

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE TRANSITION PLANNING EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG
PEOPLE WITH ADDITIONAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS IN A MAINSTREAM
CONTEXT, AS THEY CONSIDER THEIR POST-16 PLANS.
(VOLUME 1)**

by

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CONTEXT, AS THEY CONSIDER THEIR POST-16 PLANS.**

ABSTRACT

There has been much consideration given to supporting the post-16 transition needs of young people with learning difficulties and complex needs who have been educated within special school settings, but limited attention paid to those within mainstream schools. This study explores the transition planning and support experiences of four young people with identified additional educational needs, attending a mainstream comprehensive secondary school as they approach their transition into further education or work-based training. It also explores the views of their SENCO, Connexions Personal Advisor and a teacher in order to illuminate professional perspectives. The impact of the framework for transition support outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) on the support delivered and the resulting experiences of young people constitute a further area of enquiry.

Within an integrating conceptual framework derived from Bronfenbrenner's (1979 & 2001) ecological systems theory and bioecological model, qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews were analysed and interpreted using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Within Bronfenbrenner's (2001) 'person, process, context and time' model, a range of factors that independently and in combination influenced the transition planning and

support experiences, were identified. The research highlights how these factors interact with one another, and how the complex interactions within and between systems further mediate the young person's experiences. The research also draws attention to a difference between espoused theory and theory in practice (Argyris & Schön, 1974), in regard to transition support and planning provided in the school.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my closest family and friends, without whom this would not have been possible. I would like to thank each and every one of them for supporting me unfalteringly, encouraging me endlessly and tolerating me tirelessly throughout this journey.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Section		Pages
Chapter 1		Introduction	
	1.1	Doctoral training in educational psychology	1
	1.2	Issues relating to definition	2-5
	1.3	Research focus and rationale	5-6
	1.4	The context of SEN support in the UK	6-8
	1.5	The development of transition support for young people with additional needs	8-10
	1.6	Reasons for choosing this topic area: A personal and professional perspective	10-14
	1.7	My identity as a researcher	14
	1.8	Methodological orientation	15-16
	1.9	Structure of the thesis	16-17
Chapter 2		Literature Review	
	2.1	Introduction, aims and objectives.	18-20
	2.2	The wider context	20-21
	2.3	Models of transition	21-23
	2.4	Special educational needs and transition support in mainstream settings	24-28
	2.5	Transition planning experiences of young people with additional needs	29-38
	2.6	The role of young people in their transition planning	38-39
	2.7	The role of the Connexions Personal Advisor in supporting transition planning for young People with additional needs.	39-50
	2.8	Links between transition experiences and long term social exclusion	50-52
	2.9	Multi-agency working and the influence of systems on transition planning	53-54
	2.10	Integrating Conceptual Framework	54-59
	2.11	Conclusions and implications for the current study	60-61
Chapter 3		Method and Methodology	
	3.1	Overview	62-63
	3.2	Methodology	63
	3.2.1	Overview	63-65
	3.2.2	Epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research	65-67
	3.2.3	Reliability, validity and generalisation	68-70

	3.2.4	Reflexivity	70-71
	3.3	Ethical considerations	72-75
	3.4	Method	75
	3.4.1	Overview and rationale	75-77
	3.4.2	Sampling	76-77
	3.4.3	Participants	77-80
	3.5	Data Collection	81
	3.5.1	Overview	81-84
	3.5.2	Interview setting	85
	3.6	Method of analysis	85
	3.6.1	Overview	85-86
	3.6.2	Thematic analysis and thematic networks	87-89
	3.6.3	Process of analysis	90-93
	3.7	Interpretation and reporting of the findings	94-95
Chapter 4		Results and Discussion	
	4.1	Introduction	96-98
	4.2	Overview of overarching themes	98-100
	4.3	Overview of main themes and subthemes	101
	4.3.1	Multi-professional involvement	101-105
	4.3.2	Significant role of Connexions PA	105-112
	4.3.3	Vulnerability of SEN pupils	113-116
	4.3.4	Variation in SEN pupil profiles	116-121
	4.3.5	Family and community influences	122-125
	4.3.6	Statutory procedures	126-132
	4.4	Links with the integrating conceptual framework	132-140
	4.5	Pertinent aspects of the systemic landscape highlighted by the research findings	141
	4.5.1	The influence of the young people	141
	4.5.2	The impact of the Connexions Personal Advisor	142
	4.5.3	The role of meso-level interactions	143-144
	4.5.4	The role of exo-systems	145-146
	4.5.5	The role of the macro system	146-147
	4.5.6	Summary	148
Chapter 5		Conclusion	
	5.1	Addressing the initial research questions	149-159
	5.2	Methodological reflections	159-163
	5.3	Implications for practice	163-166
	5.4	Final conclusions	167
	5.4.1	Summary	167-170
	5.4.2	Theoretical and analytical generalisation	170-172
	5.4.3	Ethical considerations, limitations of the research and areas for future research	172

	5.4.4	Emerging policy and economic context	173-175
	5.4.5	Implications for educational psychologists	176 – 178
	References	Pages 179-186	
	Appendices	Pages 187-235	
Appendices	1	Literature search terms and combinations	187
	2	Public domain briefing	188-191
	3	Participant information sheets	192-197
	4	Participant consent forms	198-201
	5	Example Interview schedules	202-204
	6	Extract of the analysis grid with details of initial codes	205-211
	7	Thematic map	212

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter	Figure		Pages
Chapter 1	1.1	The levels of support outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)	7
Chapter 2	2.1	Your Transition Plan: Preparing for the Future	26
Chapter 3	3.1	The relationship between my epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and research methods	81
Chapter 4	4.1	Overarching themes, main themes and subthemes	100
	4.2	The relative bi-directional influence of the young people and the systems around them	141
	4.3	The interactions between the Connexions PA and aspects of the young people's systemic landscape	143
	4.4	The impact of meso-interactions on experience and outcomes	144
	4.5	Exosystemic influences	146
	4.6	Key features of the macro system	147

LIST OF TABLES

Chapter	Table		Pages
Chapter 2	2.1	Models of transition, adapted from Dee (2006)	23
	2.2	Overview of longitudinal research study	33
	2.3	Key Features of ecological systems theory	56
	2.4	“Process-Person-Context-Time” model, as applied to this research	59
Chapter 3	3.1	Key features of the pupil participants	80
	3.2	The strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews	82
	3.3	Examples of the pre-prepared questions for the focussed semi-structured interviews	84
	3.4	Outline of the key questions considered during the analytic process	89
	3.5	The process of thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006)	91
	3.6	Phases of the Braun and Clarke framework (2001) in relation to this study	93
Chapter 4	4.1	Overarching themes and main themes	99
	4.2	Outline of the key systems described within Bronfenbrenner’s work (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 & 2001) in relation to the research findings.	134
	4.3	PPCT Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) applied to this research	136-140
Chapter 5	5.1	Potential Implications for practice	164-166
	5.2	Potential EP contribution to post-16 transition work	178

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Doctoral Training in Educational Psychology

This thesis has been produced in accordance with the requirements of the three year full time postgraduate professional training programme in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. This programme requires trainees to attend university on a full-time basis for the first year and to secure (an) appropriate supervised professional practice placement(s) as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) in the second and third years, whilst continuing to participate in teaching and support from the university. During my second and third year of full time registration as a postgraduate research student at the University of Birmingham, I have concurrently been employed as a Trainee Educational Psychologist by Westshire County Council (pseudonym), within which context I have fulfilled the supervised practice requirement of the programme.

This volume of work is submitted as the first volume of a two volume thesis and comprises a research study exploring post-16 transition planning and support for young people with additional educational needs (AEN) in a mainstream setting. The research was completed as an integral component of my practice within Westshire County Council. Its focus and aspects of the design were influenced by County Council policy, while its scale was, to some extent constrained by the time frame within which the work needed to be negotiated with key stakeholders, ethical approval secured within the University, and data collected, analysed and reported to both stakeholders and within the current research volume.

1.2 Issues relating to definition

The definition of SEN in UK law was changed radically within the 1981 Education Act (HMSO, 1981) and has remained consistent since. The term SEN (special educational needs) within this Act was aligned with the notion of learning difficulties, and described children with special educational needs as *“those who find learning significantly more difficult than the majority of children their age, and those with a sensory, emotional, physical or other disability”*. This traditional view is best understood as focusing on individual differences between children and considering deviation from the norm as explained by biological, behavioural or cognitive factors within the child impacting on development.

The recent SEN Green Paper (DFE, 2011) addressed concerns about the potential overuse of this traditional definition of SEN when explaining the potential broad range of difficulties that some young people may experience in school. The DfE proposes that many young people’s difficulties in making and maintaining adequate progress may sometimes be better explained as a function of social influences within their family or community, and/or by their experiences of the school curriculum and pedagogic practices ill-attuned to their needs. The Green Paper seeks to redress what its authors view as the over-use and indiscriminate application of the term ‘special educational needs’, proposing to replace the current graduated conceptualisation of SEN in schools (School Action and School Action Plus), with a single SEN category, and concurrently emphasising the importance of training and other development to support schools in raising attainment and reducing risks of failing learners, who are then designated as having SEN. This change reflects a

wider shift in thinking and discourse in relation the term SEN, especially in relation to it being applied beyond those with significant, pervasive learning difficulties, to those with whose needs may arise from environmental factors. It is recognised that these factors can sometimes have substantial impact on a young person's level of achievement, even if the pupil does not have an underlying learning difficulty. Overall, for this latter group, the term 'Additional Educational Needs' (AEN) is increasingly preferred.

This latter term is perhaps particularly apposite to young people for whom English is an additional language (EAL): The Education Act (1996), Section 156 states clearly that *'A child is not to be taken as having a learning difficulty solely because the language (or form of the language) in which he is, or will be taught, is different from a language (or form of a language) which has at any time been spoken in his home.'* Although specifying unequivocally that EAL learning needs should not be construed as SEN, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) does note that EAL learners with SEN are likely to require additional support.

Overall therefore, in order to accommodate concerns re: the over-use of the term SEN in accounting for poor learning outcomes for social disadvantaged and / or poorly taught children, and to accommodate the needs of learners with EAL, the term AEN (Additional Educational Needs) is now increasingly used as umbrella term to describe both the needs of pupils with SEN, and pupils vulnerable to low attainment as a result of social and cultural influences, including pupils who are learning EAL.

Within this paper I have therefore chosen to use the term AEN as a generic term for several key reasons. Firstly, I was not involved in assessing any of the young people directly of exploring the nature of their individual needs in detail. I am therefore not able independently to account for the underlying nature and causality of their needs or explore the suitability of the term SEN in each case. The use of the term AEN encompassed the potential that social and educational factors may have played some role in their difficulties and low levels of attainment.

Further to this I was also mindful that two of my participants had experienced barriers to learning which fall outside of the traditional definition of a learning difficulty/SEN. One of the participants was a newly arrived pupil for whom the need to learn, and mediate learning was through English as an additional language (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988); in this pupil's case, the school did not provide any evidence indicative of any identified underlying learning difficulty.

Another participant's needs were described as behavioural, emotional and social difficulties (BESD), alongside general learning difficulties. In his case, the direction(s) of causality between learning and social and behavioural needs were not unclear, and their exploration lay beyond the remit of the study. Again therefore, how fully the 2011 Green Paper's more judiciously and selectively applied terminology of SEN would have been appropriate was unclear.

Overall therefore, I took the decision that the term AEN would better encapsulate the diversity of needs within my small research sample of young people considered

vulnerable as they approached transition to post-16 education and training. This term is used throughout the remainder of this thesis.

1.3 Research Focus and Rationale

Recent political changes influenced by a change of Government have led to a review of all public services including those designed to support young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) and Additional Educational Needs (AEN). A review of SEN practice has recently been undertaken, the result of which has been a new Green Paper on SEN (DfE, 2011) proposing radical changes to the delivery of support for young people with additional needs in schools. This Green Paper closely coincided with a White Paper on education (HMSO, 2010) which set out a fundamental reform for the schools system with schools being given greater freedom from local authorities. It is likely that both of these government papers will have considerable direct and indirect implications for practice in the area of SEN and impact on the roles of a range of professionals including Connexions workers, Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCOs) and Educational Psychologists. Anticipated changes are also likely to impact on how transition beyond school and into further education, training or work is supported for vulnerable young people, as the role of the Connexions service which provides careers advice and guidance to schools and colleges is also subject to the outcomes of the government's comprehensive spending review.

For young people with SEN and additional educational needs, transition from compulsory schooling into the world of work, further education or training is a time of

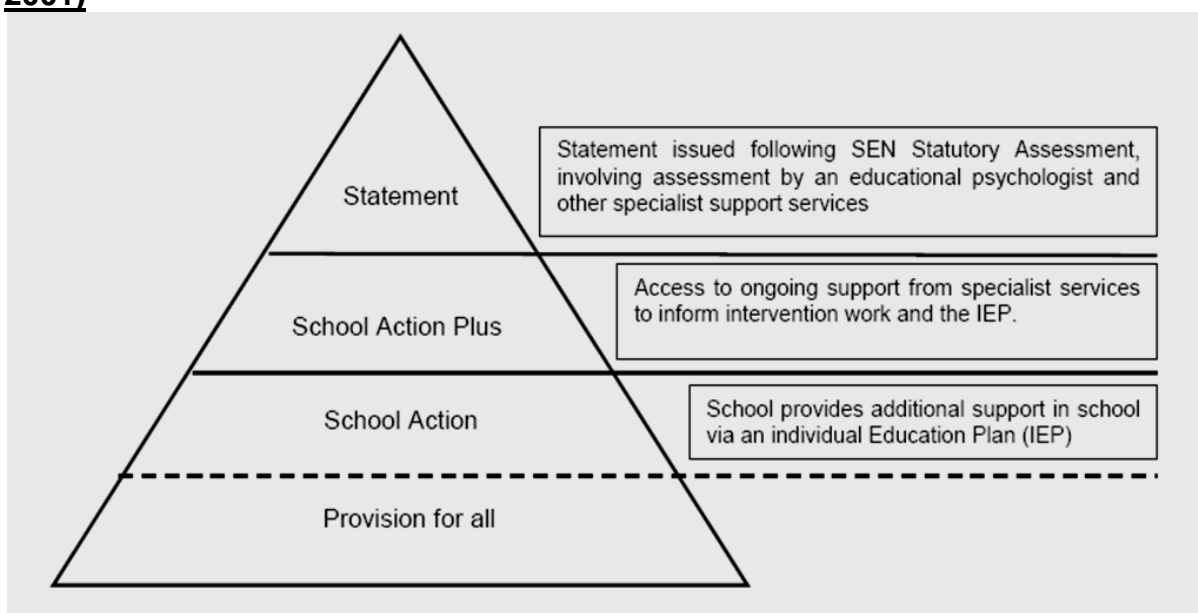
celebration, change and challenge, and can be a frustrating and daunting process (Wright, 2010). The impact of a successful transition on an individual's future may be considerable; the planning period for this is influenced by guidance and policy directives from the government, outlined below.

1.4 The Context of SEN Support in the UK

In the United Kingdom there are approximately 2 million young people identified as having a special educational need (SEN), or who are disabled and their life chances have been identified as being disproportionately poor (DfE, 2011). Regardless of their level of additional need, all of these young people reach a time where transition into adulthood is addressed and for most young people this coincides with the time that they are completing their statutory schooling. The process for addressing transition is part of a bigger framework for meeting the needs of young people with additional educational needs that is described below.

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) is a clear policy framework that outlines a graduated approach to assessing and providing support for pupils with additional educational needs in schools. This graduated approach has been designed in such a way as to recognise the individual needs of young people, allowing step by step access to specialised support should this be identified as to allow them to progress optimally. Figure 1.1 outlines the different levels of assessment, support and interventions as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).

Figure 1.1: the levels of support outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001)



Children with the most significant levels of SEN are placed at either School Action Plus, or have a Statement of Special Educational Needs following the statutory assessment process. The statutory assessment process is instructed by the Local Authority and incorporates the views of school, parents, educational psychologist and other relevant professionals involved with the young person e.g. community paediatrician or speech and language therapist. Once this information has been collected the local authority will make a decision as to whether the child's needs are sufficient enough to require a statement. Statements of SEN are legal documents outlining educational provision that the local authority has a legal duty to provide for the individual child, based on their statutory assessment. There is no such statutory responsibility in cases when young people's needs are met at School Action Plus, where schools are responding to good practice guidance. Part of the support described for young people with Statements of SEN is a plan for transition that is initiated during a Year nine transition review meeting, using a multi-professional

approach including the involvement of professionals involved with the young person such as Connexions P.As (Personal Advisors), SENCos (Special Educational Needs Coordinators), educational psychologists, and others, as appropriate.

1.5 The development of transition support for young people with additional needs

Historically, the government provided influential guidance on transition planning and support in the 2001 white paper "Valuing People" (DoH, 2001) which set out the government's vision for people with a learning difficulty and was based on the principles of civil rights, independence, choice and inclusion. This was the first white paper on learning disability in 30 years and focused on achieving an integrated approach to service provision and included education as an area of focus (DoH, 2001). This white paper addressed the area of transition into adulthood, recognising the problems and challenges that may be experienced by young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, addressing issues such as the lack of coordination between services and lack of involvement of young people; domains which became key areas of focus in transition planning in the following decade. The paper also paved the way for the involvement of Connexions Personal Advisors (Pas) in fulfilling a statutory role in transition planning and support through the provision of advice, guidance and support for young people in schools and community settings.

The comprehensive search of the literature in this area indicates that despite rhetoric alluding to its importance, there has been very limited research into the transition planning experiences of young people with additional educational needs within mainstream settings, or the role of those staff that support this area of work. The

work that has been undertaken has tended to focus upon those young people with more complex needs within specialist settings.

Therefore the broad aim of this study was to explore pupils' and staff members' experiences of the transition planning and support delivered for young people with additional educational needs within a mainstream school setting. The study was conducted within one 11-16 year high school in Westshire.

The aims of this study were:

- to provide an insight into transition planning support in school experiences of pupils with additional educational needs (AEN), in a mainstream school.
- to explore the views of professionals who directly support this area of work in schools; and
- To explore the impact of the framework for transition support outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) on the support delivered and the resulting experiences of young people.

The research sought to address the following research questions:

- What are the perceived facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning and support for transition into further education, training or work for young people with a additional educational needs within this mainstream educational setting?
- What are the transition planning and support experiences of students with educational needs (including those at school action plus and those with statements)?

- How do young people feel about their transitions and the planning and support that they have received in school prior to their transition?
- Within this support available you young people with additional needs as they approach transition how do a Connexions PA, SENCo and a teacher endeavour to support young people and what are their respective experiences of the support that they/other professionals provide?

1.6 Reasons for choosing this topic area: A personal and professional perspective

There are several reasons why I decided on post-16 transition support as the area of enquiry for this research study. In my first role within applied educational psychology, I was employed as a Graduate Psychologist and a key element of this role was in supporting schools in researching the impact of the extended schools service delivery (an initiative encouraging schools to work together to provide a range of services, tailored to meet specific identified needs). Two of these projects focused on exploring the transition experiences of pupils. In one project I specifically explored the views and post-16 planning experiences for pupils with a range of characteristics which suggested that they would be at risk of becoming NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training): a term used to describe 16-18 year olds who do not make a successful transition to training, education or employment. Research has highlighted that having a special educational need can be a significant risk factor associated with becoming NEET (Bysshe et al, 2008).

This prior research highlighted to me the particular needs of more vulnerable pupils as they planned for their futures; for instance they had reported wanting support to identify and explore the range of options available and valued access to tailored support to help them address other more personal issues in their lives. Although the participants in this research had not been identified specifically as having special/ additional educational needs, it emerged that many of them did, and, as noted above, this observation clearly links with the research literature which highlights that young people with SEN and AEN contribute disproportionately towards the wider population of young people identified as at risk of leaving school and becoming NEET; an issue which is explored in my literature review. The accumulation of results from this previous work experience focussed my attention on the needs of this vulnerable group of pupils in schools as they approached the end of Key Stage 4, and the end of their statutory education.

Following my entry into doctoral training and through my work as a trainee educational psychologist, I have become increasingly aware of the higher level of support that young people with Statements can receive: for instance, through the statutory requirement for a Year 9 transition review meeting to be convened and attended by involved professionals including a Connexions P.A. This has raised further questions for me regarding the reasons why statutory assessments may or may not have been requested for children and young people who can appear to experience comparable levels of need, and the potential implications of this decision as young people approach the end of Key Stage 4 and transition into post-16 education, training or employment, and more independent living.

This research study which forms the focus of the current volume of my doctoral thesis was agreed as appropriate and useful by my employing Local Authority as it relates to the Local Authority priority to reduce the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school. I decided specifically to focus on young people with special/additional educational needs, since in 2009, figures for Westshire showed that 9.5% of pupils in Years 9, 10 & 11 had a Statement or were at School Action Plus according to criteria provided by the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), while national data suggest that this group are at increased risk of becoming NEET after leaving school (O'Neil et al, 2010).

The work of my Local Authority and others in the area of reducing NEETS has been directed by the government in a range of policy and guidance documents including Youth Matters: Next Steps (DfES, 2006) and the 14-19 Education and Skills Implementation Plan (DfES, 2005), which both supported the implementation of the vision described in the Youth Matters: Next Steps (DfES, 2005). This Green Paper set out an agenda for 14-19 year olds to ensure that:

- all young people (until the age of 18), participate in education that stretches and challenges them to achieve their potential, and go on to further or higher education or skilled employment;
- young people are supported in developing the knowledge and skills that employers and the economy need in order to prosper in the 21st century; and
- all young people have an equal opportunity to succeed, irrespective of gender, race, disability or background, so that the achievement gap between different groups is closed.

This agenda has directed local authorities to set up Children and Young People's Plans with a view to improving local integration of Children's Services, helping strengthen local partnership arrangements, minimising inequality and tackling poverty. The overall idea of this agenda is that it contributes to the "Every Child Matters" DfES (2003) outcomes, by raising aspirations, participation, attainment and well-being.

In accordance with this directive, the local authority in which I am employed has developed a Children and Young People Plan and an associated 14-19 plan which outlined how it aimed to deliver services for 14-19 year olds, making specific reference to young people with SEN. Relevant objectives in the Local Authority Action Plan include:

- increased participation of 17 year olds in education or training;
- supporting early identification of underachieving learners/potential NEETs;
- reduction of the number of 16-18 year olds who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment and Training) to 4.5%; and
- developing specialist and holistic support provision for the most needy and vulnerable young people with severe and complex needs.

My research proposal was therefore considered relevant by my Principal Educational Psychologist in light of this action plan and also in regard to the remit of the work undertaken by educational psychologists, which can include supporting transition for young people with additional needs at an individual and organisational level. This role for the profession in supporting young people with SEN with transition is in line with

the government's recent green paper on SEN and Disability (DfE, 2011), which proposes that by 2014 care plans are introduced to replace statements of SEN and that these would last until the age of 25. These care plans would include the contribution of an educational psychologist and places emphasis on local authorities to continue to support young people with transitions. It also supported the development of my interest in this area of educational psychology practice.

1.7 My Identity as a Researcher

I acknowledge the extent to which my identity as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP) and my previous roles as a Graduate Psychologist and in youth work have influenced the underlying epistemological position of this study, including the area of inquiry I identified and the interpretations that I made when analysing the data. For instance, my voluntary work with a Youth Offending Service highlighted to me the importance of valuing the voice of the young person and supporting them in expressing their views, and making positive choices. As a Graduate Psychologist I continued to be able to work with children to gain their views and I further developed an appreciation for conducting research which incorporated the voice of the child and which acknowledged the influence of contextual factors on behaviours and experiences. I also developed sharp awareness of the need to seek information from a range of sources to develop a rich, holistic picture to inform my work. In my role as a TEP, eliciting young people's views in a meaningful way is an integral and enjoyable element of my role and one which I continue to develop in my practice, using psychological frameworks such as personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955) and solution-focussed approaches (Rhodes et al, 1995).

1.8 Methodological Orientation:

The personal, historical and contextual factors introduced have influenced me as a practitioner and researcher and consequently I consider myself to be aligned with an interpretivist/constructivist epistemological and ontological position. This position gives validity to the exploration of views and experiences of individuals and recognises the existence of multiple realities based on experiences within any given context (Henwood, 1997). Further to this, the research study adopts a phenomenological approach, as it focused on subjective human experience and concerned with how individuals experience and perceive the world around them (Bryman, 2004). This is opposed to a positivist approach focussing on the testing of hypotheses and endeavours to develop universal rules and/or quantification of data. Therefore this research takes an anti-positivist view of the world, as is evident within my research questions, methodology and methods of data collection and analysis. All of these aspects of the study align with my underlying epistemological position and are demonstrated through the exploration and interpretation of the experiences of individuals in relation to the topic area of transition planning and support. As opposed to aiming to quantify variables or test and establish universal rules, understanding of experience and meaning is afforded priority throughout the research process.

A total of four young people and three staff members participated in this study, taking part in individual semi-structured interviews, in order for me to collect a rich data set exploring their experiences and perspectives. I analysed these data using thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) who provided a useful framework for exploring the phenomena being studied. My endeavour to ascertain parental

perspectives on these phenomena proved unsuccessful as parents declined invitations to participate. I recognise that the absence of parental voice diminishes the richness and completeness of the overall data corpus.

1.9 Structure of the thesis

This chapter sets out to introduce the aims of this piece of research, the underpinning research questions and methodological orientation of the work, as well as providing the broad context within which the work is situated. Chapter 2 will provide a review of the literature related to this study, including literature exploring the transition planning experiences of young people, the role of key professionals and multi-agency working. Within this chapter I also introduce systems theory and the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001) as a useful framework within which this work can be conceptualised. Chapter 3 outlines the methodology and methods utilised in the study and highlights the range of ethical considerations that were addressed in the course of this work. Chapter 4 provides a report and discussion of the data in line with the sixth stage of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). In this chapter the themes that were abstracted inductively from the data through the application of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) are presented. In this chapter I also look at the data deductively using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and his later 'person, process, context and time' model outlined in his bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), as my conceptual and theoretical lens. Throughout this process the findings will be presented, interpreted and then discussed in reference to the literature presented in my literature review. In the concluding chapter (Chapter 5) I consider how my findings address my initial

research questions, consider implications for practice as well as attending to the issues of analytical and theoretical generalisation. The final chapter also provides an exploration of the limitations of this study, as well as providing considerations for further research. Feedback to the school in relation to the key features and findings of this research were provided by a much shorter and easily accessible and digestible public domain briefing (See Appendix 3).

