participants whose role involved working across the LA:

> "At the forefront of our job roles, is working collaboratively rather than holding anyone to account.…The focus on transition, we will look to attend as many annual reviews that we possibly can, particularly all of the transition reviews so that we can talk to the school about transition planning….to aid with our role with the transition."
> (Rich, post-16 PLANCo, lines 54-59)

> "We have to work with what is available in that kind of local authority. We would make suggestions and work with parents. We also have to work very closely with SENCos."
> (Raj, careers service manager, lines 60-61)

Collaboration was also noted within smaller systems such as between staff within a school system:

> "The dyslexia check-in and the SEMH-L [Social Emotional and Mental Health for Learning team] work with her. And then there's Sal, who's the pastoral support manager. We all work very closely together. So we'll have a meeting as a handover, for all the SEN children into sixth form…and keep in contact."
> (Joanne, secondary school SENCo lines 85-88)

Analysis also illuminated situations where the level of collaboration was suboptimal. Olivia, SENCo, and Roberta, Inclusion Manager, noted that collaboration between their secondary school and the College had been impacted by the COVID pandemic:

> Olivia: "Roberta has done a lot of the chasing of the College, you know, in terms of can we have this meeting, can we come along, can I bring these students, can I tell you about them."
> Roberta: "We need maybe more of a relationship, between us, joined up, because obviously we've got so many of our kids going there."
> Olivia: "And we did used to have that, they did used to come in and we'd do a morning where we'd hand over information, erm, but I think obviously COVID happened and that changed things."
> (Roberta, secondary school SENCo, and Olivia, secondary school inclusion manager, lines 108-116)

Linking with RQ 2c, analysis of EP data highlighted that collaboration on the part of EPs is perceived as less widespread than it used to be. This change is attributed to EPS working practices, with EPs having more freedom in how they write reports, but perhaps at the expense of collaborative practice:

"I don't really see other people's [psychological] advices. It used to be that we that we saw other people's advices quite frequently before the pandemic, but now I don't really see by that many…compared to other local authorities I have worked in."

(Ted, EP, lines 321-324)

4.7.2 The Importance of the SENCo Role

Talk about collaboration was less prominent in data from parents and YP people in this study. In contrast, these participants made more reference to specific individual support, rather than inter-personal or inter-agency collaboration.

Connecting with RQ 2a around perception of support, the subtheme *Importance of the SENCo* role was an example of support being perceived to come from one specific source. Having a proactive SENCo was noted to make a significant impact on the communications between home and school:

"She [Joanne] tends to be my direct contact and I will email her. She'll email me the problems.…By going to the SENCo directly I've found that works a lot better."
 (Bryony, Ginny's mother, lines 352-353, 383).

"In the second year, the new SENCo started and she has been like a breath of fresh air….She supported me in applying for an EHC needs assessment"
(Nicky, Liam's mother, lines 202-209)

The centrality of the SENCo role in post-16 transitions is explored further in Section 4.7.3 and Figure 4.2 further below.

4.7.2.1 Additional Specific Support. *Additional specific support* in schools and colleges was a descendent theme that contributed to understanding of how transitions are supported (RQ 1). In addition to the SENCo role there were other specific supports that participants mentioned. For example, for Ab at the College, a worker from the well-being team is a specific source of support:

> Ab: "I mainly go to well-being centre it's further down, just next door."
>
> Interviewer: "OK, So what do they help you with then?"
>
> Ab: "They help me with, like, my stress and over-thinking….I was assigned Jade.
>
> She's next door. And she's helped me ever since I came here and she's really good."
>
> (Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 157-159, 167-168)

4.7.3 Collaboration and Support Summary

This subsection clarifies inferences from the contrasts in perceptions of collaboration and support amongst different groups of participants.

Analysis of contrasts in the data seems to raise a primary level *(within node)* CHAT contradiction. For example, the SENCo role was described both in terms of its collaborative nature (Section 4.7.1), and as being a single channel support (Section 4.7.2). However these two positions need not be mutually exclusive, as they can be interpreted as representing different aspects of multi-faceted role. Figure 4.2 models the findings showing the SENCo in a pivotal role.

Figure 4.2

Illustration of the SENCo role in relation to collaboration and support
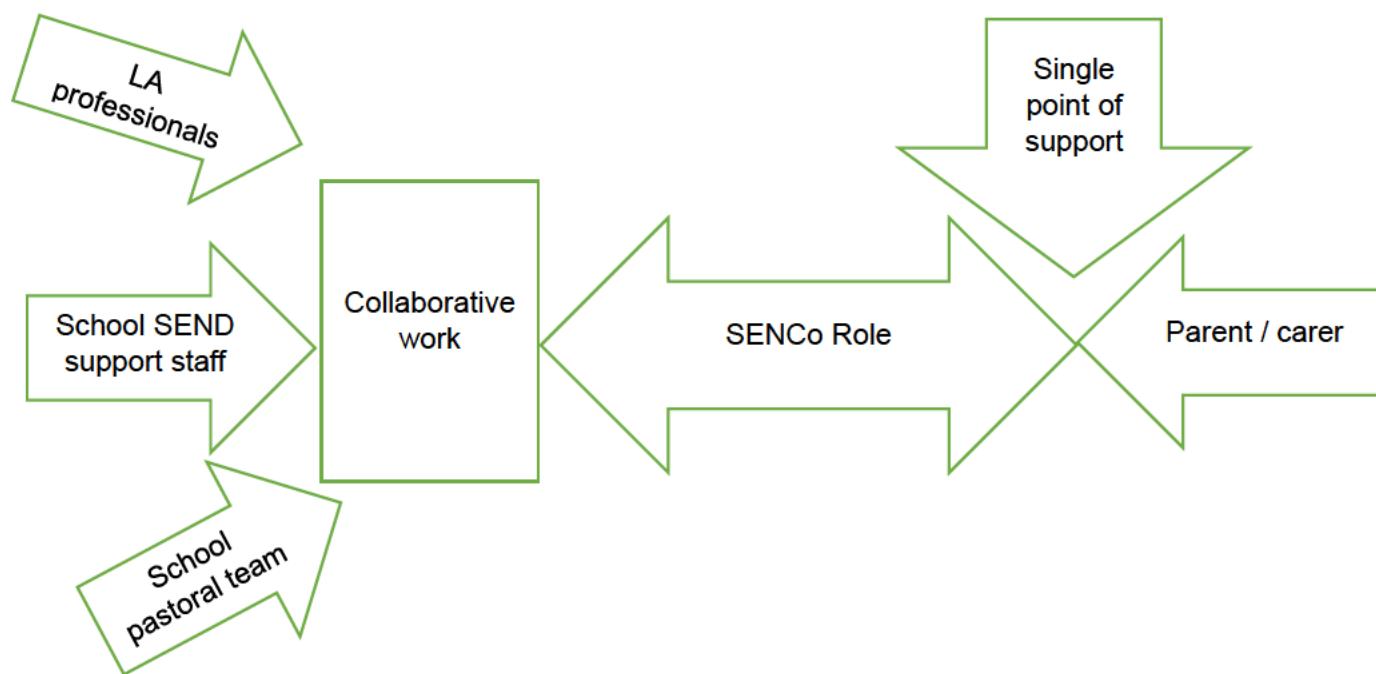
4.7.4 Defining the EP Role in Post-16 Transitions

This subsection discusses findings from that data concerning EP support for post-16 transitions, explored through two descendent themes which together help to define the role. Figure 4.3 illustrates the subtheme and descendent themes.

Figure 4.3

EP role subtheme and descendent themes
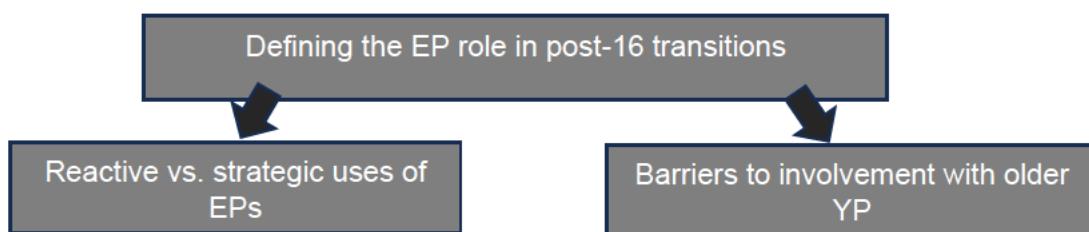
4.7.4.1 Barriers to EP Involvement With Older YP . EPs from the LA explored barriers to working with young people in Key Stage 4 and post-16 age ranges. For Ted, a Specialist Senior EP, EP work in this LA has been heavily weighted towards the younger age range, driving a culturally ingrained cycle in which EPs work mainly with younger children, so increasingly develop their skills in that area. Consequently, EPs in Ted's LA may develop and maintain fewer skills for working with older YP:

"I guess it's our skillset and knowledge of systems and things like when I'm working with a kid at early years or primary level or early secondary, I feel like I've got a very good knowledge of like the systems and trajectory and pathways that young people might take….I guess within secondary like I'm less clear of like, of I guess what services even, for example, support at the college level?"

(Ted, EP, lines 193- 201)

Similarly, the allocation of a smaller number of statutory assessments in Key Stage 4 and above seems to reflect a LA system that focuses on to identifying needs at a younger age, though this may be different in other LAs:

"For example, most of our statutory assessments are early years, primary and early secondary stage….It's far less common for somebody to present at 16 years old to be going through a statutory assessment, because you would hope that their special needs have been picked up earlier."

(Penny, EPS Service Manager, lines 249-258)

Analysis of data from LA professionals outside of the EPS reflected a perception that EP involvement for older YP was critically dependent on a school's willingness to keep the EPS involved:

"What I think happens with an EP for one reason or for a number of reasons is they are very heavily involved at the early part of somebody's EHCP journey, I think that's

fair to say, and dependent on how proactive their education setting is, probably

determines how much they remain in contact and remain in part of that process."

(Rich, post-16 PLANCo, lines 155-158)

Psychological theories from the literature review in Chapter 2 can support analysis of the EP role in post-16 work. Interpretation of what EPs said about work across different age ranges is presented below in Figure 4.4 through the lens of SDT (Ryan & Deci, 1985), see Section 2.5.

Figure 4.4

Barriers to EP involvement at post-16, analysed through SDT

Competence

EPs acknowledged higher levels of competence in EYFS, primary and early secondary work.

EPs perceived less competence in post-16 work due to lack of experience and opportunitie in this domain

Autonomy

Autonomous work for EPs at post-16 was perceived to be challenging and requires extra research, information gathering, resource development, understanding provision and PfA.

Autonomous work for EPs at EYFS / primary / early secondary level is perceived as an ingrained part of the EP role.

Relatedness

EPs reported feeling more connected to EYFS / primary / early secondary systems, staff and YP.

A sense of belonging for EPs seems secure in these systems, compared to in post-16 settings where sense of belonging is less certain.

Among participant data, 31 out of 49 of references to the EP role were from EP interviews. By contrast, none of the YP interviewed mentioned the role of the EP, and only one reference to the EP role was coded in parental data. Remaining data about EPs came from school staff and LA professionals. Connecting to perceptions of support in RQ 2a, the EP role in working with older YP seems poorly understood by the families and YP in this dataset, despite their evident contacts with EPs.

A lack of awareness of EP involvement in transition work, despite it having taken place, echoes similar findings in the literature review (Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Esbrand, 2016; Mortune, 2021). It is therefore inferred, from both the data and existing studies, that it is important to clarify and explain more clearly to parents and YP how EPs provide support for post-16 transitions. To clarify the EP role to parents and YP, professionals and EPs themselves need an up-to-date understanding of how EPs can support for post-16 transitions.

Some of the participants whose roles focused on post-16 transitions speculated about how EP support might be better utilised in post-16 transitions. Reviewing and updating the information in EHCPs during transitions to the College was seen as an area where EPs could provide further support:

> "Moving forward that's something that I'm very keen to develop….Looking at things like their EHCPs you know we have stuff from when they were assessed back, you know when they were six, still in their EHCP. So getting that updated picture of that learner [from EPs] , knowing their presenting needs now as a young adult, I think is crucial.…There's only so much we can do with the information in the EHCP if it's not relevant."

> (Hannah, college SEND staff, lines 279-283, 294-295)

LA professionals triangulated this point by similarly suggesting that EPs could play a valuable role in updating information concerning levels of need, provision, and sought outcomes as part of transition planning:

> "What I think would be of incredible benefit to YP for transition would be….In a perfect world having a reassessment….Probably around 16 would be most sensible, …. Because that would give a better reflection of their projection or their trajectory towards adulthood, rather than their trajectory through education."

> (Rich, post-16 PLANCo, lines 158-183)

4.7.4.2 Strategic and reactive EP work. Analysis of the data from EPs and participants who had worked alongside them reflected contrasts in how the EP team was engaged in post-16 work. One aspect of EP work identified was that of a strategic orientation to casework for EPs. In this context, strategic EP work is primarily taken to mean work that is identified, negotiated, and planned towards longer term outcomes for a YP. For clarity, a second commonly understood definition of strategic work for EPs is work that works towards a systemic goal, such as work for organisational change, or implementing a project across a school or LA. For example, a strategic approach to mental health in Scottish schools is explored by Greig et al. (2019). The EP role in post-16 transitions could also potentially align with this second definition.

A second view was of a more reactive, tactical involvement in a difficult situation, for example involving SEMH needs, or extended non-attendance in Liam's example. In reactive work sought outcomes are typically shorter term or seeking an urgent change for the YP. One EP compared both sides of the role:

> " [post-16] cases in this LA…they tend to fall into two camps…. So one camp…there's just a little bit of uncertainty often around what sort of support the young person will need…with their learning needs when they transition into the

college environment….And then I'm often referred cases where a young person might have been experiencing like high anxiety for a long period of time. It gets to the end of Year 11 and you're asked…to give advice about what sort of setting they should access next….One is sort of almost a crisis case, and the other is more of a like planning for updated learning needs."

(Ted, EP, lines 135-149)

Joanne (SENCo) makes a similar point but seems to invite the EPS to support during instances she perceives as crises, and uses other SEND professionals for longer-term planned interventions. However, she also highlights the role of EPs in training staff, thus, their upskilling role, another type of strategic involvement that works towards long term goals:

"The thing is with EPs…if you're not careful, it could be a crisis thing like, you know who's my highest level child? I know that SEMH-L and Complex Communication teams say that we're very good here at getting in early intervention. But I'm kind of aware that perhaps I don't use the EP team in the same way….I have used her for training and for, erm you know talking to me or getting involved in some of our behaviour. So those kind of things rather than always 1:1."

(Joanne, secondary school SENCo, lines 290-296, 302-306)

The College was also keen to incorporate a strategic use of EP time in a staff training context, to help staff meet the needs of YP who are transitioning to college:

Hannah: "At my previous place, we had the EPs come in and deliver…emotion coaching and that sort of thing….If we get the information in, in advance we can book you guys in to come and train some of the coordinators, and learning support providers for that, so then again, we can take on all these learners."

Interviewer: "And historically what do you think prevented that from happening?"

Hannah: "Financial implications…staffing all those issues. And…I think it's never been highlighted, you know previously."

(Hannah, college SEND staff, lines 320-326)

Analysis here presents a secondary *(between nodes)* CHAT contradiction between the *division of labour* and *rules* nodes , as the College has identified a role for EPs in post-16 transitions but is restricted by "financial implications". Financial implications are interpreted to mean having insufficient budget to book enough traded hours from the EPS to carry out the work considered necessary. Challenges in budgeting for EP hours in schools or colleges in the local commissioned model of service delivery also arose in conversation with members of the EP team, indicating that the same secondary contradiction exists across the activity system.

4.7.4.3 Considering the EP role through a matrix model. The matrix in Figure 4.5 below offers a model through which EPs could evaluate their role in post-16 work, taking from inspiration Gutkin's (1999) matrix for consultation. Two dimensions of the EP role that were identified in the data analysis above form two polarised axes, creating four quadrants in the matrix. On the vertical axis, collaborative work (as discussed in Section 4.7.1) can be polarised by siloed work. Siloed practice in SEND work has been defined as an active separation between parts of a system (Holland & Fitzgerald, 2023, p.14).

On the horizontal axis, strategic involvement is polarised by reactive involvement. EP work can be positioned in any of the four quadrants, depending on the working practices of the individual psychologist, SENCo and wider EP team guidance. Nevertheless, for transitions to post-16 education the upper right quadrant with higher levels of collaboration and strategic planning seems aspirational to stakeholders, based on the analysis and interpretation of data in this *division of labour* node.