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction, aims and objectives

The broad aim of this study was to explore young people's experiences of post-16 transition planning and support, and to gain the views of their parents, school staff and Connexions Service staff in regard to this. For the purposes of this study the transition planning phase primarily spans the last year of school attendance, when a large proportion of this planning takes place, although it should begin when the young person is aged 13-14 years (DfES, 2001).

Transition beyond school and into adulthood can be a complicated process that all young people will navigate, and a myriad of factors work together to affect pupils' lives after they have completed school (Kohler et al, 2003). Transition more generally has been investigated from a range of theoretical and research perspectives which have informed policy and practice.

The aim of this review of literature is to review critically the most recent, relevant and pertinent policy and research relating specifically to the transition for young people with additional educational needs (also referred to in the literature as Special Educational Needs (SEN)). I begin by presenting the wider context in which this research is situated and then explore conceptualisations of transition in more general terms. I then introduce research exploring a range of factors that appear to mediate transition for the population with whom my research is focussed. I also make links with literature and policy focussing on the NEET (Not in education, employment and training) population, in light of the fact that young people with additional educational

needs appear to contribute disproportionately to this group after school leaving age. This area has received considerable recent political focus.

Despite the fact that there is a wealth of research exploring and addressing the transition needs of young people with complex needs attending specialist settings (e.g. Cooney, 2002) and addressing the transition from paediatric to adult services within healthcare (e.g. Betz, 2007), there is very limited research in the field of transition for young people with identified special/additional educational needs attending mainstream educational settings. However limited research in this area is beginning to emerge, reflecting both the drive for mainstream education for young people with a range of learning difficulties and additional needs alongside escalating social, political and economic concerns about young people with additional needs not always continuing with education, or moving into employment or training after school. Katsiannis et al (2005) who explored effective transition for children with disabilities commented that this trend towards inclusion in mainstream schools may have created a further complicating dimension for transition. This is because although young people attending mainstream schools may have comparable needs to other young people with statements, due to local authority pressures to reduce statements they may have their significant additional needs met at School Action Plus (DfES, 2001). A potential implication of this could be that they may not have access to the statutory processes of transition planning afforded to pupils attending special schools, who always have a statement. This means that there may not always be comparable secure entitlement to skilfully coordinated multi-agency transition support. The transition experiences of this group of young people also appear often to occur at the

intersection of various services and organisations which also presents a particular organisational challenge to stakeholders (Keahne et al, 2009). I intend that my research should contribute to this small but emerging field of enquiry through identifying and exploring such challenges for young people with Statements and at School Action Plus within a mainstream school, as well as identifying variables that appear to support effective transition planning in the mainstream school setting.

As noted in chapter 1, this literature review and study advocates qualitative, contextualised approaches to the exploration of transition planning which seek to highlight the experiences of the young people at the heart of this process, as well as the adults who play a primary role in this work.

This review of literature is the result of a search of key terms relating to the topic which was initially conducted in November 2009 from a range of educational/health and psychological databases (including ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Education: A SAGE Full-Text Collection, ERIC, MEDLINE, and Psychology: A SAGE Full-Text Collection). The same search was repeated in July 2010 and December 2010 to provide an up to date account of research in the field. For a full account of the search including the list of databases, key words, search terms and combinations used see Appendix 1.

2.2 The Wider Context

Although the term “transition” has become largely synonymous with the period of leaving school (Dee, 2006), transitions are experienced by everybody and are

therefore shared by all members of society (Cooley et al, 1993). While it is clear that we all make many transitions in our lives, perhaps the one with the most far-reaching consequences is the transition into adulthood during which the physical aspects of growing up are overlaid by the need to negotiate a complex set of changing roles, relationships and status, and can involve significant and sometimes unsettling change (Heslop et al, 2002).

The particular transition when young people are expected to leave a phase of compulsory schooling was described by McGinty and Fish (1992) as:

“a phase or period of time between the teens and twenties which is broken up educationally and administratively. During the phase there are changes of responsibility from child to adult services, from school to further and higher education and from childhood dependence to adulthood responsibility....a process by which the individual grows through adolescence to adulthood and achieves the balanced state of dependence and independence which a particular community expects of its adult members.”

This quote provides an insight into the potential complexities associated with transition, highlighting the distinction between the concrete procedures a young person may encounter and the processes they experience and interpret.

2.3 Models of Transition

The complexities associated with conceptualising transition are reflected in a range of perspectives on transition described in table 2.1. Each perspective or model differs in its consideration of transition in relation to either phase, agency or time.

These models, which are influenced by a range of theoretical perspectives, offer a useful way of highlighting the fact that transition from school is much more than simply a point in time. Rather it appears to be a socio-culturally mediated personal process which may involve change and uncertainty which can lead to feelings of loss and control, as well as excitement, challenge and progression. Transition also appears to involve changes in the way in which young people view themselves and are viewed by others (Dee, 2006) and it is therefore generally accepted that transition can be complex for all young people. However, it appears that it becomes even more complex when a young person is reliant on a higher level of support and guidance or the services of a range of agencies (e.g. Dee, 2006) due to an additional need. Such additional needs in various forms may mean that in many cases the young person encounters higher number of administrative and legislative procedures associated with health and education for instance. In relation to the SEN population specifically Dee (2006) suggests that young people who have learning difficulties or disabilities may be denied certain opportunities typically experienced by young people of the same age and alongside this they may be subjected to a transition planning experience which is both more public and more bureaucratic. This issue is addressed in more detail later in the review.

Table 2.1: Models of Transition, adapted from Dee (2006)

Model	Assumptions of the model	Description	Relation to young people with SEN/AEN	Critique
Phase-related model of transition	Regards transition to adulthood as one of a number of stages which individuals pass during their life time (Levinson, 1998)	Defines the final years of secondary education, for example as “a continuous journey that starts well before they leave school and does not end when they first enter work”	Guidance in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) reflects this model. Young people are encouraged to identify goals and set targets, anticipating that by their early 20s they will have achieved relatively settled adulthood.	This model makes considerable assumptions about the trajectory and outcomes of young people’s development and the nature and timing of the support best served to help them achieve these goals.
Agency related model of transition	A sociological view that reflects the degree of agency or control that an individual has in determining the course of their lives.	Social theorists have suggested that individuals have increased freedom to challenge the assumptions of society about who they are and who they want to be, although factors such as gender, ethnicity and SES still influence this process, (e.g. Ball, 2000)	Those on social margins such as those with learning difficulties and disabilities may continue to have more limited control over the direction of their lives	Some argue that mainstream debates relating to agency overlook those with disabilities, and that barriers remain in place which constrain their capacity to make choices and/or exercise agency.
Time related model of transition	Draws from biology, social psychology and sociology. Takes time as the starting point for thinking about transition from school to adult life. This model helped to place transition from school in the wider context of lifelong learning and development.	Transitions seen as single points in the process of lifelong development. Identifies and considers three dimensions of time: history, life and social time (Merriam, 1999).	Using time related ideas helps to take the long view, thinking about transitions for young people with SEN/AEN, forcing a perspective that looks beyond the school gate. Recognises that social expectations are marked by ritual and rites of passage.	Young people with SEN may not have participated in activities normally associated with adolescence, potentially reinforcing what they cannot do.

2.4 Special Educational Needs and Transition Support in Mainstream Settings

The current SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) adhered to by schools in the United Kingdom is outlined in Chapter 1.3 and describes the importance of addressing transition for young people with additional needs; recognising that schools have a duty to do so under the Education Act (1996). A component of this statutory duty is for schools to ensure that all pupils with a Statement of SEN have a transition review meeting in Year 9 attended by the school's Connexions PA, other professionals involved with the young person, and which pupils and their parents are invited to attend. The result of the meeting should include a transition plan that clearly outlines the young person's post-16 aspirations and the support they will need to achieve their goals. This is designed to be a person-centred approach focused on the pupil's personal goals, and not centred on available resources and/or existing services. Following this meeting, the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) states that the pupil should continue to receive support from the Connexions PA and that the transition plan should be reviewed annually until they leave school. The aim of this transition planning process is to establish ongoing in-school and local authority coordination of provision, as well as considering post-school arrangements: a process described in the Code of Practice as ideally participative, holistic, supportive, evolving and collaborative (DfES, 2001).

Although the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) supports schools in meeting the needs of children with additional educational needs, it is not without caveats. The process outlined above is part of a statutory duty for schools to provide for young people with a Statement; however there is no such statutory arrangement for young

people at School Action Plus, for whom the transition planning process will be guided by the individual school's policy and approach to practice. However, whether or not a young person has a statement of SEN has been linked to a range of variables beyond their degree of special educational need. The Audit Commission (2002) identified that the decision to pursue the process was influenced by factors including where the child lives (the proportion of children with statements varies fivefold between local authorities in England and Wales), the school they attend and parental means and attitude (Audit Commission, 2002). This context means that young people at School Action Plus may in some situations be vulnerable to receiving less support than statemented peers despite the fact that in some cases the difference in their level of need for such support may be small. This potential differential does not appear to have been addressed substantively within existing literature.

The transition planning process outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) also makes assumptions about pupils' capacity to make plans and problem solve, which may prove problematic, depending on the nature of their needs. The transition plan that is put together at the Year 9 review assumes that at this point the statemented young person has a range of ideas or aspirations for the future, which may not be assured in all cases. Work in preparation for this meeting, as well as follow up work with the Connexions PA or another skilled adult may be important in helping the young person to consider and communicate their aspirations and explore a range of options for their realisation, but there is no clear mechanism for this. The Government's website (www.direct.gov.uk), designed to describe the type of support

in place for young people with additional needs, gives guidance on how young people could prepare for this transition review meeting as described below:

Fig 2.1: Your Transition Plan: Preparing for the Future Taken from:
http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/YoungPeople/Youngdisabledpeople/DG_10039608
(Accessed April, 2011)

"Because you will be asked about your plans for your future, it's a good idea to think about what you want to say before the meeting. Some things to think about include:

- what subjects you want to study and what other activities you'd like to be involved in for your remaining time at school
- what you want to do when you leave school
- what information you need to help you make decisions about your future
- what opportunities there are in your area to do what you want to do
- what support you might need to achieve your goals "

However, to be able to access this information without support assumes levels of literacy, problem solving skills and IT skills that may not always be present if a young person has a learning difficulty or another additional need. The guidance suggests that the young person should take the time to consider a range of complex questions prior to their planning meeting. Given the nature of the statemented population, for many this would require considerable preparation and support. There is no particular mechanism in place for this support to be provided prior to the planning meeting and again the element of this study which explores individual pupils' experiences will highlight whether this important preparation takes place for statemented pupils and those at School Action Plus who still have considerable support needs.

The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) also outlines that schools have a duty to work collaboratively with other agencies (including Connexions) when preparing the transition plans for pupils with SEN, and this is another distinguishing feature of the transition planning process for young people with additional needs in schools. Dee (2006) comments on how this level of involvement may be experienced by the young person and their family as a particularly public and bureaucratic process (Dee, 2006), which supports a need for exploration of pupil's experiences: again, a key focus of this study.

There are a range of post-16 options that young people may consider, but a common route is transition into a further education college. If a young person remains in their existing school post-16 then the Statement is usually maintained by the local authority, however it ceases automatically if the young person moves into further education or training (DfES, 2001) and the non-statutory responsibility for providing appropriate support then lies with the individual further education provider. Ensuring that colleges have a good understanding of a pupil's needs lies primarily with the Connexions Personal Advisor (PA) who has a core statutory duty to complete a 139a assessment (formerly known as a Section 140 assessment), as outlined and described within the Learning and Skills Act (2000). The purpose of this assessment is to identify the young person's educational needs and the support which is required to help them with those needs (Douglas & Hewitt, 2010). The outcome of this process should be to share information with the further education providers to inform individual planning as well as sharing information with the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) (the body responsible for funding and planning education and training for over

16-year-olds in England), in order that they can identify gaps in provision and profile training and learning needs and support for this group as a whole (Townesley, 2003).

Despite the fact that information sharing is highlighted as a key aspect of this process recent research (Rowland-Crosby et al, 2002) has identified that does not always happen. This research found that Completed Section 140 assessments were simply forwarded to the 'destination' as a way of clarifying what the young person would be doing and to outline what their support needs were. The authors highlight that this is not only duplicating the education-led transition plan, but it also suggests that information about the whole local population of learners with learning difficulties/disabilities is not being actively shared with the Learning and Skills Council to inform their work.

In light of this, another area of focus of this study is to gain the views and perspectives of professionals in school regarding to how well they feel the information that they collate through transition plans and section 139a assessments is shared and acted upon during the transition planning process and once transition has taken place.

Chapter 2.5 introduces further research exploring the efficacy of the framework for transition support in meeting the needs of the young people. Links are made with research exploring the role of the Connexions Personal Advisor whose agency according to the framework, is a key provider of work in this area.

2.5 Transition planning experiences of young people with additional needs

The developing body of research exploring pupils' experiences of transition planning appears to indicate that despite the legislation and guidance summarised above, some young people with SEN leave school without any form of transition planning. For instance Ward et al (2003) conducted a study which aimed to explore how well legislation and guidance for statemented pupils worked in practice, from the perspective of young people with learning disabilities and their families. Through using a range of postal questionnaires sent to parents and through interviews with young people, they found that within their sample 1 in 5 children with a learning difficulty had left school without any planning at all. Of the young people involved in the study who were still at school, only two thirds had a transition plan. The study also looked at the nature of the transition planning that had taken place and found that there was a stark mismatch between the topics that families wanted to cover and those addressed by the professionals involved. Ward et al (2003) also found that many of the young people who did receive transition planning had very little involvement in the process and parental involvement was also less than it should have been. In their conclusion they raise interesting questions about transition planning relevant to this study, including:

- Are schools and Connexions services working together effectively?
- Have professionals and agencies thought carefully about the information that young people and their parents need in considering their future?
- Could schools and colleges reflect on and develop the content and style of the transition meetings that they hold, to facilitate the young person's involvement?

The research also highlights the role that Connexions PAs may be able to play in supporting transition planning for young people with additional needs. This research questions whether PAs always have the relevant expertise in learning disability to fulfil this function appropriately, and also highlights that as they are employed at one base they may not have an ongoing working relationship with individual pupils as they progress to different options (Ward et al, 2003). They express in their conclusion the need for further consideration of the role of the Connexions service in light of the fact that PAs should, in principle, have a key role to play for young people with learning disabilities, but that there is some uncertainty about their capacity to fulfil the role in practice (Ward et al, 2003).

The findings of the Ward et al (2003) study are not directly generalisable to my research population since many of their participants had high level support needs and attended either a day special school (62%) or residential special school (21%). Only 4% had attended a mainstream school. While it cannot therefore be assumed that the transition planning experiences within mainstream schools would mirror the special school students the findings highlight why further research into this area is important and relevant.

Despite the fact that gender was not a particular area of focus in this research, the work of Hogansen et al (2008) is relevant due to its focus on the transition experiences of females with disabilities, addressing an identified gap in how transition is experienced and could be enhanced for females. The study explored the experiences of 146 female participants aged between 15 and 23 who had

attended, or were attending special schools, and who experienced a range of physical needs, learning disabilities and/or social and emotional needs. The participants were interviewed or took part in a focus group and the data were subjected to qualitative analysis.

During the interviews they were asked to describe their transition-related activities, and then reflect on how they felt they had been affected by their gender. Interviews and focus groups with 34 parents/carers and 45 professionals (including teachers, transition specialists and a school psychologist) also took place.

This research found that a range of factors influenced the young people's transition goals and experiences, with many of the females focussing on the importance of gaining an education, career and family (goals also held by their parents). The research also identified that many of the females were unsatisfied with their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings (the American equivalent of Annual Review Meetings) and felt that the educational opportunities made available to them were limited. They also reported a disconnection between their interests and academic needs and their special education programme, feeling that the emphasis of this process was skewed toward the needs of disruptive boys (Hogansen et, al 2008). The females also stressed the importance of having a network of support which was able to inoculate them against negative perceptions associated with both their gender and their disability.

This research highlights some of the challenges faced by young women with additional needs: challenges which are also reflected in other studies in this review which do not focus on the impact of gender (e.g. Ward, 2003), but which also highlight dimensions such as the need to develop a meaningful transition meeting processes and provide individualised support. Additionally, this study also highlights the need for professionals to acknowledge gender issues when considering the type of support available for young people with additional needs.

Other research in this area has applied a longitudinal approach, exploring both transition planning and transition outcomes for young people with additional needs in mainstream settings. For instance a large scale longitudinal research project took place between 2001 and 2005 (published by Polat et al, 2001; Dewson et al, 2004; and Dewson et al, 2005) exploring the post-16 transitions of young people with an SEN; within this research a large sample of young people were tracked over four years. The overarching aim of this body of research was to explore young people's transition experiences, as well as their achievements and attitudes over time in order to identify strengths, weaknesses and barriers to their progression to further education, higher education, employment and training. The research also sought to gain the views of parents, and considered the role of the Connexions PA. This research applied a mixed methods approach, including questionnaires distributed to nearly 5,000 pupils and parents, interviews with young people (1,020 at Wave 2 and 1874 at Wave 3), alongside a small number of more detailed case studies (16 at Wave 2). The three waves of this research are described and summarised in table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Overview of the longitudinal research reported by Polat et al (2001). Dewson et al (2004) and Dewson et al, (2005)

Wave	Key Aims	Methods	Key findings
Wave 1: Reported by Polat et al, 2001.	Data collection took place when the pupils were in year 11, exploring the nature of the support that the young people were receiving in planning for their futures.	This included exploring the perspectives of young people with SEN, their parents and carers using questionnaires and interviews.	10% of pupils with statements had not experienced their statutory entitlement to a transition review meeting during Year 9, and a quarter of parents felt that school had prepared their children poorly for the transition into adult life. More promisingly, three quarters of the pupils had had a meeting with a careers advisor in their final year of schooling, (but one quarter had not).
Wave 2: Reported by Dewson et al, 2004.	This took place in the year following transition in order to track progress beyond school.	1, 874 pupil interviews and 16 case studies	This study identified that following transition, half of participants were studying at school or college, one quarter were in employment and one in five were unemployed or inactive. Interestingly those continuing in education were most likely to remember a transition review meeting, to have a statement of SEN, have attended a special school and have communication and interaction difficulties or sensory and/or physical disabilities.
Wave 3: Reported by Dewson et al, 2005.	This followed up on the young people when they were aged 19 or 20 years old, in order to update the earlier studies and to map their activities and achievements over time.	Interviews with 1020 young people	This final strand of the research highlighted that half of the participants were now in employment and those young people who had been identified as having a BESD were now more likely to be in training or employment than at Wave 2. Just under a quarter of the participants were still in education (one third of these were now attending university), with young people with statements contributing disproportionately to this group. Overall 27% of the participants fell into the NEET (not in education, employment and training) category, with young people with cognition and learning difficulties most likely to contribute to this group. At this point in the young people's lives, the support from Connexions had reduced considerably, with only one fifth of the participants reporting contact in the last year, and a quarter indicating that they had not had support from any support services during that time. Parents had continued to act as a major point of support for these young people.

A number of interesting issues arose in relation to the research findings across all three waves of the research, that are not encapsulated in the summary in table 2.2, or which require further discussion. For instance Dewson et al (2004) reported that less than half of statemented participants recalled attending a transition review, young people in special schools were more likely to have had a formal transition review meeting than those in mainstream schools, and only one third of pupils without a statement recalled having a transition review meeting. These figures call into question the equity of access to transition review meetings, in relation to level of need of the child and the type of school attended.

Further to this the figures regarding transition review meetings for statemented pupils reported at phase 2 are considerably lower than those reported in Phase 1, and could indicate unreliable recall, rather than that these meetings had not taken place. However, overall, these findings raise considerable questions in regard to the implementation of the transition planning framework described within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). This is especially concerning if we consider that Dewson et al (2004) also reported that of those pupils who did recall a transition review meeting, the majority reported it being useful for them.

Highlighted aspects of the longitudinal study raise particular questions about the non-statemented population in mainstream settings, especially those whose needs were categorised as BESD (behavioural, emotional or social difficulties). This is because young people with BESD without a statement, who had attended a mainstream

school and could not recall attending a transition planning meeting were typically most likely to be in employment (cf. further education or training), at the time of the 2004 survey (Dewson et al, 2004). However, they were engaged in what were described as “elementary occupations” and the majority were not engaged in any work-related or government-supported training. Furthermore, the researchers found that those without a statement and those with needs categorised as BESD were also more likely than those with other types of SEN to have been unemployed at the time of this survey (Dewson et al, 2004). Although caution is needed before generalising the findings of this study, it clearly raises considerable questions regarding the vulnerability at transition of non-statemented pupils in mainstream settings, especially those with behavioural emotional or social difficulties.

Despite the fact that a range of policy, guidance and research indicates that the Connexions PA plays a pivotal role in transition planning (see 2.7), in this study Connexions PAs were rarely recalled as being present at the transition review meeting when it had taken place. However, over three quarters of young people did recall a meeting with someone from Connexions or the careers service taking place where they had discussed their future, and which had provided information about the options available to them. However, some young people (figure not reported), said they had not received the right sort, or enough information from this process.

This study (Dewson, 2004) also identified the challenging role requirements of the Connexions PAs, depending on the type of need of the young person and highlighted concerns about appropriate skills base and training opportunities among this

professional group: a finding congruent with the reported findings of Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003).

This second wave of the research also explored the role of parents in relation to transition planning, and pupils identified them as being very important in this process. However the parents themselves reported that they felt they had received little help or information from schools regarding post-16 options for their children (Dewson et al, 2004). Many parents had also sought additional advice since their child had left school and reported difficulties in getting hold of the information that they needed even after transition had taken place.

This body of research considered as a whole is particularly important in highlighting several key issues in regard to transition for young people with additional educational needs. For instance Dewson et al (2004) question whether the mainstream 'systems' in which many of this group of young people were situated (e.g. mainstream schools and the open labour market) were mindful of and/or able to marshal support to enable these young people to overcome the diverse difficulties which they faced. This is especially important in light of the identified contribution of young people with cognition and learning difficulties the NEET population by the end of the study.

The research also raises questions about the role of the Connexions Service and other services involved in transition planning and support, identifying that most young people had received contact with a professional service during Year 11 and that at follow up (i.e. post transition), only one in three reported experiencing a meeting with

Connexions or the Careers Service in the year since leaving school (Dewson et al, 2004). However, by Wave 3 this had reduced to just one in five. While this may suggest that services are not organised to support transition as a long-term process of adaptation as opposed to supporting a single act of transfer from school to a post-16 setting, it is equally important to acknowledge that by the end of the study 64% of the participants indicated that they no longer felt that they required additional support. This may indicate that the support has worked effectively for this group of participants, who by this point felt equipped to move forward more independently. However, it is salient to note that for the remaining 36% of young people, this was not the case, particularly when it would be expected that attrition from the original sample would be likely to be skewed toward those who had drifted out of mainstream training or employment contexts, so that the settled and autonomous 64% may not reflect the outcome across the original sample of 5,000 young people.

The key conclusions of this longitudinal body of work included the identification of four sets of factors as important determinants of the outcomes of the transition process:

- the young people's capacities and characteristics;
- the purposefulness of familial support;
- the nature and effectiveness of local support systems; and
- and the range of local opportunities available to young people (Dewson, 2005).

It therefore emerged that the factors impacting on the outcomes of the young people's transition transcended the characteristics of the nature and level of their

additional/special educational need, and are related to features of their environment. Therefore the questions raised and conclusions drawn from all of the phases of this longitudinal study provide a clear rationale for the questions raised in the current study regarding the transition planning experiences of young people, and the facilitators and barriers to effective transition for a sample of pupils with AEN/SEN in a mainstream setting.

2.6 The role of young people in their transition planning

The involvement of young people as agents in the transition planning process has also been explored in research exploring the extent to which they reflect the provisions outlined in the 1996 Education Act and 2004 Children Act, both of which specify that young people should be actively involved in planning for their futures. However, in a study Heslop et al (2002) 42% participants with learning difficulties reported that they had little involvement in the transition planning process.

It also appears that it is not just involvement in the process itself that leads to a positive experience, but rather what that involvement constitutes, and the wider package of support that is provided alongside this. Heslop et al (2002) reported that positive aspects of the transition planning process for young people with learning difficulties (who were mainly educated in special or residential schools) included work experience or link placements, a sense of the next step, time to get accustomed to new locations and a means of informing choices. The youngsters had particularly enjoyed opportunities to visit provisions and reported that this had given them a clearer sense of what they would be moving on to. It was also important to them that

they would have someone familiar in the college or work destination to whom they could talk on their arrival.

The current study addresses this issue, as it is particularly interested in the role that young people have played in their transition planning and how they have interpreted this role with a view to identifying what they have valued most and found most useful.

2.7 The role of the Connexions Personal Advisor in supporting transition planning for young people with additional needs.

It appears through policy, guidance and practice that Connexions Personal Advisors (PAs) should be well placed to provide transition planning support for young people with and without additional needs in mainstream and specialist settings; however the research carried out by Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003) and Dewson et al (2004) raised questions with regard to their functions within and beyond school: an area that has been addressed specifically in the current research.

Historically, the role of the Connexions PA came into fruition following the publication of the 2000 Learning and Skills Act, which revised funding arrangements for post-16 providers and reiterated the duties of local councils to have due regard for the needs of young people with additional needs, and to promote equality of opportunity. Partly subject to this Act the Connexions Service (designed to combine elements of the Careers and Youth services) was introduced in England, with a key role in supporting the transition of young people aged 13-19, and up to 25 for those with a Statement of SEN, through the role of a school-based Connexions Personal Advisor. Their central role was described by Grove & Giraud-Saunders, (2003, p16) who reported on the

development of the PA's role as “mapmaker, bridge builder, encouragement provider, truth teller and developer of educational, employment and social networks.” The Connexions PA was originally intended to provide both targeted and holistic support in order to respond to individual need through working with young people, their parents and carers. They were also expected to give particular priority to those at risk of disadvantage, and their role was described as “having a key role acting as an advocate to ensure each young person gains access to a range of other sources of specialist support for young people.” (2000 Learning and Skills Act, p53).