Figure 4.5

Two-dimensional matrix model for EP role in post-16 work (after Gutkin, 1999).
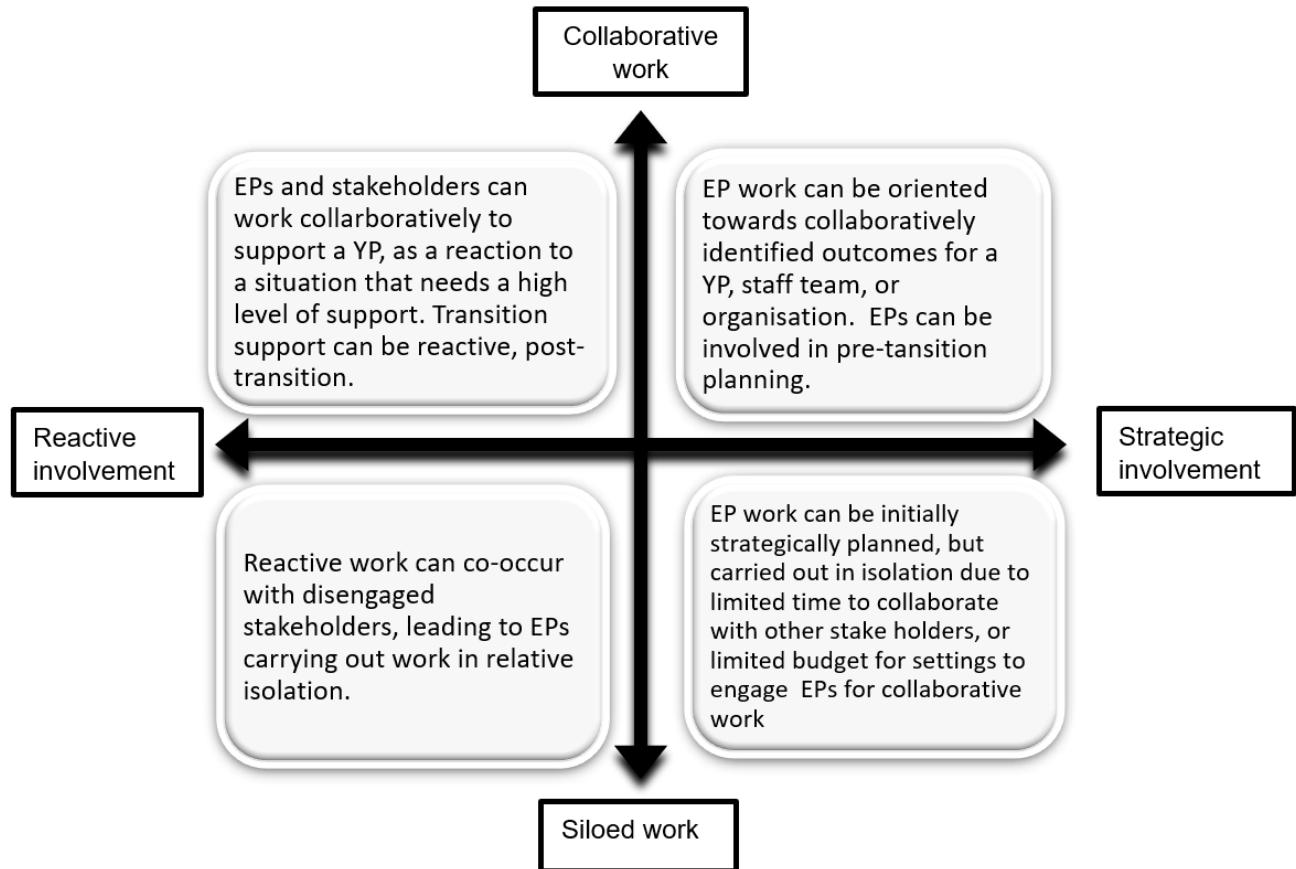
This model might help EP services to plan development of the EP role in post-16 work. A matrix based on polarisation between collaboration and siloed work, and strategic versus reactive work need not be exclusive to the EP role and could apply to a range of SEND professionals who work in transitions. To give clearer direction to the involvement of outside agencies, the matrix could also be used by SENCos to audit how they are utilising EPs and other SEND professionals in their school.

4.8 Tools node: EHCPs, PfA and academic supports

The *tools* node explores resources that mediated between system stakeholders and the *object* and *outcomes* nodes. In CHAT, the notion of *tools* being encultured is important (Roth & Lee,

2007). EHCPs, the PfA framework, and the support they provide, are interpreted here to be to tools that are culturally situated in LA, school, and college practices.

Two prominent subthemes of relevance to the research questions were identified through the data analysis. The first subtheme concerned EHCPs as a support tool, directly addressing support for post-16 transitions. A second subtheme identified was the inconsistent use of PfA outcomes as a tool, relevant to RQ 2b. Other types of tools that supported transitions were based around academic support, and included use of assessment and intervention, assistive technology, and adapted learning environments.

4.8.1 Support from EHCPs: Maintenance and Stagnation

Foot (2014) notes that there can be ambiguity in the rules and tools nodes, and that it is important to recognise when part of a system is functioning as either a tool or a rule. This issue is relevant to EHCPs, which have impact as both a culturally significant rule and tool.

The data included a range of references to EHCPs and the support they were perceived to provide, interpreted here as a mediating tool in a YPs education. This section distils data specifically relevant to post-16 transitions, rather than more general support for the YP from EHCPs. References to the process of applying for an EHCP are discussed later under the *rules* node.

For Hannah, a critical issue with EHCPs as a tool in transition planning at college is their being kept up to date. The discussion of the EP role further highlighted a drive towards earlier involvement: a potential consequence of this is a less robust review process as time passes. In some cases, YP come to the college with an EHCP that does not represent their needs:

"The EHCP might not be reflective of the YP"(Hannah, college SEND staff, line 24)

"We actually say "this is what it says in your EHCP tell me about how things are now, does it sound like you?" And then often they go "I don't do that, that and that and that" So again, having that relevant up to date information, it is really, really important for us."

(Hannah, college SEND staff, lines 299-301)

Hannah implies an EHCP as a tool is only useful if it is kept sharp. There is a connection here with the voices of EPs in the data, where there was a lack of clarity about who was reviewing YP's EHCPs as they got older. Kaz, a main-grade EP explains:

Interviewer: "Have you ever worked in a post-16 setting such as college, anything beyond GCSEs"

Kaz: "No – it is has been 6 or 7 years now and I've never."

Interviewer: "So that's interesting in itself. Though presumably there are YP with educational needs within those colleges"

Kaz: "And with EHC plans that need to be reviewed. I don't know who's doing that."

(Kaz, EP, lines 109-114)

Kaz triangulates Rich's observation that EP involvement declines as the YPn gets older. Keeping EPs involved in reviewing EHCPs in post-16 should therefore be an aim, to optimise the relevance and utility of the EHCP as a tool. Because this is currently not common practice in the LA, sixth forms and colleges may need to engage EPs in planning meetings advance to anticipate this involvement, and may also need to consider allocating additional traded hours for extended EP involvement with older YP.

4.8.2 PfA: an inconsistently applied tool

This subsection considers how PfA outcomes are used in transition planning and within EHCPs from Year 9 onwards.

Discussion of PfA recalls the intertwinement of institutional and life course transitions, as explained in Section 2.5. Data coded to the *tools* node illustrates inconsistent uses of PfA outcomes to support the transition to post-16 education, an institutional transition. PfA is also revisited later in the *community* node where YP have developed PfA skills as part of life-course transitions in their home and family life.

Analysis identified two types of inconsistency in the application of the PfA framework. First, not all the YP in the study had EHCPs written or reviewed by EPs using the PfA framework. Second, the YP people had had limited access to learning skills associated with PfA in their school or college settings. These inconsistencies are interpreted here in the CHAT framework as a secondary level (between nodes) contradiction, as planning PfA outcomes for post-16 is a statutory requirement (DfE, 2014), and encompassed by the *rules* node.

The first point was mentioned by Penny in her interview:

> "Interviewer: in writing the advice, did you have any reference to the preparation for adulthood framework?
>
> Penny: Okay, I've seen it, but I didn't use it in this case and I don't have that many post-16 cases.... So I haven't used it for the last four years, but had seen it prior to that." [Penny referenced some breaks to normal practice including COVID period] (Penny, EPS service manager, lines 189-198)

Kaz explained a similar situation. PfA outcomes were not used when she wrote Serena's initial EHCP advice, but have been used in pieces of statutory work since then:

> "At that time, no I wouldn't have used it for her. I have used it with other YP since though....I started to use it a lot more recently, because I find, using those, you can actually make their outcomes much more aspirational, and just "oh so they're going to learn their multiplications" , and it's more things like reading a bus timetable, or

making outcomes more relevant to their day to day life, rather than just that school

environment that's just not going to be relevant to them."

(Kaz, EP, lines 54-61)

Ted, the third EP interviewed, was more confident with PfA in EHC advices:

"Yeah, I've had, I've had a lot of experience with using the preparation for adulthood

framework in writing advices and I would say that's, that's mainly sort of limited to me

marrying up what I'm putting in the report with these different outcomes.

Yeah. So like that's, that's my main sort of involvement with that framework through

the sort of psych advice, writing process."

(Ted, EP, lines 291-296)

Staff from schools and the College reported challenges in implementing PfA for YP with

EHCPs. The types of challenge faced in implementing PfA for YP are summarised in Table

4.6 below, along with potential problem-solving actions identified in the data.

Table 4.6

Examples of challenges for schools and colleges in teaching PfA skills to YP with EHCPs

Participants	Issue / challenge	Quote illustrating challenge	Identified actions and supporting quotes
Sarah (Pastoral Lead) In reference to Liam (YPn, 17yo)	Concern that PfA content will be too demanding for Liam, as he has been demand avoidant in the past and is currently attending his A-level classes well.	"He used to… back in Year 10, but then I believe…he saw it as again that build up of "I don't understand why we're learning about this. Why do I need to learn about it now?" Because it's not relevant now." (Sarah, l. 542-544)	There is time put aside for Liam to work with staff on 1:1 learning outside of his A-level courses through his EHCP funding. "Maybe because he's in sixth form where he's, you know, open to the big world….he has good opportunities here where he'll have to put himself out, if he wants an apprenticeship or he wants something, he will have to put that that information out there himself, not from us." (Sarah, l. 550-553)
Hannah (College Learning Needs Manager)	Hannah is 1 year in post, and previously has not had a member of staff available to deliver PfA content	" [PfA] is something that we're looking to roll out. We've had to, start small, …this is a trial year….So students who haven't been able to access it this year we do have them on the list for next year so that they can access that.…certain aspects of the programme that might be in their EHCP" (Hannah, l. 112-116)	New PfA and social skills classes are on offer from this academic year. "So both PfA and social skills are optional programmes….I've started selling this to Year 10s, Year 11s coming in, because this is a provision we've not had previously…its something that we want to grow. And we want it to be a reason for people to come to the college." (Hannah, l. 123-126)
Ab (YPn, at college, 18 years)	Proposed PfA class schedule is not compatible with Ab's timetable	"They do actually have an adulthood course going on but I can't really attend because my timetable isn't really right which is a bit annoying, 'cause I think that will benefit me" (Ab, l. 271-272)	Hannah has a positive perception of Ab's ability to handle college life, and feels she is managing the challenges of independence. "They're very capable, they're very proactive, they will come to you if there is a problem" (Hannah, l. 150-151)

4.8.3. Assessment and Intervention

Engaging in extra tutoring and using past papers to prepare for exams is a well-established preparation technique for pupils of all abilities (Baird et al., 2013). In Liam's case he was not attending school during Year 11 and use of past papers became the principal means of his preparation for exams, and crucially was one that he was prepared to engage in:

> "We sent papers home, we sent past papers, we sent things that would help him… so when he's at home and he's got them papers in front of him, that's how he got his grades, I believe. All working together, because it was, it was a battle for Nicky [his mother] though, to make sure that, you know, everything was still done. We were trying to work as much at home, but because he was that defiant."
> (Sarah, secondary school pastoral staff, lines, 173-186)

Collaboration, a main subtheme in the *division of labour* node, underpins the process of exam preparation, with the school, Liam's mother, and Liam himself all collaborating. Past papers were a tool to orient Liam towards his transition goals. Ginny's perception of past papers is also a positive reflection on their pragmatic value:

> "Sounds crazy, but I think I'd add more mocks. OK, actually, I'd hate myself for doing that, but I do because we do some in October and then December. But it's just looking more at the actual paper and less of the knowledge that goes into it."
> (Ginny, YPn, 16 years, lines 361-363)

Additional intervention tools that mediated preparation for transition to post-16 education raised in the data include technological supports for literacy such as laptops and reading pens, the role of 1:1 tutoring, and training for staff in SEND needs

4.9 Community Node

The *community* node, also referred to as "community of significant others" (Foot, 2014, p.6) explores communities that the YPn interacts with who share an orientation towards the object of transition to post-16 education. The *community* node is distinct from the *division of labour* node as it looks beyond those who are employed to support transition for the young person. The main groups identified were peers and family members. Understanding the contribution of these groups in supporting post-16 transitions is a key part of RQ 1.

4.9.1 Peers: Supports and Challenges

The importance of peer relations was noted across the data from YP, parents, school, and college staff. Accounts from YP in the study can be interpreted in the context of social identity theory (Tajfel et al.,1979, see Section 2.5). For YP pre and post transition, there was a perception of the value of feeling part of an in-group of students who have the common ground of studying on the same course or having similar educational needs. Ab, who has made a successful transition to post 16 education, explained challenges and positive outcomes from establishing a new peer network when starting college:

> Ab: "It's always been difficult. Because you've got to approach someone you don't really know and kind of just say "hiiii"… but I made friends in the end…. They support me in like the group session and they support me in like the work that we do… they will like, suggest what I should put in my book that I didn't think about, maybe like, what they've got in their book I can maybe add in mine. And like we've worked together in like shoots, photo shoots."
>
> (Ab, YPn, 18 years, lines 178-190)

Being part of the photography group has supported Ab with the workload and helped her with ideas for projects: it took resilience from Ab to make these connections in the face of some initial anxiety.

Serena, in her first term at college, had a similar experience early on of feeling socially isolated, but was able to make new friends quickly:

> Serena: "On the first day, I hated it. Well, I wouldn't say I hated it, I'd say I was nervous. Because I didn't know anybody. All of my friends went somewhere else so I didn't have nobody. And then but on the second it went better."
>
> Interviewer: ….."So you've made new friends here, how did you meet them."
>
> Serena:" One of them, she's from my course, and then her friends her on different courses, I've met them."
>
> (Serena, YPn, 17 years, lines 7-15)

Ginny's peer relations were identified as being more complex than the other YP, with the SENCo hypothesising that a lot of time off school with medical needs had made building friendships and finding an in-group more challenging for a period:

> "She did have a lot of problems. She completely changed her friendship group at one point….She's a bit intense to start with because she's not had a peer group for such a long time because….She obviously was completely isolated for quite a long time….So when she came back, she was a bit over the top, bit too much… rather than, you know, deciding as a group, she would kind of tell them what they were supposed to be doing."
>
> (Joanne, secondary school SENCo, lines 129-135)

Ginny's own words were an honest and concise explanation:

> "I just struggle to make friends and kind of read the room sometimes."
>
> (Ginny, YPn, 16 years, line 25)

This situation forms an important connection with neuro-developmental literature (Blakemore, 2008) exploring how brain development might influence the prioritisation of peer interactions

in adolescence (see Section 2.5). Ginny was isolated during this highly sensitive developmental period as she has had medical conditions that required extended periods of time at home, which seems to have had an environmental impact on her peer-relationship skills. Nevertheless, with support from the school, Ginny has been able to learn successful peer interaction strategies from a counsellor the school engaged to work with her.[5] Joanne explained the benefits of this support.

> "It was learning how to back off, how to be a bit more relaxed about friendships. So she was helping her with sort of practising conversations that she might have in a different way, that sort of thing. So going to sixth form, I don't know whether her peer group are going with her, but I think she's a bit more relaxed now. I think she would deal with that better."
>
> (Joanne, secondary school SENCo, lines 146-149)

4.9.2 SEND community support

Eddy drew support from a SEND community within his school, who he feels connected to as an in-group through shared experience of educational needs. The SEND base is an important provision for this community of YP as they can meet there as a safe space. Eddy was the only YPn who discussed his peer relations in this way, however the role of *SEND community support* is categorised as a descendent theme because of the potential transferability to other YP. *SEND community support* example of a descendent theme with low coding density that is nevertheless relevant to research questions about support and perception of support:

> "At break and lunch I will come here to the SEND centre, because I have friends with similar problems here as well…. My mum wanted me to go to a special school

---

[5] Ginny's counsellor was recruited for interview as a key supporting adult but withdrew consent to participate shortly before the interview.

because of my autism, but I wanted to come here because I had friends that also

came here.…I made plenty of new friends, so I'm glad I came here yes."

(Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 99-100, 112-114, 122)

Eddy, in Year 10, has not engaged in detailed transition planning, however projecting forward, being part of a SEND community could be an important part of maintaining peer relations as he moves to post-16 education.

4.9.3 The family community

Families as communities of support were also clearly identified in the data. This was relevant to PfA outcomes for the YP in the study (RQ 2b). Liam's school learning relevant to PfA outcomes, taught through Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE) had been missed altogether. Nicky explained that outside of his educational setting Liam had developed skills for independence in several areas, through family support.

"I wouldn't say he's had any educational input from school in that, and partly because

of his low attendance, he's probably not attended those sort of pastoral

lessons….The way we live our life as a family, he gets a lot of input. He's perfectly

capable of cooking for himself. He can plan a menu, see what he needs to do and

what he needs to buy to make that meal….He knows how to read a timetable. He

knows how to catch a bus…from a practical point of view, he's really quite, savvy."

(Nicky, Liams mother, lines 518-525, 531-533)

Eddy similarly perceived that life skills can be taught at home rather than at school:

Interviewer: "How do see yourself learning these skills in the future then?
Eddy: "Well I see myself learning them from my dad…. I think your relatives and family

should teach you. Cooking should be passed on from generation to generation."

(Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 226-229)

Closely linked to skills for independence in the outcome node, Ginny explained that her day-to-day organisation is closely linked to family support:

> "Time management, is not my forte….Mum is very good at helping me do it all. She wakes me up and makes sure she makes my lunch and makes sure I've got it before…and because we live close, so if I do forget something she can just bring it in."

> (Ginny, YPn, 16 years, lines 267-273)

The data also identifies broader perceptions of family communities. Roberta and Olivia's interview highlighted family as a general strength in Serena's situation:

> "She's got a very supportive social network at home as well, so mum does a lot for her, dad does a lot for her, she's got her brothers, she's got dad's partner, they really look out for her, they're close, which is good."
> (Roberta, secondary school inclusion manager, lines 130-132)

In a contrasting situation Eddy described rifts in his family that had been difficult, whilst also explaining that he did not see a connection between home life and school life. Eddy's compartmentalised view might be associated with his autistic profile, as it has been suggested that autistic YP struggle to generalise skills and understandings from one setting to another (Hampshire et al., 2013).

> "Even now they're on more even ground it took a while to see my dad regularly. And now I see my dad erm every two weeks…. It used to be a massive emotional problem that I had. I felt that I was forced to pick a side….It didn't effect things at school no…I see them as completely separate, that's why I refuse to do my homework. Because if I wanted to do homework, I would be home-schooled."

> (Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 277-288)

YP's perceptions of peer group and family communities highlighted both positive and challenging relationships. Analysis of community support in the context of post-16 transitions leads to the inference that outcomes for post-16 transitions are consistently mediated by peer and family relationships. However, the precise nature of these supports is nuanced and varies from one young person to another, a finding that seems likely to be transferable to other YP or LA systems.

4.10 Rules Node

The rules in an activity system can constrain or facilitate processes (Engeström & Sannino, 2021). Like tools, rules in an activity system are encultured, and represent a place, time, and a value system. Within an activity system there can be systems rules, such as school rules and statutory requirements in the SEND system, and cultural norms that function as rules (Foot, 2014).

Earlier discussion positioned EHCPs within the *tools* node. However, participants also talked about EHCPs system in terms of rules and their impact. Other relevant subthemes under the *rules* node were the importance of school rules, and the degree to which YP and parents developed their own rules where other rules imposed constraint.

4.10.1 Challenges Associated with EHCP Application Process.

Parents in the study spoke of difficulties in the process of applying for an EHCP. EHCPs are highly relevant to research questions about support for transition, as the EHCP is perceived in the data as a gateway to additional support and wider choices for provision in post-16 education.

Nicky, Bryony, and Cath all expressed frustration that their initial applications for EHCPs had been turned down by the LA. Nicky (Liam's mother) expressed a clear view the process was difficult to navigate:

"Initially his first secondary school applied for one and it was rejected. One thing I'm always asked is "what do you want for Liam?" Well, I don't know what is there for somebody like Liam? …. it's almost like a secret society. You have to know the answer to the question that you're being asked. Without knowing anything about it."

(Nicky, Liam's mother, lines 779-789)

Parents and professionals had contrasting views on the LA's rules for SEND funding. Bryony felt the LA was particularly constraining:

"There'll be children out there that aren't achieving or getting the support that they need and they deserve because the families aren't in a situation to take on a battle. And this Local Authority seems to be one of the worst for it."

(Bryony, Ginny's mother, lines 806-809)

Raj, Careers Service Manager, who works within but not for the LA, had a broader perspective on the constraining factors:

"I don't think this is a LA problem, this is a national problem, which is unfortunately it will go down to funding. And I don't think that is in the power of those SEND coordinators necessarily….I think it's a national problem, the volume compared to the resources."

(Raj, careers service manager, lines 493-499)

Penny faced challenges when working on Liam's EHCP advice, in terms of cooperation with Liam's school and the rules for EHCP advice. Penny was following statutory guidelines to complete the EHCP within a set timeframe, so had needed to write the advice based on the evidence she had access to at the time:

"I made many attempts to contact that second school and even when I put in an appointment of a Teams meeting, nobody turned up and on multiple occasions could

not get anybody to talk to me about the young person, so went ahead without gathering

the school's views…. I wasn't able to triangulate, so I used Mum's views….Couldn't

get pupil views cause child wouldn't meet with me."

(Penny, EPS service manager, lines 48-51, 75-76)

The difficulty in engaging with Liam's school raised a primary *(within nodes)* CHAT

contradiction, as Nicky perceived the new SENCo at the school to be helpful with EHCP

application (see quote in Section 4.7.2).

The lack of engagement between Liam's school and the EPS illustrated difficulties in

collaborative work within LAs, resonating with findings from the literature (Craig, 2009).

Aligned with the lower left quadrant of the matrix model in Figure 4.5, Penny's psychological

advice for Liam's EHCP was completed in what seemed to be relative isolation, as a reaction

to a high level of concern about his attendance and engagement. Nevertheless the application

was successful and Liam received an EHCP shortly before he transitioned to sixth form.

4.10.2 School Rules and Their Impact on the Activity System

For some YP, challenges with flexible thinking meant that following school rules was a

challenge, leading to conflict with staff. A contrasting interpretation is that some school rules

were applied inflexibly and did not take account of YP's profile of needs. Liam's mother Nicky

explained:

"He'd sit with his coat on because he was cold. That was against the school rules. So

teachers took, some teachers took offence to that, and then that just got into a

vicious cycle of constant fighting."

(Nicky, Liam's mother, lines 145-148)

Sarah, who has worked with Liam, shared her frustration with this situation:

> "He felt to come into school was very, very overwhelming. And it got to the point where I was emailing teachers and saying if Liam comes in with a coat or anything, that's, you know, don't challenge it like that. He's coming into school."
>
> (Sarah, secondary school pastoral staff, lines 188-190)

My interpretation is that school rules constrained Liam in Year 11 at a crucial phase in his journey towards post-16 education, as anxiety about basic rules was impacting his attendance. In Liam's eventual transition to post-16 education, it was confirmed that in the absence of strict uniform rules he was able to engage in learning, a finding that re-connects with the *transition brings freedom* descendent theme earlier in the discussion:

> "Everything to do with his uniform and how he looks and everything like that. It's a bit more relaxed in sixth form you see."
>
> (Sarah, secondary school pastoral staff, lines 130-131)

In Ginny's case there had been some examples of rules that were constraining, even when this meant contradicting provision identified in her EHCP, which Bryony, her mother, noted:

> "There's still some challenges with some staff not liking Ginny using a laptop rather than writing class. That can still be challenge sometimes because they want her to hand homework in.… But that was a challenge. She was being penalised for missing deadlines or being handed worksheets."
>
> (Bryony, Ginny's mother, lines 124-134)

Therefore, there appear to be inconsistencies in how some EHCP provisions were delivered in schools, as staff adhered to simpler school rules, not adjusting to YP's needs where necessary. Because EHCP provisions are statutory, this creates a primary (within node) contradiction in the *rules* data. A finding drawn from this contradiction is a possible need for

further support or training for school staff to understand when one set of constraining school rules can be overridden to facilitate the more specific rules of EHCP.

An interesting descendent theme within the *rules* node relates to how some participants constructed their own rules in response to externally constraining rules. For example, when Eddy's EHCP was initially turned down, Cath was not willing to send him to school until the plan was granted:

> "The Council wouldn't grant him an EHCP going from primary school to secondary school. And so I had to appeal that. And Eddy didn't actually start secondary school. He started about a month and a half later, cause I wasn't prepared for him to go into secondary school without a plan in place."
>
> (Cath, Eddy's mother, lines 277-279)

Rules regarding EHCPs had been experienced and interpreted in different ways by participants across the dataset. Parents had the strongest views on these rules. Examples above also show situations where school rules appeared inflexible, sometimes cutting across the existing rules of EHCP provisions.

4.11 Transitions for young people with EHCPs: a conceptual model

A conceptual model of transitions (C-MoT) is presented below, with the purpose of representing support for educational transitions for YP with EHCPs. The model is not limited to post-16 transition as an important part of the model is a cyclical process between *cliff edges* and *new adventures*. The *outcome* node discussion explores the idea that when a YPn moves forward to a new situation, eventually a further transition presents itself. The new transition temporarily becomes the new cliff edge. Transitions are identified to either move dynamically forward again to a new situation or to statically manage transition with a minimal change.

Figure 4.6

Conceptual model to illustrate support for educational transitions
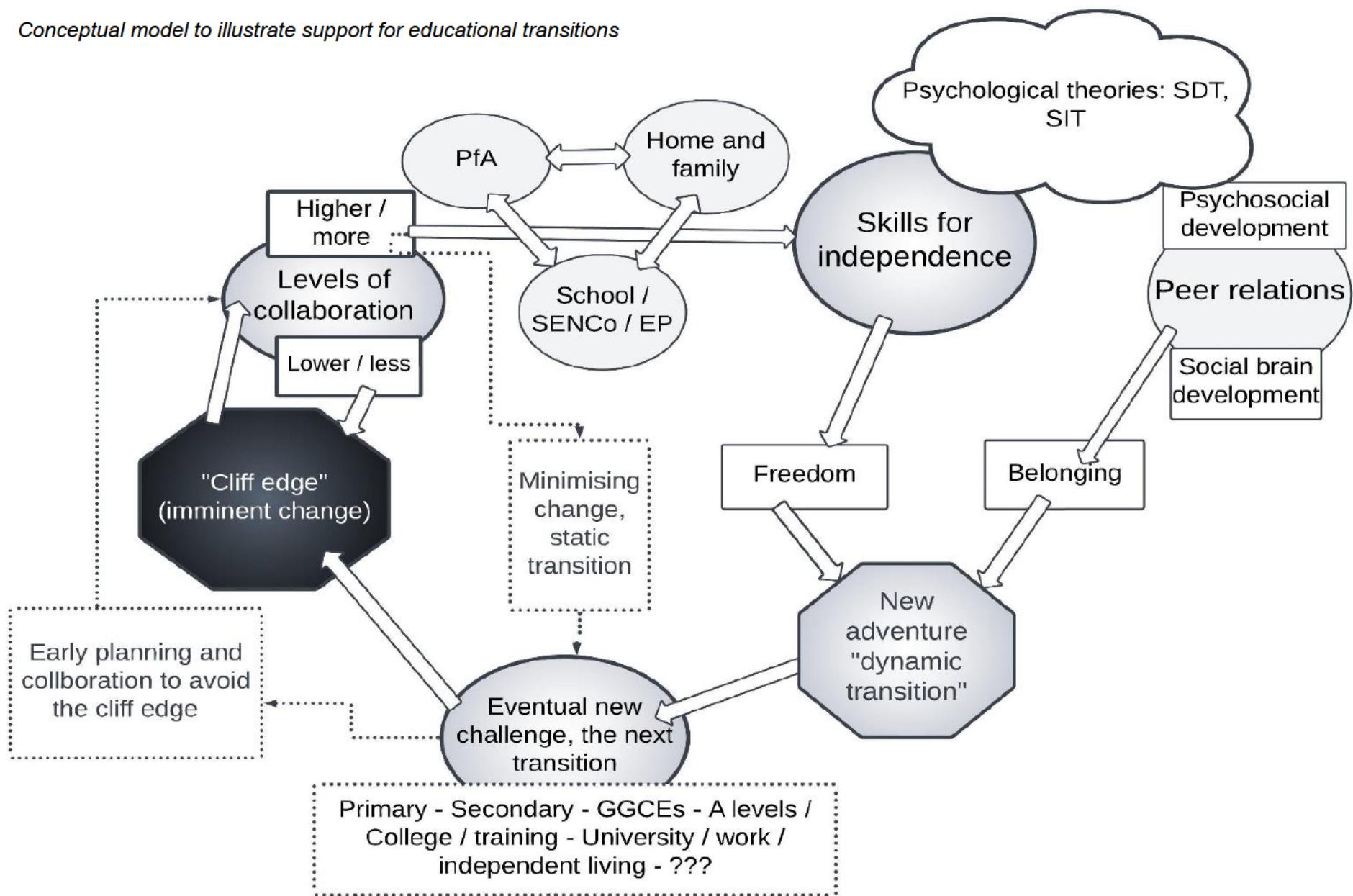
The C-MoT theorises that where higher levels of collaboration occur, new skills for independence are more likely to develop, promoting autonomy and a greater sense of freedom on the part of the YPn. Accordingly, lower levels of collaboration can maintain the *cliff edge*, as represented by college walk-in transitions at the systemic challenges they create. A third pathway shows that some transitions are collaboratively supported, but in a way that minimises change, a static transition. Static transitions were a priority for some YP and their families in this study.

A further dotted line shows an early planning pathway. This was identified, through interpretation of the data, as a strategic approach that could by-pass or reduce the perception of a cliff edge. Here it is important to reflect that the data implies early involvement in this LA is conceptualised as intervention early in the YPs lifespan, such as in EYFS or Key Stage 1. For post-16 transitions, early involvement needs to include further involvement in late Key Stage 3 or early Key Stage 4, for example, through the EHCP annual review process. This was particularly challenging for Liam who did not receive an EHCP until the end of Year 11 and so did not have access to the statutory review system.

Connections between psychological theories and the research findings are tentatively integrated into the conceptual model. Overlaps between elements of motivation in SDT (Ryan & Deci, 1985) and identity in SIT (Tajfel et al.,1979) have previously been explored in a range of contexts including organisational psychology (Wang & Zheng, 2012), communication research (Neys et al., 2014), exercise psychology (Strachan et al., 2012), and social psychology (Yip et al., 2023). Findings in this study propose an overlap between the relatedness component of SDT, and relatedness from ingroup identity in SIT. There is a secondary overlap between the autonomy component of SDT, and the finding that skills for independence promote autonomy as part of a dynamic transition. Social brain development (Blakemore, 2008; Andrews et al., 2021) and psychosocial development (Erikson, 1950;

Graves & Larkin 2006) are positioned in the model as orbitals of skills for independence as they attempt to explain the young person's social priorities.

4.12 Summary: Findings and Discussion Chapter

Chapter 4 presented and discussed the findings from the data. Sixteen participant interviews were analysed using framework analysis to probe how support for transition to post-16 education for YP with EHCPs was perceived to function. Summary findings were based on a framework matrix, and thematic heatmap. An overall activity system diagram models how themes coalesced around each CHAT node.

Subthemes of greatest relevance to the research questions were discussed in an account of each activity node, illustrated by illuminative excerpts drawn from the framework matrix. Meanings in the subthemes were interpreted in the context of relevant psychological theory, existing post-16 transition literature from the systematic review, and CHAT contradictions.

Salient points from the analysis of nodes and subthemes were brought together into a main conceptual model for transitions, along with a smaller quadrant model to represent the EP role in post-16 transitions.

Chapter 5. Implications, Reflections, Conclusions

The purposes of Chapter 5 are as follows:

- To reflect on how the findings from the study answer the research questions, and explain what the research has illuminated about the support for post-16 transitions in the LA.

- To draw out appropriately positioned meaning from the research, through considering the main findings in the context of literature and psychological theories of relevance.

- To establish a clear understanding of the implications of this study for educational psychology, in terms of the EP role and the systems in which EPs work.

- To reflect on limitations of the study and consider implications for further research.

The research questions were:

RQ 1 - How are young people with EHCPs supported by school, home, and agencies in the transition from secondary education into post-16 education?

RQ 2a - What are young peoples' perceptions of the transition process and how do these perceptions relate to the perceptions of stakeholders in the systems around them?

RQ 2b - How is preparation for adulthood supported in the transition process for these young people?

RQ 2c - Do EP services contribute to the transition process, and how can this role be developed?

5.1 Implications of CHAT for the study findings

This subsection critically reviews how the CHAT framework has contributed to the study findings, and the meanings that can be drawn from them. Exploration of post-16 transitions through the CHAT framework arguably adds to existing literature in the following ways:

1. CHAT offers a cross-systemic perspective on educational transitions, which the C-MoT tentatively represents (Figure 4.6). The application of CHAT to analyse SEND systems is noted as underused by Bal et al. (2020).

2. The CHAT framework takes account of historicity and culture within the activity system (Bal et al., 2020; Daniels, 2016). Historical and potential future versions of transition activity systems were considered, with the CaFA (2014) legislation representing a significant point of cultural change for SEND and post-16 transitions. A cross-sectional group of YP also illustrated different points in the transition journey from age 15-19. Working practices in the LA and an orientation towards chronologically earlier EP involvement with YP can be identified as a cultural feature of the activity system.

3. The activity system is oriented towards the YPn's experiences, by positioning the YPn as the subject for the activity system. However, in CHAT the meanings of the study findings are ultimately considered at a collective activity system level rather than in relation to any one individual in the system (Anastasiou & Hajisoteriou, 2022).

This last point has been proposed as a significant unsolved problem for CHAT (Davydov, 1999). The focus of CHAT on multi-voiced systems encourages a collective view of subjects in the activity system, which seems to negate the importance of individual context. However, Engeström (1999b) seeks to reconcile the issue at a philosophical level through dialectical thinking, meaning that two seemingly opposing ideas can be accepted to co-exist (Rathus & Miller, 2015).

A dialectical interpretation is facilitated by a social constructionist position, accepting that participants construct their position on issues such as collaboration rather than there being an objective truth that can be discovered (see Section 3.2). When analysed collectively, tensions between individual positions are accounted for by the CHAT framework: contradictions are

acknowledged as areas for growth and development in a system (Kuutti, 1996; Engeström, 1999a; Foot, 2014).

My reflection on the question of individual and collective voices in CHAT is that the YPn's transition to post-16 education is the *object* of the activity system. Therefore, the voices of other stakeholders can also orient towards the YPn's journey. For example, SENCos and EPs mediate the activity system *object* and *outcome* without being the *subject* of the system.

5.2 Reflections on the Research Questions

5.2.1 Primary Research Question (RQ 1)

How are young people with EHCPs supported by school, home, and other agencies in the transition from mainstream secondary education into post-16 education?

Broadly, supports for transition identified in Chapter 4 were congruent with the four main topics identified in the systematic literature review. These were: the importance of collaboration and continuity; a focus on the journey to adulthood; the importance of relationships; and the challenges of poorly planned transitions. However, findings in the present study also offer new perspectives to the existing literature. For example, Section 4.7 analyses the EP role in transitions post-16 through SDT and a collaborative and strategic work matrix, which are additions to previous studies of the EP role.

The emergent-stage C-MoT in Figure 4.6 illustrates transition supports that seemed to matter most to participants. Collaboration between different parts of the activity system was identified as a crucial support for post-16 transitions. Further consideration of recent literature on collaboration in education systems brings important context and meaning to this key finding.

Hellawell et al. (2022) highlight changes in collaborative practice across SEND systems during the COVID pandemic. For Hellawell et al. (2022) a more flexible approach to communication through online meetings seems to have improved relationships between school and parents. This is countered by a perceived loss of professional presence from moving some face-to-face SEND supports to an online system.

Connected to the above, EP data in the present study implies that collaboration in post-16 work in this LA has been reduced since COVID, making writing Psychological Advice for the less commonly commissioned post-16 age-group more challenging. Post-COVID collaborative practice and the volume of post-16 work across other EPS's may differ from the LA in this study. Nevertheless an implication here is that collaborative practice across LA systems could be re-evaluated in the light of changes that became commonplace in the pandemic, focusing on important questions about professional presence and communication.