As already described, Connexions holds a statutory role in supporting the transition of young people with statements of special educational needs (SEN) from school to post-16 learning, training or work, through attending reviews and assessing needs should they decide to move to another provision. The document “Connexions: The Best Start in Life for Every Young Person” (DfEE, 2000) also states that this role should extend beyond those young people with Statements stating: “The Service will also be able to arrange for assessments to be undertaken for other young people who are under 19 years of age, whose learning difficulties develop after they have left compulsory schooling or who choose to leave school after Year 11.” (DfEE, 2000 p.44). The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) also reiterates that the role of the Connexions Service should not just be focussed on supporting young people who have the highest levels of special educational need that require a Statement. It summarises this view in para.9.67, which clearly states that:

“the Connexions Service has a responsibility to ensure that all young people who may have difficulty in transferring to further education or training after they

have completed their compulsory schooling, including those with SEN but without a statement, have a needs and provision assessment. When undertaken for young people with SEN but without statements these assessments may be recorded as having been carried out under Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act” (p. 139).

Despite this guidance, there appears to be no indication in the literature of the amount or quality of support that Connexions is providing to young people with additional needs who do not have a Statement, and again this is an area of focus for this study.

More generally the impact of the Connexions Service was assessed via a customer survey that was conducted in 2003, which aimed to explore how the general population of Connexions Service users had found their experiences (Clemens et al, 2003). The study remit was extensive, comprising interviews and questionnaires with 16,000 young people. The sample included young people receiving differing levels of support; including those receiving Category 1 support ("intensive" support for those with multiple barriers or those who were already categorised as NEET), category 2 support (which is that aimed at young people who are at risk of not participating effectively in education or training) and category 3 support (general information, advice and guidance). Although information regard to the number of young people with AEN/SEN in the sample is not included, it could be assumed that due to the broad sampling criteria, that their views are incorporated into the overall sample for the survey. However it is disappointing that the views of this group of young people

are not distinguished within the research findings and it is not possible to distinguish their findings from the overall population.

However, the most relevant results identified from the survey of the broad population of service users included that the advice given by Connexions was generally rated as useful by service users. However, not all young people felt that Connexions Advisers had been easy to reach (only 80%), but those with higher levels of need (which presumably would include some participants with AEN and SEN) rated them more favourably for this: 68% of these young people felt that their contact with Connexions had had a positive impact on them and 86% indicated that it had helped them to identify and understand the options that were available to them. The results of this survey appear to indicate how useful the wider population of young people found accessing the Connexions Service.

However, the specific impact of the role of the Connexions PA in relation to providing transition planning support for young people with additional educational needs has been subject to only limited research attention, which has shed some more specific light on the role of PA as a valued contributor to the process: this research is introduced below.

Connexions PAs have been identified as playing a key role in supporting young people with specific speech and language difficulties in optimising transition from school into post-16 provisions (Dockrell et al, 2007 & Cullen et al, 2009). This finding was one of many identified in a large scale, longitudinal study (Dockrell et al, 2007)

which explored the outcomes of endeavours to raise the achievements of young people with specific language difficulties and other special educational needs, within their trajectory from school to work and/or college. The study gained the multiple perspectives of the 92 young people, their parents and their teachers and 46 Connexions Personal Advisors; the inclusion of so large a number of Connexions PA views is a particular strength of this study. The specific element of this larger study that focussed on the role of the Connexions P.A in supporting this cohort of young people is separately presented in a paper by Cullen et al (2009), and the findings presented here are reported within both papers.

The findings of the study were informed by a range of data including results of standardised tests such as the British Picture Vocabulary Scales (BPVS), and qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews, providing information on the participants' experiences and perspectives.

A key finding of this research included that for this group of young people, a range of support was made available via Connexions, who were always able to fulfil their statutory obligations in regard to statemented pupils through the use of Connexions Personal Advisors. They achieved this through attending the Year 9 transition review meetings and completing Section 140 (now Section 139a) assessments. It emerged that this support was also provided for non-statemented pupils when their needs were considered significant. However despite the availability of this identified level of support during transition, the study found that some pupils became disengaged during Key Stage 4 and so did not make use of this support. The research papers

(Dockrell et al, 2007 & Cullen, 2009) discuss how this finding highlights the importance of continuing support from Connexions PAs for young people with speech and language difficulties and other special educational needs following the immediate post 16-transition phase.

Within this study, data from the Connexions PAs themselves highlighted some of the challenges they experienced in fulfilling their role effectively. They communicated that they struggled with large caseloads, which they felt sometimes prevented them from acting quickly, and which sometimes limited their level involvement. They identified that they would have liked to have spent more time with the young people in order to get to know them better, to spend more time with parents, and be able to offer a higher level of support with applications and with visiting provisions.

This research also highlighted inadequacies in the training in SEN for Connexions PAs. The Connexions PAs described how their practice in this area was often informed by their experience gathered "on the job" over time, augmented, in some cases by previous professional experiences. It emerged that some training on SEN had been made available to some PAs but this was neither a universal entitlement or indeed a requirement, nor was such training found to be readily accessible; none had received specific training on supporting young people with speech and language difficulties (Dockrell et al, 2007).

The Connexions PAs also indicated that they felt the Section 140 (now 139a) assessments that they completed for the young people were valuable in highlighting

their areas of strength and weakness, as well as drawing attention to their support needs. However, they did not feel confident that post-16 providers were always referring to their assessments or applying them in a consistent manner (Dockrell et al, 2007 & Cullen et al, 2009). Further, the PAs identified that they felt that having the capacity to provide continued support to young people once the post-16 transfer had taken place was particularly important in supporting young people and ensuring the success of their placements: this echoes the findings of other research introduced in this review (e.g. Dewson et al, 2004).

This research explored in some detail the impact of the role of the Connexions PA on young people with speech, language and communication difficulties and other special educational needs. A real strength of this study was the fact that it was able to gain the perspectives of so large a sample of Connexions PAs, illuminating their perspectives on key aspects of the work that they undertake to support this group of young people. Overall, the impact of the work of the PAs was highly valued and considered to have had a positive impact. However, from their own perspective, key issues were identified in regard to caseload, a desire to complete more work with parents and other professionals, and ensure that the support needs highlighted in the Section 140 (now 139a) assessments would be acted on by post-16 providers. Dockrell et al (2007) conclude by highlighting how these findings indicate the importance of statutory obligations and the ring-fencing of Connexions support for this group of vulnerable young people. Cullen et al (2009) conclude that their research findings indicate that Connexions can make a positive contribution to this

process, but that there are a range of structural and resource issues to address if the potential impact of this service is to be fully harnessed.

Research has also considered the impact of the Connexions PA for young people with a wider range of additional educational needs. On request from the Department of Health (DoH) Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003) conducted an evaluation study using action research methodology to explore the ways in which young people with learning difficulties attending special schools and a further education college utilised the Connexions service. The research took place at a Connexions pilot site, with the aims of describing the role of the PA as it developed and assess the impact and implications from the perspectives of the PAs, schools, pupils and their families. The young people were identified as having moderate or severe learning difficulties, severe and complex enough to warrant special education provision. The research used semi-structured interviews and group discussions to gain the views of PAs, young people, parents, teachers and other staff members, where the focus of the interviews was the role of the PA and school, as well as identifying the barriers to transition from school into adulthood and the world of work.

This study looked at various aspects of the PA role and found that there was general agreement about the role, and that students valued having an independent person whom they could access for support, while parents reported liking the fact that the role of the PA was objective. The research highlighted differences in the ways in which the PA role developed across settings. The researchers speculated that this may have been due to the individual PAs' previous experiences, or could alternatively

be a reflection of the PAs' responding differently according to the individual needs of the young people (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003).

Interestingly, the researchers also commented specifically of the role played by PAs when young people had either moderate learning difficulties (MLD) as compared to severe learning difficulties (SLD). In SLD cases the role was specifically valued for its objectivity and as the main point of coordination between agencies, and parents very much valued the role that the PA played in the transition planning process, which was often experienced as generally poor at delivering information and support (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003).

In an MLD context, the role of the PA was described as harder to define, in terms of with which pupils the PA would take on a key role within an MLD setting and what the nature of their work would be. This appeared to be in part due to the fact that PAs were unable to work with all of the pupils within the MLD special school context, despite the fact all students had a statement of special educational needs. It was noted that in this context the PA was required to negotiate difficult boundaries, to navigate situations and take care to avoid undermining teachers' authority (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003). However, when their role was established they were identified as helping pupils to identifying post-school activities and were reported as supporting young people in having a voice in the transition planning process. The students were clear that the PA was “good to talk to” and “listens to ideas”, which the researchers interpreted as the pupils experiencing their contact with the PA as positive and personally validating for them.

This research was useful in highlighting the role that Connexions can play, but also shed light on the complexities of this role in different settings: a question which was also raised in the Dewson et al (2004) study. The researchers concluded that their context-specific findings indicated that the Connexions PA role as originally conceptualised is well placed to address problems with the unsatisfactory nature of much transition planning for young people with learning difficulties (Grove and Giraud-Saunders, 2003). They also highlighted that the particular subset of young people who benefited most from the service were young people with the most severe learning difficulties, and that the role was more complex within the moderate learning difficulties arena. They also noted that to be effective *“PAs must have an official role in the life of the school that enables students and families to see them as insiders, but not completely identified with the systems that maintain discipline or allocate places and resources”* p.16.

This study highlights the important and complex role that the Connexions service can play in addressing the transition planning needs of vulnerable children with high levels of learning difficulties, who received their education in special schools. It would be problematic to generalise these findings into mainstream settings especially in light of the fact that the role was viewed differently between MLD and SLD settings. This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that the role was harder to define in the MLD setting when the young people's needs could be closer (although still different from) young people with SEN receiving education within mainstream settings. This raises the question, as to whether the PA role may become increasingly complex or contested as a young person's needs are less severe or less

clearly formulated; as it is also possible that because an additional need is not considered to be severe, this does not preclude it from being complex. My search of the literature indicated that this is an area of enquiry that has received very limited attention.

Although this research raises some interesting questions and indicates a potentially pivotal role for PAs, it is also important to recognise that the Grove and Giraud-Saunders' (2003) research focussed on an early Connexions initiative, which may have influenced the work that was the focus of the study and the associated findings of the researchers. The pilot project participants were described in the paper as “enthusiastic partners” who has applied for specific funding to work with young people with learning difficulties in special schools. It is important to consider that the specific context of the team and the skills and attributes of the PAs included in this project may mean that the findings are not generalisable to the profession as a whole or to other settings. For instance it is possible that the PAs within this pilot context may have had skills that were particularly suited to working with young people with MLD and SLD, which would not necessarily be the case within mainstream contexts such as the one explored in the present study. However despite its limitations, this work highlights some of the issues facing young people with additional needs and the role that Connexions may be able to play in supporting positive life trajectories at this all important transition: questions explored within one mainstream setting in this research.

The body of research introduced in the section provides a clear rationale for the exploration of the role of the Connexions PA in supporting young people with a range of additional educational needs within a mainstream setting. This is particularly pertinent given that the future of the role of Connexions PAs is threatened by the outcome of the Governments spending review the result of which has been the Connexions budgets being merged with the early intervention grant. This means that meaning it is no longer a service that is protected by a ring-fenced budget, with local authorities now free to spend this budget on whichever services they deem most beneficial. Although there are plans for a new all-aged careers service to be established by 2012, the cuts in the meantime may mean that existing youth services that have been established via Connexions may have been eroded by the time this takes place (Watts, 2011).

2.8: Links between transition experiences and long term social exclusion

As previously mentioned NEET is a government term for people currently "Not in Education, Employment, or Training" and government data suggests that pupils with special educational needs are disproportionately represented in this group of young people after leaving school (DfES, 2008). For instance, in a report into the links between SEN and NEET the Audit Commission (2010) analysed data from the Connexions Client Caseload Information System (CCIS) in nine councils between September 2007 and September 2009. They found that over 40% of young people with an SEN were NEET at least once, and a quarter were NEET for 6 months or more (Audit Commision, 2010). They also highlighted that disengagement with education is a significant issue for young people with SEN and that figures of

exclusion for young people with SEN are high; 70 percent of permanent exclusions nationally in 2007/2008 were for pupils with an SEN. They also outline barriers to engagement emerging from their work including "*Lack of support during transition to post-16 work or training*" (p.11). This report therefore highlights direct links, supported by data, between SEN, disengagement and becoming NEET after leaving school.

The long term outcomes for young people who become NEET are poor, and associated for instance with unemployment into adulthood (DfES, 2008). The previous Labour Government was said to be committed to reducing the number of young people who become NEET on or soon after leaving school and this view appears to be shared by the new coalition. The discourse surrounding NEET and the work associated with this population is important to acknowledge, as it relates to transition experiences, and because statistics show that young people with learning difficulties and disabilities are twice as likely as their peers to be NEET. This suggests that transition support for children with additional needs may be particularly important in order to try and prevent their becoming NEET on leaving school. An important finding of a trial into raising the school leaving age (O'Neil et al, 2010) was that young people with learning difficulties who had been educated in mainstream schools were disproportionately represented in the Year 11 leavers becoming NEET. This again is a strong indication of the need for improved support for this vulnerable group of young people in mainstream schools. This suggests that transition planning and support should not only aim to encourage continued participation, but that this work also serves a preventative function and so could be re-framed as early targeted

intervention to prevent young people with additional needs becoming NEET in their near future.

This agenda has been recognised by many local authorities which have responded to government directives in this area, such as Youth Matters: Next Steps (DfES, 2006), which attempts to reduce the number of young people becoming NEET by targeting SEN pupils as part of their Children and Young People's Plans.

Government initiatives have provided a range of guidance on how Local Authorities can achieve this, using interventions such as transition mentoring which is described within Delivering 14-19 Reform: Next Steps (DfES, 2008). This signals further recognition of the fact that transition can be a challenging time for young people and indicates the role that transitional support can play in encouraging success for more vulnerable young people. The good practice examples of mentoring schemes they describe do not follow a specific model; however many contain features such as multi-agency involvement, pre-and post-transition support, early intervention work and one-to-one support for young people. There is therefore much cross-over with the framework outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) for supporting young people. For instance the DfES describes how targeted guidance and support should be made available to young people to ensure they know how to access education, training or employment and to enable them to overcome barriers to participation. Here Connexions workers in schools are identified again as having a key role in the delivery of this type of support.

2.9 Multi-agency working in transition planning

The literature introduced in this review contributes to a complex picture in which a wide range of individual needs are met with varying degrees of success through transition planning experiences situated and operating within a range of interacting organisations and systems, where a range of professionals can become involved.

Research exploring the impact of multi-agency working in relation to transition suggests that it is often beneficial to the transition planning process. For instance Kaehne et al (2009) explored how teachers and support workers worked together to support transition for young people with learning difficulties in special schools. They found that many of the respondents talked about the importance of the quality of interagency collaboration. They interpreted this as indicating that a key feature of the transition planning process involves reconciling different work cultures and objectives across the agencies involved. They also identified that professionals attribute value to transition protocols which govern joint working between agencies. They identified that these protocols can improve the speed of processing and helped people to understand their roles. However, they also identified some scepticism as to whether the protocols they used provide a good framework, specifically in regard to the information being filtered and communicated to the people who need it most. This suggests that the impact of transition protocols may be varied across local authorities and may be dependent on other factors (e.g. good working relationships). The authors emphasise that inter-agency cooperation must result in meaningful, concrete outcomes for young people with learning disabilities that benefit the individual in the long term. This research suggests that although not always perfect and despite

variation across localities, multi-agency approaches to supporting transition planning for children with additional needs is generally viewed as positive and beneficial (Kaehne et al, 2009).

2.10 Integrating Conceptual Framework

The research that has been explored critically in this chapter can best be integrated within systems models of human behaviour (Burnham, 1988; Dowling and Gorell-Barnes, 2000; Dowling and Osborne, 2003). This perspective is evident in the emphasis afforded to contextual influences on the extent to which individual young people navigate life transitions effectively: differences in outcome are not explained predominantly in terms of individual young people's profiles of strengths and limitations, (although the significance of individual characteristics is fully acknowledged); greater impact is placed upon the complex interplay between individual characteristics and both proximal and distal environmental conditions (Dowling, 2003). Dowling (2003, p4) notes that adoption of a systemic perspective requires 'a move from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal level, from an individual to an interactionist view of behaviour': a theoretical lens which seeks to understand the complex interplay between a range of interacting variables in the child's systemic landscape in mediating their experiences, as opposed to a 'within child perspective' which, in the current case would, for example, see poor transition to post-16 education, employment and training as a function of young people's additional educational needs.

Systems models recognise that the behaviour of one component of any system can affect and be affected by the behaviour of other components in the system, albeit not always directly; these complex, non-linear assumed chains of cause and effect relationships are described as circular causality (Dowling, 2003).

When systems theory is applied in educational contexts (as in this study) it seeks to explain how young peoples' behaviours and experiences are influenced by the educational establishment of which they are part, as well as the influence of the relationships between school and home (Dowling, 2003). In short, systems theory provides a useful conceptual and theoretical framework for the current study, allowing a process of deductive analysis to take place alongside an inductive analysis. Specifically, I considered Bronfenbrenner's (1979 and 2001) developments of systems theory particularly apposite to the study remit.

In considering this focus of the present study and the interpretation of its findings I considered that systems theory, as reflected in the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001) afforded a particularly helpful perspective. Bronfenbrenner's original ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and its further development within his bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) recognise a child's development within the systems of relationships that form the nested layers of his or her environment. These various systems (described in the Table 2.3), include the influence of the people closest to the young person, their wider community and the cultural and political landscape in which these are situated.

Table 2.3 Key feature of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2001)

<u>Name of System</u>	<u>Key features of the system</u>
The Microsystem	E.g. The features of the individual, family or classroom. The systems in which the child lives: including family, peers etc. This is the system in which most direct social interactions take place. The individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings
The Meso System	Two microsystems in interaction with one another. E.g. interaction between the child and their teacher.
The Exosystem	External environments which indirectly influence development e.g. community based resources. Exosystems are essentially any setting which affects the individual, although the individual is not required to be an active participant. This refers to community level influence, including social norms and standards.
The Macro system	The larger socio-cultural context. These are the cultural values, customs and norms as well as social and political contexts in which the child is situated.

The more recent bioecological theory of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001), also included the Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model which considers

development as a product of increasingly complex reciprocal interactions (processes) between an active and evolving person and objects, and/or symbols within their immediate environment. It further suggests that the form, power, content and direction of proximal processes affecting development vary as a function of personal & environmental characteristics, so emphasising the synergistic interactions between heredity and environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). The model also highlights that Interactions (proximal processes) must occur on a regular basis over an extended period of time to be effective. Acknowledgement of the significance of both the duration and timing of experience is reflected in Bronfenbrenner's addition of the chronosystem, described as the patterning of environmental events and transitions over the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) to his original (1979) framework.

In summary this model suggests that although proximal processes function as the engines for development, the energy that drives them comes from a range of deeper, subjective forces which exert a particularly strong influence during the formative years (including adolescence) (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). These forces could lie within relationships with close family members and wider family networks, friends and neighbours. At a superordinate level, these more proximal influences on the developmental process and outcomes are mediated by more distal, but powerful influences from the exosystems and macrosystem which an individual inhabits.

In regard to the current study, this bioecological model and the associated PPCT model provides a useful theoretical and conceptual framework, as it suggests that a young person's capacity to be able, motivated and have the skills to engage in

effective transition planning will be heavily influenced by both their personal characteristics (including their additional educational needs), and the ways in which these interact the features of their environment. Each of these key aspects of the framework are explored in this study, as described in table 2.4. This overarching conceptual framework can contribute to, and help organise current understanding of personal attributes and the features of the environment that influence transition planning which are reflected in the literature, and developed in the current study. This area of theoretical interest was used to support a phase of deductive analysis that is introduced in Chapter 2.

The phenomenological orientation of this study, which explores and values the individual experiences and perceptions of the young people and staff involved with transition planning, is well aligned with the underlying assumptions of this theoretical framework, as both place emphasis and value on individual experience in context.

Table 2.4: “Process-Person-Context-Time” model, as applied to this research:

Feature of the Model	Aspects of this research relating to this feature of the model
Process: “proximal processes”: interactions over time between self and environment.	“Proximal processes” associated with transition (which vary as aspects of the individual and the context) could include planning, organising, reading, researching, problem solving, visiting etc.
Person: Biological and genetic aspects of the young person. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity) • Resource (e.g. mental and emotional resources, such as skills and intelligence) • Force (e.g. temperament, motivation and persistence) 	Young people’s AEN status was the particular personal characteristic of reference in this study
Context: Four interrelated systems are described in Table 2.1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - microsystem - mesosystem - exosystem - macrosystem 	Each of these interrelated systems were considered in this study, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Features of the school • Staff • Peers • Family • Community environment • Political landscap
Time: Micro time: happens during a specific interaction Meso time: the extent to which activities occur with some degree of consistency Macro time: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timing of events and experiences within the developmental life span • specific salient historical events happening at that moment in time. 	This study looked at aspects of: Micro time: i.e. what occurred during interactions focussing on transition? Meso time: i.e. how often did processes relating to transition occur? Macro time: Consideration of the impact of developmental stage of the young people and the current political focus on reducing the amount of young people not continuing into work or training.

2.11 Conclusions and implications for the present study.

The literature reviewed indicates that the area of transition planning and transition experiences for young people with additional educational needs is complex and the population it relates to highly heterogeneous (Dee, 2006). Although transition planning for young people with additional needs is guided by policy and guidance provided by the Government, such as the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) it appears that there is much variation in the type and quality of support that is available, which appears to be mediated by a range of (predominantly exosystemic and macrosystemic) factors, and is reflected in the variable quality of transition planning experiences reported by young people and their families (e.g. Dewson et al, 2004, and Ward et al, 2003). It appears that there are particularly vulnerable populations: for instance young people in mainstream settings with additional needs, who do not have a statement (Dewson et al, 2004).

In considering the nature of transition planning for young people with additional needs in schools, the views of families, young people and professionals have been sought (e.g. Kaehne et al, 2009; Ward et al 2003), and the roles of key professionals addressed (Grove, 2003). The research has highlighted a range of issues relating to the complexities of transition planning for this population. Key points include the facts that:

- transition planning appears to be more straightforward when a young person has clearly defined special needs (Grove, 2003);
- young people do not always feel that they played an active role in transition planning (Heslop et al, 2002); and

- the role of the Connexions PA is often highly valued, but operates within complex systems which influence how it is fulfilled and experienced (Grove, 2003).

There remains a significant gap in the literature in regard to how transition planning is addressed for young people with additional needs within mainstream settings: a gap rendered all the more significant by other research that appears to highlight this group as one of the most vulnerable at the point of transition (Dewson et al 2004, O'Neil et al, 2010). Literature also indicates the long term vulnerability of this group in terms of their long term employment prospects and life chances (DfES, 2008). The majority of the research in this field has focussed on young people with more severe or complex needs who have been educated in special schools (e.g. Ward et al, 2003). This indicates that it would be beneficial to explore the transition planning experiences of the population, with an emphasis on gaining the views of the young people and the staff who work closely with them.

Given the complex nature of the interacting factors likely to influence actions, experiences and actions, the systemic framework outlined in Section 2.10 above, Bronfenbrenner's 1979 and 2001 has been adopted as a conceptual framework within which to endeavour to make sense of findings, from a systemic perspective.

CHAPTER 3: METHOD AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

The focus of this study was to explore young people's experiences and perceptions of post-16 transition planning and support provided in school for pupils with additional educational needs, and to gain the views of school staff and the Connexions PA involved in providing this support.

Young people in Year 11 at a large urban secondary school who were at School Action Plus on the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) or who had a Statement of Special Educational Needs (SEN) were invited to take part, along with their parents and school staff members who were involved with transition support. These staff included the SENCo (Special Educational Needs Coordinator), the Connexions Personal Advisor (PA) for the school and an ASDAN teacher involved in teaching all of the young people who participated (ASDAN is a curriculum offering programmes and entry level qualifications to develop key skills and life skills).

The research questions that I aimed to explore included:

- What are the perceived facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning and support for transition into further education, training or work for young people with an additional educational need within this mainstream educational setting?
- What are the transition planning and support experiences of students with educational needs (including those at school action plus and those with statements)?

- How do young people feel about their transitions and the planning and support that they have received in school prior to their transition?
- Within this support available for young people with additional needs as they approach transition how do a Connexions PA, SENCo and a teacher endeavour to support young people and what are their respective experiences of the support that they/other professionals provide?
- How do parents feel about the level of support that their children receive in planning for their transition into post-16 provision?

In this chapter I introduce my methodology and chosen methods. I also introduce the philosophical underpinnings and assumptions of this research, including my epistemological and ontological position. The method section includes information about the ethical considerations that I addressed when planning and undertaking this piece of research and information regarding how I selected my participants, the data collection methods employed and how I analysed the data.

3.2 Methodology

3.2.1 Overview

Methodology is defined by Gray (2009, p.578) as "the analysis of and the broad philosophical and theoretical justification for a particular method used in research."

Distinguishing between methodology as the philosophy behind research, and methods as the practice of research in terms of techniques, is both helpful and important. This is because when researchers chose to use certain research methods, they are implicitly or explicitly basing their decision on assumptions

about the nature of the social world and the contingent principles of social inquiry. Such philosophical considerations cannot be separated from the real world of research and should lead researchers to examine the assumptions and purposes behind a research design (Pawson, 1991). Every piece of research is underpinned by a range of assumptions which have direct implications for the methodological concerns of the researcher (Scott & Usher, 1999). The purpose of a research methodology is to make clear the reasons why particular choices and decisions were made in regard to research methods. It should provide a philosophically coherent account of ideas as they relate to a field of enquiry.

My choice of research methodology was influenced by the fact that the majority of the studies reviewed in Chapter 2 had used qualitative, contextualised approaches to the exploration of transition planning, seeking to illuminate the lived experiences of the young people at the heart of this process, as well as the adults who play a primary role in supporting young people throughout the transition process. The methods used by these researchers often included semi-structured interviews e.g. (Ward et al, 2003 & Dewson et al, 2004) sometimes supplemented by other methods of information gathering questionnaires and in depth case studies (e.g Polat, 2001 & Dewson et al, 2005). Findings were typically subjected to qualitative analysis.

This corpus of extant research, supported my rationale for the use of an idiographic approach in the study. Such a qualitative approach in research is described as "concerned with the quality or nature of human experiences and what these phenomena mean to individuals" (Draper, 2004, p.642).

More specifically, the body of work that I reviewed drew my attention to the utility of such approaches in identifying the factors which influence the transition planning and support experiences of young people. In light of this, I considered it appropriate to apply interpretivist and phenomenological approaches in my work, reflected in my use of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), in an attempt to contribute to this existing body of work in a complementary manner.