Further socio-political factors have been argued to play a part in limiting scope for collaborative work. In studying collaboration between EPs and speech and language therapists (SALTs), Birch et al. (2023b) noted austerity has had significant impact on the resources, staffing and working environments, all of which act as top-down challenges for collaborative SEND work, compounded by greater statutory pressures from the 2014 CaFA. Data from participants about local and national level challenges with staffing and resources seems to reflect this position.

Exploring future directions for collaborative work, Griffiths et al. (2021) propose a model of *building blocks* for collaborative practice, shown in appendix 11. In the model, collaborative practice is conceptualised as being built on a foundation of relationships, built further through shared values, built on further still through active engagement, to establish the necessary conditions for meaningful collaboration. Participants across the present study referred to successful relationships, the cornerstone of Griffiths et al.'s (2021) model, in a range of contexts. Analysis of the *community* node is an example.

The present study adds further perspectives to Griffiths et al's (2021) model of collaboration, by drawing out nuances in how collaboration and support are conceptualised by different stakeholders. Exemplified by the *SENCo role* subtheme, SEND and LA professionals were aware of the mechanisms of how collaboration could lead to support. By contrast, parents and YP seemed more interested in the *perception* of support, as a product of collaboration.

EP work was also discussed in the context of collaborative versus more siloed working practices. This forms the vertical axis in the collaborative and strategic work matrix (see Section 4.7.4.3). Collaboration was most successful where EPs had built successful working relationships with schools over time, connecting again to the foundation layer of Griffiths et al.'s (2021) building blocks model.

Long-term transition planning between professionals, schools, and families has been identified as an important support for post-16 transitions (Doyle, 2016; Selfe et al., 2018; Packer et al., 2022). In the present study there was a projection that future versions of the activity system could involve earlier collaboration to support transitions over a longer period, especially in the move from schools to colleges. Stakeholders suggested that consistent updates of EHCPs and involvement of EPs in this could enhance transition support, a point discussed below in the context of RQ 2b. Difficulties associated with ineffective transition planning were also clearly identified in the systematic literature review (Essex & Melham, 2019; Shepherd, 2016), echoed in the present study by the contrast between collaboratively planned transitions and walk-in transitions at the College.

The rules surrounding EHCP applications and maintenance formed a persistent backdrop to stakeholders' understanding of support. Concern from parents that a YPn's needs would not be adequately met without an EHCP reflects wider questions for the LA system about how YP with SEND are supported in the absence of statutory supports (Capper & Soan, 2022; Malkani,

2021). The perceived impact of challenges with EHCPs is explored further in the discussion of RQ 2a.

Development of skills for independence can be an important part of transitions to post-16 education (Park & Mortell, 2020; Lawson, 2018). In the data analysis, skills for independence were associated with increases in autonomy and perceptions of freedom, resonating with an association between successful transitions and higher levels of self-determination reported in Alsaeed et al. (2023). In the present study, life skills were generally being supported at home more than at school and college. Relevant literature continues to highlight the importance of family support in educational transitions, with parental knowledge and understanding of their own child's needs interpreted as a key reason for their involvement in transition planning (Doyle et al., 2017; Malkani, 2021).

The identification of *static transitions* and *dynamic transitions* forms a key part of the C-MoT, also underpinning the *outcomes* node of the activity system (Section 2.5.1). This contrast can be given clearer meaning when considered in the context of psychological models for change. Prochaska and DiClemente (1983) theorise change in individuals to be a six-phase cycle. Their stages of change model gives further theoretical context for the cyclical aspect of post-16 transitions in the C-MoT (Figure 4.6).

Prochaska and DiClemente's (1983) seminal model is concerned with behavioural change rather than educational transitions, however there are still relevant connections, such as the idea of a YPn and their family being *change ready,* and the potential role that school and LA professionals can play in moving YP and families from *contemplation* to *preparation*. The phases of the model in relation to post-16 transitions are mapped out in Table 5.1 below, illuminating how the C-MoT can align with established cyclical models of change.

Table 5.1

Illustration of post-16 transitions through the Stages of Change model (Prochaska and DiClemente 1983)

Cycle of change phase	Definition	Relevance for Post-16 transitions for YP with EHCPs	Reflections
1. Pre-contemplation.	An individual is not yet aware of a need for change.	Parents, YP, and school are not engaged in planning for post-16 transitions or considering options.	Staying in phase 1 may lead to an unplanned transition *walk-in*. Settings may struggle to meet needs in post-16
2. Contemplation.	Changes are considered, and potential outcomes are weighed, but actions not yet taken.	Parents and YP may consider transitions involving minimal change, versus new situations and routines,	Movement from phase 2 into phase 3 can be instigated by early transition planning meetings
3. Preparation	Actions are taken to prepare for changes that are forthcoming.	Parents, YP and other stakeholders plan for transition type that has been contemplated in phase 2. PfA skills that might be needed in transition should be planned for.	Phase 3 involves collaborative work, visits to new settings to ensure transition is appropriate and viable. EHCP review is appropriate in phase 3.
4. Action	Actions are taken to enact agreed changes	YP begins post-16 education, transition is supported as agreed in planning at phase 3.	Transition can be supported through close monitoring of EHCP provisions and outcomes in early weeks of transition and review of these outcomes in an agreed time frame.
5. Maintenance	The changes are maintained successfully. New routines replace older patterns.	The YP is settled in their educational settings and engaged in their work towards agreed outcomes	Reviews will need to remain regular. Provisions and outcomes should continue to be adapted to remain relevant

Cycle of change phase	Definition	Relevance for Post-16 transitions for YP with EHCPs	Reflections
6. New horizon (*relapse* in the original model)	New challenges emerge as the post-16 phase of education approaches an end	YP, parents and other stakeholders approach a new cycle of change for post-19 education, work, and a potentially more independent lifestyle	As with post-16 transitions early planning and evaluation of PfA skills is important.

5.2.2 Secondary Research Question (RQ 2a)

What are young peoples' perceptions of support for the transition process, and how do these perceptions relate to the perceptions of stakeholders in the systems around them?

At the time of interview, the YP and their parents all perceived support in their settings and were able to name people at their school or college who helped them currently. YP in the study consistently perceived the importance of peer relations, a finding which was supported by the systematic literature review (Hickey, 2016; Manning, 2016; Packer et al., 2022; Gaona et al., 2019). Parents and school staff triangulated similar views to the YP, valuing peer support and being aware of the challenges the YP had faced. In a social neuro-science context, social brain development in adolescence may explain the elevated significance of peer relationships for the YP in this study (Blakemore, 2008; Andrews et al., 2021). Parallel to this, SIT (Tajfel et al., 1979) highlights the importance of feeling connected to a group.

Establishing the importance of peer support leads to questions about *how* YP can be supported in making new social connections in their transition to post-16 education. Data analysis showed there was limited consensus amongst the YP in the study in this area. Social support from a SEND community was one way that social connections were eased, whilst

other participants made new connections with fellow students on their study courses, which was initially difficult but eventually successful. Another YP was supported through SEMH counselling to help with social skills development.

The study findings illuminated tensions in perceptions of support for transition to post-16 education. Parents and school staff talked about past systemic frustrations, especially issues with EHCP applications. This finding seems to illustrate a national, rather than a LA, issue as frustrations with EHCP applications are further reflected in recent qualitative accounts. These come from the perspective of parents (Cullen & Lindsay, 2019), SENCos (Gore, 2016), and YP (Robinson, 2023).   EHCPs impact the transition process as they should play an important role, as a tool in planning the supports that a YPn will need in their transition to post-secondary education.

5.2.3 Secondary Research Question (RQ 2b)

How is preparation for adulthood supported in the transition process for these young people?

Ten years after initial PfA guidance, the level of consistency for PfA implementation is still considered a national issue: Ofsted have recently announced *thematic visits* to inspect PfA provision for YP with EHCPs (Ofsted, 2024). The study findings suggest that PfA as a statutory framework for planning EHCP and transition outcomes was being used inconsistently across school, college, and EP work in the LA.

Historicity that runs through the CHAT framework is relevant here. PfA outcomes have been part of the CoP guidance since 2014, but the present activity system does not reflect this, which can be interpreted as a tertiary level CHAT contradiction (concerning how the system changes over time). PfA guidance (DfE, 2014), alongside a range of online resources (National Development Team for Inclusion, 2021) can help construct an idealistic activity system to work towards in the future. However, the activity system in the present study reflects pre-2014 position where planning with PfA outcomes is not mandatory.

Atkinson et al. (2015, p.160) note that EPs are "uniquely positioned" to work with YP to plan for the development of life skills. It is therefore important to examine more closely why this may not have happened. School staff and EPs in the study were aware that PfA has been used inconsistently in planning transition outcomes for YP in the LA. Participants indicated change-ready intentions for more explicit emphasis on PfA in transition work. My reflection on PfA in this study is that PfA was not absent from school and EP practice in this study, but neither was it embedded.

Relevant literature has further implications for understanding potential barriers to embedding PfA planning. McAnaney and Wynne (2016) highlight that PfA requires a highly individualised approach, implying that including general PfA skills groups in the post-16 curriculum may not be adequate. Fayette and Bond (2018b) note challenges for the planning and evaluation of PfA due to a lack of adequate tools for this purpose. Beyond the UK, Burrus et al. (2018) undertook a systematic review of 36 interventions for the US equivalent of PfA, Adult Preparation Subjects (APS). Their findings were that 29 of these interventions were unable to evaluate APS to a high standard, highlighting further the challenges associated with evaluating life-skill development programmes.

The need for bespoke individual PfA planning bridges back to the importance of carefully reviewed and updated EHCPs as highlighted by College staff in Section 4.6.2.1. In this context, the earlier question of how to adequately support YP without EHCPs remains relevant and unanswered (Capper & Soan, 2022, Malkani, 2021).

Contrast between institutional transitions and life-course transitions, noted by Zittoun (2009), was evident in the data. Preparation for adulthood through a general development of life skills at home was reported across participants, tying in with the presence of family support systems across the participants. Certain life skills such as using public transport contributed to the degree to which YP were willing to look at new settings for post-16 education. Beyond post-

16 education, functional skills for independence and self-advocacy were found by Moon et al. (2011) to be of significance to potential employers of YP with SEND.

5.2.4 Secondary Research Question (RQ 2c)

Do EP services contribute to the transition process, and how can this role be developed?

Discussion of this RQ has the purpose of exploring implications of this study for the EP role, and wider implications for how EP work is commissioned at post-16 level.

The EP role was given elevated attention within the activity system due to the researcher's position as a TEP. CHAT is a useful framework as it can address the EP role through the division of labour node. At the same time the CHAT framework also guides the research to a systemic understanding of post-16 transitions and the place of the EP within the wider LA system.

Findings in this study echoed the view in earlier literature that EPs are underused in post-16 education (Esbrand, 2016; Mortune, 2021; Greenidge-Scott, 2016; Edwards, 2017). However, in this study EPs, LA professionals, and school SEND staff also added new perspectives for the potential expansion of the EP role in post-16 transitions.

EPs from the LA in the study conceptualised post-16 work as a diminishing cycle where less work led to less confidence and skills maintenance, aligning with self-determination theory, (see Figure 4.4). Tomlinson and Oland (2022) evaluated the use of a new tool, the Personal Skills Profile (PSP) designed for EP use to help keep PfA at the forefront of post-16 and transition work. Based a combination of personal construct psychology and person-centred planning, the PSP is psychologically informed, and was viewed with positivity by EPs from five LAs.

The PSP is a tool build a YPn's profile and assist in PfA planning. For EPs in the present study, learning to use the PSP in post-16 work could be a helpful step to increase confidence

and address skill maintenance in this area of the role. It should be noted that the PSP does not offer evaluation for outcomes of PfA, recalling the Fayette and Bond's (2018b) claim that there are limited resources for evaluating PfA.

EP work was discussed and analysed in the context of a contrast between a reactive and strategic involvement. This forms the horizontal access in the *collaborative and strategic work matrix* (see Section 4.7.4.3). The reactive role was seemed sometimes inevitable, referred to by staff and EPs a crisis case. The reactive EP role represents a contradiction when considered in the context of educational psychology literature. Strategic, preventive working has been a long-term aspiration for professional practice (Gillham, 1978; Mackay & Boyle, 1994). Whilst EPs note that casework tends to be reactive in nature, the data signals that focus is needed on development of strategic responses, underpinned by the growth and development of transition systems.

College staff and LA professionals speculated about increasing the involvement of EPs in post-16 work. Utilising EPs to contribute to pre-transition planning, rather than *post hoc.* reactive involvement, was identified as an area where the EP role could be expanded. Funding and a general lack of awareness of the EP role in post-16 education were perceived as barriers to involvement.

Models for expanding the EP role in post-16 education are already used in other LAs. Following research across Hampshire LA, Keegan and Murphy (2018) reported the development of a traded offer for EP work in LA post-16 colleges. The outcome was a Service Level Agreement with seven colleges which had previously not been trading with the EPS. Similar to the LA in the present study, a financial barrier to post-16 EP work was initially identified. Keegan and Murphy (2018) mitigated the financial barrier through a *start small* approach which offered services that were already well-developed within the Hampshire EP team and therefore kept costs lower.

The EPS in the present study could draw inspiration from Keegan and Murphy (2018) to develop a similar *start small* strategy. Planning out a traded offer for the College could be supported by the present study's findings which indicate that EPs in the LA and staff at the College have already begun to develop ideas about how the EP role might be developed for post-16 work (see Section 4.7.4).

For example, staff training was identified by college and school SEND staff as an area of collaborative work where EPs could improve support for post 16 transition. EPs regularly deliver training to staff in primary and secondary school (Birch et al., 2023a), so extending this part of the role to post-16 work should not be unsurmountable as part of a *start small*, traded offer. Training for post-16 staff in transition planning and the challenges this brings, with and without EHCPs, could be a specific support for EPs to offer. Because the SENCo role was identified in the data as playing a crucial supporting role in post-16 transition, there is a case to made for EPs to also be involved in providing training to Secondary SENCos around pre-transition and PfA planning. The lack of consistency in PfA planning (see Sections 5.2.3 and 4.8.2) further supports this notion.

Growth of the EP role in transition to post-16 education could potentially make EP work more visible and relevant to the YP and their families. Lack of EP visibility in post-16 transitions connects to an earlier point (Section 4.7.2), where parents are more likely to perceive support from a point of contact at the setting (e.g. SENCo) without understanding the systemic layers that underpin the support. In the context of the CHAT framework, parents saw and understood the *outcome* clearly, but the *division of labour* was less clear.

5.3 Implications for Stakeholders Across the LA and Beyond

This section reflects on the findings of the study and their relevance beyond the specific contexts of the research questions. An activity system in this study was constructed by interpreting the words of the participants in their unique contexts, against the backdrop of the

core CHAT nodes. Beyond the participants, anyone who is involved in post-16 transitions or SEND can consider what aspects of this research are relevant to their own position. For example, other EPs in other settings may have made greater use of PfA in their work. In this regard the findings are intended to have a degree of transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

A further reflective implication across the LA is the nature of communications between different stakeholders. There were examples where contradictions had developed between voices in the activity system that seemed linked to communication styles. Parents in the study noted occasions when they had not felt listened to, a finding reflected in other qualitative parental accounts (Cullen & Lindsay, 2019). LA professionals conversely noted that putting the voice of the YPn at the centre of the process means that parental wishes may be a secondary concern, especially if the YPn is 18 or older. Giving prominence to YP's voices was also reflected in post-16 transitions literature (Lawson, 2018, Greenidge-Scott, 2016).

Dialectical thinking can be revisited, as a philosophical tool, to reconcile the contradictions described above. However, it is important to offer practical ideas as part of this implications chapter. In this regard, motivational interviewing has been shown to potentially improve outcomes for difficult conversations (Thomas et al., 2019). Training for skills in motivational interviewing may be of benefit to staff across the LA, post-16 settings and secondary SEND staff to facilitate smoother communications at all levels in the activity system.

Two conceptual models in emergent stages were developed in this study. These were the *collaborative and strategic work matrix,* (after Gutkin, 1999) in Figure 4.5, and the C-MoT in Figure 4.6. Looking at the wider changes to SEND since the 2014 CaFA, Castro and Palikara (2016) highlight the need for evidence-based frameworks to support integrated services in SEND work. The C-MoT may represent a useful platform from which to address this need through further study and development.

Looking at specific applications of the models, the *collaborative and strategic work matrix* is used in this study to illustrate variations in the work of EPs in transitions to post-16 education, however it could be used to illuminate variations in EP work in other areas. For example, Zafeiriou and Gulliford (2020) address the EP role in the context of mental health in schools. As mental health literacy continues to grow across school settings (Marinucci et al., 2023), the matrix could contribute to the evaluation of EP work in mental health contexts. The matrix could also be used to conceptualise the work of other SEND professionals where collaboration has been identified as important, for example, in the SALT role, explored by McConnellogue (2011).

Implications be drawn from critical consideration of how the C-MoT applies to transitions other than post-16. The transition from primary to secondary education was challenging for all the YP in the present study. Literature indicates that primary to secondary transition has the potential to be challenging for many YP (Jindal-Snape et al., 2021; Harris & Nowland, 2021), and that YP with SEND are significantly more likely to experience a difficult transition (McCoy et al., 2019). It has also been argued that it is difficult to minimise change in a mainstream primary to secondary transition (McCoy et al., 2019, Makin et al., 2017). The school size, need for movement around the site, and building relationships with multiple teachers are examples of significant changes for YP in secondary school. When YP and families perceive the *cliff edge* in primary to secondary transition, it is therefore harder to achieve a *static transition*.

However, a detailed primary to secondary transition plan might address the *cliff edge* through retaining level of support for learning similar to that received in primary school, and an enhanced focus on establishing new routines and relationships (Makin, et al., 2017). These supports could be planned through the annual review process, or through separate transition meetings.

The data also highlighted YP and family concerns about future transitions beyond post-16 education. Literature addressing transitions to Higher Education (HE) has recently focused on mental health in HE (Cage et al., 2021), and the need for skills in independent living and independent learning in HE transitions (Thompson et al., 2021), connecting with the focus on PfA in the present study. Parmentier et al. (2021) suggest that YP can experience simultaneous negative and positive emotions about transition to higher education. This position can be used to critique the C-MoT as it implies that a single transition can be both a "*cliff-edge*" and a "*new adventure",* leading to questions for the present study about whether a distinction between the two is too reductive to be useful for all transition types.

Considering the C-MoT in the context of earlier and later transitions therefore raises critical questions that probe the model. My reflection is that this model is emergent in its nature. Future consideration of the C-MoT in the context of transitions across primary, secondary, post-16 and higher education age-ranges may help its evolution and add lead to developments and revisions.

5.4 Implications for Future Study

The findings from this study illustrate an activity system of transitions to post-16 education for YP with EHCPs. This illustration is a snapshot from one LA, through the interpretation of 16 accounts. From a researcher's position there are different avenues that could be explored in this area in future.

RQ 2c raised the relevance and visibility of the EP role in post-16 and older secondary work as an area for development. This study has taken first steps to do this through probing the views of EPs, and other key professionals in one LA context. Further study could seek to explore EP involvement in post-16 transitions beyond the LA to establish a regional West Midlands picture or even a national picture.

Damali and Damali (2018) studied general post-16 EP practice (not limited to transition work) through surveying EPs in across London. Four areas for further exploration by EPs were identified as: skills needed for successful transition to post-16 adulthood, informed consent and mental capacity, post-16 provisions and pathways, and theories of adolescent development and adult learning (Damali & Damali, 2018, p.255). A survey used by Damali and Damali (2018) to inform their study could be adapted to include further questions about pre-transition EP involvement to research post-16 transition work across a wider area. The original survey is reproduced in Appendix 12.

The EP role in supporting YP from post-16 into higher education is a sparsely researched area, despite a body of literature exploring social, emotional, and academic aspects of transitions to HE (see Section 5.3). Nevertheless, challenges with the next steps beyond post-16 education were raised in this study. For example, participants who seemed to have taken the transition to post-16 largely in their stride still expressed reservations about the changes involved with going to university.

Squires (2018) identifies a role for EPs at Universities in working towards more inclusive environments, informed by the statistic that University Students with SEND rose from 2.6% in 1994/5 to 11.8% in 2015/16. This figure has continued to rise with the most recent available figure from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) being 15.7% (HESA, 2023). Squires (2018) acknowledges that the question of *how* to involve EPs in Universities is unanswered, leaving this as an open avenue for future consideration. University staff are also working to address support for students with SEND, for example Sandland et al. (2023) study the needs of neurodivergent doctoral students.

An alternative direction for exploring post-16 transitions would be to look at what different research paradigms can add to predominantly qualitative research of the topic. In a large FE college with around 5000 students and over 100 EHCPs, gathering information about YP and

their needs quickly and efficiently may help to prevent some of the transition challenges identified in this study. To help gather relevant information to supply insights, a quantitative instrument could be developed through further research.

Transition inventories in the US such as the Pathway to Independence (Reardon, 2020), and Transition Planning Inventory, 3rd edition (Patton & Clarke, 2014) are examples which could be starting points for a carefully developed transition inventory, specific to post-16 education in the UK. Constructs that could be considered include transition readiness, specific needs for transition, and, as a follow-up, evaluation of transition experiences. Further study to develop a transition inventory would therefore help in this context and could still be reintegrated into a CHAT model of transition as a tool for further person-centred planning in due course.

5.5 Reflections on Potential Limitations in the Study

Reflection on limitations of this research is important, in order to be mindful of the criteria for research quality and trustworthiness discussed in Sections 3.5 and 3.9. Some limitations have been alluded to and explained as the rationale and method for the research emerged. For example, the small sample size and lack of generalisability are examples of a type of limitations typically cited in qualitative transition literature (Manning, 2016; Lawson; 2018; Park & Mortell, 2020) that can be explained by principles of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This also led to the participant group being representative of young people with a small cross-section of additional needs, only. This piece of research has been rationalised as a snapshot view of an activity system in the specific context of one LA. The findings and their implications speak of what was relevant to this specific group of people, each of which was at unique point in their educational, parenting, or professional journeys.

Historicity is an important dimension in the CHAT framework (Bal et al., 2020; Daniels, 2016). The research can look back to past situations and project forward to potential futures for the individuals and the activity system they construct. However, the timeframe for research in the

present study was limited and all interviews were conducted between August and October 2023. This meant that re-visiting participants to gain further insights into developments in their transition experiences was not possible. Other educational psychology doctoral theses in the systematic review also reported feeling restricted by the timescale (Shepherd, 2016; Hickey, 2016; Greenidge-Scott, 2016).

There were challenges in recruitment for this study which arose from a combination of the tight timeframe for research and a very small number of participants responding to contact about research. For example, the College initially sent letters to twenty potential participants that had been deemed the most likely to engage. Despite follow ups, only two responses were received. Recruitment began in the summer of 2023 and was separated by the summer break. A cut off recruitment for was set at October half term, after which data analysis begun. The group of 16 participants was fixed at that point.

Recent systematic reviews of qualitative research involving YP have concluded that methods for obtaining the views of YP with SEND are still in need of further development (Lewis-Dagnell et al., 2023; Sun et al. 2023). Lewis-Dagnell et al. (2023) propose that researchers seeking YP's views should audit their approaches considering Lundy's (2007) model of *space, voice, audience, and influence*, a model based on United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989).

In the present study the learning needs of the YP who were interviewed gave cause for reflection on limitations of the data. One YPn did not engage at all, and three of the other four had difficulties with either speech and language or social communication. The consequence was that data from YP, positioned as subjects of the activity system, was sometimes sparser and less rich than other data gathered.

Accordingly, some of the analysis focuses more on accounts of the YPn's journey through the voice of others than through the words of the YPn. Whilst YP's voices have been made as

relevant as possible, Pearlman and Michaels (2019) indicate that triangulating a YPn's views through family or school views can be problematic due to significant differences in their interpretations. The CHAT framework is well-placed to take account of these differences through the acknowledgement of contradictions.

A further reflection offers a potential practical amendment to information gathering. With more time available the participants could have been asked to journal, record, or draw any relevant thoughts about their experiences over a period. Humphrey and Lewis (2008) suggest this would have placed the YP under less pressure to give detailed answers at short notice , adding depth to the spoken answers.

An additional data-related reflection concerns assessing the trustworthiness of the data. Some published studies from the systematic review featured code checking by another researcher (for example, Essex & Melham, 2019), whereas unpublished theses did not. Code checking has similarly been absent in this research. Several factors help to mitigate this potential limitation. Firstly, checking techniques were used throughout the interviews to clarify information that might have been unclear or ambiguous. An example from the interview with Eddy is shown below:

> Interviewer: "And do you find there are people who will try and annoy you deliberately?"
>
> Eddy: "Absolutely, but now I'm not in any for their classes so it makes me feel better."
>
> Interviewer: "So it's not a problem?"
>
> Eddy: "It's not a problem so long as they're not in the same class as me."
>
> (Eddy, YPn, 14 years, lines 146-149)

Secondly, this research is positioned as an interpretive account of the data (see Section 3.2). Analysing the data to identify themes and report findings is shaped by my position and

experiences as a TEP and former secondary school teacher (Mohler & Rudman, 2022), along with further refinement through the process of academic supervision. The analysis process does not claim to be objective, and acknowledges the findings are my interpretation of the words of the participants as a reflexive, qualitative researcher. Nevertheless, to justify my interpretation of the data, the analysis process was thorough, and is fully explained and accounted for in section 3.9. From similar perspectives, O'Connor and Joffe (2020) explain that code-checking has been argued to be non-essential in qualitative research.

A methodological reflection concerns the compatibility between the CHAT activity system and FA. Organising data through the framework matrix felt intuitive and immersive during the analysis, with a useful ease of reference for nodes across participants and participants within a node: I perceived these features to be strengths of FA. I also perceived limitations of FA. On reflection, at times the use of a framework matrix had the potential to steer analysis away from CHAT, overlooking the mediating power of one node in relation to others. This was addressed in re-reading and revising the data analysis to keep CHAT prominent. Nevertheless, my perception of the analysis was that FA and CHAT co-piloted the process.

5.5.1 Next Steps – Moving Beyond CHAT.

Chapter 5 opened with consideration of what CHAT had offered to the analysis process, and what the CHAT framework was able to add to existing post-16 transition literature (Section 5.1). Mitigation of a notable challenge to the CHAT framework was also noted through a focus on the social constructionist position taken by this study, and the application of dialectical thinking (Engeström, 1999b).

Using the framework of CHAT nodes helped to organise the data analysis, and interpret subthemes, raising key issues relating to post-16 transitions. Nevertheless, it is important to critically consider other ways that the research could have focused on post-16 transitions if the CHAT framework was not used to organise the data.

Alternatives to the CHAT framework within the qualitative paradigm could lead to a more in-depth focus on narrower aspects of post-16 transition. In the case of using a more ideographic approach such as IPA (Smith et al., 2009), a study of the lived experiences of YP could be produced. This was the approach taken by Esbrand (2016), Manning (2016), and Lawson (2018) in their theses. IPA would be suited to research questions about making sense of transition experiences.

To give a further example, using discourse analysis (Potter & Weatherall, 1987) could explore research questions about the ways that a group of participants talked about a certain issue, for example, *how* did parents talk about support. In contrast to the popularity of IPA, none of the reviewed literature from 2014 onwards used discourse analysis to explore how stakeholders talk about transitions.

IPA and discourse analysis can therefore explore areas that CHAT does not probe and could provide a follow up research to zoom in on one particular aspect of post-16 transitions. By contrast, zooming out to look at wider EP experiences beyond the LA picture could implement quantitative measures such as surveys by Damali & Damali (2018, see Section 5.4 and Appendix 12) as part of mixed-methods approaches.

To go further in making sense of the findings of the present study, and to consider next steps in planning for development of transition systems in the LA, frameworks oriented towards organisational change could be used to model the development of transition systems. Soft Systems Methodology (SSM, Checkland, 2000) has been used by EPs in organisational development work to explore "messy" real-world situations through "systems-level thinking" (Richards, 2017, p.242), and has potential to probe and explore post-16 transitions at a LA level.

Checkland (2000) provides detailed guidance for carrying out a SSM analysis of a situation, however some foundational elements of a Soft Systems approach are already implicit in the

present study. Four key areas are proposed for consideration in Checkland (2000, p.21),

shown in Table 5.2, which has the purpose of illustrating key SSM ideas alongside relevant

reflections.

Table 5.2

Dimensions of SSM as applied to the present study (from Checkland, 2000, p.21)

SSM Phase	Definition	Reflection on relevance in the present study
1	Finding out about the problem situation including culturally and politically.	Challenges associated with post-16 transitions were identified across the stakeholders and discussed in Chapter 4. For example, unplanned transitions, tensions between parents and schools regarding EHCPs and their role in transition planning. .
2	Formulating some relevant purposeful activity models.	This process has begun to a degree through the C-MoT and the *collaborative and strategic work matrix.* SSM guidance offers further development of organisational models through *CATWOE** analysis and *rich pictures*
3	Debating the situation, using the models, seeking from that debate both:	This would need to be planned as a next step. It could be initially debated within the context of an LA EP team meeting, or formation of a post-16 transitions work group, within the LA or across LAs.
3a.)	Changes that would improve the situation and are regarded as both desirable and (culturally feasible), and	Starting points for change can be drawn from the findings in the present study, however new perspectives could also be added from the EP team.

SSM Phase	Definition	Reflection on relevance in the present study
3b.)	Accommodations between conflicting interests that will enable action-to-improve to be taken.	This aspect of SSM could begin through further discussion of the CHAT contradictions identified in the analysis.
4	Taking action in the situation to bring about improvement	This aspect of SSM would need to be planned, implemented and evaluated.

Chapter 5 has aimed to illustrate a breadth of models and psychological principles that could be used to further develop and make sense of the findings in this study. These include models of collaboration and change (Griffth et al., 2021; Proshaska & Diclemente, 1983); transition inventories (Reardon, 2020; Patton & Clarke, 2015); existing LA-level resources and planning strategies (Damali & Damali, 2018; Tomlinson and Oland, 2022); communication strategies (Thomas et al., 2019), and larger-scale models for organisational development (Checkland, 2000). Alongside these I offer an emergent conceptual model for transitions which could be used alongside some of the existing models and resources above.

5.6 Concluding Comment: Taking the Study to the Real World.

A concluding comment offers a personal reflection on this study, to add to the findings and implications above. Similar to the EPs in this study, my work so far as a TEP has been weighted towards primary and early secondary aged work. It has been a privilege to talk to older YP as they approach adulthood, and to learn about the skills and resilience they are developing against the backdrop of some significant needs and challenges.

Participants in this study have shared perspectives on expanding the EP role in post-16. Whilst barriers of funding and engagement from other parts of the system are anticipated to remain,

there will be future opportunities for disseminating and actioning this study's findings with the LA EP team, and at other levels within the LA. It is hoped that sharing the findings of this study can drive the development of an involved, visible, and genuinely collaborative EP role in supporting post-16 transitions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development, from Graves and Larkin (2006).

Conflict	Stage
Trust vs. mistrust	Infancy
Autonomy vs. shame and doubt	Age 1-3
Initiative vs. guilt	Early childhood
Industry vs. inferiority	Middle and late childhood
Identity vs. role confusion	Adolescence
Intimacy vs. isolation	Early adulthood
Generativity vs. stagnation	Middle adulthood
Integrity vs. despair	Late adulthood

Appendix 2

Brain regions discussed by Blakemore (2008, p.268).
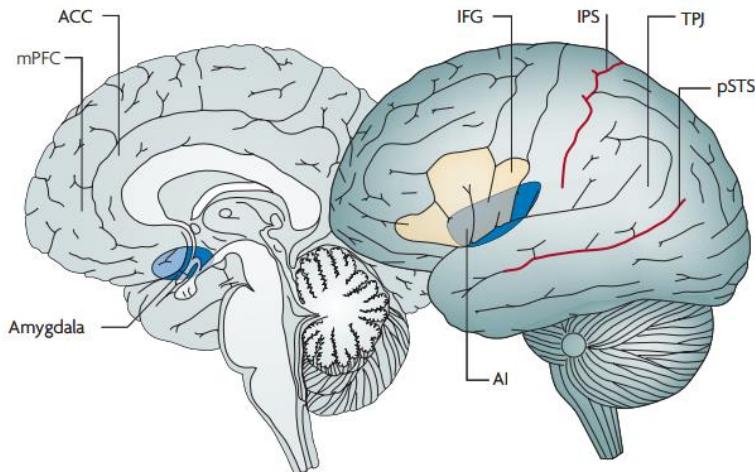
Figure 1 | **Regions of the social brain.** Regions that are involved in social cognition include the medial prefrontal cortex (mPFC) and the temporoparietal junction (TPJ), which are involved in thinking about mental states[19–29], and the posterior superior temporal sulcus (pSTS), which is activated by observing faces[6–8] and biological motion[11–13]. Other regions of the social brain on the lateral surface are the inferior frontal gyrus (IFG) and the interparietal sulcus (IPS). Regions on the medial surface that are involved in social cognition include the amygdala, the anterior cingulate cortex (ACC) and the anterior insula (AI).

Appendix 3

Boland et al. (2017). Ten step process for literature review.

Step 1: Planning

Step 2: Scoping searches, review question and protocol

Step 3: Literature searching

Step 4: Screening

Step 5:Obtaining papers

Step 6: Choosing the full text

Step 7: Data extraction

Step 8: Quality assessment

Step 9: Synthesis

Step 10: Writing up

Appendix 4

Post-it notes showing literature review planning

Green – first section

Blue – systematic review

introduction - thesis overview, academic and professional context, rationale, aims and research questions (1126 words)

models of disability & SEND

Preparation for adulthood framework ?

section 1 - lit overview, CHAT overview, SEND & legislation, conceptualisations of transitions, psych theory and transitions

Lit Review overview explains the main parts of the review (150 words currently)

CHAT and systems - what is CHAT and how is it relevant to the research aims? (current 1700 words, too much!)

Legislative context. What legislation is relevant for post 16 transition support ? what is the criticism of this legislation, how does this legislation align with CHAT (782 words) AG: YP Voice

Concepts in transitions: Why is support for transition to post 16 important from a psychological perspective. How have transitions to post-16 been conceptualised? (800 words)

smooth transitions vs disruptive transitions. educational transitions vs lifespan transitions.

CHAT vs. Bronfenbrenner and why CHAT for this thesis

Erikson - pyscho-social development. AG: Sarah Jayne Blakemore. Tajfel - social identity theory.

Deci - self determination theory (?) AG: check papers by Isabelle Pollak

summary through data extraction tables (separate tables for published studies / unpublished theses)

how does the EP role connect to these findings?

section 2- published studies , and unpublished doctoral theses - transitions from secondary to post 16, YP with SEND

database searches for published studies involving UK secondary-post 16 YP with SEND - since 2014

thesis repository searches for theses studying secondary - post-16 transitions for YP with SEND, since 2014.

what are the key findings across the published studies and unpublished theses? what do they outline as implications / future areas for research?

how do these findings connect with psychological theory esp. those identified earlier in review

how did I search for these - search terms / other criteria

which repositories were used and why, what were the search terms / other criteria

how do these findings connect to my research questions / aims

Appendix 5.