3.2.2 Epistemological and ontological assumptions of the research

Epistemology is the branch of philosophy that studies knowledge and attempts to distinguish what constitutes 'true' knowledge how it can be acquired, and how it can be communicated (Scott & Usher, 1999). Epistemology is supposed to answer the question: how do we know what we think we know and how can we differentiate between truth and falsehood?

Ontology is the study of being, that is the nature of existence (Gray, 2009) and concerns questions of whether knowledge is a given which is "out there" or is created within our own mind.

Neglecting to surface the epistemological and ontological assumptions of research can mean that the practice of research may be under-theorised, denying readers the means by which they can judge its worth (Scott & Usher, 1999). Consideration of these assumptions is highly relevant, as they are integral to the research process, and have been said to constitute what researchers 'silently think' about research (Scott & Usher, 1999).

The epistemological position of this research falls within the interpretivist paradigm and is underpinned by a constructivist philosophy, as it is primarily interested in exploring and interpreting the experiences of individuals in relation to the topic area of transition planning and support experiences. Interpretivism looks for 'culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world' (Crotty, 1998 p. 67). The basic tenet of this interpretivist paradigm is that reality is constructed by the people active in the research process and that researchers should attempt to understand the "*complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it*" (Scwandt, 1994, p.118).

Within this Interpretivist paradigm, this study adopts a phenomenological philosophy as it is concerned with understanding how people experience and perceive the world around them (Bryman, 2004). Phenomenology insists that we must lay aside our prevailing understanding of phenomena and instead revisit our immediate experience in order that a new meaning may emerge (Gray, 2009) with newer or fuller meaning. Therefore phenomenology is not concerned with trying to understand and quantify what is going on, but rather it is interested in understanding how people experience and perceive their world (Bryman, 2004). This position rejects the positivist view that all knowledge comes from observable experience and therefore it is solely the traditional scientific method derived from the physical sciences that can reveal facts or reliable knowledge about the world.

Phenomenology was developed by Edmund Husserl and also influenced by Wilhelm Dilthey's study of interpretive understanding called hermeneutics (Eichelberger, 1989). Hermeneutics is the study of interpretive understanding or

meaning which Bryman (2004) describes as "concerned with the theory and method of the interpretation of human action" (p.g 540). The hermeneutic perspective focuses on the role of an individual's personal and social context, arguing that social reality is socially constructed and that interpretation of this should be given more standing than explanation or description (Gray, 2009). Thus perception is viewed as an interpretation of this context and therefore reflects an interpretivist ontological position. Interpretivist ontology also tells us that reality is socially constructed and therefore multiple mental constructions can be apprehended, some of which may conflict with each other. Interpretivist/constructionist ontology also accepts that perceptions of reality may change through the process of a study. Constructionists reject any notion of objective reality and tells us that "meaning is constructed not discovered" (Bryman, 2004 p. 18) arguing that social reality is too complex to be understood simply through observation, and further suggesting that it is the goal of the researcher to understand and interpret these multiple social constructions of meaning and knowledge (Mertens, 1998), in order to achieve deeper levels of knowledge and self understanding (Gray, 2009).

This study explores how a range of individuals perceive their experience of transition support and planning, and therefore this work adopts an interpretivist/constructivist position applying a phenomenological approach congruent with social constructionist theory.

3.2.3 Reliability, Validity and Generalisation.

The interpretivist position of this research is closely linked with qualitative research methods. Within qualitative/interpretivist research the constructs of reliability and validity adopted within positivist epistemologies do not apply and the standards for “good” research differ from traditional criteria (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Instead evaluative criteria for qualitative research are commensurable with the aims, objectives, and epistemological assumptions of the research project (Sparkes, 2001). For instance in their consideration of the reliability and validity of grounded theory as a qualitative method, Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested consideration of key questions in relation to the following broad criteria:

- credibility (i.e. ensuring that the theoretical framework generated is understood and is based on the data from the study);
- usefulness (i.e. there is a worthwhile end product to help explain a phenomenon); and
- trustworthiness (i.e. the extent to which one can believe in the research findings).

These criteria are relevant to a range of qualitative approaches beyond grounded theory and demonstrate how within this broad paradigm, data are subjected to critique based on questions relating to the detailed elements of the strategies used to collect, code, analyse and present them, and on the way people read the theory generated from these data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

There is a range of steps that researchers can take to maximise fidelity of their work in relation to these criteria. For instance when discussing thematic analysis (the qualitative method of analysis applied in this research) Braun and Clarke

(2006) highlight the importance of avoiding pitfalls such as failing to move beyond description into making conceptual links, using the data collection question as the “themes”, being overly generic, and failing to provide a convincing analysis where themes may not “work” or may overlap. They describe specific strategies that can be used to avoid these pitfalls including for instance: using a diary to track how the data has pushed the researcher from her initial assumptions, use of extensive quotations in reporting, exploring convergence with other sources of data, independent checking of the data from a third party, and checking back with participants to see if hypotheses are accurate (Ratcliffe, 1995). All of these strategies were applied with varying levels of success within this study. For instance a research diary was used to track my thinking and the key decisions I made during the research process, as well as recording the key questions addressed during supervision sessions. I was also able to ensure that a substantive extract of my research was independently checked by a peer to ensure that the findings of the analysis could be verified.

Perspectives on generalisation are also strongly influenced by the epistemological and ontological orientations of the contributor (Seale, 1999). The focus of this study was on the individual experiences of the participants in context. However, the potential for theoretical generalisation is possible in studies of the kind, if the findings are able to contribute to an existing theory. This is because the focus of theoretical generalisation is on what a study might be able to tell us or contribute to an existing theory, as opposed to asking what it might tell us about the general population. The aim of this study was to contribute to the existing body of research in this area, with a particular focus on developing an understanding of how

systems theory and in particular the work of Bronfenbrenner (2001) as an existing theoretical framework may help to make sense of this research base. Therefore, following the analytic process I will consider if the findings are able to achieve theoretical and conceptual generalisation through making links between the research findings and the existing research and theory introduced in the literature review.

3.2.4 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is also applied within this work and this is an important component of ensuring the fidelity of qualitative research. Personal reflexivity involves a researcher having an awareness of their contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process as well as acknowledging the difficulty of remaining outside of one's subject matter when conducting research. Reflexivity therefore involves the researcher exploring how their involvement with their study acts upon and informs the research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999).

Willig (2001) also explores how reflexivity can be applied to consideration of the underlying epistemological position of the research, through asking questions such as:

- How were the research questions defined and how did this impact on what could be “found”?
- How has the design of the study and the method employed “constructed” the data?
- How could the research questions have been investigated differently?

Epistemological reflexivity therefore encouraged me to reflect upon the assumptions made in the course of the research, and think about the implications of such assumptions for the research and its findings (Willig, 2001).

These questions were addressed in relation to this study throughout the research process and especially through the process of regular research supervision which promoted exploration of such topics. For instance through this process I was able to consider the impact of my own identity values and stand point on my research (as discussed in section 1.5). It is clear that my identity as a researcher directly influenced the work, including the decisions I took in regard to the methods I used as these were aligned with my position and beliefs as a researcher.

In light of the epistemological position of the research, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis were identified as appropriate methods of respectively collecting and analysing the subjective accounts that form the data corpus derived from the current study as they both work to reflect the subjective realities of the research participants and unpick the surface of these realities (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The research explores the individually constructed meanings of the personal experiences of transition support and planning within a given social context which is a large secondary school in a shire county in the Midlands area of the United Kingdom, which is also situated within and influenced by a wider social context of educational and special educational needs policy. The methods employed are described in further detail following an account of the ethical considerations that informed their use.

3.3 Ethical Considerations

A range of ethical considerations informed my research design and the methods employed within it. This study was conducted in accordance with the protocol outlined by the Ethics Committee of the University of Birmingham and ethical approval was granted via their rigorous approved ethical review (AER) procedures (See Appendix 2 for the submitted AER form). Throughout the research process I paid due attention to the ethical guidelines set out by the British Psychological Society (British Psychological Society, 2009) the revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (BERA, 2004) as well as the Health Professional Council's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (Health Professionals Council, 2008).

A significant ethical consideration of the research was the fact that four of my participants were young people who may be considered particularly vulnerable due to the fact that they have an identified additional educational need. This meant that particular consideration needed to be paid to how I gained their freely given informed consent.

The BPS Code of Ethics and Conduct (BPS, 2009) highlights in its Standard of Informed Consent (principle 1.3i) that psychologists should:

"Ensure that clients, particularly children and vulnerable adults, are given ample opportunity to understand the nature, purpose and anticipated consequences of any professional services or research participation, so that they may give informed consent to the extent that their capabilities allow".

Challenges inherent in gaining informed consent from potentially vulnerable pupils are also addressed in The Health Professional Council's Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics (HPC, 2008) which applies to all registrants and students engaged with professional practice or research. Standard 9 tells the registrant that s/he must "Get informed consent". It expands on this by telling the registrant that "You must explain to the service user the treatment you are planning on carrying out, and the risks involved".

The revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (British Educational Research Association, 2004) also give specific guidance relating to inclusion of vulnerable young people as research participants. Paragraph 14 highlights that researchers must comply with Articles 3 and 12 from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which require that in all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child must be of primary consideration. It also requires that children who are capable of forming their own views should be granted the right to express them freely in all matters affecting them, commensurate with their age and maturity. Children should therefore be facilitated in giving fully informed consent.

In light of this guidance, I spent a session with the young people in school to explain the purposes of the study and their own potential contribution to this, as well as detailing the safeguards that would be in place to protect their rights. I talked about the nature and purpose of the study in simple terms and explained the role that I hoped young people would play in it. I provided written information for them to take away, including the participant information sheets and consent

forms (see Appendices 4 and 5) I was also able to brief staff in order that they could answer questions following my visit and I gave the pupils time to discuss the invitation to take part in the study with their parents. I then returned to school a week later to answer any outstanding questions and collect forms from pupils who indicated that they would like to participate confirming their informed written consent, in cases where they were happy to take part in the study. I feel because of the approach I used this could be considered to be fully informed consent.

The guidelines (BERA, 2004) also highlight that researchers must ensure that they comply with all legal requirements in regard to working with school children and vulnerable young people (paragraph 17), all of which were adhered to throughout, as would be the case during my normal working practice as a trainee educational psychologist working in schools. As well as this, researchers have a responsibility to recognise that participants may experience distress or discomfort in the research process, and to take all necessary steps to reduce any sense of intrusion and put participants at ease (paragraph 18). However, in the event none of the participants in this study manifested distress at any time during the interviews.

Informed consent from staff members was also sought. Participants were again provided with an information sheet (see Appendix 4) outlining the aim of the study and the nature of their involvement; their written consent was gained through the signing of a consent form (See Appendix 5). All of the staff members approached agreed to take part in the study.

As described later in section 3.4, parents were approached via information packs containing information sheets and consent forms sent in via the pupils and then a follow up phone call was made. However, all the parents declined to participate, in my sample. At this point, with regret, I took the decision not to include parents in my sample since I believed that further approaches risked ignoring their expressed wishes, and may constitute harassment.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Overview and Rationale:

Method is described by Gray (2009 p. 578) as "the systematic approach towards the collection of data" and is concerned with the how participants are identified and recruited as well as how the data are collected and analysed. These issues are addressed within this chapter where I provide an account of the key issues in regard to the methods utilised in this study. This includes consideration of the sampling procedures used, an overview of the research participant, an account of the data collection method used (semi-structured interviews) and consideration of the interview setting. This is followed by a detailed account of the method of data analysis chosen (thematic analysis).

3.4.2 Sampling

Sampling concerns the process by which participants are identified to take part in a study. I decided to identify my participants through applying a purposive sampling technique. The principal selection mode in purposive sampling is the researcher's judgement as to typicality or interest (Robson, 2002) and it involves identifying participants who have knowledge or experience of the phenomena

being investigated. This is different to representative sampling which aims accurately to reflect the wider population.

This was appropriate in this study as I was interested in exploring views and experiences of transition planning and support from a range of perspectives and I felt that, through identifying participants purposively I would be best able to ensure detailed exploration of the research questions summarised in section 3.1. Purposive sampling is a popular technique in qualitative research and involves identifying participants who fall into the categories that have been pre-determined by the researcher and which are described below. Before I was able to identify individual participants, I needed to identify a school in which the research would take place.

The school that I contacted to take part was a large maintained secondary school within the Local Authority in which I was employee. It was selected because I was not directly involved with it in my role as a Trainee Educational Psychologist (TEP). Information made available on the Department for Education (DfE) website indicates that the school has 1043 pupils on role. Performance information from 2010 indicates that 13.5% of the young people in the school were either at School Action Plus or had a Statement of Special Educational Needs. The percentage of pupils at the end of Key stage 4 achieving an A*-C grade in Maths and English was 40% and this represents a 22% increase from 2008 when only 18% of pupils in the school achieved this benchmark. These percentages are low compared to local averages (55%) and national averages (53%). (This information was

accessed from http://www.education.gov.uk/performance/tables/schools_10.shtml in April 2011).

3.4.3 Participants:

The aim of this study was to explore transition planning and support experiences from a range of perspectives, including the young people who were directly experiencing it as well as the staff members supporting and organising the process and the parents of the young people. Therefore, in this study participants had to meet one of the following purposive sampling criteria:

- A Year 11 pupil at School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).
- A parent of a Year 11 pupil at School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) (This group was later removed in response to their expressed reluctance to participate).
- A staff member directly involved with supporting Year 11 pupils at School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN as outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001).

My initial points of contact in the school were the Connexions worker and the Special Educational Needs Coordinator (SENCo). They expressed an interest in taking part and were provided with participant information sheets (See Appendix 4), which were also shared with the head teacher who indicated that he supported the school's participation in this research.

Identifying the pupils for the research was a collaborative process between myself and the school SENCo. I was able to share my purposive sampling criteria with the SENCo and was careful to explain that as this was a contextualised study with a small sample, which was not concerned with distinguishing the impact of specific types of special/additional educational need. What was more important was the fact the pupils were recognised as having an additional educational need (AEN) and that their needs were addressed via the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2003) at either School Action Plus or via a Statement of SEN. This was particularly important as the sample of young people with a Statement of SEN was very limited (comprising two in total within Year 11), and so even if desired, it would not have been possible to select pupils specifically based on sub-types of additional educational need.

Following this discussion the SENCo provided me with a list of the pupils who fulfilled the sampling criteria summarised above. Many of these pupils (including the two Statemented pupils) attended an ASDAN-accredited programme, which is a key skills and life skills programme delivered in the school (further information is available at [http://www.asdan.org.uk/About ASDAN/AS DAN Status](http://www.asdan.org.uk/About_AS DAN/AS DAN_Status)). This led the SENCo to direct me to select my final sample from this group as many of the year group fitting my sampling criteria would all be accessible during this session in school. Despite the fact that there were several other School Action Plus pupils who did not attend the ASDAN lessons, I was expected by the school to select from the former sample as the SENCo identified this as the most pragmatic option from her perspective. Although this may have prevented some School Action Plus pupils from taking part, I was reassured by the SENCo that she believed that the

pupils participating in the ASDAN course were representative of the spectrum of needs within school of Year 11 students at School Action Plus and with Statements of SEN.

The teacher who led the ASDAN programme was also invited to take part in the study, as he was directly involved with supporting all of the statemented and School Action Plus pupils who were invited to participate in the research.

Following this agreement re: the initial pool from which the sample would be drawn, I was invited to deliver an introduction session to the students during an ASDAN lesson, where I introduced the research and explained clearly the role which I hoped students would play in it. At this point the pupils were given information sheets (see Appendix 4) summarising key details about the research. The invitation to participate was distributed to all of the pupils in the ASDAN group who fulfilled the purposive sampling criteria (being at School Action Plus or with a Statement of SEN) and four agreed to participate. Of this group two were at School Action Plus and two had a Statement of SEN.

Each of the pupils who agreed to take part was provided with a parent information sheet and consent form to take home to their parents, (see Appendices 1 and 2), inviting them also to take part. However no parent accepted this invitation.

On my return visit to the school, the young people indicated that their parents did not want to take part. I responded to this by phoning the parents to discuss the opportunity in person; again however, they all indicated at this point that they did

not wish to take part. Concern to respect the ethical requirement for freely given consent prevented my taking further steps to recruit parental participation in this study. This meant that I was unable to gain the perspective of parents as I had originally planned.

The table below highlights the characteristics of participants who were recruited for the study via the application of purposive sampling. The level of information provided is limited, since they were primarily recruited due to the fact that they were identified as at School Action Plus or as having a Statement: I had not sought information re: the 'category' of AEN/SEN, since this had not been relevant to the purpose of my study.

Table 3.1 Features of the pupil participants

	Category of Need	Type of identified Need	Gender
P1	School Action Plus	English as an additional language	Female
P2	School Action Plus	General learning difficulties	Male
P3	Statement	Speech, language and communication needs.	Male
P2	Statement	Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties	Male

The adult participants who were recruited to take part were:

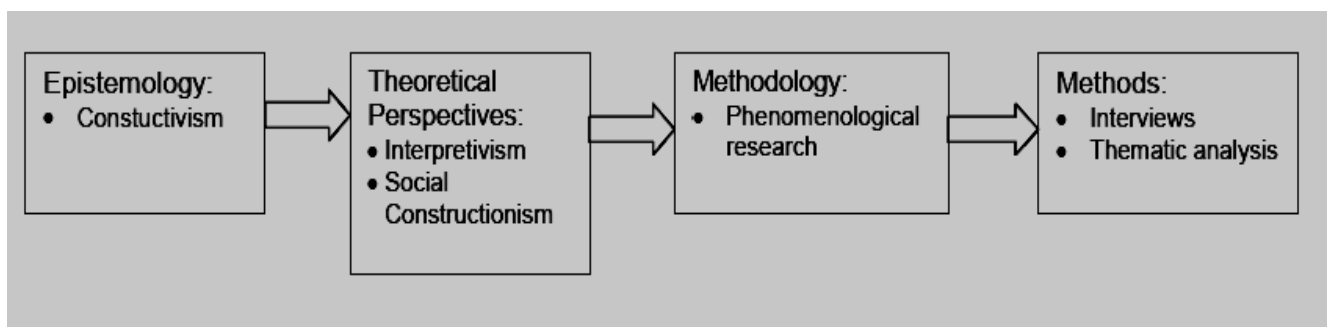
- the school's Special Educational Needs Coordinator;
- the School's Connexions PA; and
- The teacher of the ASDAN-accredited course, who was directly involved in teaching all four pupils.

3.5 Data Collection

3.5.1 Overview

Focussed semi-structured interviews were used as my data collection method as these allowed me to obtain rich accounts of the experiences of each participant. The method also fits within the overarching epistemological, theoretical and methodological orientation of this work, already introduced and described in figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1: The relationship between my epistemology, theoretical perspectives, methodology and research methods.



This semi structured interview affords a means of collecting qualitative data by allowing each respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular topic in response to a range of open-ended questions. The objective of this method is to understand the respondent's point of view rather than to make generalisations (Livesey & Lawson, 2010). The strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews are summarised in table 3.2.

As introduced in table 3.2 semi-structured interviews are flexible enough to allow lines of enquiry to emerge and be explored through the interview process in a way

Table 3.2: The strengths and weaknesses of semi-structured interviews, adapted from Chris Livesey: Sociology Central (www.sociology.org.uk) © 1995-2010

Strengths and Uses	Weaknesses and Limitations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive rapport between interviewer and interviewee. A simple, efficient and practical way of obtaining information. • High validity as Respondents are given the opportunity to talk in depth and in detail. Meanings behind actions may be revealed through this dialogue, which is non-directive • Complex questions can be discussed and clarified. The interviewer can probe areas suggested by answers, picking up and responding to the information that emerges. • Reduces need for prior judgement The issue of pre-determining what will or will not be discussed is resolved. The interviewer is not pre-judging what is and isn't important information. • Easy to record 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dependent on the skill of the interviewer and articulacy of the respondent • Interviewer may give unconscious signals that influence the respondent • Time consuming/sometimes expensive • Not very reliable in the positivist sense and they are difficult to replicate across participants, as different questions are likely to be asked and samples tend to be small. • Analysing data may be difficult, in terms of deciding what is and is not relevant. • The personal nature of interviews means that it may be difficult to generalise the findings. • Validity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No real way of knowing if the respondent is giving authentic responses. • The respondent may have imperfect recall • Respondents may feel they have to justify or rationalise their actions and so their explanation for something may be different from what they were thinking at the time.

that a structured interview would be less able to provide. The questions included in the semi-structured interviews linked to my research aims (see 1.3), as is reflected in the pre-prepared schedules of questions and issues to be addressed in each interview (See Appendix 6).

The questions for the young people were different to those for each of the staff, due to their differing positions in relation to the topic area. Examples of the questions prepared for each interview are described in table 3.3. A key strength of this method in supporting my research aims is that it provided flexibility during the interview process. This meant that the order of questioning could change and particularly pertinent areas be explored in further detail in order to expand on a response. This approach helped to ensure that the responses were rich and authentic, although as described in the table researchers adopting a positivist position argue that this can result in reduced reliability (Coolican, 1999).

In total two interview schedules were developed (one for pupils and one for staff members), and these were used flexibly to allow individual narratives to emerge. The interview questions for the pupils focussed on their experiences of transition planning, the support they had received and their hopes for the future. The questions to staff were related to their experiences of delivering various types of transition planning and support, how they worked with other professionals and the structures in place to direct their work. Therefore interview schedules reflected the overall aims of the research. The areas of enquiry and key questions outlined in the interview schedules were used in the interviews and additional questions and prompts were used to explore emergent lines of interest during the interviewing process.

Table 3.3: Examples of the pre-prepared questions for the focussed semi-structured interviews

Participant	Examples of key pre-prepared questions/prompts	Link with areas of research enquiry
Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are you hoping to do when you leave school? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plans for the future
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What support have you received in school to support planning and decision making for when you leave school? • Have you been told about any other services that may be available to you this year to help you with your planning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil's experiences of transition planning support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been most useful/least useful in supporting your planning? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil perceptions of the impact of transition planning support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who has helped you to with think about what you will do when you leave school so far (Parents, school etc)? • If you could change anything about the support so far, what would you change? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils' views on Facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning
Staff (SENCo, Connexions P.A, ASDAN teacher)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe how you support pupils with SEN who are approaching transition? • What other services/agencies you work with to support this work? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff experiences of delivering transition planning support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the facilitators and barriers to this type of work? • What improvements do you think could be made to improve this support? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff views on facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do parents contribute to the transition planning process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perceived impact of parents on the transition planning process
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you describe any differences between the support given to young people with a Statement as compared to those at School Action Plus? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of policy and school systems on transition planning and support

3.5.2 Interview Setting

All of the interviews took place in the school setting. The pupils were interviewed in a classroom and the staff in a school office. Each of the participants was given the opportunity to revisit the information sheets prior to the interview and I reiterated that they could decide to end the interview at anytime. The pupil interviews lasted between 15-20 minutes and the staff interviews ranged from 20 minutes (class teacher) to 45 minutes (SENCo and Connexions Advisor). The interviews were recorded on tape using a Dictaphone in order to ensure that I had an accurate record of what was said. A short de-briefing followed the interviews where I offered participants the opportunity add any further information and/or to ask any further questions about the study.

3.6 Method of Analysis

3.6.1 Overview

I considered several methods of analysis during the development of this study, all of which reflected my underpinning methodological position, through focussing on the interpretation of the lived experience. I initially considered interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) before deciding that thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006) would afford a more appropriate method.

Phenomenological approaches such as thematic analysis and IPA tend to used small sample sizes, focussing on capturing rich, detailed data rather than large quantities of data from multiple sources. Interpretative phenomenological analysis attempts to do this, whilst prescribing that the sample is homogenous (identified using purposive homogenous sampling) in order to enable the researcher to be

able to "examine convergence and divergence in some detail" (Smith, 2009 p.3). I did not consider it wholly appropriate to use IPA due to the heterogeneous nature of my sample, which included pupils and staff in different roles to explore a range of perspectives on experiences of the same topic area: this sample had not therefore all 'lived' the transition experience being explored directly; another requirement of IPA (Landridge, 2007). Therefore the option to use IPA was discounted and, after further consideration, I decided to use thematic analysis as my method of qualitative analysis.

Qualitative methods have become increasingly popular since the 1990's and have gained recognition in disciplines traditionally inclined towards more positivist methods such as psychology, allowing for a deeper understanding of phenomena and their dynamics (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic analysis is arguably the most common approach to the qualitative analysis of data in the social sciences (Holstein & Gubrium, 1994). Despite the fact that it is considered a widely used method, it has been considered poorly conceptualised and has been described as a poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used analytic method (Boyatzis, 1998) with little guidance on how to analyse the textual material that researchers are presented with at the end of the data gathering stage (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). Braun and Clarke (2006) and Attride-Stirling (2001) acknowledged these criticisms and provided frameworks for the flexible but rigorous use of thematic analysis by researchers in the field of psychology, in an attempt to address this gap (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

3.6.2 Thematic Analysis and Thematic Networks

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes within data through minimally organising and describing a data set in detail (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic maps can be generated using thematic networks analysis (Attride-Stirling, 2001) and these are illustrations that summarise the themes that have been generated. I utilised the Braun and Clarke (2006) framework for thematic analysis and present my themes using thematic maps and diagrams influenced by thematic networks analysis; both of these methods are described further below.

Through the development of a framework for conducting thematic analysis, Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis should be considered a method in its own right. They considered how theoretical and methodological issues relate to thematic analysis and explore the importance of “thematising” meanings, using thematic coding. The aim of developing the framework was to demarcate clear stages in the analytic process to support researchers in ensuring they are engaging actively in a decision-making process; Braun & Clarke (2006) claim to provide a vocabulary and recipe for people to undertake it in a way that is theoretically and methodologically sound (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe the process of undertaking thematic analysis as *"Involving a number of choices which are not often made explicit, but which need explicitly to be considered and discussed"* (p.82). The process of conducting a thematic analysis should also involve an ongoing reflexive dialogue on the part of

the researcher in regard to these issues emerging throughout the research process.

I moved systematically through each stage of data analysis, considering each of these questions and making key decisions as appropriate. The key questions that were considered throughout the analytic process are outlined in table 3.4.

Applying thematic analysis from a constructionist perspective ensures the focus is on the socio-cultural context and structural conditions in which the individual accounts occur, rather than focussing on individual psychology or on assumptions regarding motivation. The Braun and Clarke (2006) process of analysis summarised in Table 3.5 helps the researcher to achieve this. It directed me to search across the two data sets, in order to identify repeated patterns of meaning. After I had done this I then looked again to identify similarities and differences in the two data sets to see if any of the themes were evident across the data corpus as a whole.

Table 3.4: Outline of the key questions considered during the analytic process

1. **Having to decide what counts as a theme:** A theme is described as *"capturing something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some type of patterned response or meaning within the data set"* (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 82).
The process of identifying themes is influenced by the prevalence of each data item across the data set and data corpus, but there are no concrete parameters regarding the level of evidence of a theme needs to have within the data for it to be considered a theme. The authors highlight that researcher judgement is necessary in defining what a theme is and emphasise the importance of taking a flexible approach as there is no right or wrong method for determining decisions, although it is important that a consistent approach is applied throughout the analysis.
Implications for this study: A consistent approach to analysis was applied throughout the process, especially in regard to the level of evidence a theme required.
2. **Consideration of whether or not to provide a rich description of the data set or focus on one particular aspect?** Decisions as to whether to focus on analysis of the entire data set versus choosing to provide a more detailed or nuanced account of one particular group or theme needs to be considered.
Implications for this study: In this research there is little existing research and so participant views on the topic are relatively unknown; in situations like this it is advised that the initial approach should focus on the entire data corpus in order to achieve a rich overall description: This was the approach taken in this case. In order to allow the two sets of narratives to emerge I first looked at the two data sets (pupils and staff members) in isolation and then identified similarities, differences and themes that emerged across the data corpus in a second stage of analysis.
3. **Consideration of whether themes and patterns are identified in an inductive or 'bottom up' way, or a deductive or 'top down' way.** When patterns are analysed and identified inductively, they are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990), providing a rich description of the data overall. This contrasts with deductive analysis where analysis is driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytical interest in the area of study, tending to provide a more detailed analysis of some favoured aspect of the data.
Implications for this study: A combination of inductive and deductive approaches was applied. The initial inductive approach meant that that data were collected and then analysed to see what themes emerged by taking a 'bottom up' approach towards the analysis. In this type of analysis the coding that takes place does not try and align with any analytic preconceptions, but rather is driven by the data and the codes emerge through a process of reading and re-reading the interview transcripts, remaining open to any themes that emerge which are closely related to these original data. In a second phase of analysis I looked at my data again deductively using systems theory and in particular the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001) as a theoretical framework within which to consider my findings.

3.6.3 Process of analysis

Thematic analysis can be completed inductively ('bottom up') or deductively ('top down'). In inductive analysis the data are considered without trying to fit them into a pre-existing framework or theory and so the analysis is wholly data-driven. In deductive analysis (sometimes referred to as 'theoretical thematic analysis'), the analysis is driven by the researcher's theoretical or analytic interest. Due to my recognition of the systemic nature of the influences on transition planning and its outcomes, identified in my literature review and specifically the links made with the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001) I augmented the initial inductive analysis with a process of deductive analysis.

In the first phase of analysis I considered the data inductively through coding the data without trying to fit them into any pre-existing theory, to ensure my findings were data driven, allowing theory to emerge. In a second phase of analysis I considered my findings from the inductive analysis in relation to and *a priori* theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner, including his ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and his later Process-Person-Context-Time model, which is a key component of his bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 2001). This deductive analysis allowed me to organise and theorise my findings within a systemic perspective on transition that had emerged from my review of literature.

This dual approach to analysis maximised the overall depth of analysis allowing the potential for new theory to emerge from my data from the inductive analysis, and aligning findings with a well explicated theoretical model in the case of the deductive

analysis, so potentially strengthening claims for theoretical generalisation, if my findings supported this.

The steps outlined in table 3.5 were used to guide the inductive analysis of the data generated through the semi-structured interviews. After I had completed phases 1-5 in relation to the individual data sets I looked at the data corpus as a whole and abstracted a super-ordinate thematic map, a process which helped me to identify the relationships between the themes and refine themes further (See appendix 9).

Table 3.5: The process of thematic analysis, as outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006).

Phase	Description of the Process
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Transcribing interviews, reading and re-reading the transcripts, noting down initial ideas
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the transcripts in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating examples for each code
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential link
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back to the analysis of the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

This approach was informed by the work of Attride-Stirling (2001) who provides a detailed a step-by-step method of analysis. This framework proposes that the analysis should be presented as "thematic networks", which are web-like illustrations (networks) that summarise the main themes that have been identified. Attride-Stirling 2001 p.386) argues that this framework supports a "sensitive, insightful and rich exploration of a text's overt structures and underlying patterns" She recognises that thematic networks analysis is not a new method, but one that shares the key features of any hermeneutic analysis. Thematic networks analysis systematizes the extraction of basic themes, organising themes and global themes, which are then represented as web-like maps depicting themes and illustrating the relationships between them. It is emphasised that networks are only a tool in the analysis and are not the analysis itself. I found that creating a thematic map (appendix 9) informed by a thematic networks approach served as an organising framework and an illustrative tool in the interpretation of the data and the themes generated. I could see the value this map may offer in supporting the communication of the findings in my report of the data (Chapter 4) and supporting the understanding of its readers.

To summarise, in this study I use thematic analysis in a transparent and rigorous way. In doing so I strove to meet the guidelines for conducting high quality research as described by the British Psychological Society (British Psychological Society, 2010). These guidelines include emphasis on the need to be clear and explicit, and to ensure that what researchers say they are doing, were actually done so that both the theory and method are applied rigorously, where "rigour lies in devising systematic method whose assumptions are congruent with the way one conceptualises the

subject matter" (Reicher et al, 2005 p. 549). Criteria that ensure such a systematic approach were provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) whose approach was used in the manner described by the authors, which ensured that a rigorous thematic analysis was conducted. Peer validation through independent checking also strengthened my confidence in the integrity of the process and reported findings.

In order to make clear to the reader how I have analysed the transcripts and conducted the analysis, table 3.6 outlines each phase of the Braun & Clarke (2006) framework was achieved in relation to this study, and where evidence of stages of the analysis can be referred to either in the main body of the thesis or within the appendices.

Table 3.6: Phases of the Braun and Clarke framework (2006) in relation to this study

Phase	Links with this study and evidence within the thesis
Familiarising yourself with the data	Familiarisation was achieved through listening back to the recordings, transcribing of the data and reading the several times.
Generating initial codes	See Appendices 7 and 8. These contain an extract of a transcript with initial codes highlighted, as well as an extract of the initial grid used to note down codes and to begin to move them into themes. This process involved constant reviewing.
Searching for themes	
Reviewing themes	
Defining and naming themes	See Appendix 9. This thematic map shows how the themes from the 2 data sets were looked at together in order to identify the key themes from across the data corpus. The thematic map begins to consider how these themes may be linked.
Producing the report	The report (Chapter 4) outlines clearly the final overarching themes, main themes and subthemes arising from the data and links these back directly to data extracts from the transcripts. The report also highlights how the findings link with my integrated conceptual framework.

3.7 Interpretation and reporting of the findings

The interpretative analysis component of this method takes place once a thematic map has been generated, and is described as varying from study to study. The authors recommend looking to other studies that have used this method in order to provide a sense of the sorts of questions to ask about data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In doing this I was guided to ask questions about the data that went beyond a surface level interpretation and included my exploring questions such as "what does this theme mean?", "What are the assumptions underpinning it?", "What are the implications of this theme?". "Overall what do the different themes reveal about the topic? In asking these questions a story emerged that related to my initial research questions, as well as to my integrated conceptual framework.

In the next chapter I will present a report and discussion of my findings. This analysis will include an overview of the overarching themes, main themes and subthemes. I present these in turn providing a concise, coherent, logical and non-repetitive account that identifies and integrates the themes derived from the analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Evidence for each theme is presented in the form of data extracts from the original transcripts in order to strengthen the transparency and validity to my account. After my themes have been presented I also consider the findings in relation to my integrated conceptual framework. In this and the concluding chapter (chapter 5) I move beyond the descriptive to provide an analytic narrative that links the themes with the research questions which this study set out to explore, making links with the literature outlined in chapter 2 and developing arguments in relation to the

research questions. I also consider how the findings of this study may contribute to conceptual and theoretical generalisation.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction:

Braun and Clarke (2006) describe how the sixth stage of a thematic analysis begins once researchers have a set of fully worked out themes, and involves the final analysis and write up of the research report; a process demonstrated in this and the concluding chapter. I discuss the findings analytically, highlighting the most pertinent findings in relation to my research questions, making links to the literature presented in chapter 2. This move from the descriptive to the analytic is what Braun and Clarke (2006) identify as a key feature of a rigorous thematic analysis. Within the final chapter I also develop my findings into implications for practice, as well making links with my chosen integrated conceptual framework (Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model) arising from the second phase of deductive analysis.

Results are presented using thematic diagrams, with reference to a thematic map produced during the thematic analysis (Appendix 9); data extracts from the interviews are presented to support each theme. The purpose of using this approach is to provide a concise and coherent account of the story that the data tell, both within and across themes.

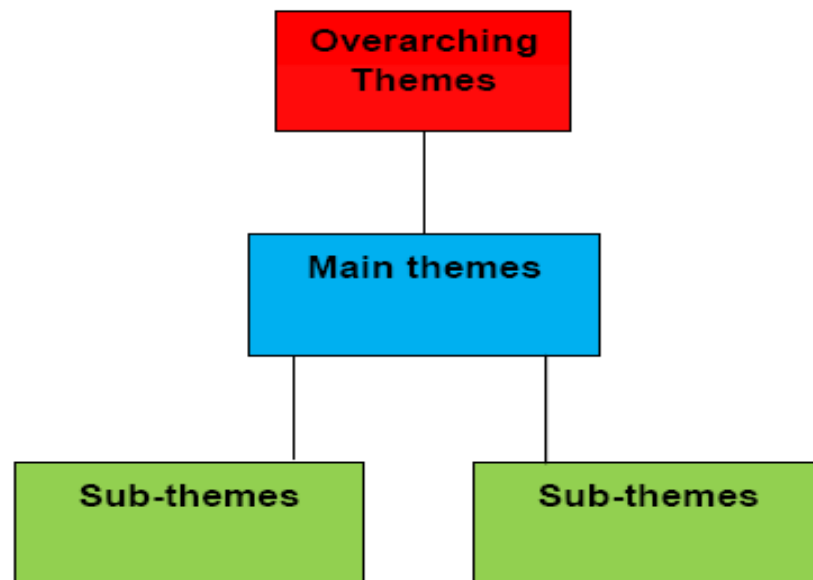
The themes presented in the first part of this chapter have been inductively abstracted using the stages of thematic analysis described (see Table 3.5), and address the research questions outlined in chapter 1 section 1.5, presented again below for ease of reference:

Final Research Questions:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. What are the perceived facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning to support transition to further education, training or work for young people with an additional educational need, within this mainstream educational setting?2. What are the transition planning and support experiences of students with educational needs (including those at School Action Plus and those with statements)?3. How do young people feel about their transition and the planning and support that they have experienced in school?4. Within this support available for young people with additional needs as they approach transition, how do a Connexions PA, SENCo and a teacher endeavour to support young people, and what are their respective experiences of the support that they/other professionals provide?

I began by analysing the two data sets (pupil data and staff data) separately. In the next phase I sought to identify any differences between the data sets, as well as identifying themes that were evident across the data corpus, through revisiting the data and through the production of a thematic map (See Appendix 9). Once this phase of inductive analysis had been completed I then considered my findings deductively in relation to my integrated conceptual framework. This report summarises/presents the outcome of this systematic approach, and reference is made to whether themes are reflective of a particular data set or the data corpus as a whole as I move through the report.

This report of the key findings is divided into several sections. I begin by providing an overview of the three overarching themes and six substantive main themes that emerged from the data corpus. I then consider the main themes and the associated subthemes in more detail. The sub-themes of each of the main themes are introduced individually, supported with data extracts. After each overarching theme has been presented I explore the findings, highlighting the most salient points and making links with the review of the literature.

In all diagrams and headings the themes are coloured coded as follows:



4.2: Overview of Overarching Themes

As Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 demonstrate there were six main themes that emerged from the data set. These themes were organised under 3 overarching theme areas:

- 1. Professional roles;**
- 2. the Individuality of the pupil; and**

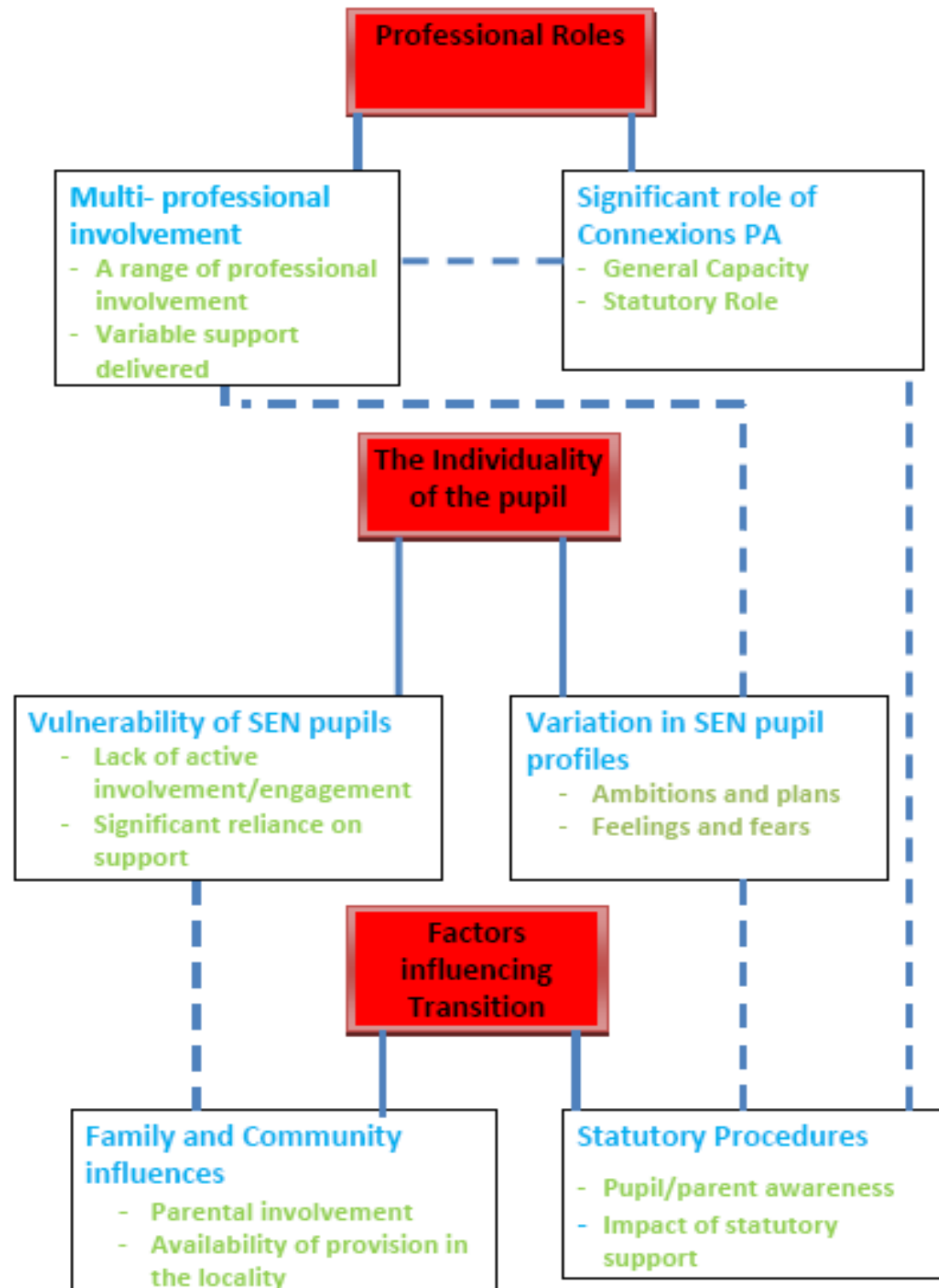
3. factors influencing transition.

Table 4.1 The overarching themes and main themes.

Overarching Theme 1: Professional Roles
<p>The overarching theme of professional roles referred to the multi-professional approach to transition planning and the key roles within this process. Within this two main themes emerged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multi-professional involvement• The significant role of the Connexions PA
Overarching Theme 2 : Individuality of the Pupil
<p>The overarching theme of the individuality of the pupil consisted of two themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The vulnerability of SEN pupils• Variation in SEN pupil profiles, needs and experiences.
Overarching Theme 3 : Factors Influencing Transition
<p>The third overarching theme encompassed the views of the pupils about what influenced them, and the views of professionals about what influences the needs of this group more generally. The two main themes emerging were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Family and community influences• The influence of statutory procedures

Although the overarching themes and main themes are distinct from one another they are not wholly independent, but interrelate: the most significant interrelations are indicated by the dashed lines on the figure 4.1 which maps out all of the overarching themes, main themes and sub themes.

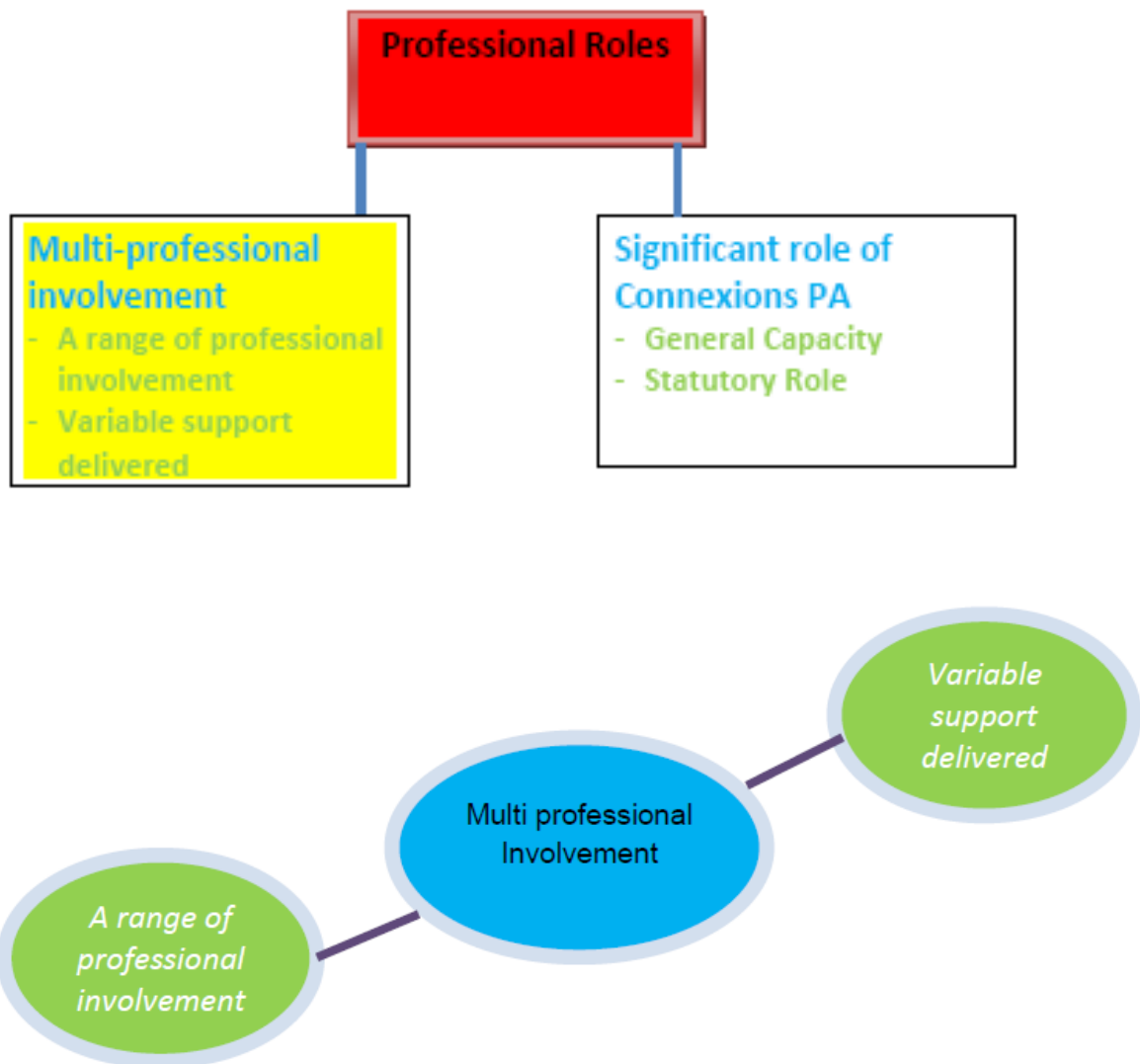
Fig 4.1: Diagram showing overarching themes, main themes and sub themes.



4.3 Overview of the Main Themes and Subthemes

Professional Roles

Theme 4.3.1: Multi professional Involvement



Multi-professional involvement was a main theme under the overarching theme of **professional roles**, with 2 emerging subthemes:

4.3.1 (i): A range of professional Involvement in school

4.3.1. (ii): Variable support delivered

4.3.1 (iii): A range of professional involvement in school: The data suggested that within the school system, participants could identify **a range of professionals who were involved in delivering transition planning and support.** The school itself provides a base for this work to take place and the planning and support can operate within existing mechanisms, such as lessons and assemblies.

Pupils focussed on the involvement of school-based staff such as their teachers and the Connexions PA, whereas staff also recognised the value of visiting staff from the local authority, such as the Educational Psychology Service, the Behaviour Support Team and the Learning Support Team.

Evidence in the data to support the 'range of professional involvement' subtheme:

A staff member described the role that a range of outside professionals could play in attending transition planning meetings if they were requested:

"if there was a need for it (attendance at school meeting) and I said it was really important that they're there, then as far as possible people (outside agencies inc EPS BST and LST) would attempt to be there"

(Staff member-SENCo)

School staff also emphasised the role of "others":

"There are a lot of things going on; it isn't always just us (school)."

(Staff member- SENCo)

Positive relationships with these staff appeared to facilitate links with outside agencies:

"You have obviously got a good relationship with those (support) staff, so they will be responsive to your needs and stuff like that"

(Staff member- SENCo)

Staff described how the Connexions PA contributes to this range of professional involvement from within school:

"There's a big input from Connexions"

(Staff member- SENCo)

Staff also described the role that school staff can play in this multi-professional

approach:

"Myself or the TAs might become a bit more involved and talk to them (pupils with SEN) about what their options are, how they are going to get there and what they are going to do"

(Staff member- SENCo).

Unlike staff members, when pupils were asked about the support they may have received from a range of professional groups, the pupils tended to focus on the role of the Connexions PA and school staff, rather than other outside agencies:

Interviewer: *"Have you accessed Connexions at all?"*

Respondent: *"Yes I have been to them"*

(Pupil- School Action Plus)

(No pupil mentioned support from an external service in his/her transition support)

A member of staff described the range of staff providing input within the school building:

"I mean Connexions are in school, most days somebody's in, and obviously the school time we get from EPs, LST (Learning Support Team) and BST (Behaviour Support Team) comes in hours."

(Staff member - SENCo)

Another staff member described how lessons in school are a conduit for delivery of planning and support within the school system:

"We've got Connexions based in school and we've done some more work through Connexions in lessons last year and will do more this year"

(Staff member- Teacher)

The type of support located within school was also further described:

"There's good people in school that set all that (transition planning) up. You know, and people that work on things like planning their work experience, that's another thing they did last year"

(Staff member- Teacher)

Pupils described how support was based within the school system, and delivered via existing systems such as assemblies:

"In assembly they said it was a very important year for us"

(Pupil- School Action Plus)

Pupils also explained that the support they had received from Connexions had *been in school*:

"I have spoken to someone from Connexions (in school). I went and we looked at websites and it tells you what grades you need and stuff"

(Pupil-Statement)

4.3.1(ii) Variable support delivered: Staff members described how the level of support that young people with AEN received in regard to their transition was variable, being influenced by a range of factors, with this support derived from a range of sources. The data suggest that the variation in the nature of the support on offer is linked to a range of factors, including the young person's needs, the staff awareness/perceptions of these individual needs, the impact of the statutory framework and the level of parental involvement. There is some contradiction within the data regarding the level of influence that the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) has on the support offered/delivered to young people.

Evidence in the data to support the 'variable support delivered' subtheme:

The support a young person received appeared to be influenced directly by their assessed individual support needs:

"Others (pupils) who aren't sure, K (The Connexions PA) might do 3 or 4 sessions with them"

(Staff member - SENCo)

The engagement of parents is influential on the support a young person receives.