CASP qualitative studies checklist

	Section A: Are the results valid? As applied to all of the studies included for review				
	Question	**Yes**	**Can't tell**	**No**	**Comments**
1.	Was there a clear statement of research aims?	X			This was thorough across the reviewed studies. There was a distinction between doctoral theses, which explicitly stated research questions, and peer reviewed papers, where research questions were inferred by a statement of research aims.
2.	Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	X		Longden (2019)	All of the reviewed studies had research aims which were suitable to answer using qualitative methods. Research questions were dominated by 'how' type questions, or questions about experiences, views and sense-making. Longden (2019) was an exception which asked about factors (see below) rather than processes and experiences.
3.	Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	X			Use of Q-methodology in Longden (2019) involved mixture of quant and qual, so was an interesting contrast to the other purely qual studies, and did generate answer to the research questions in the form of a 5-factor solution. However it was also acknowledged QM may have been restrictive to some participants in terms of the level of detail they could give in their answers. Use of IPA as a method of data analysis (e.g. Esbrand, 2016) is appropriate to the research questions, however the communicative capabilities of some participants may have been better suited to a method that was less dependent on detailed accounts and sense-making
4.	Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	X Doc. Theses	X Published studies		Recruitment strategy less clear in some of the published studies, again likely due to word count. For example, Packer et al. (2022) referred to their research being part of a broader study in which further details could be found.
5.	Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	X			This seemed consistent across the studies.
6.	Has the relationship between the researcher and participants been	X Doc. Theses	X Published studies		Re. CASP prompt concerning researcher response to events during the study and implications of these: this is harder to tell in

	adequately considered ?				published studies as word count often limits expansion on

	Section B: What are the results? As applied o all of the studies included for review…				
	Question	Yes	Can't tell	No	Comments
7.	Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	X			This was rigorous in all the reviewed studies
8.	Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	X	X (Edwards 2017)		Edwards (2017) analyses interview data from audio without transcription, which makes it less clear whether data analysis was as rigorous as through a more conventional process of re-reading and immersion in the data
9.	Is there a clear statement of findings?	X			In doctoral theses it is not usually feasible to have a second analyst, compared to the use of this technique to triangulate analysis in the published studies.

	Section C: Will the results help locally? As applied to all of the studies included for review…	
	Question	Comments
10.	How valuable is the research?	Each of the studies selected for review makes a distinctive contribution to the body of literature on transitions to post-16 education. Lawson (2018) is the only study that did not involve a mainstream setting either pre- or post-transition but is included due to providing relevant perspectives on relationships and perceptions of transition processes.

Appendix 6

Ethical review form cover sheet showing approval

Dear Anthea Gulliford, Chris Jordan

RE: Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education : Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of the systems around them.

Application for Ethical Review: ERN_0752-May2023

Thank you for your application for ethical review for the above project, which was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences

Committee. On behalf of the Committee, I confirm that this study now has ethical approval.

Any adverse events occurring during the study should be promptly brought to the Committee's attention by the Principal Investigator and may necessitate further ethical review.

Please ensure that the relevant requirements within the University's Code of Practice for Research and the information and guidance provided on the University's ethics webpages (available at https://intranet.birmingham.ac.uk/finance/accounting/Research-Support-Group/Research- Ethics/Links-and-Resources.aspx) are adhered to.

Please be aware that whilst Health and Safety (H&S) issues may be considered during the ethical review process, you are still required to follow the University's guidance on H&S and to ensure that H&S risk assessments have been carried out as appropriate. For further information about this, please contact your School H&S representative or the University's H&S Unit at healthandsafety@contacts.bham.ac.uk.

Kind regards,

The Co-Chairs of the Humanities and Social

Sciences Committee E-mail: ethics-

queries@contacts.bham.ac.uk

Appendix 7

Example consent forms and information letters

Appendix 7.1

Consent form for young person over 18 years of age

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education: Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transition systems.

Researcher: Mr Chris Jordan ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇

▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ (Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm)

Supervisor: Dr Anthea Gulliford ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇

Education Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Young person's name

___ _____

Please tick each box to confirm that you consent to the following

	Please tick
I have read the attached information letter and I am to take part in this study	
I have an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP)	
I understand that my interview is voluntary and can withdraw at any point up to two weeks after the interview date.	
I understand that my interview will be recorded as audio, this recording will be transcribed and analysed. Names and places in the data will be anonymised when writing up the research.	
I understand that interview data will be stored securely and confidentially, and then only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to it.	
I understand that quotes from my interview may appear as anonymised quotes in the write up of the study.	
I understand that this interview is being conducted as part of a doctorate in educational and child psychology at the University of Birmingham	
I understand that I can contact Chris by email ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ or by phone on ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ to discuss this study	
Once this research is complete I understand it will be stored (in anonymised form) in the university of Birmingham data repository.	

Appendix 7.2

Parental consent form for young person under 16 years of age

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education: Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transition systems.

Researcher: Mr Chris Jordan

(Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm)

Supervisor: Dr Anthea Gulliford

Education Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Parent / carer's name:

Young person's name

Please tick each box to confirm that you consent to the following

	Please tick
I have read the attached information letter and I am happy the young person for whom I have responsibility (YP) to take part in this study	
My YP has an Education and Health Care Plan (EHCP).	
I understand that my YP's interview is voluntary and can withdraw at any point up to two weeks after the interview date.	
I understand that my YP's interview will be recorded as audio, this recording will be transcribed and analysed. Names and places in the data will be anonymised when writing up the research.	
I understand that interview data will be stored securely and confidentially, and then only the researcher and his supervisor will have access to it.	
I understand that quotes from my YP's data may appear as anonymised quotes in the write up of the study.	
I understand that this interview is being conducted as part of a doctorate in educational and child psychology at the University of Birmingham	
I understand that I can contact Chris by email at or by phone on to discuss this study	
Once this research is complete I understand it will be stored (in anonymised form) in the university of Birmingham data repository.	

Appendix 7.3 School Information 'gatekeeping' Example Letter

School recruitment letter

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education
Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transition s

Researcher: Mr Chris Jordan

 (Mon-Fri, 8am-5pm)

Supervisor: Dr Anthea Gulliford

Education Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Dear Headteacher,

cc. SENCo

As part of my training for a doctorate in Applied Educational and Child and Psychology at the University of Birmingham, I am carrying out a research project in Coventry Local Authority.

Why is this research being conducted?

The study aims to find out how young people with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) are supported in the transition from secondary school into post-16 education.

Successful educational transitions can help autonomy, well-being and self-image, and academic outcomes. How transitions to post-16 education is planned and delivered is particularly important for pupils with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs).

This research aims to understand how young people, and staff around them, experience transitions and transition planning: so as to help make the process the best it can be. I hope to also interview members of school staff who have worked closely with the young people, and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

I am writing to request your permission to ask your SENCo to share information with parents/carers on this study. If parents/carers consent, the study involves speaking with young people who have an EHCP, in a post-16 setting and staff who have worked closely with them.

Further details of the research plan are given below:

Confidentiality and data storage

Individual names and school names will not be used in the research, so no one who reads the research will be able to identify who has been involved. Information will be stored safely and securely and will be password protected.

What does this study involve?

This study involves interviewing young people who have EHCPs; their parents/carers; members of school staff who have worked closely with them; Educational Psychologists (EPs) who have worked with the young person.

The findings of the research will be anonymised and will not contain any personal identifiers such as names, address or anything that would identify participating schools, college, participants or services involved.

Who is conducting this research?

I am a trainee EP, Chris Jordan, on placement with Coventry Local Authority. I previously worked as a secondary school teacher and have prior experience supporting young people with educational needs in their preparation to leave secondary school and start post-16 courses. This study has received ethical approval from the research ethics committee at the University of Birmingham.

How can I get in contact with Chris?

If you have any questions please contact Chris Jordan by email on ⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛ or by telephone using the number at the top of this letter. If you would like more information from the project supervisor, please contact Dr Anthea Gulliford by email on ⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛⬛.

Confidentiality and data storage

Individual names and school names will not be used in the research, so no one who reads the research will be able to identify who has been involved. Information will be stored safely and securely and will be password protected.

Pseudonyms (different names) will be used, and the names of schools will also be replaced. All personal data will remain confidential.

How can I hear about the findings of this research?

If you agree for students and staff to take part in the study, on request you will be sent a link to be able to view an online summary report from this study research.

The study will also be written up as a research thesis, which will be accessible on request from the University of Birmingham.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

Chris Jordan   (Trainee Educational Psychologist)

Appendix 7.4 Participant Information Example Letter

(Year 12 or 13 Parent & Young Person)

Year 12/13 parental invitation letter

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 educa
Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transiti

Researcher: Mr Chris Jordan

_____ (Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm)

Supervisor: Dr Anthea Gulliford

Education Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

Dear Parent/ Carer,

As part of my training at the University of Birmingham to become an Educational Psychologist, I will be carrying out a research project in the Coventry area.

I am aiming to find out about how young people with Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) are supported in the transition from secondary school into post-16 education.

I am inviting you and the young person for whom you have responsibility (YP for short) to take part in this study, as I am interested in learning about their perspectives. I am writing to ask for you and your child's consent to take part in this study.

What will the study involve?

If you and they agree, your YP will be asked to sign a consent form (attached) before talking with me for 20-30 minutes at college or via Team. The interview is voluntary and they will be able to withdraw at any point without giving an explanation.

I will be asking question about their school and college experiences, how they found the move from school to college / 6th form, and their hopes for future learning.

If there are any questions that your YP does not want to answer, they will be free to skip questions or stop taking part in the interview at any time.

I would also like to talk with you for 20-30 minutes in order to
learn about your views on your YP's transition to post-16 education. Both yours and yours and your son/daughter's views are important.

Why is this research being conducted?

Successful educational transitions can help autonomy, well-being, self-image, and academic outcomes. How transitions to post-16 education is planned and delivered is particularly important for pupils

This research aims to understand how young people, and staff around them, experience transitions and transition planning: so as to help make the process the best it can be. I hope to

also interview, members of school staff who have worked closely with the young people and Educational Psychologists (EPs).

Who is conducting this research?

I am Chris Jordan, a trainee educational psychologist with Coventry Educational Psychology Service. I previously worked as a secondary school teacher and have experience supporting young people with educational needs in their preparation to leave secondary school. This study has received ethical approval from the research ethics committee at the University of Birmingham.

How can I get in contact with Chris?

If you have any questions please contact Chris Jordan by email on or by telephone using the number at the top of this letter. If you would like more information from the project supervisor, please contact Dr Anthea Gulliford by email on .

How will the findings / data be used

If you choose to take part in the study, on request you will be sent a link to a brief report regarding the findings of this research. I will offer to meet with your son / daughter to feedback the findings of the research. General anonymised findings will also be shared with other stakeholders from the schools and educational service, if they request this.

The anonymised data will be written up as a research thesis, which will also be stored securely online, and will be accessible upon request.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information.

If you would like your YP to participate in this research project, it is important that you complete the consent slip on the following page, either on paper or by email. This can be returned directly to me via email or to Esther Hooper Coventry College.

Yours sincerely,

Chris Jordan

I do / do not want the young person for whom I have responsibility to take part in this study, and they are happy to participate
(Please delete as appropriate)

I do/ do not want to participate myself.
(Please delete as appropriate)

Young person's name:

Parent/carer's name:
(Capital letters) (forename) (surname)

Signature:_____ Today's date:

Telephone number: _____

Email:_____

Appendix 7.5 Example of Accessible Information Form

Young Person's Consent Form version 2.

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education : Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transition systems.

Researcher: Mr Chris Jordan

(Mon-Thurs, 8am-5pm)

Supervisor: Dr Anthea Gulliford

Education Building, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, Birmingham, B15 2TT

My name is:

_____

(first name)   (surname)

Who is Chris ?

Chris would like to find out what you think about school / college and how people help you. Chris is a Trainee Educational Psychologist, and works with teachers, parents and with different groups of children and young people. Sometimes Chris works young people to help them with their learning.

- I will then go with Chris into a quiet room at school / college.
- My learning support assistant can come with me if I want them to.
- Chris will ask me some questions about school / college, looking at the help and support that you receive.
- I can talk to Chris about this use or use prompt cards to help explain my experiences.

- If there are any questions that I do not want to answer, then this is will be OK.
- Chris will bring a Stop card with him. It will look like this:

- I should be finished within 20-30 minutes, although it may take a few minutes more or a few minutes less.
- If for some reason I want to stop talking to Chris, I can hold the Stop card up to stop talking or to have a break. I am free to end the conversation at any time. This no problem.
- If there are any changes or new instructions, Chris will explain what will happen next when we speak.
- Chris will also meet with my parents or carer on Teams or at school / college if they want to.

Is it ok to meet with Chris ? Please tick

Yes   No

Appendix 8   Sample interview schedules

Appendix 8.1

Schedule A. Young person, Year 10 or Year 11, pre-tansition

This interview schedule is for young people in year 10-11 (aged 14-16) and explores school experiences prior to transition into post-16 education.

Please note the interview schedules below are skeleton guides – the nature of semi-structured interviews is that conversations may take unexpected directions, so other prompts and questions may be improvised.

Sharing information / clarity	General information to be shared as preamble to interview: • I am interested to know more about how it works when young people like you move from school to college/ from college onwards. • There are no right or wrong answers, but the more details you can tell me the more I can learn. • Stop sign reminder – the participant can pause or terminate the interview at any time without needing to give a reason. • I am recording the discussion today, but will not be using any real names when writing up the study. • No-one else will know be able to tell what you have said today; unless I think you might be at risk of harm, in which case I will need to tell another adult in your school.	General prompts to be used throughout the interview • Can you tell me more about that? • Could you give me an example of this? • Can you tell me a bit more about what you mean by …… • What do you think led to you thinking that way? • Why do you think that? • What do you think led to you feeling that way? How does ……make you feel ? • Can you think of a time when it was different to that (e.g. better or worse)
Rationale	Question	Question specific prompts
Exploring current strengths and challenges for YP – building rapport and getting a context for their current situation	1a.) I'm wondering if I can ask you a bit about what has been going well for you in school / college ? 1b.) What are you enjoying at school at the moment (simpler question form) 1c.) Would it be ok to ask a bit about what has been difficult for at school / college recently ? 1d.) What is hard about school / college? (simpler question form)	Favourite subjects / areas / experiences What has gone well ? Which subjects have been harder / tough / challenging for you.

		School well-being cards[6] can be used to help pupils communicate ideas.
Exploring how school experiences have changed over time	2a.) I'd like to know a bit more about Year 10 compared to your time in Year 7-9. How have you found the work this year? 2b). What has been like in Year 10 compared to 7-9 (simpler question form) 2c.) How do you think things will change when you leave here and go to college / 6th form?	What has been going well compared to Year 7-9 What has been more challenging
School supports (link with preparation for adulthood – employment)	3a.) Could you tell me about the people who help you with your learning here at your school? 3b.) Who helps you here (simpler format) 3c.) What other supports might help you at school that are not happening currently? 3.d) Could you tell me about any conversations or plans that people have made about what will happen when you leave this school and go to college / 6th form 3e.) Have you talked to people here about what you will do when you leave this school? (simpler form) 3f.) Can you tell me about anything in school that has involved learning about careers and jobs?	Are there any groups or clubs that you go to at breaktimes or lunchtimes? Does anyone outside of school help you with your schoolwork?
Exploration of social supports (link to preparation for adulthood – community inclusion)	4a.) Could tell me about your friendships at school? 4b.) What difference do your friendships make in your school life? 4c.) Tell me about your friends (simpler form) 4d.) Why are friends important (simpler form) 4e.) How do you think your friendships will change when you leave this school and go to college / 6th form?	School well-being cards address friendship and social supports, and can be used here. Do you attend any clubs or groups in the local community? (link to preparation for adulthood – community inclusion)

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[6] School well-being cards are a set of picture cards with simple statements about school. Young people choose whether the cards are true about them or not true about them for example 'I have someone at school I can talk to' . These are a useful resource for pupils who struggle with aspects of verbal communication.

Aspirations for transition to post 16 education	5a.) Can you tell me about any plans you have for when you leave this school at the end of Year 11?	What might the challenges be?
	5b.) How do you think you might feel when you leave?	Do you know what you might like to do at college / 6th form
	5c.) What do you want to do when you leave this school (simpler form)	
	5d.) How will choose where to go and what to do there?	Who are the staff who might be able to help plan this ?
	5e.) What do you think would help you with this ?	
	5f.) How might you feel when you start post-16 education	
Closing questions	Is there anything else you would like to tell me? Is there anything you would like to ask me ?	

Appendix 8.2

Schedule B. Young person, Year 12 or Year 13, post transition

Support for the transition from Secondary education into post-16 education: Perspectives of young people with EHCPs and stakeholders of transition systems.

Interview schedules guide –

This interview schedule is for young people in Year 12 (aged 16-17) and explores school experiences of transition into post-16 education.

Sharing information / clarity	General information to be shared as preamble to interview: • I am interested to know more about how it works when young people like you move from school to college/ from college onwards. • There are no right or wrong answers, but the more details you can tell me the more I can learn. • Stop sign reminder – the participant can pause or terminate the interview at any time without needing to give a reason. • I am recording the discussion today, but will not be using any real names when writing up the study. • No-one else will know be able to tell what you have said today; unless I think you might be at risk of harm, in which case I will need to tell another adult in your school.	General prompts to be used throughout the interview • Can you tell me more about that? • Could you give me an example of this? • Can you tell me a bit more about what you mean by …… • What do you think led to you thinking that way? • Why do you think that? • What do you think led to you feeling that way? How does ……make you feel ? • Can you think of a time when it was different to that (e.g. better or worse)
Rationale	Question	Question specific prompts
Exploring current strengths and challenges for YP	1a.) I'm wondering if I can ask you a bit about what has been going well for you in school / college ? 1b.) What are you enjoying at school at the moment (simpler question form) 1c.) Would it be ok to ask a bit about what has been more difficult for at school / college recently ? 1d.) What is hard about school / college? (simpler question form)	Favourite subjects / areas / experiences What has gone well ? Which area have been harder / tough / challenging for you.