"if there is an active role from parents and the child showing that they want to be involved, then I think the SENCo will be as involved as is needed"

(Staff member – teacher)

Having a Statement also appeared to influence the support delivered to the young person from school:

"We will ensure that it is primarily the statements that are sorted, but again we will be aware of the School Action Plus kids who need that extra input"

"I guess we are more high profile at ensuring that the kids with Statements are sorted, as K (Connexions PA) is having to complete the Section 139a and so we kind of focus on that"

(Staff member – SENCo)

This also appears to influence the work of the Connexions PA:

"A lot of PAs choose do School Action Plus. I do a few but mainly I do Statements"

(Staff member – Connexions PA)

However this view was also contradicted by other data that suggest that there is not variation in the support delivered for young people with Statements as compared to

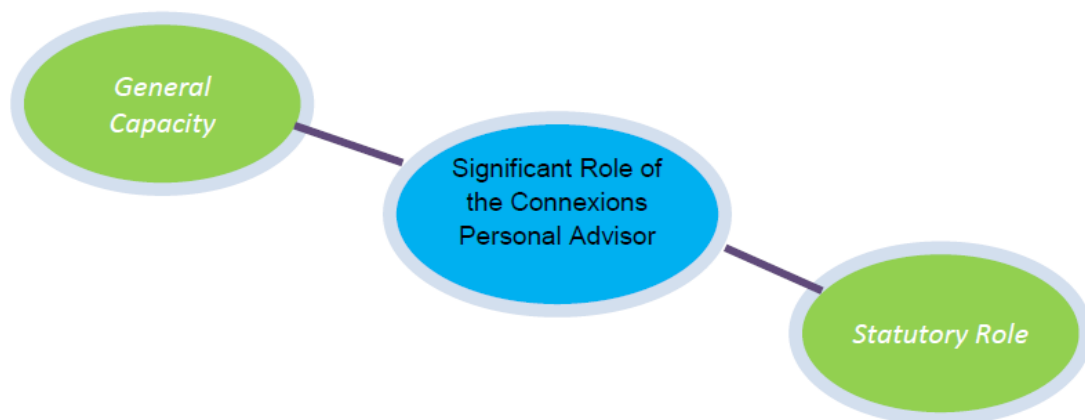
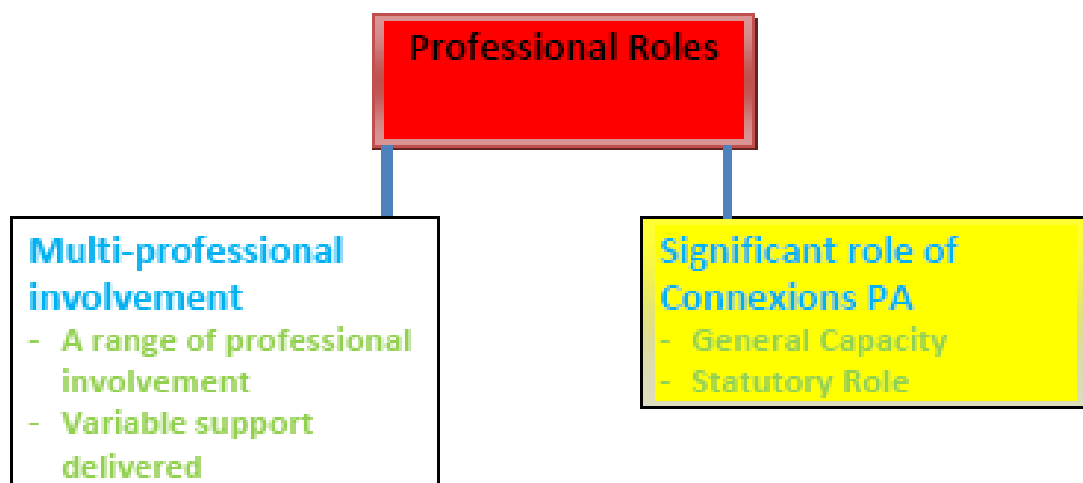
those at School Action plus:

Interviewer: "And do they get this level of support regardless of whether they are School Action Plus or Statemented?"

Respondent: "Well I'm not certain about that, but yes I would say so yeah....these kids in my group definitely do yeah"

(Staff Member – Teacher)

Theme 4.3.2: The Significant Role of the Connexions Personal Advisor



The Connexions Personal Advisor emerged as the most significant figure in the system impacting on the transition planning process, within the overarching theme of **professional roles**. The subthemes reflecting the key elements of this role are:

4.3.2 (i): General capacity; and

4.3.2 (ii): statutory role

4.3.2.(i): The staff data indicated that the Connexions PA is the person in school who is viewed as having the capacity to provide a consistent service addressing transition for SEN/AEN pupils, and able to bridge the gap between those with and without statements when this is deemed necessary. The Connexions PA is described as having the capacity to offer a higher level of transition support than other professionals, which allow her to provide a consistent service, described as regular and flexible, offering support to pupils beyond school, maintaining links once the transition had taken place. The staff narratives (the SENCo in particular) described how the PA also had the flexibility within the transition planning model to provide additional support to young people without statements if necessary.

Pupils were considerably less descriptive about the support they had received from the Connexions P.A. They indicated that they had met with her, but were not able to describe the focus, purpose or value in this work.

Evidence in the data to support the 'Significant Role of the Connexions PA' subtheme:

Staff indicated that the Connexions PA is able to take a lead role:

"Connexions do a huge bulk of the work"

"She will interview the student pretty much within two weeks of them having their review, and depending on when it is in the year, she will identify what it is they want"

to do next"

(Staff Member - SENCo)

Data also indicate the value of having this capacity in school:

"It's invaluable because at the end of the day if K (Connexions PA) wasn't there to do it, I don't quite know who in school would do it."

(Staff Member - SENCo)

This capacity which allows a range of work to take place:

"K (Connexions PA) did spend some time with him and his family"

"K's been really good at doing stuff over the summer holidays."

(Staff Member – SENCo)

Staff commented on how the Connexions PA could be available at regular intervals:

"And then she (Connexions PA) will see them at regular intervals"

(Staff Member - SENCo)

They also described how this support over time was not just school-based:

"I can quote an example of a student who went to (named college) last year. K (Connexions PA) did spend some time with him and his family, ensuring he knew where to get on the train and what to do at the other end...that kind of thing".

(Staff Member - SENCo)

Staff also described how the Connexion's PA played a much more consistent role than professionals from other support services:

"(The Connexions PA) is probably the one face that is there throughout their high school, at every transition review. Quite often they go "yeah it's you". They might have a new ed psych or a new SENCo, we have had that happen here over the last 4 or 5 years. But there is consistency here, they know you are the person who will be at everything"

(Staff Member – SENCo)

This consistency can extend to maintaining contact once the transition has taken place:

"there is a connection, like a bridge between school and college. They have left school, but Connexions are still there"

(Staff Member – SENCo)

Pupils were less forthcoming about this support, but did indicate that they may have seen the PA on more than one occasion:

"I saw them twice I think"

(Statemented Pupil)

They also indicated that support over time would be available if they sought it:

Interviewer: *"Do you feel that if you needed more support from them that you would be able to get it?"*

Respondent: *"Yeah they said they would help me"*

Interviewer: *"So do you have any plans to go back and talk to them?"*

Respondent: *"yeah after half term. They said they would take me to college in the summer"*

(Statemented Pupil)

It emerged that in this context Connexions PAs may chose to provide additional support for SA+ pupils if they felt it would be useful.

"A lot of PAs choose to do School Action Plus; they do it at whatever they're at if they need it really"

(Staff Member – Connexions PA)

This can include duplication of their statutory role for Statemented pupils and this is viewed as good practice in this context.

"It's a very good document (139a assessment). We as Connexions Advisors do write them at School Action Plus. Although we don't have to, we do. It's a good practice approach"

(Staff member)

"We are able to write 139a reports for School Action Plus if we think it will be important for them"

(Staff Member – Connexions PA)

"A lot of PA's choose to do School Action Plus reviews"

(Staff Member – Connexions PA)

4.3.2 (ii): Statutory Role

The narratives in the data also illuminate how **the Connexions PA plays a key statutory role in the transition planning process for young people with Statements.**

Through the staff data set, the significance of the Connexions PA's statutory work in supporting young people with Statements of SEN was evident; for instance, through attending transition review meetings and preparing Section 139a assessment to support transition planning.

Evidence in the data to support 'The Statutory Role of the Connexions PA' subtheme:

The Connexions PA has a specific statutory role in supporting statemented pupils as they approach transition:

"Very often the students who've got a Statement: there's usually someone linked to

them, Connexions do a lot of work at that level"
(Staff Member- SENCo)

"Usually they (The Connexions PA) only attend reviews for statemented pupils"
(Staff Member- SENCo)

It is recognised that the work of the Connexions PA comprises a statutory component in transition planning meetings:

"Basically due to the SEN Code (of Practice) we have a partnerships agreement that we have to be involved (with statemented pupils). We have to obviously identify them within the school, we have to make sure they are interviewed in Year 9 and we have to attend their annual review (Transition review). They have to be followed through by us. The transitional review cannot be held without us there"
(Staff Member- Connexions PA)

Connexions PA's also prepare statutory 139a assessments for Statemented pupils:
"She'll go through the 139a form with them, getting lots of information from them, their personal details. She'll talk about what support they had here and what support they might need when they move on"
(Staff Member-SENCo)

Overall, the perspectives organised within the overarching theme of **professional roles** tell a story where the staff describe flexible support provided for young people with AEN, from a range of professionals and primarily from the Connexions P.A. However the views of staff were not congruent with the narratives of the pupils, who described fairly limited support provided from staff in school and were far more circumspect in their accounts of the contribution of the Connexions PA.

Multi-professional involvement was valued by staff in this setting, in line with previous research identifying this as a valued component of transition work in specialist settings (Kaehne et al, 2009). However, Kaehne et al (2009) also suggest that this type of practice works best when it is situated within a clear transition protocol that guides everyone to understand their role in this process. In this setting, no such framework was described, and the work of outside agencies appeared to be largely

based on factors such as availability and good working relationships. This suggests that coordinated multi-agency support for post-16 transition may be improved if such an explicit protocol were developed and employed by the school.

Despite some inconsistencies in the data with regard to the amount of support the Connexions PA was providing, she emerged as the key transition support figure within the school. Her input was highly valued especially by the SENCo, but the pupils did not speak about her with the same high regard, which highlights a differential view. The value attributed to the Connexions PA by school staff is in line with other research in a special school setting (e.g. Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003), however in Grove & Giraud-Saunders (2003) research the pupils' views had also been positive, whereas in this study the pupils did not communicate any significantly positive opinions about the Connexions PA. This suggests that in this setting the Connexions PA may not be working in a way that is having a significant positive impact on young people with AEN. This is particularly important given the fact that working with young people with AEN is a key statutory aspect of the role, and a role that is directly linked with governments original Valuing People Strategy (DoH, 2001). This strategy highlighted that transition into adult life for individuals with learning difficulties was an area for considerable development. The overall purpose of this transition aspect of the Valuing People strategy which has recently been revised and updated (DoH, 2009) is to ensure that as young people with disabilities approach adulthood they are assured of appropriate support in a bid to support equality of opportunity and successful transition into further education, work or training (DoH, 2001). The voices of the young people emerging in this study raise specific questions

about the value that young people attribute to the contribution of the Connexions PA in this work. It also highlights wider questions as to whether or not the visions of this White Paper has been realised, nearly a decade after its inception and the role out of Connexions PAs in schools to support it. Moving beyond questioning the level of involvement of Connexions PAs in their role with young people with AEN, it raises more complex questions in regard to the nature and quality of the support provided.

The differential views of pupils and teachers about professional contributions to transition support is also potentially, important suggesting a gap between the transition work described by the staff, and lived experience described by the young people. This gap between what people say they do and what they actually do has been described by theory of action (Argyris & Schön, 1974). This theory suggests that people often have mental maps that help them to describe what they do in certain situations (known as espoused theory). However, despite the fact that this is the theory of action to which someone gives allegiance, and which, upon request, she communicates to others, the theory that actually governs actions is this theory-in-use, which may be somewhat different.

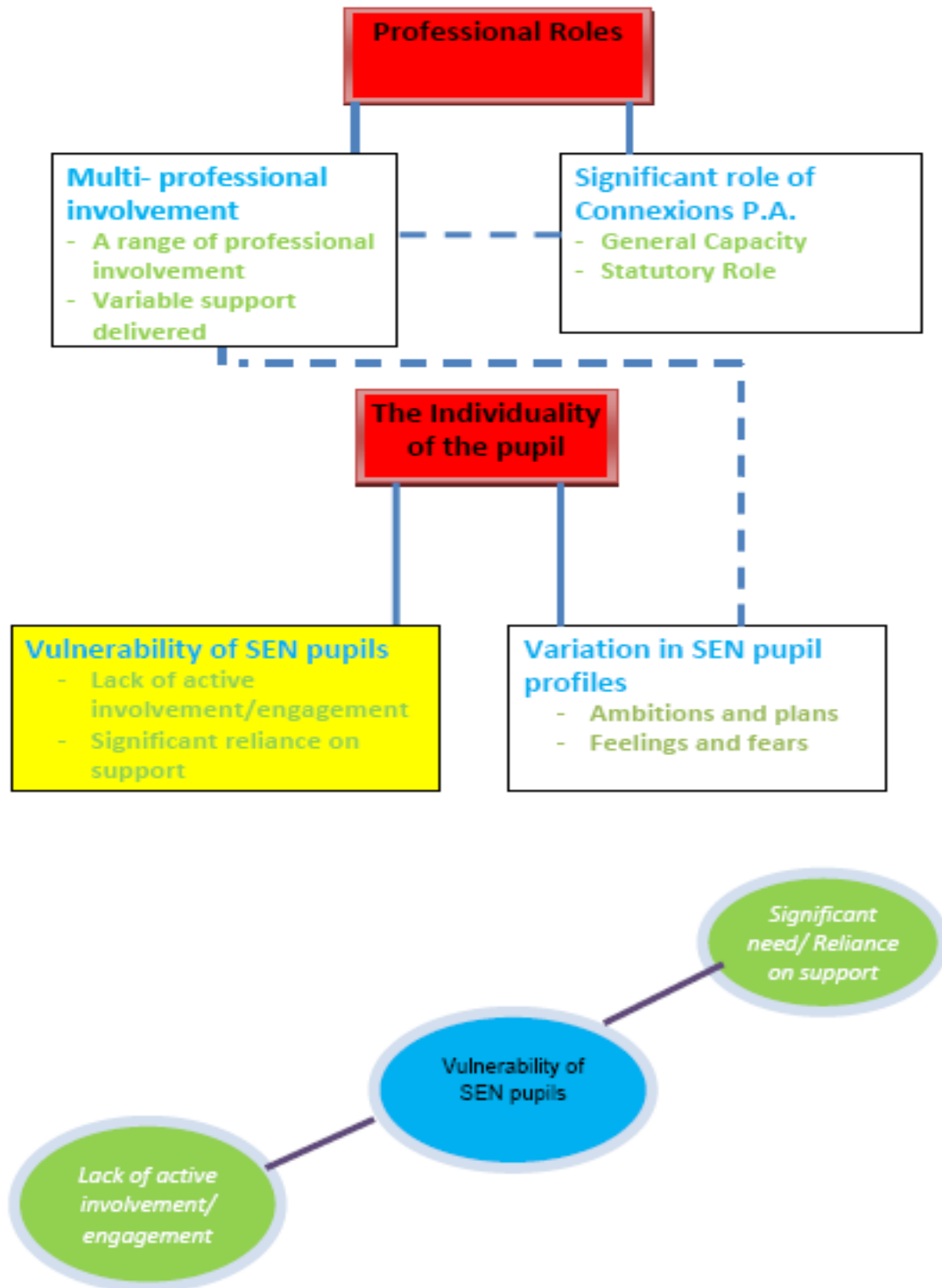
This theory may help to account for the discrepancies in staff and pupils accounts of transition support within the data corpus. There was a lack of congruence between the espoused theory and the theory in action with regard to the transition planning and support experiences provided for and received by young people with additional educational needs. This is even more important if we assume that the espoused theory described by staff is what they really believe to be true. This may mean that

the status quo will remain invisible, unchallenged and unchanged because the young people receiving an espoused service based on a theory in action, are relatively powerless to challenge it or even aware that things could or should be different.

However, another explanation for the incongruence in the data corpus could be the timing in which the interviews took place. The staff were talking about transition support for young people with AEN more generally, whereas the pupils were talking about their lived experience at that point in time. As the interviews took place in the spring term of their final year in school, it is possible that some aspects of the support that had been described by staff had not yet been received by the young people and may have been scheduled for a later point in time. The timescales outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), highlight that the transition planning phase should span the final two years of school, in which case you would expect that by this time the young people would have experienced key aspects of this work. However, although it was not mentioned by the staff, it remains possible that the school could provide increased support at the later part of this two year time frame, and this work would not have been discussed during the interviews. Follow up with the young people and school would need to take place in order for this issue to be unpicked further.

The Individuality of the Pupil

4.3.3 Vulnerability of SEN pupils



The subthemes under this main theme relate to the areas of vulnerability that emerged from the pupils' data: The subthemes that emerged were:

4.3.3 (i): Significant needs/reliance on support

4.3.3 (ii): Lack of active involvement and engagement

4.3.3 (i): This group of young people had needs addressed through support in school, aligned to their identified additional educational need(s). This had been delivered mainly through teaching assistant support in core subjects.

Evidence in the data to support 'Significant needs/reliance on support' subtheme:

Pupils discussed the significant needs that had impacted on their experiences at school.

Interviewer: *"How have you found being at secondary school generally?"*

Respondent: *"It's been alright...it's been difficult for me"*

Interviewer: *"What was difficult? Can you remember?"*

Respondent: *"Learning maths and stuff. I'm getting there slowly".*

(Pupil - Statemented)

Pupils discussed some of the support that they had received in school.

Respondent: *"I had help in middle school, I had to have a teaching assistant"*

Interviewer: *"So what do you have now?"*

Respondent: *"Just science, I have a TA to help me in science, that's about it I think. Oh, and in maths".*

(Pupil - Statemented)

Interviewer: *"Would you be able to tell me about some of the support you've had?"*

Respondent: *"In each lesson I've had some support, to help me translate the words and to write and understand".*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

Interviewer: *"What kind of support have the school given you?"*

Respondent: *"TAs"*

Interviewer: *"Do you have an individual TA, or has it been a TA that's there for the whole class?"*

Respondent: *"Individual"*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

4.3.3(ii) Lack of active involvement and engagement: As a group, pupils appeared rarely to engage proactively in the transition planning process and had low levels of involvement with the Connexions PA. It appeared that the degrees of difficulty in this broad area may have reflected their learning difficulties.

Evidence in the data to support the 'Lack of involvement and engagement' subtheme:

There were several indications that some of the young people had not been actively engaged in the process of transition planning:

Interviewer: *"Have you spoken to any of your teachers about it (transition)?"*

Respondent: *"No."*

Interviewer: *"What about Connexions, have you had a Connexions appointment. Do you know what that is?"*

Respondent: *"No I don't think I have".*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

Interviewer: *"Have you had an opportunity to talk through these options with anyone?"*

Respondent: *"I don't know; I don't think so, it's slipped my mind a little bit"*

(Pupil- Statement)

A lack of active engagement, also emerged as a feature of some of the young people:

Interviewer: *"So if you did want some more information about something who would you speak to?"*

Respondent: *"Probably my teachers or something like that"*

Interviewer: *"Is there anyone in particular?"*

Respondent: *"No, not really"*

(Pupil - Statemented)

Their discussions in regard to their level of involvement with Connexions, suggest that this contact was limited in terms of duration and impact on the young people.

Interviewer: *"So in school you've got someone called Mrs.K who is your Connexions Personal Advisor and she's meant to interview pupils about what they want to do when they leave school, and give you some advice if you're not quite sure. Has that happened"*

Respondent: *"Not at the moment".*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

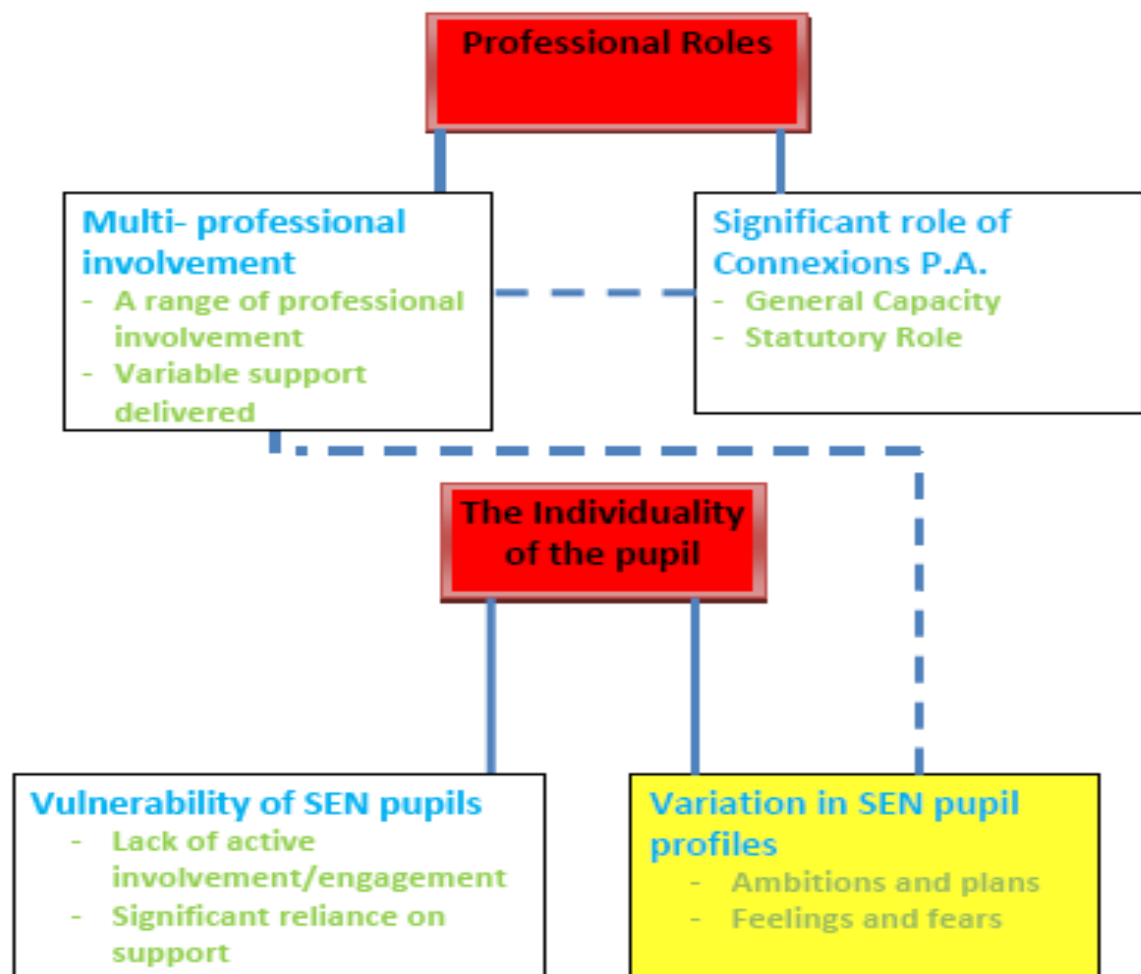
Interviewer: *"Have you met anyone from Connexions?"*

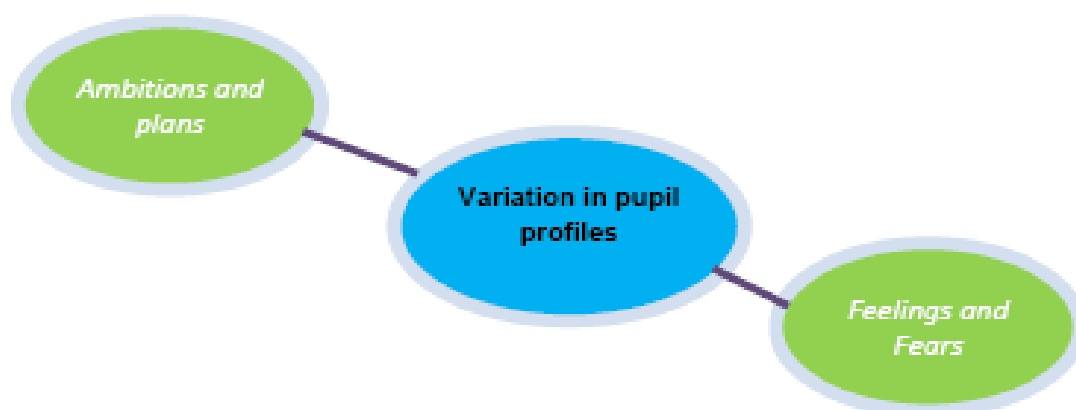
Respondent: *"I have spoken to someone from Connexions"*

(Pupil-Statement)

Interviewer: *Have you accessed Connexions at all?*
Respondent: *"Yes I have been there"*
Interviewer: *"So did you talk to them?"*
Respondent: *"Yes I did"*
(Pupil – School Action Plus)

Theme 4.3.4: Variation in pupil profiles





Variation in the individual pupil profiles clustered within the overarching theme of **the individuality of the pupil**. Subthemes that reflected the significant areas of pupil variation were:

4.3.4 (i): ambitions and plans; and

4.3.4 (ii): feelings and fears

4.3.4 (i): The young people discussed a range of options, including attending a local college, training and work.

Evidence in the data to support the 'Ambitions and Plans' subtheme:

The pupils' responses demonstrated that they had a range of post-16 ambitions and plans.

Respondent: *"I'm going to the 6th form to do woodwork and football, K***** Harriers. If I can't do football I'll do my backup plan"*

Interviewer: *"Which 6th form are you planning on going to?"*

Respondent: *"(Named current school's sixth form)"*
(Pupil - Statement)

Interviewer: *"So in terms of next year, when you leave school, what are your plans at the moment?"*

Respondent: *"College"*

Interviewer: *"Yeah, which one?"*

Respondent: *"(named local F.E college)"*

Interviewer: *"Great. What subjects do you want to do, or what course do you want to do?"*

Respondent: *"A gaming course if I can"*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

Respondent: *"I want to get a job as a tree surgeon"*

Interviewer: *"What's made you think about doing that?"*

Respondent: *"I saw people doing it and I just thought I might like to give that a try you know"*

(Pupil – Statement)

Respondent: *"When I leave school I want to go to college, study two years and then maybe go to University, I don't know, to study physiotherapy"*

Pupil – School Action Plus)

4.3.4 (ii): Feelings and fears

The young people's narratives suggested that they were experiencing a range of feelings and fears about their forthcoming post-16 transition. They also discussed feelings with regard to other issues such as the support they had received in school such as worries about the need to gain the necessary qualifications.

Evidence in the data to support the 'feelings and fears' subtheme:

Interviewer: *"So how are you feeling about leaving school; are you feeling confident or nervous or.....?"*

Respondent: *"A bit nervous"*

Interviewer: *"What is it that's making you nervous?"*

Respondent: *"About coping"*

Interviewer: *"What do you mean by coping?"*

Respondent: *"When I have to leave school like, you have to like do things for yourself and all that"*

Interviewer: *"It's a big step. What sort of things do you think you might have to do that you don't do at the moment?"*

Respondent: *"No idea"*

(Pupil – School Action Plus)

Respondent: *"The only thing I'm worried about is if I don't get a job as a tree surgeon. I don't know what I'll do if I don't get the job"*

(Pupil – Statement)

One pupil discussed the perceived difficulty in getting qualifications.

"It's hard to get qualifications, because it's easy and then it gets harder and harder and harder in science, English and maths"

(Pupil- statement)

Struggling in lessons was also discussed.

"I struggle a bit with lessons like maths, I.T stuff like that"

(pupil – School Action Plus)

"It's hard trying to focus for the entire lesson kind of thing. It's been difficult mainly through this year".

(Pupil –School Action Plus)

One pupil discussed how a previous opportunity had failed.

"I was meant to go on a course last year, but I quit it. I didn't get anything so I moved into ASDAN"

(Pupil - Statement)

Responses organised within the overarching theme 'the individuality of the pupil' evidenced the young people's historical need for support at school, but reflected further their current lack of active engagement and involvement in the transition planning process, and highlighted a range of feelings and fears they were experiencing in relation to this. These findings collectively support the view that transition can involve significant and sometimes upsetting change for young people with learning difficulties (Heslop et al, 2001) who are generally reliant on a higher level of support thus supporting the view that transition is much more than simply a point in time (Dee, 2006) for these young people. The findings support the concern raised in the literature review in regard to the vulnerability of pupils with SEN within mainstream schools, supporting the view that they are a vulnerable population at the point of transition (Dewson et al, 2004). It has also emerged that these complexities are evident without any further evidence of a coherent and effective package of support in the mainstream setting to mediate these complexities.

The individual support received in school to optimise their learning is not reflected in the transition support they have received. This may highlight a weakness in the

school's delivery of pastoral/holistic support for young people with AEN, as opposed to simply focussing on supporting their learning needs. Inadequately supported transition at age 16 is of particular concern in light of what is known about the links between poor transition planning and long term social exclusion for SEN pupils (Audit Commission, 2010).

As discussed in the literature review, despite their statutory role with SEN pupils, training in SEN is not required for Connexion's PA's. This is significant as Katsiannis et al (2005) highlighted that inclusion in mainstream schools can add a complicating dimension to transition planning, and other research has highlighted that transition work can be even more complex when young people have moderate learning difficulties or when their needs are harder to define (Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003). This again raises questions in regard to the capacity of the role to successfully address the individual needs of pupils with AEN. This is especially important in light of the fact that the programme was rolled out in part due to government's concerns about a gap in support for this population at this point in time, over a decade ago (DoH, 2001). These findings suggest a need for specific SEN/AEN training for Connexions PAs who work in mainstream settings, in order that they can be more fully attuned to and able to respond to their individual needs in a suitably differentiated way.

The young people's narratives indicated that active participation in a meaningful transition process in school was not a universal entitlement, and also demonstrated a limited capacity to mediate transition planning independently. None of the young

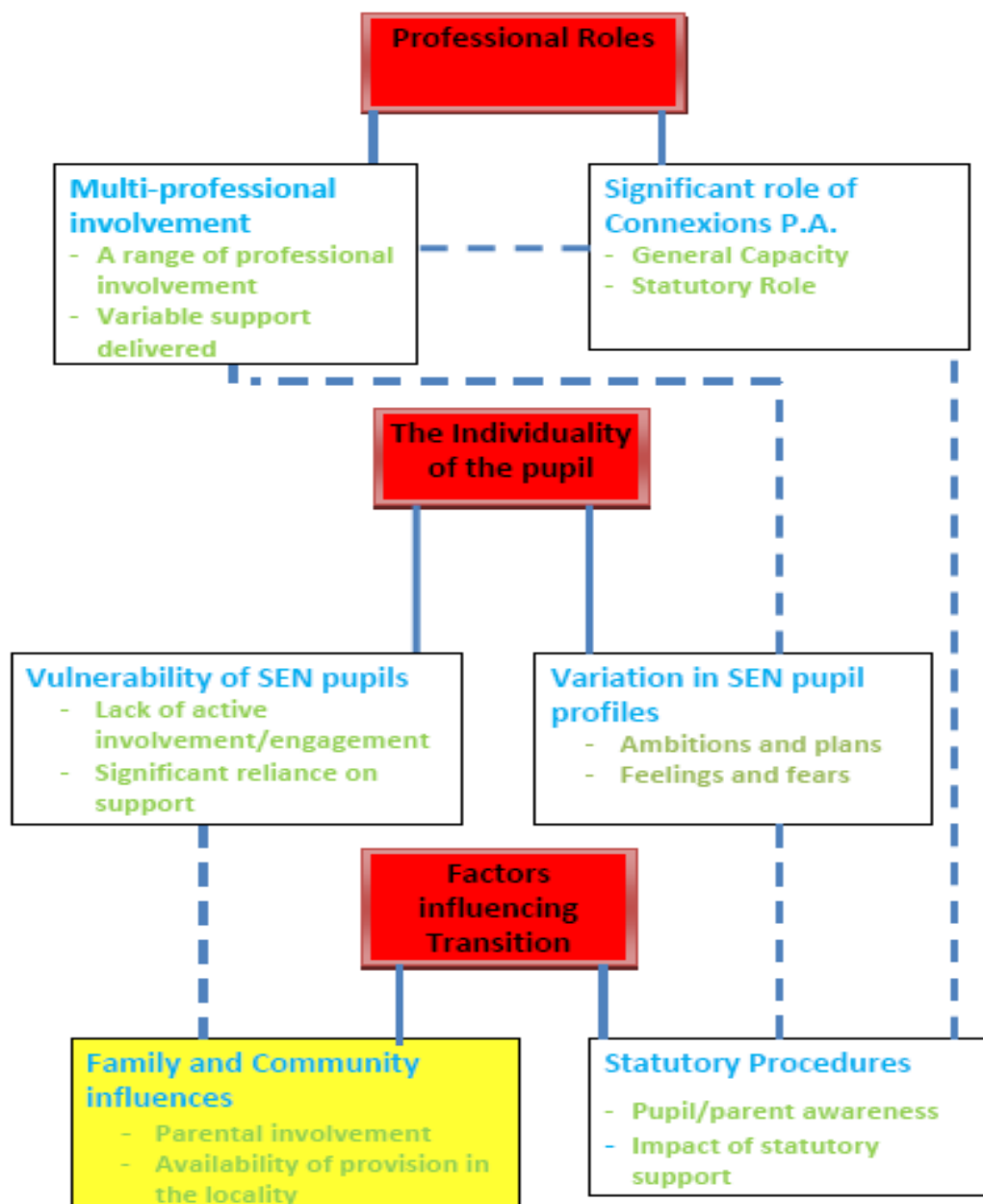
people mentioned a transition plan that they had, nor recalled that they had attended a transition review meeting. This echoes the findings of Ward et al (2003) and Heslop et al (2002) who found limited levels of formal transition planning and limited pupil involvement in a special school and limited pupil involvement; this study mirrors this finding in this mainstream setting.

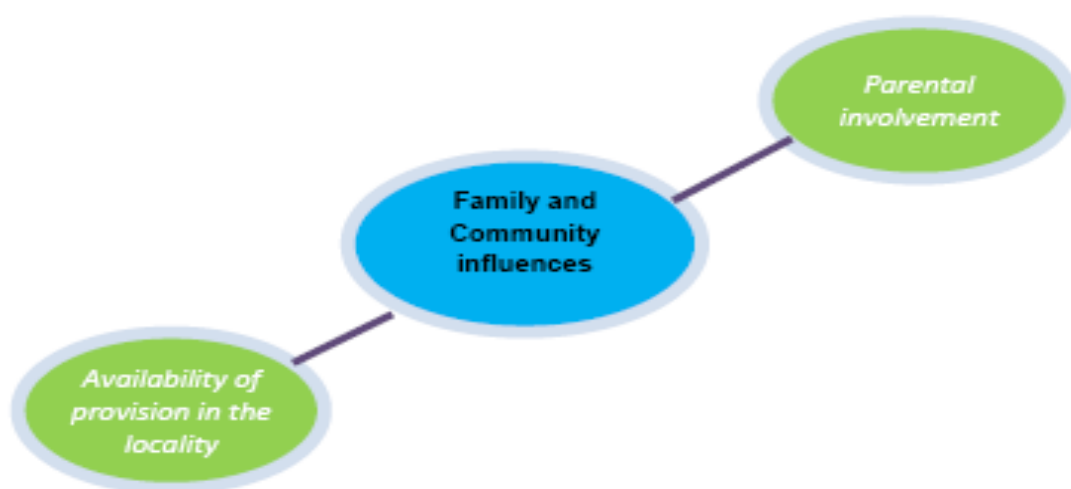
Limited meaningful pupil involvement emerges as a feature in this research. This requires consideration, especially as it is highlighted as being a key feature of effective transition planning which is supposed to be supported by the Connexions PA, according to key documents such as the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) and Valuing People (DoH, 2001 & 2009).

The ladder of pupil participation (Hart, 1992) is useful when exploring aspects of pupil involvement and participation as it differentiates between tokenistic and meaningful involvement of young people in decision making. The findings of this study suggest that pupils are not actively involved in a collaborative process of enquiry and decision making in relation to their transition. Therefore, promoting young people's participation in the transition process appears to be an area requiring considerable development.

Factors Influencing Transition

4.3.5 Family and Community Influences:





A range of factors related to the family and community systems around the young people influenced the transition planning process, reflected in:

4.3.5 (i): Parental involvement

4.3.5.(ii): Availability of provision in the locality

4.3.5 (i): Several staff members discussed the influence that they felt that young people's parents had played within the transition process. Staff responses suggested that parental involvement was variable, but that when parents were more heavily involved this typically enhanced both transition planning process and its outcomes in determining the quality and level of active support provided by school staff. They also identified that it may further influencing the post-transition support that a child receives.

Evidence in the data to support the 'parental involvement' subtheme:

The staff indicated variable levels of parental involvement.

Respondent: *"We've got a lot of really good parents, supportive parents who do understand fully what's going on and if I'm not doing what I'm meant to be doing*

they're telling me that I'm not doing what I'm doing. There are other parents who....students in the three years that I've been here, I've not met yet because they don't come to any of the reviews, parent's evenings"

(Staff member - SENCo)

Staff indicated that lack of engagement from parents could have a negative impact.

Respondent: *"I think lack of engagement can impact negatively. Yes it can because very often it can make it difficult when you are trying to get hold of parents, when you are trying to discuss an issue, whether it's learning or behaviour...whatever. If they are not on side it's very difficult to make any impact on the student, because if the parents don't care why should the kids care? Do you know what I mean?"*

(Staff member- SENCo)

Staff indicated that links with parents could influence staff in being more proactive.

Respondent: *"I think it does make a difference (parental engagement), because it means we are more proactive in ensuring that the child gets exactly what they want"*

(Staff member – Connexions PA)

4.3.5 (ii) Availability of provision in the locality: When young people discussed their plans for transition it emerged that they were all planning on taking their post-16 steps within the local context, within their existing school, a local college known to them or within a local business. This importance of local choices also emerged from the staff data. Although it is recognised that it is the norm for young people generally to pursue post-16 options locally, this highlights the importance of having a strong range of local options from which young people with AEN can choose.

Evidence in the data to support the 'availability of provision in the locality' subtheme:

Several of the pupils were keen to stay on in their existing school, but this was not always a possibility.

Interviewer: *"Which 6th form are you planning on going to?"*

Respondent: *"B"* (name of existing school)

(Pupil-Statement)

Interviewer: *"Are you looking forward to leaving and starting new things?"*

Respondent: *"Really I don't want to leave B"* (name of existing school)

Interviewer: *"Why not?"*

Respondent: *"Because it's nice, the teachers are so nice. Everybody is nice here".*

Interviewer: *"But isn't there a sixth form here?"*

Respondent: *"Yes there is, but I can't go to sixth form. I am not good in the language"*

Interviewer: *"So ideally you would like to stay here?"*

Respondent: *"Yes but I need to go to K College"* (named local Further Education College).

(Pupil- School Action Plus)

The pupils were not keen to travel far from home.

Interviewer: *"So which college have you decided on?"*

Respondent: *"I don't know, I have no idea.....I want to go to K College because it's near to my house".*

(Pupil- School Action Plus)

The staff confirmed that most pupils with additional needs continued to access local post 16-provision.

Respondent: *"I think for a lot they will be based in colleges. From last year's experience they'll go to K College (Local FE college). They'll go there or maybe they'll stay here"*

(Staff- SENCo)

The industries that young people were aware of from their local community also appeared to play a role in their decision making in regard to transition.

Interviewer: *"Can you tell me a bit about your plan for when you finish Year 11, what plans have you got for next year?"*

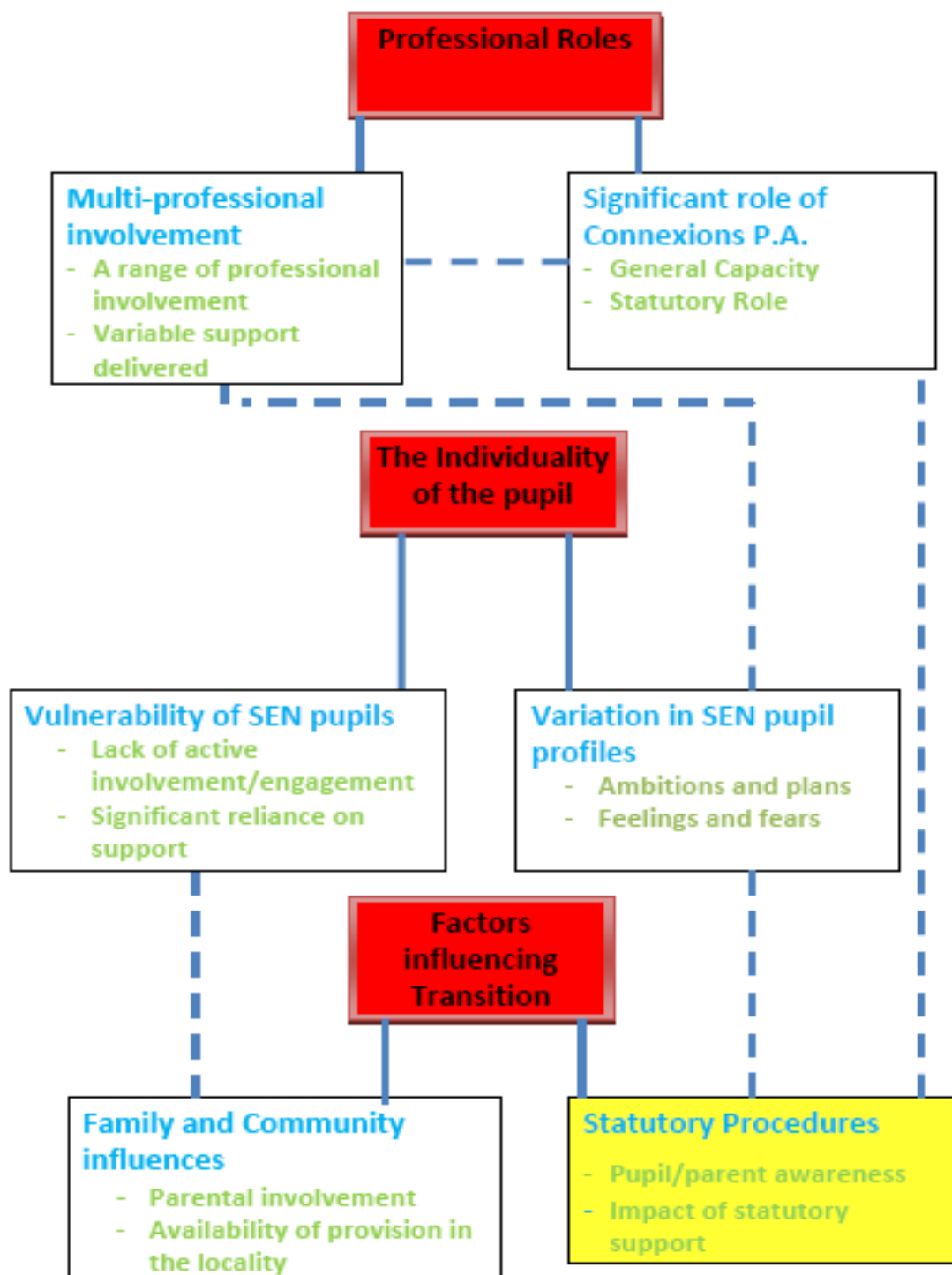
Respondent: *"I want to get a job as a tree surgeon"*

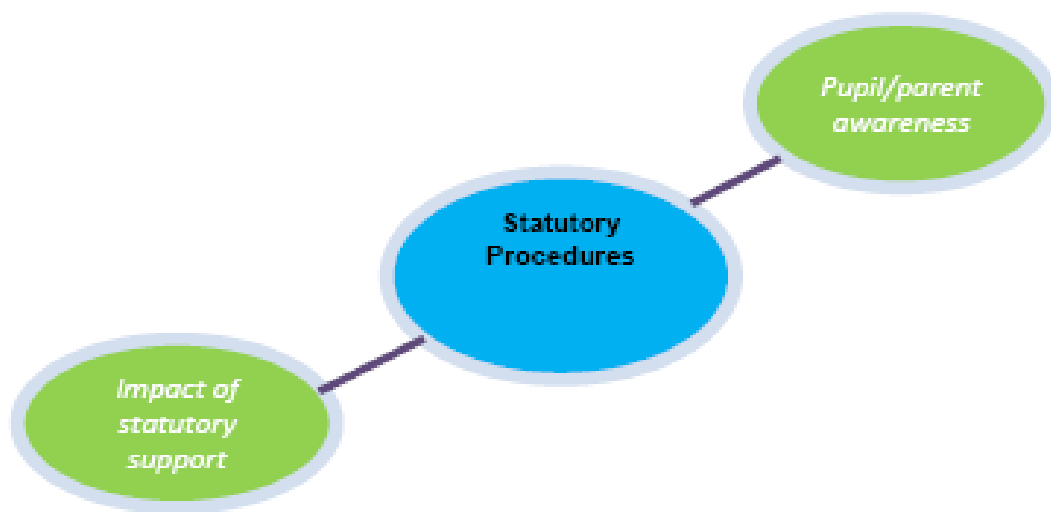
Interviewer: *"Ok, so what made you think about doing that?"*

Respondent: *"Just people. Like people from the tree work companies in S (local town)and stuff".*

(Pupil – Statement)

4.3.6 The influence of statutory procedures on practice





The final main theme abstracted from the data was **the influence of Statutory procedure**, contributing to which are the subthemes of:

- **4.3.6 (i): pupil and parent awareness; and**
- **4.3.6 (ii): the influence of statutory support received**

4.3.6(i): The data indicate that parents' awareness about the statutory framework and entitlement varied considerably and that this could influence the level of support received by the young people. This resonates with the earlier subtheme about the influence of parental involvement, and raises questions as to why young people and their parents are not always fully informed about the level of support that they are entitled to receive. There was no clear indication of the mechanisms in place to share information with parents about their child's SEN status and the implications of this with regard to their transition support entitlement. Pupils too did not make any reference to their SEN status or their entitlement to support.

Evidence in the data to support 'pupil and parent awareness' subtheme:

Staff suggested that parents do not always understand what is going on in school:

Respondent: *"I don't think they (parents) fully understand what's going on. I think it's very mixed from one child to the next"*

(Staff Member - SENCo)

Parents' understanding of the statutory position can be important in securing support post transition.

Respondent: *"The information goes with them and obviously we say to the college this kid might need some support, and that might well depend on the parents. Whether the parents chooses to follow that up and ensure it is.....they know the section 139a exists because they have been part and parcel of putting it together."*

(Staff Member – Connexions PA)

Staff suggested that pupils can be vulnerable if their parent's lack this awareness.

Interviewer: *"If it was a School Action Plus Child without a 139a and the parent's don't understand the mechanisms, do you think there is a potential for vulnerability?"*

Respondent: *"Yes, there is potential for vulnerability."*

(Staff member – Connexions PA)

4.3.6(ii): the influence of statutory support received

It emerged that having a Statement of SEN did sometimes have an effect on the transition support experiences of the young people, as well as potentially impacting on the support to which they would be entitled post-transition. However, the young people did not talk about this themselves (none of them made reference to their SEN status); rather it was staff who were more aware/made reference to the implications of pupils' SEN status and the impact that this may have on their support for transition. Despite the fact that previous themes have indicated the ways in which the school responded to the needs of School Action Plus pupils, the impact of a Statement still emerged from the data as an influence on prioritisation, for example. This theme therefore contradicts other data presented earlier, which suggested that not having a statement would not act as a barrier to transition support.

Evidence in the data to support 'the influence of statutory support' subtheme

Respondent: *"Without our support they wouldn't be able to access some things. Some of the parents aren't able to help them, so you would find that without support from school they (statemented pupils) wouldn't be able to access college"*

(Staff member – Teacher)

Respondent: *"Obviously we will ensure that primarily the statements are sorted"*

(Staff member – SENCo)

Respondent: *"I guess we are just more high profile at ensuring the kids with the statements are sorted"*

(Staff member – SENCo)

Respondent: *"very often, the students who've got a statement, there's usually somebody linked to them"*

(Staff member – Teacher)

Respondent: *"Usually they (the Connexions P.A) only attend reviews for statemented students"*

(Staff Member – SENCo)

Respondent: *"The statements are probably more prioritised by us in terms of us identifying who they are first"*

(Staff member – SENCo)

Parental involvement appears to impact directly on the level of transition support which young people may receive, despite the fact that there was reportedly a poor level of parental awareness in regard to the transition frameworks in place and the their child's entitlement to support. The Audit Commission (2002) highlighted a range of factors that influence whether or not a child received a statement of SEN, including parental means and attitude. It seems that this influence is also relevant when applied to the area of transition planning and support. Further to this, staff did not provide any indication of how they try to engage with parents and what they would like the nature of their involvement to be. When parents were considered influential,

this was attributed to their making direct requests to the school rather than via the mechanisms described within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), such as attendance at transition planning meetings.

Overall, this supports the findings of previous research which highlighted inadequate levels of parental involvement in transition planning as well as raising concerns about the nature of this involvement (Ward et al, 2003). It seems that school places a lot of emphasis on the value of parental involvement, despite their recognition that engagement is likely to be poor. Poor parental involvement can therefore sometimes be used as an explanation for a poor level of overall transition support, perhaps reducing the school's own accountability for weak practice.

Unsurprisingly, the young people wanted to pursue post-16 plans within a local context, and several wanted to stay on within their own school's sixth form. However, one highlighted she had been told she would not be able to due to her low predicted grades; she would therefore have to transfer to a local college. This raises implications in regard to the range of post-16 options available for young people with AEN, especially within school sixth forms which although variable in what they offer, can tend to have a more traditional academic focus. This is opposed to further education colleges which tend to offer a broader range of qualifications, starting at a much lower level. In the school Sixth Form which was the focus of study the qualifications on offer included A-levels, BTEC and other courses all of which required at least 4 or 5 GCSE's between A*-C; a high benchmark for these young people with a range of additional needs.

This study clearly indicated that at least two of the four participants (one with a statement and one at School Action Plus) would rather stay in their current setting, but that they are unlikely to be able to do so. This raises a broader question in regard to inclusion and as to whether schools have a responsibility to cater for pupils with additional needs beyond the age of 16. This is especially important if meeting this preference is likely to increase their engagement and potentially promote the success of the transition for this population, which in turn could have a longer term impact on reducing NEET figures.

The statutory framework described within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) emerged as the primary contributor to the staff's espoused theory regarding the support that they feel they deliver; however key aspects of the framework do not appear in the student narratives. Despite the fact that transition support is described as prioritised for statemented pupils and for those at School Action Plus pupils who require it, there is little evidence that when this takes place the theory in action (i.e. what the young people receive) is sufficient and meaningful in terms of promoting a positive and meaningful experience for the young people.

Again young people and their parents do not seem to have a good understanding of the framework that is hypothetically at least, there to support them. This raises considerable questions with regard to the efficacy of a framework such as the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), for supporting transition planning especially if there is no mechanism in place to ensure it is being delivered as intended. In the school's most recent OFSTED inspection report (February, 2009) there was no mention of the

transition support provided by the school for either AEN or non AEN pupils. This perhaps indicates a role that inspectors could develop when assessing the quality of SEN/AEN provision. It seems that as there is no clear mechanism for feedback on their theory in action it is understandable and perhaps inevitable that staff continue to deliver transition planning which may not best meet the needs of the most vulnerable pupils.

The findings from this phase of the analysis will be linked with the research questions and then further developed into implications for practice, once an overview of the links with the integrated conceptual framework, identified as a result of the second phase of deductive analysis are presented in section 4.4.

4.4 Links with the integrating conceptual framework

As described in chapter 3.6.3 a second phase of deductive analysis took place in which the data were considered in relation to a systems model of human behaviour, and more specifically the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2001). The rationale for this was that this framework emerged in relation to my literature review as a useful lens through which findings of this research could be considered, as it aided understanding of the complex interplay between a range of interacting variables highlighted by the research.

The findings show that there are variables at every level of the system as described in Bronfenbrenner's original theory, and outlined in Table 4.2 These variables appear to interact with one another and mediate the young peoples' transition experiences in

this setting. This supports the findings in the literature review which also focus on the influence of systemic factors, rather than attributing the outcome of transition purely as a function of the young people's additional educational needs.

Table 4.2: Outline of the key systems described within Bronfenbrenner's work (Bronfenbrenner, 1979 & 2001) in relation to the reserach findings.

<u>Name of System</u>	<u>Key features of the system</u>	<u>Aspects of the research findings linked to this system.</u>
The Microsystem	E.g. The features of the individual, family or classroom. The systems in which the child lives; including family, peers etc. This is the system in which most direct social interactions take place. The individual is not a passive recipient of experiences in these settings	Key aspects of the microsystem in transition planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The young persons' individual needs - Parents - School staff - Connexions PA
The Meso System	Two microsystems in interaction with one another. E.g. interaction between the child and their teacher.	Key aspects of the mesosystem in transition planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interaction between the pupil and the Connexions Personal Advisor - Interactions between school staff and the pupil - Interactions between parents and school
The Exosystem	External environments which indirectly influence development e.g. community based resources. Exosystems are essentially any setting which affects the individual, although the individual is not required to be an active participant. This refers to community level influence, including social norms and standards.	Key aspects of the exosystem in transition planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Further education opportunities available in the local community - Workforce opportunities available in the community
The Macro system	The larger socio-cultural context. These are the cultural values, customs and norms as well as social and political contexts in which the child is situated.	Key aspects of the macrosystem in transition planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The influence of government policy, legislation and guidance on transition planning - Current political climate and context - State of the economy

The Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) introduced in Chapter 2, places further emphasis on the interactions within the systems and the interplay between heredity and the environment. In this research the 'proximal processes' described by this model (which were also the focus of the enquiry) were the transition planning and support experiences of the young people. This study has highlighted how these processes are influenced by features of the person, the context and time in the manner described in chapter 4.2. The findings are summarised directly in relation to his model in table 4.3, which also makes links to where the supporting data can be found. This again supports the view that transition planning experiences and outcomes are a function of the features of the child, the features of their environment and the interactions between them.