		College well-being cards[7] can be used to help pupils communicate ideas.
Exploring how school experiences have changed over time	2a.) I'd like to know a bit more about college / 6th form compared to Secondary school. How have you found the work this year? 2b). What has 6th form been like compared to secondary school (simpler question form) 2c.) What are the main differences in being in college / 6th form compared to when you were in your old school .	What has been going well compared to Year 10-11 What has been more challenging?
School supports	3a.) Could you tell me about the people who help you with your learning here at college / 6th form? 3b.) Who helps you here (simpler format) 3c.) What other supports might help you at school that are not happening currently? 3.d) What things could happen to help you more here (simpler format) 3e.) What helps you with making plans to get your work done?	Are there any groups or clubs that you go to at breaktimes or lunchtimes? Does anyone outside of school help you with your schoolwork?
Exploration of social supports	4a.) Could tell me about your friendships here at college / 6th form / ? 4b.) What difference do your friendships make at college / 6th form 4c.) Tell me about your friends (simpler form) 4d.) Why are friends important (simpler form)	College well-being cards address friendship and social supports, and can be used here. Do you attend any groups in the community ?
Experience of transition process	5a.) How did you feel when you left secondary school 5b.) How did you feel when you started college / sixth form 5c.) Can you remember what things helped you choose the college / 6th form you are at now.	Who helped you with this?

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[7] College well-being cards (similar to the school well-being cards) are a set of picture cards with simple statements about being at college. Young people choose whether the cards are true about them or not true about them for example 'I have someone at school I can talk to' . These are a useful resource for pupils who struggle with aspects of verbal communication

	5d.) How did you come to choose the course(s) that you are studying now?	
	5e.) How did you decide what to do after Year 11 (simpler format)	
	5f.) Can you tell me about what has helped you in the move from school to 6th form / college?	
Aspirations for future learning / employment	6a.) Can you tell me about your plans for when you have finished your course / qualifications here at college / 6th form	Are there further courses you would like to do here?
	6b.) What do you want to do when you have finished your course here (simpler form)	What might the challenges be?
	6c.) How will choose what to do there?	
	6d.) What do you think would help you with this ?	
Closing questions	Is there anything else you would like to tell me? Is there anything you would like to ask me ?	

Appendix 9

Audit trail for *Importance of SENCo role* subtheme.
**9.1 Comments highlighted in original transcripts**

Example comment re. SENCo role highlighted in Kaz [EP] original transcript

75	K: <u>So</u> I guess from my point of view, I don't really know what's out there to support these children.
76	So it's a lot about making sure, you know, when you've got a good relationship with the SENCo and
77	maybe the can tell you 'ooh we've got these options in mind, and they can do this, this and this. <u>So</u> I
78	think that's a real barrier for EPs, not knowing these things.
79	CJ: Yes, that makes I sense, and I guess it's interesting in the context of this <u>particular YP</u> because I've
80	picked up your work
81	K: yes
82	CJ: <u>So</u> when she's in y11 I have been asked to come in and attend the annual review with a view to
83	helping to make a plan for going to post-16. <u>So</u> I suppose if I hadn't been there as a trainee they
84	might have asked you, or somebody else would have been involved in that. So apart from this YP
85	where I've been asked to do that, it's something you haven't really come across as <u>much ?</u>

Jordan, Chris
Importance of SENCo communication
13 September 2023, 14:36

Another comment is in progress
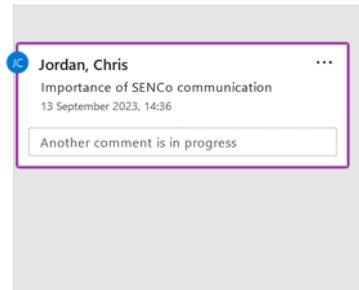
Example comment from Nicky's [Liam's mother] original transcript

|	
198	
199	**Nicky** 7:34
200	What else can we do with you can't just stay at home. You do have to attend to
201	school, so his attendance just dropped. It was horrific.
202	And in the second year, the new <u>senco</u> started and she has been like a breath of
203	fresh air. To be honest, we ended up getting in on a reduced timetable which helped.
204	
205	**Jordan, Chris** 7:50
206	OK, so that's made a difference in.
207	
208	**Nicky** 7:54
209	Um, she supported me in applying for an EHC needs assessment.

Christopher Jordan
Importance of SENCo role
09 October 2023, 21:07

Reply
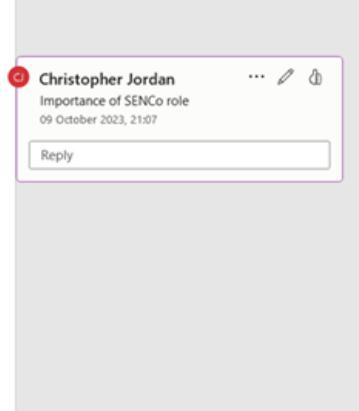
9.2 Transcript in Nvivo highlighted for codes. Coding stripes indicate which code has been highlighted

than going to see head of year or the form tutors who then are communicating with teachers - by going with the SENCo directly, I've found that works a lot better, so everyone supports G in the schools.

Jordan, Chris 14:06
Yeah.

Bryony 14:07
At different levels, but it's the SENCo that coordinates at all.

Jordan, Chris 14:11
So you find that it's helpful to have that direct communication with the school and just have, like, one person to speak to is easier for you than having to speak to lots of different people.

Bryony 14:16
Yeah.
Yeah, cause that's when you get miscommunications and people have different understandings whereas the
SENCo spent a lot of time from before G went to that school to the times she's been there, we've had meetings with like nurse, specialist, wheelchair services making site visits. So she's got to know G and her own personal.
needs at good level. So she can then cascade it down.

Jordan, Chris 14:47
Yeah.

CODE STRIPES

Coding Density

- Object
- Division of labour - importance of SENCo
- Tools - support from EHCP
- Rules
- Community - peer relationships

Appendix 9.3 Collected codes from *SENCo role* subtheme across different transcripts

<Files\\Ginny complete transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.07% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 0.07% Coverage

Mrs S [SENCo] helps me a lot.

<Files\\ Nicky [Liam's mother] transcript > - § 3 references coded [1.03% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 0.49% Coverage

And in the second year, the new SENCo started and she has been like a breath of fresh air. To be honest, we ended up getting in on a reduced timetable which helped.

Reference 2 – 0.16% Coverage

she supported me in applying for an EHC needs assessment

Reference 3 – 0.38% Coverage

Well, I I had a I basically had the SENCo at this first secondary school. Just laugh in my face and tell me there was nothing wrong.

<Files\\Bryony [Ginny mother] > - § 5 references coded [4.63% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 0.29% Coverage

But overall it's been positive. The SENCo is really good and
she kind of worked to plan out for G.

Reference 2 – 0.78% Coverage

 So Mrs S. She tends to be my direct contact and I will e-mail her. She'll e-mail me the problems. Initially in years (few seconds missing in recording but I think it was reference to earlier down the school) when she was in the lower sets there was an extra TA.

Reference 3 – 1.40% Coverage

By working with the SENCo, we've been able to establish
the support. The counsellor also adapted like timetables, so G's classrooms are all on the ground floor, or it's possible -tt she used to use the wheelchair lot, and she's

choosing not to at the minute, so it's just minimising the walking, but, the whole school team, it's coordinated by the SENCo, and we find that by having just that one or two different people to connect with, there's not miscommunications.

Reference 4 – 0.65% Coverage

by going with the SENCo directly, I've found that works a lot better, so everyone supports G in the schools.

14:07

At different levels, but it's the SENCo that coordinates at all.

Reference 5 – 1.52% Coverage

the SENCo spent a lot of time from before G went to that school to the times she's been there, we've had meetings with like nurse, specialist, wheelchair services making site visits. So she's got to know G and her own personal.
needs at good level. So she can then cascade it down.

<Files\\serena transcript> - § 1 reference coded [0.84% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 0.84% Coverage

 erm Miss O [SENCo}, all my teachers. I used to not believe in myself, but mrs O [SENCo] and mrs [Inclusion lead] helped me to believe in myself

<Files\\ Kaz_EP interview> - § 3 references coded [2.42% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 0.75% Coverage

I think the SENCo there is quite keen to involve EPs especially for annual reviews, or children she's thinking of referring for an EHC assessment.

Reference 2 – 0.99% Coverage

So it's a lot about making sure, you know, when you've got a good relationship with the SENCo and maybe the can tell you 'ooh we've got these options in mind, and they can do this, this and this

Reference 3 – 0.68% Coverage

Erm, maybe it shouldn't just be put onto one person in the school either, but I guess it often is if they're labelled as the SENCo.

<Files\\Ted, EP> - § 1 reference coded [3.47% Coverage]

Reference 1 – 3.47% Coverage

Yeah, I think where we where SENCos I guess have a good knowledge of the EP role they'll consult us on a sort of general issue without necessarily just having to have as input into an annual review or into a psych advice. So for example, I think this was working with J somehow, but one of the SENCos at a post 16 provision and they wanted a little bit of like therapeutic or motivational interviewing type work to be or that this is sort of what transpired for a young person who was sort of experiencing some difficulties with his self esteem when applying for jobs.
That side of things. And so yeah, that that involvement sort of came about, I guess, because the SENCo was a minded about about things and was willing to consider like different areas that an EP could support with I guess. So yeah.

Appendix 9.4 Illustration of *SENCo role* subtheme in the Nvivo coding structure

Name	Files	References
Support for the transition to post 16 education for YP with EHCPs	16	728
Community	16	100
Division of labour	16	160
Division of labour - external supports	8	12
Division of labour - defining the EP role, reactive vs strategic use	10	49
Division of labour - importance of SENCo	8	17
Division of labour - LA systems	3	5
Division of labour - levels of collaboration across systems	14	44
Division of labour - parental contribution to transition	8	12
Division of labour - support networks in school	11	21
Object	15	107
Outcome	15	92
Rules	13	42
Subject	16	96
Tools	16	131

Appendix 9.5 Collected codes for *SENCo role subtheme*, as shown in the *all data matrix*. Showing rows for Bryony, Kaz and Nicky

	our - external supports	B : Division of labour - defining the EP role, reactive vs strategic use	C : Division of labour - importance of SENCo	D : Division of labour - levels of collaboration across systems	E : Div
1 : Bryony [Ginny's mot…]	nd she helped her th anxiety, but also arning that she doesn't	_she was achieving low to medium and we'd like a we brought, we paid for a private educational psychologist to come and assess her, and said look, and it turned out she was in the top 90s something percent, and he said she's really smart girl and we just had to take that say, look. Yeah, she's doing well but she can do a lot better with adaptations and support, which is now showing with the levels and the results she's getting. _she was achieving low to medium and we'd like a we brought, we paid for a private educational psychologist to come and assess her, and said look, and it turned out she was in the top 90s something percent, and he said she's really smart girl and we	But overall it's been positive. The SENCo is really good and she kind of worked to plan out for G. So Mrs S. She tends to be my direct contact and I will e-mail her. She'll e-mail me the problems. Initially in years (few seconds missing in recording but I think it was reference to earlier down the school) when she was in the lower sets there was an extra TA. By working with the SENCo, we've been able to establish the support. The counsellor [SEMHL] also adapted like timetables, so G's classrooms are all on the ground floor, or it's possible -tt she used to use the wheelchair lot, and she's choosing not to at the minute, so it's	And we just we try and work together as much as we can, and we work very closely with them, SENCo who's been really supportive of G. Yeah, cause that's when you get miscommunications and people have different understandings And we just we try and work together as much as we can, and we work very closely with them, SENCo who's been really supportive of G. Yeah, cause that's when you get miscommunications and people have different understandings	we pro checke medica acknow when s going c wouldn she cur
2 : Kaz, EP		And so I was asked to gather up to date information about the child's strengths and needs, particular in relation to her learning. I think the school were finding there were areas of struggle in her learning, and they wanted to unpick it a bit further. So how do you think your work with this YP has supported the process of planning for her transition to post-16 education. K: Erm I'd like to think its given the school and I guess parents, and hopefully the YP herself information about her learning levels, any areas of strength that maybe they can explore further with her in terms of what she wants to do post-16. Or also areas of weakness, so thinking about how they can link that to her provision at post-16. Honestly, no, because I feel like we don't tend to get many post-16 cases.	I think the SENCO there is quite keen to involve EPs especially for annual reviews, or children she's thinking of referring for an EHC assessment. So it's a lot about making sure, you know, when you've got a good relationship with the SENCo and maybe the can tell you 'ooh we've got these options in mind, and they can do this, this and this Erm, maybe it shouldn't just be put onto one person in the school either, but I guess it often is if they're labelled as the SENCo. I think the SENCO there is quite keen to involve EPs especially for annual reviews, or children she's thinking of referring for an EHC assessment.	I feel like even though we're using those outcomes from year 9, and saying to school, you know they need careers advice, we ned to prep them, and we put all those in reports, I don't really know if schools honestly focus on those things until year 10 and 11, if that makes sense, so I don't think they are having those conversations and also different services, like in the SEND service maybe if , or someone who knows them really well over those years, their views should also be sought and not just 'ah well we'll just pay for the EP advice' So it was more sort of work with the parent around what support would she like, and I don' think she'd ever felt listened to before, erm so I think just be listening to her made her feel more open to me suggesting er	
3 : Nicky [Liam's mother]			And in the second year, the new senco started and she has been like a breath of fresh air. To be honest, we ended up getting in on a reduced timetable which helped. she supported me in applying for an EHC needs assessment		Um, we few dis he is, h doesn't acader univers to unive staying very littl appeal Erm, bu we live

Appendix 9.6 *SENCo role* subtheme summary and illustrative quotes alongside other CHAT nodes summaries (seven columns) in sample from *master matrix*. Showing data row for Nicky [Liam's Mother]

	A : Subject	B : Community	C : Division of labour	D : Rules	E : Tools	
9 : Mrs O			support students got; we know there's support centres there and students will get support, but we			"Th
	Nicky is Liam's mum. **Summary** A significant theme for Liam's mum was the difficult transition from primary to secondary school, and a perceived lack of collaboration / support. There was also reflection on some of Liam ASC traits such as communication challenges, and fixed mindset. **Illustrative quotes from subthemes** *Subtheme – primary to secondary transition* "When Liam left primary school, he was basically one of the top three in the year and was achieving very well academically. He went up to secondary school within three to six months of starting secondary school...it will completely imploded. His attendance fell, his achievement fell and it just kept getting progressively worse." "At primary school, you're with one teacher, and whether you like them or you don't, you kind of develop a relationship of some kind and you rub along one way or another and you don't really have time for that in secondary school." "It got to the end of his first year at secondary school and it was only when he was excluded for two or three days that I finally got an answer from the school that they didn't even have his paperwork from primary school It was horrific, to be honest. And I don't think really he's ever bounced back from that experience." *Subtheme – challenges for YP: social and emotional vs. academic* "Part of the way his autism presents itself, is he has no filter anyway. So he often comes across as being quite rude, even though he isn't necessarily being rude." "If he has a bad experience with something, he's very reluctant to try again. He'll just have it in his head that "they're rubbish. They couldn't help. I'm not wasting my time.""	**Summary** It was reflected that Liam does have a community of peers with whom he is comfortable, but that low attendance has given him limited access to them. Family have also provided a community support for him in discussing future opportunities (see also **outcomes)** **Illustrative quotes from subthemes** *Subtheme – peer relationships* "Um, he does, um, a good friendship group has grown in the last two years specifically, but they are outside of the school environment. He doesn't really have much in the school environment, partly because he doesn't really attend very much or hasn't up until now, so you don't really have the, the time to build those friendships and relationships" *Subtheme – parents and family* "Um, well, my husband and I've had quite a few discussions with him. Yeah, Liam although he is, he can achieve well academically, he doesn't really want to go down the academic route."	**Summary** Nicky raised the importance of the SENCo in Liam's journey to post 16, which chimes with the **"SENCo role theme"** and the difference this had made. Further difficulties were raised in terms of how parents navigate the SEND system with this division of labour falling to them with less support than they felt needed. **Illustrative quotes from subthemes** *Subtheme – importance of SENCo role* "And in the second year, the new SENCo started and she has been like a breath of fresh air. To be honest, we ended up getting in on a reduced timetable which helped. She supported me in applying for an EHC needs assessment" *Subtheme – parental contribution to transition* "We had a nightmare just getting this place, to be honest, because he slipped through the cracks...at the one point he wasn't even going to get a place because they hadn't communicated properly. What he what he should be doing .... But for me, speaking personally, the hardest thing is navigating something that you know nothing about."	**Summary** Nicky explained that the school rules had flet very inflexible for Liam considering his needs, and that this had had a significant impact on his situation. Secondly, the rules surrounding EHCP applications and SEND support were also opaque to Nicky as someone who does not work in the education sector. **Illustrative quotes from subthemes** *Subtheme – school rules* "He was treated basically as just a naughty child. Constant sanctions, constant punishments." "And he'd be tired and...he'd sit with his coat on because he was cold. That was against the school rules. So teachers took, some teachers took offence to that, and then that just got into a vicious cycle of constant fighting" *Subtheme – EHCP application process* "His first secondary school applied for an EHCP and it was rejected. This this time round with the support of the SENCo that he has now I wrote the letter myself, but even then answering some of the questions or one thing I'm always asked is what do you want for Liam ? Well, I don't know what is there for somebody like Liam? I don't know. I want his life to be perfect obviously. But I don't. I can't tell you specifics of what I think would work out of all the support that's available, what I think would work for him. It's almost like a secret society. You have to know the answer to the question that you're being asked without knowing anything about	**Summary** Assessment and subsequent intervention through reduced timetable and increased support were useful tools in mediating Liam's school experience. Working from home in COVID was an earlier change in learning environment that was successful and similar to his reduced timetable plan in essence. Tools available to support parents were (similar to in **rules)** were hard to navigate from Nicky's perspective. **Illustrative quotes from subthemes** *Subtheme – assessment and intervention* "We had his assessment and he got his diagnosis." "And the fact that the expectation isn't then on him to attend 100% of the time is kind of built into the plan. The idea is to attempt to increase his attendance, which has all kinds of positive knock on effects" *Subtheme – learning environment* "It was actually a good thing all round that there was lock-down and there was no school because his anxiety levels came right down. Our anxiety levels came right down. My stress levels came right down because we didn't have to deal with the school basically." *Subtheme – support from EHCP* "Yeah, so I've been signposted to places before that are supposed to support us, but they ask me..,And they asked me what I want, and I'm kind of I've come to you for support and I'm expecting you to advise me'.	Su The was tran con sett area high too Illu: Su: tra: "My is. \ as p wer we "Be anx sch a hi mo he v his hon "Ev "he war leve wha Su: tra: Go. too
10 : Nicky						
	Penny is an EP who is part of the leadership team at XLA, and	**Summary**	**Summary**	**Summary**	**Summary**	Su:

Appendix 9.7 Sample from summary matrix (Figure 4.2, thesis body text) showing *SENCo role* subtheme in Division of labour node for Nicky (derived from Nicky's row in the master matrix).

Participant	Subject	Community	Division of labour	Rules	Tools	Object	Outcome
		division of labour column.					
Sarah (school staff)	Sarah triangulated info from EP and mum about Liam's challenges with communication. This made intervention work in the pre transition years difficult to to engage. Sixth form so far has seemed far more preferable to Liam	Similar to mum and EP, a community of friends for Liam was confirmed, but little is known by school about Liam's peer interactions as he is very closed about it.	Sarah explained that a lot of the work pre transition had been done collaboratively between home and school as Liam was at home a lot. With improved attendance so far in sixth form there is a plan for new team members to build a working relationship with Liam	For Sarah the main issue concerning rules was the school rules, their rigid application to Liam and the impact this had on his engagement and attendance	Pre transition and early in the sixth form term, adaptations to expectations and learning environment are key tools to mediate Liam's experience. Past papers and exam practice were also a very practical tool that helped Liam prepare for GCSEs whilst he was at home	The primary objective for Liam in transition was to achieve the grades that he needed to attend sixth form. GCSEs were a means to an end for Liam in his journey to post 16. Communication has been an ongoing challenge for Liam in his transition journey, but in sixth form there is reduced conflict.	Sarah perceived that Liam had started his sixth form courses with much greater success compared to his engagement in school pre transition, This was attributed to, less pressure and more relaxed rules, combined with only studying what he enjoyed. Liam is beginning to take responsibility but still needs to learn to access help for academic needs as Liam still doesn't always communicate these
Nicky (parent)	A significant theme for Nicky was the difficult transition from primary to secondary school, and a perceived lack of collaboration / support. There was also reflection on some of Liam ASC traits such as communication	It was reflected that Liam does have a community of peers with whom he is comfortable, but that low attendance has given him limited access to them. Family have also provided a community support	Nicky raised the importance of the SENCo in Liam's journey to post 16, which chimes with the "SENCo role theme" and the difference this had made. Further difficulties were raised in terms of how parents navigate the SEND	Nicky explained that the school rules had felt very inflexible for Liam considering his needs, and that this had had a significant impact on his situation. Secondly, the rules surrounding EHCP applications and SEND support	Assessment and subsequent intervention through reduced timetable and increased support were useful tools in mediating Liam's school experience. Working from home in COVID was an earlier change in learning environment that	The academic process of obtaining GCSEs was a key objective in Liam's journey to transition as they were a requirement for his continuation into 6th form – moving to a new setting was not preferred. A challenge in this area was Liam's	Nicky reflected on Liam's goals for beyond sixth form, and her support for that. The issue of sameness and preferring current setting was raised. Although Liam hasn't engaged in PfA skills at school he has developed a number of key independence skills through home support

Appendix 9.8

SENCo role **subtheme as discussed in Chapter 4, Section 4.7.2**

An important descendent subtheme exemplifying support is that of the SENCo role, where data centred around support more than collaboration. Having a proactive SENCo was noted to make a significant impact on the communications between home and school

> "She tends to be my direct contact and I will email her. She'll email me the problems.…By going to the SENCo directly I've found that works a lot better."

(Bryony, [Ginny's mother] lines 352-353, 383).

> "In the second year, the new SENCo started and she has been like a breath of fresh air….She helped me in applying for an EHC needs assessment"

(Nicky [Liam's mother], lines 202-209)

Appendix 9.9

Hierarchy within Outcome node

- ○ Support for the transition to post 16 education for YP with EHCPs
  - ⊞ ○ Division of labour
  - ⊞ ○ Tools
  - ⊞ ○ Object
  - ⊞ ○ Community
  - ⊞ ○ Subject
  - ⊟ ○ Outcome
    - ⊟ ○ Outcome - skills for independence
      - ○ Outcome - transition to 16 gives greater freedom
    - ⊟ ○ Outcome - cliff edges and new adventures
      - ○ Outcome - thinking beyond post 16
  - ⊞ ○ Rules

Appendix 10

Examples of memoing in Nvivo.

Appendix 10.1 Bryony (Ginny's mother): post-interview reflective memo
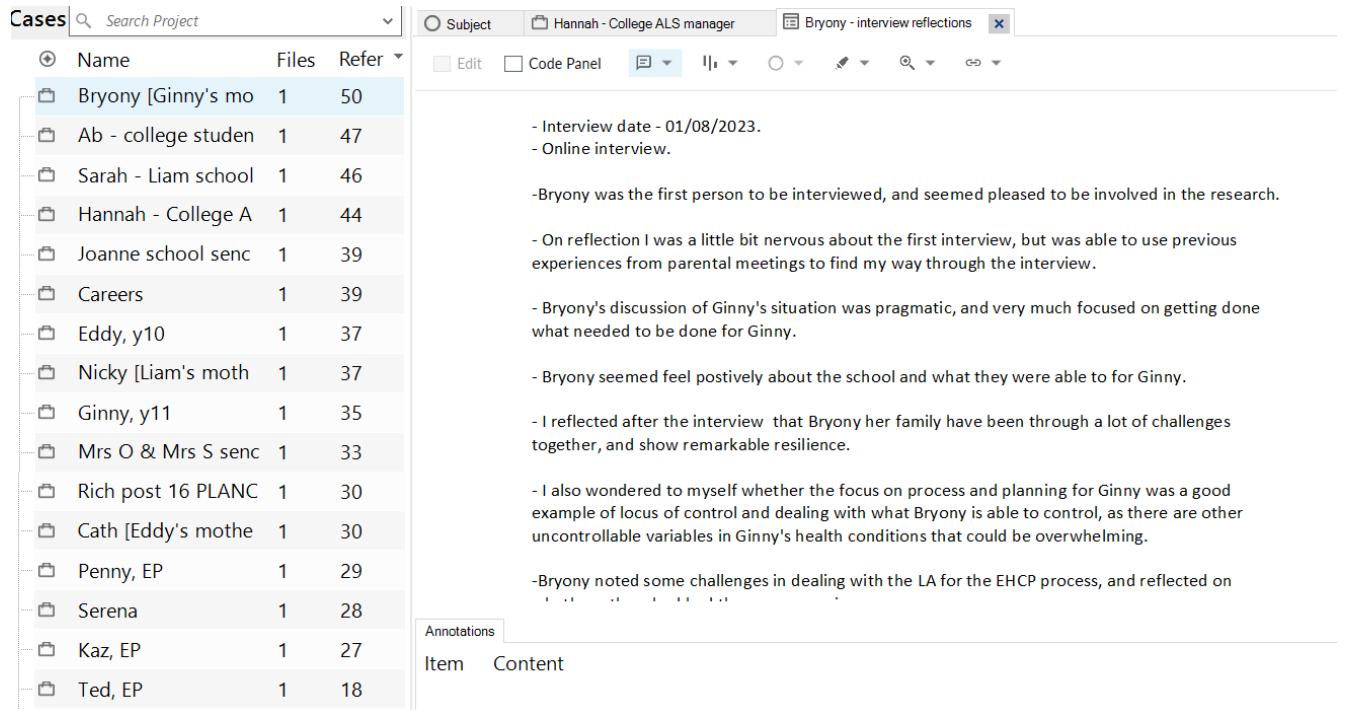
Name	Files	Refer
Bryony [Ginny's mo	1	50
Ab - college studen	1	47
Sarah - Liam school	1	46
Hannah - College A	1	44
Joanne school senc	1	39
Careers	1	39
Eddy, y10	1	37
Nicky [Liam's moth	1	37
Ginny, y11	1	35
Mrs O & Mrs S senc	1	33
Rich post 16 PLANC	1	30
Cath [Eddy's mothe	1	30
Penny, EP	1	29
Serena	1	28
Kaz, EP	1	27
Ted, EP	1	18

Bryony - interview reflections

- Interview date - 01/08/2023.
- Online interview.

-Bryony was the first person to be interviewed, and seemed pleased to be involved in the research.

- On reflection I was a little bit nervous about the first interview, but was able to use previous experiences from parental meetings to find my way through the interview.

- Bryony's discussion of Ginny's situation was pragmatic, and very much focused on getting done what needed to be done for Ginny.

- Bryony seemed feel postively about the school and what they were able to for Ginny.

- I reflected after the interview that Bryony her family have been through a lot of challenges together, and show remarkable resilience.

- I also wondered to myself whether the focus on process and planning for Ginny was a good example of locus of control and dealing with what Bryony is able to control, as there are other uncontrollable variables in Ginny's health conditions that could be overwhelming.

-Bryony noted some challenges in dealing with the LA for the EHCP process, and reflected on

Appendix 10.2 Ginny (YP, Year 11) post-interview reflective memo
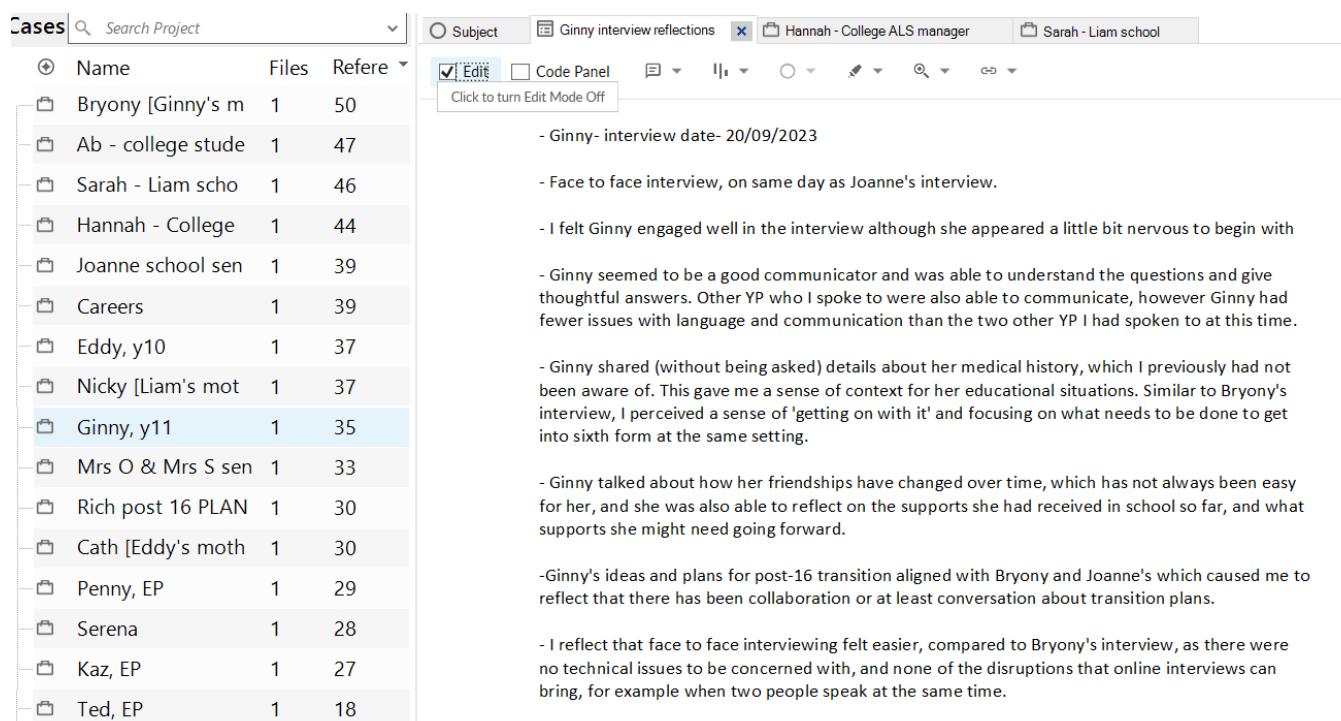
Name	Files	Refere
Bryony [Ginny's m	1	50
Ab - college stude	1	47
Sarah - Liam scho	1	46
Hannah - College	1	44
Joanne school sen	1	39
Careers	1	39
Eddy, y10	1	37
Nicky [Liam's mot	1	37
Ginny, y11	1	35
Mrs O & Mrs S sen	1	33
Rich post 16 PLAN	1	30
Cath [Eddy's moth	1	30
Penny, EP	1	29
Serena	1	28
Kaz, EP	1	27
Ted, EP	1	18

Ginny interview reflections

- Ginny- interview date- 20/09/2023

- Face to face interview, on same day as Joanne's interview.

- I felt Ginny engaged well in the interview although she appeared a little bit nervous to begin with

- Ginny seemed to be a good communicator and was able to understand the questions and give thoughtful answers. Other YP who I spoke to were also able to communicate, however Ginny had fewer issues with language and communication than the two other YP I had spoken to at this time.

- Ginny shared (without being asked) details about her medical history, which I previously had not been aware of. This gave me a sense of context for her educational situations. Similar to Bryony's interview, I perceived a sense of 'getting on with it' and focusing on what needs to be done to get into sixth form at the same setting.

- Ginny talked about how her friendships have changed over time, which has not always been easy for her, and she was also able to reflect on the supports she had received in school so far, and what supports she might need going forward.

-Ginny's ideas and plans for post-16 transition aligned with Bryony and Joanne's which caused me to reflect that there has been collaboration or at least conversation about transition plans.

- I reflect that face to face interviewing felt easier, compared to Bryony's interview, as there were no technical issues to be concerned with, and none of the disruptions that online interviews can bring, for example when two people speak at the same time.

Appendix 10.3 Joanne (SENCo at Ginny's school) post-interview reflective memo

10.4 Reminder memos for code checking

Appendix 11

Griffiths et al. (2021) conceptual model of collaborative work
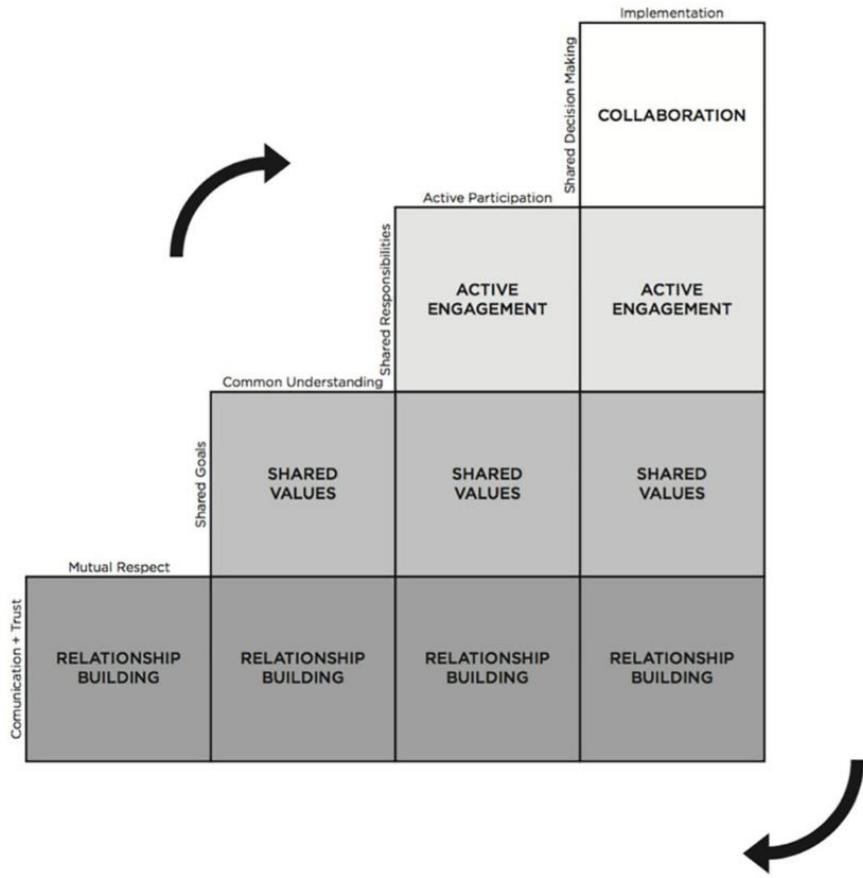
Appendix 12

Lewisham educational psychology questionnaire on working with the 16-25 age group (from Damali & Damali, 2018, p.259)

The 16-25 age group is often stated as a discrete grouping - please circle (a, b or c) where you feel it's more helpful as working sub groups:

   a. Work with the 16-25 as one homogenous group

   b. Split into 2 sub-groups: 16-20, 21-25

   c. Split into 3 sub-groups: 16-18 ,19-21, 22-25

   1. The Code of Practice requires that we consider the four areas of Employment, Health, Independence and Community in our assessments.
      What other areas do you think are important?

   2. What published tools, if any, do you use most often to elicit the views of 16-25 year olds?

   3. What informal (i.e. not published or standardized) tools, if any, do you use to elicit the views of 16-25 year olds?

   4. What tools do you use most frequently to assess the needs (personal and/or learning) of 16-25 year olds?

   5. What opening statements) do you use when meeting with a 16-25?

   6. What statements) do you use to end your meeting with a 16-25 year old?

   7. What was the age and gender of the last 16-25 year old that you worked with and what was the reason for your involvement?

   8. What do you feel is the key difference between working with 16-25 year olds compared with the younger age range?

   9. What is the single most important question you would ask a 16-25 year old (if you were limited to one question)?

   10. What is the main difference in eliciting the CYP's view between the old statementing process and that of the EHCP?

   11. Do you believe that the CYP's view should be elicited aurally, visually or by tactile means?

   12. Do you believe it's best to conduct these interviews at the CYP's home, educational setting or council premises?

   13. Do you believe that the interview should be conducted in a therapeutic setting (private and one-to-one) or with selected persons present?

   14. How do you introduce yourself and what do you say you are there to do?

Mary thanks for helping me with this questionnaire!