Table 4.3: Process, Person, Context time (PPCT) Model (Bronfenbrenner, 2001) applied to this research

Feature of the PPCT Model	Associated Research Findings	Links to data and research findings
<p>Process: “proximal processes”: interactions over time between self and environment.</p> <p>In this study the proximal processes of focus were those associated with transition planning and support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The quality of the proximal processes is perceived differently by the staff and the young people. - The quality of the transition processes is influenced by a range of interactions between characteristics of features of a young people (including his/her AEN) and aspects of each of the 4 levels of nested systems within his/her life would. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Differential perspectives highlighted in theme 4.2.3 outline the differing narratives in regard to the role played by the Connexions PA. - The interactions between the pupils and the Connexions PA is the key proximal process highlighted by the research, as it emerged as being particularly influential on transition planning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil ↔ Connexions PA (See theme 4.3.2) Supporting quotes from theme 4.3.2; <p><i>"Its invaluable because at the end of the day if K wasn't there to do it (work with young people), I don't quite know who in school would do it"</i> (Connexions PA)</p> <p><i>"K did some work with his and his family. K's been really good at doing stuff over the summer holidays"</i> (Connexions PA)</p> <p><i>"She will see them at regular intervals"</i> (Connexions PA)</p>

<p>Person: Biological and genetic aspects of the young person.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand (e.g. gender, age, ethnicity) • Resource (e.g. mental and emotional resources, such as skills and intelligence) • Force (e.g. temperament, motivation and persistence) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The young people's additional needs affected their personal resources in terms of being able to effectively navigate transition planning without support. • More specifically, the young people shared a common feature of lack of involvement and engagement in a meaningful transition planning process likely to be linked to their additional educational needs. 	<p>The following themes highlight the aspects of the research findings relating to the personal features of the young people.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vulnerability of SEN Pupils 4.3.3 (i and ii) Links to the data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer: <i>What was difficult, can you remember?</i> Respondent: <i>" Learning maths and stuff, I'm getting there slowly"</i> • <i>"I have a TA to help me in science, that's about it....oh and in maths"</i> • <i>"In each lesson I've had some support, to help me to translate and to write and understand"</i> • Interviewer: <i>"Have you had an opportunity to talk these options through with anyone?"</i> Respondent: <i>"I don't know, i don't think so, it's slipped my mind al little bit"</i> • Variation in SEN pupil profiles 4.3.4 (i and ii) Links to the data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer: <i>"how are you feeling about leaving school?"</i> Respondent: <i>"A bit nervous"</i> Interviewer: <i>"What is it that's making you nervous?"</i> Respondent: <i>"About coping"</i> • Respondent: <i>"The only thing I'm worried about is if I don't get a job as a tree surgeon. I don't know what I'll do if I don't get the job"</i> • Respondent: <i>"It's hard to focus for the entire lesson kind of thing. It's been difficult mainly through this year"</i>
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<p>Context: Interrelated systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Microsystems - mesosystem - exosystem - macrosystem 	<p>Key features are described in Table 4.2 and summarised below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Meso interactions (interactions between Microsystems) were significant in mediating the transition experiences of the young people. 2) Not all of these factors operated directly on the young people. 3) There appears to be significant features of wider systems that influence the transition planning experiences. 	<p>Links with the data:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Significant meso-system interactions evident in the data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pupil ↔ School staff (see theme 4.3.2) School Staff* ↔ Support staff (in theme 4.3.1(ii)) Parents ↔ School staff (See themes 4.3.5(i) and 4.3.6(ii)) <p>*In this context school staff refers predominantly to the SENCo and the Connexions PA</p> 2) Indirect influential interactions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Staff ↔ Parents (See themes 4.3.5(i) and 4.3.6(ii)). Supporting quotes: <i>"I think it does make a difference (Parental engagement), because it means we are more proactive in ensuring the child gets exactly what they want"</i> • Statutory Framework ↔ Staff (See theme 4.3.6(ii)) Supporting quotes: <i>"Obviously we will ensure that primarily the statements are sorted"</i> <i>"I guess we are just more high profile at ensuring the kids with statements are sorted"</i> <i>"The statements are prioritised by us in terms of us identifying who they are"</i> 3) Other influential factors part of the exo-system and the macrosystem: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community influences (see theme 4.3.5(ii)) – e.g.: lack of availability of provision in the 6th form for AEN pupils. • Family influences (See theme 4.3.5(i)) – e.g. parental engagement impacting transition planning experiences. • Policy influences (See theme 4.6.3(ii)) - The influence of the SEN Code of Practice on the approach of staff and on pupils experiences.
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<p>Time:</p> <p>Micro time: happens during a specific interaction</p> <p>Meso time: the extent to which activities occur with some degree of consistency</p> <p>Macro time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the timing of events and experiences within the developmental life span • specific salient historical events happening at that moment in time. 	<p>1) At a micro and meso-level transition planning experiences, as described by the young people appear to be fairly limited in terms of their frequency, duration and consistency.</p>	<p>1) Links to the data: Theme 4.3.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interviewer: <i>"Have you spoken to any of your teachers about it (transition)?"</i> Respondent: <i>"No."</i> Interviewer: <i>"What about Connexions, have you had a Connexions appointment. Do you know what that is?"</i> Respondent: <i>"No I don't think I have".</i> (Pupil – School Action Plus) • Interviewer: <i>"Have you had an opportunity to talk through these options with anyone?"</i> Respondent: <i>"I don't know; I don't think so, it's slipped my mind a little bit"</i> (Pupil- Statement) • Interviewer: <i>"So if you did want some more information about something who would you speak to?"</i> Respondent: <i>"Probably my teachers or something like that"</i> Interviewer: <i>"Is there anyone in particular?"</i> Respondent: <i>"No, not really"</i> (Pupil - Statemented)
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	<p>2) At a macro level all of the young people were experiencing this transition at the same point in time, and their experiences are impacted by the policy context and the availability of post-16 options available at this point in time.</p>	<p>2) Macro time features were not explored explicitly, but can be inferred from the knowledge of the context in which the research took place.</p> <p>Specifically:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All of the young people almost the same chronological age at the same point in time (2011). • They are roughly at the same point in their developmental lifespan, although some individual variation in developmental level will be expected given their additional needs, which may pre-dispose them to some differences • They are all experiencing their transition planning in the context of a new coalition Government who have reviewed public services, including education which may impact on their experiences of transition.
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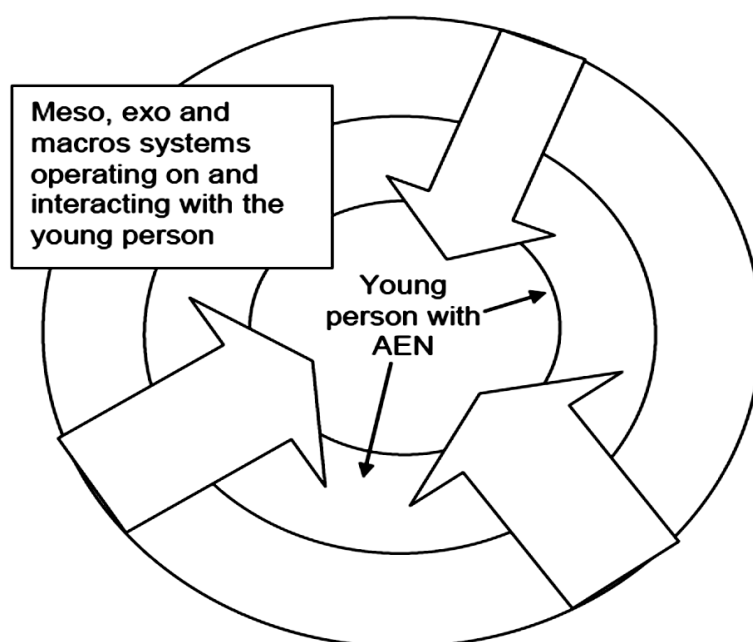
4.5 Pertinent aspects of the systemic landscape highlighted by the research findings

Viewing the findings through a systemic lens has been helpful in highlighting the relevance of systems theory in accounting for the process as a whole, the perspectives of individuals within the school system, and the ways in which communication within and between subsystems (i.e. staff, pupils and parents) will have affected outcomes for young people whose needs the post-16 transition support system is intended to address. The following figures aim to highlight these influences within and between systems that have been suggested by the research findings.

4.5.1 The influence of the young people

The research findings indicate that the young people exert little influence on the transition support systems, and are relatively passive as opposed to active agents in the transition planning process (See Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2 : The relative bi-directional influence of the young people and the systems around them.

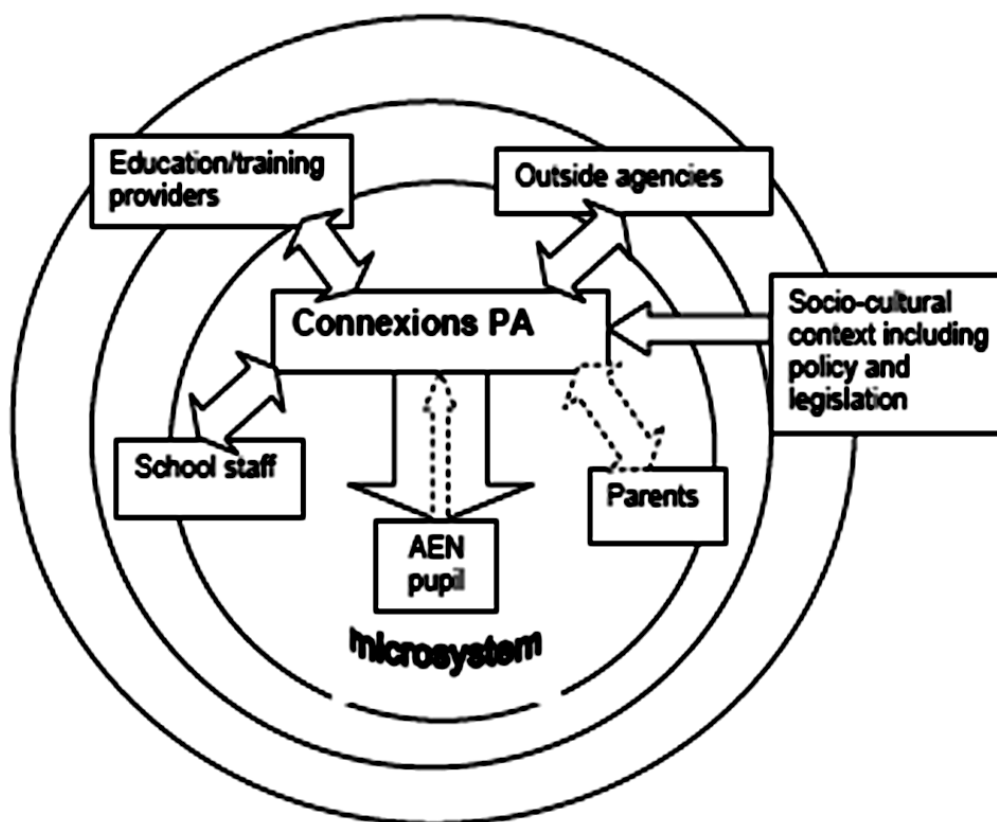


4.5.2 The Impact of the Connexions Personal Advisor

Despite the limitations described in the report, the Connexions P.A emerged as the individual well placed to provide a service involving working across and within a range of systems levels, (as described in figure 4. 3). However the research highlighted that this support could be operationalised more effectively, according to the perspectives of the young people.

These key findings support the further development of the Connexions PA role specifically in supporting young people with additional educational needs (AEN). If this role were developed (for instance through the provision of training and development) then it may help to ensure that these young people are best supported to achieve a positive outcome at transition, through access to an experience which engages them in a positive and meaningful transition planning process. If this were achieved it would be commensurate with the description of the support already described in the SEN Code of Practice, which outlines that transition support for young people with special educational needs should ideally be *"participative, holistic, supportive, evolving and collaborative"* (DfES, 2001). It would be hoped that this would also link with more positive long term outcomes for this population of young people.

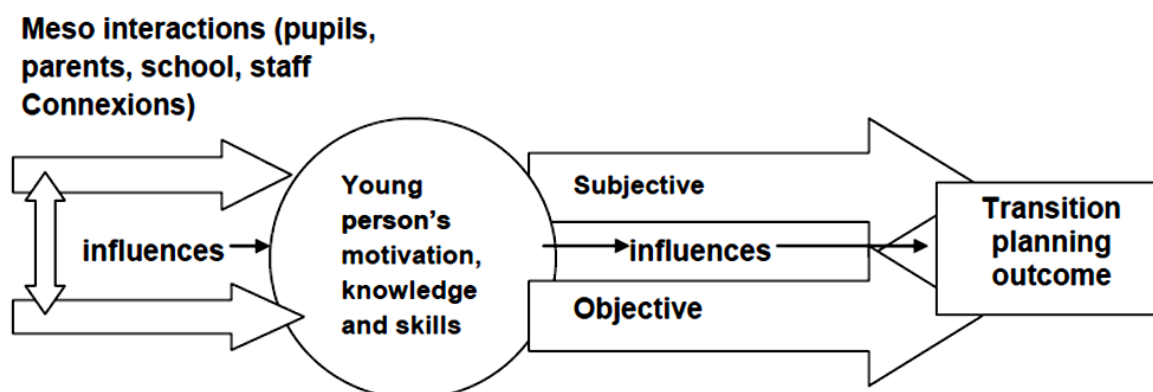
Figure 4.3 The interactions between the Connexions PA and aspects of the young people's systemic landscape.



4.5.3 The Role of Meso-level Interactions

Bronfenbrenner's (2001) bio-ecological theory (of which the PPCT model is part) highlights the important role that both direct and indirect interactions can play in influencing the objective and subjective elements of a person's experience, as well as influencing their ability, motivation and knowledge to engage with activities. This research has highlighted the important influence of positive meso-level interactions (such as those between the pupil and the Connections PA and between the parents and school) in influencing the young person's transition planning experience. These findings can be interpreted in relation the theory which is schematised in figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4: The impact of meso-interactions on experience and outcomes



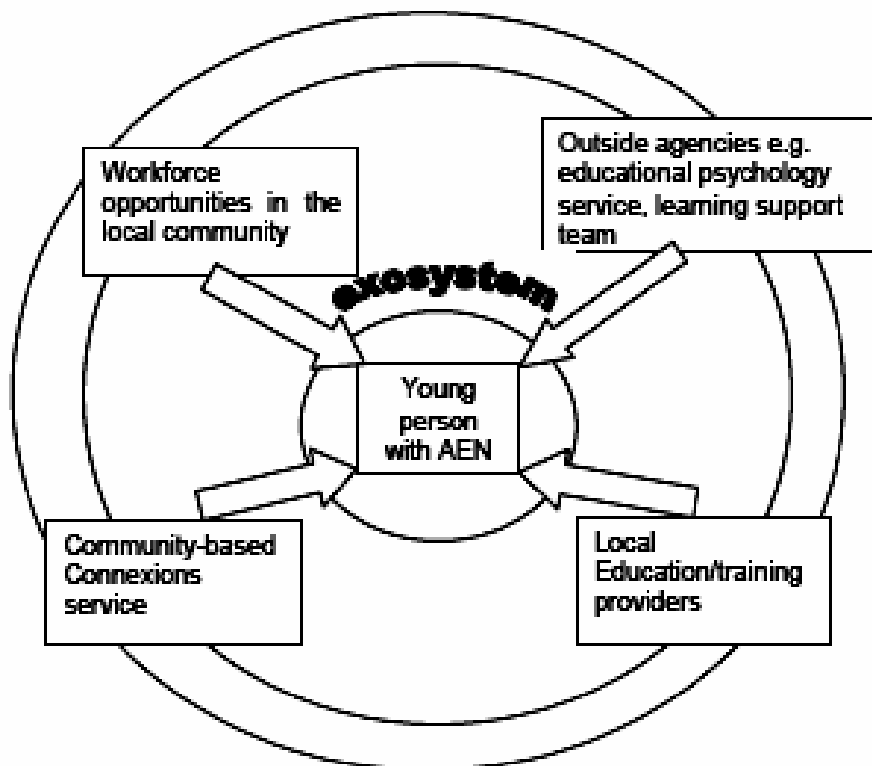
This figure highlights how according to this model the identified significant meso-interactions will directly and indirectly influence the young people's motivation and knowledge, in regard to engaging with transition planning. This resulting level of engagement in turn impacts on their objective and subjective experiences of transition planning and support. This suggests the potential significance in promoting more positive meso-level interactions as this could improve young peoples' engagement with the transition process and their feelings about it. Further to this the model asserts that in the longer term these more positive interactions will therefore indirectly impact on the transition planning outcomes. This model therefore supports the recommendations made in light of the research findings, which in part focus on improving the meso-interactions that have been identified as playing a role in transition planning for young people with additional educational needs, including most significantly those between the pupils and the Connexions PA and those between school and parents.

4.5.4 The role of exo-systems

The research findings also highlighted the potential influence of exo-systemic factors in transition planning in this context, described in figure 4.4. For instance, the availability of suitable post-16 education and training opportunities for young people with AEN in their local community, and the effective utilisation the range of outside agencies to support this work. Both of these factors emerged as playing an indirect role in transition planning experiences; factors which may be also be linked to the longer outcomes of the young people's transitions. Specifically, several of the young people talked about the desire to stay on in their school's sixth form when this may not be a possibility, and the staff talked about the useful role that they felt outside agencies could and do contribute within their exiting framework of practice. It appears that these exo-systemic factors were impacting indirectly on the young people, as they did not make direct reference to them in their narratives.

This interpretation supports the recommendation for consideration to be given to whether local workforce opportunities and further education opportunities cater adequately for young people with AEN, and through the recommendation to explore the potential development of the role of outside agencies in supporting the transition process. The role of outside agencies in this is already outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001), but the narratives emerging from within this school context suggest highlight areas of development; for instance through the development of a clear framework outlining their role and remit in this work in school, of which everyone is made aware including the young people and their parents.

Figure 4.5 Exo-systemic influences



4.5.5 The role of the macro system

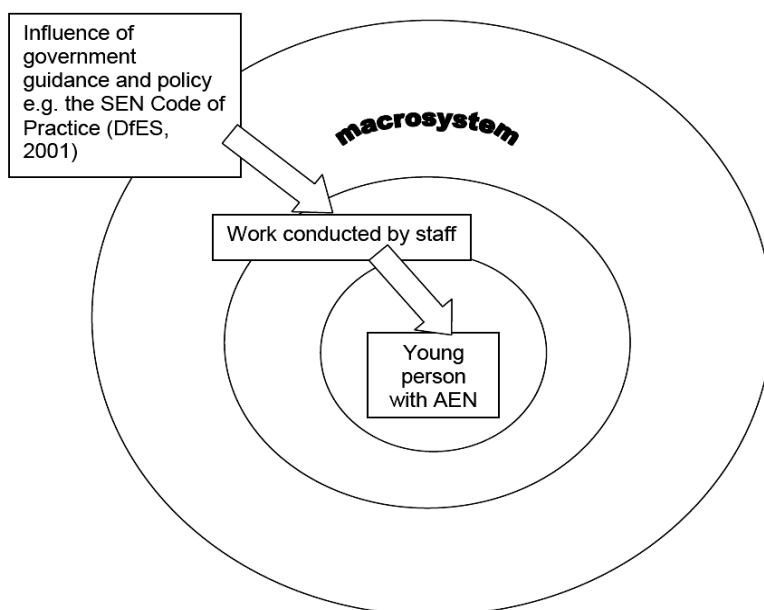
The macro system is the wider social, cultural and political context in which the young person is situated, which acts indirectly on the young people as described in figure 4.5. Macro systems influences individuals indirectly though for instance the influence of value systems, media, government policy and the overarching economic and political climate.

The most significant macro system to emerge in this research was the influence of the government policy, which can be linked to the staff narratives around the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) guiding their work. This policy had a clear influence on the espoused values of the teachers and on the framework of practice that they

described, even when it was not always congruent with the experiences described by the young people.

It also emerged from the young people's narratives that the schools focus areas for support appeared to be skewed towards their learning, for instance through the utilisation of Teaching Assistant (TA) support described by the young people, primarily in core National Curriculum subjects. There appears to be a much lower level of support targeting holistic, pastoral and long terms needs such as those associated with transition. A systems model interpretation of this finding could be that the influence of the government education policy which is operationalised via the delivery of the National Curriculum in the school, impacts on the transition experiences of the young people's; as it plays a role in mediating the type of support that they receive in school. This suggests that changes at a policy level may be influential in improving the transition experiences of this group of young people.

4.6 The key features of the macrosystem



4.5.5 Summary

Applying this integrated conceptual framework has been useful when interpreting my findings, helping me to consider how they map onto a systemic framework and highlighting the important role of the context in mediating transition planning and support experiences for the young people and staff whom I interviewed.

Through the application of this analytic process I have not only been able to identify the key findings of this research in situ, but also make links with how these findings from a specific context may contribute to a wider research base, and wider theoretical framework through which these complex interactional processes and their effects can be understood. Therefore, in my concluding chapter I will discuss how my findings address the initial research questions. I will then explore the implications for practice and address issues regarding the analytical and theoretical generalisations of my research findings.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Addressing the initial research questions

The overall aim of this study was to explore the transition planning experiences of young people with additional needs in a mainstream setting, in an attempt to address an identified gap in research in this area. The methods used in collecting and analysing the data allowed me to address the research questions developed in relation to my area of enquiry. The process of analysis that was applied to the data revealed a story which is presented within and across the themes, highlighting a range of pertinent issues in regard to the post-16 planning and support experiences of young people with AEN in a particular school. In Chapter 4, these key findings were presented and discussed in relation to the literature presented in Chapter 2, and further interpreted within the integrating conceptual framework afforded by Bronfenbrenner's (2001) bio-ecological model.

To conclude this discussion, a summary which presents the findings in relation to the initial research questions and existing research literature is presented below.

Research question 1: What are the perceived facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning and support for transition into further education, training or work for young people with additional educational needs within this mainstream educational setting?

Key facilitators were identified as:

- **Parental Involvement:** When parents are informed and involved in transition planning they can have a positive influence on the process.

- **Committed longitudinal support from an appropriately skilled and trained Connexions PA:** The Connexions PA is in a position to be a key facilitator in this work with young people with additional educational needs.
- **Utilisation of existing systems:** The school building and existing school systems act as a base for transition work to take place, for instance through meetings and assemblies.
- **Use of outside agencies:** Staff perceived the contribution of and value of outside agencies positively in relation to transition planning work.
- **Application of guidance:** The SEN Code of Practice outlines existing framework for transition planning that participating school staff considered useful in guiding their work.

The research findings which address this research question are congruent with many of the existing research findings that were presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis. This body of work collectively indicates that transition into adulthood can be a complicated process for young people with AEN (e.g. McGinty and Fish, 1992), and usually involves a range of people working together to support this process, including parents and professionals (e.g. Kohler et al, 2003; Dee, 2006; Dewson 2005). The findings also support the view that the inclusion of young people with AEN in mainstream schools, may be complex and potentially reduce young people's and parents' access to appropriately supported planning and support throughout the transition period (Katsiannis et al, 2005), and may prove challenging for organisations to address effectively (Keahne et al, 2009). The research findings from this study contribute to the existing knowledge on the facilitating factors involved in

transition, as many of the factors identified in this study, such as the importance of parental involvement and involvement of the Connexions PA were also identified in the key studies explored in the review (e.g. Dewson et al, 2004, Polat 2001, & Ward et al, 2003).

Key barriers were identified as:

- **Restricted pupil engagement with available support and services:** Pupil engagement with the Connexions Service emerged as limited in this context, from their perspective.
- **Understanding in regard to the role of the Connexions PA:** The pupils did not communicate a good understanding of the role of the Connexions PA, in relation to how it this may be able to support them.
- **Parental understanding of the SEN framework:** Parents were not considered to have a good understanding of the framework of SEN support used in the school, and what this might mean for their child.
- **Parental involvement:** There were reportedly low levels of parental involvement with transition planning work. Parental reluctance to contribute to the current study might be seen as a further indicator of their disinclination to play an active role in contributing to transition support.
- **Outside agencies' engagement with pupils:** The input of outside agency involvement was not recognised by the young people and there was no clear framework in place to outline their role in this work clearly to the young people.
- **Training needs:** The Connexions PA had limited training in the area of additional educational needs.

- **Limited opportunities:** There were limited opportunities in the school's sixth form to cater for young people with AEN.
- **Pupil engagement:** The young people showed poor engagement with the transition planning process, which may be related to their additional needs.

The Audit Commission (2002) highlighted a range of factors that can influence whether or not a child receives a Statement of SEN, and the findings of the current study suggest that similar factors, including most significantly the role of parents, can impact on the quality of transition support a child receives. Dewson et al (2005) and Ward et al (2003) highlight how, in their research, parents suggested that they had not received enough information on transition. The findings of the present study indirectly suggest that this may be the case in this setting, particularly if parents do not actively seek such information out from the school, which it also seems they do not, within this context.

The literature review also drew attention to potential difficulties in the framework outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001) in regard to the high expectations regarding pupils' capacity to engage independently with the level of thinking and planning expected early in the transition planning process. The findings of this research support the view that this is an area of concern, as the pupil participants were not meaningfully engaged in the transition planning process; this highlights the need for the further development of support to strengthen pupils' active participation in this process.

The findings of this study also add to the concerns raised by the work of Dockrell et al (2007), Ward et al (2007) and Grove and Giraud-Saunders (2003), the work of whom considers the role requirements of the Connexions PA in transition support for pupils with AEN/SEN. This literature highlights the lack of training in additional educational needs available to Connexions PAs and the potential impact this could have on the quality of support available to young people with additional educational needs. This study extends this finding within the focus mainstream setting, where the PA also did not have any specialist training in this area of AEN/SEN.

Clear protocols for multi-agency working were identified in the literature review as useful in special school settings (Kaehne et al, 2009). In this research within a mainstream context, such a protocol did not appear to be in place. However multi-agency working emerged as beneficial from the perspectives of staff: the further development of coherent multi-agency support pathways is therefore suggested by this study as a key area for development.

I acknowledge the influence that the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 had on the focus on my study, its methodology, and the methods adopted. For instance this is evident in the conceptual orientation of this study, towards recognising the influence of contextual and ecological factors on transition planning and support experiences. I am aware that in choosing to adopt this ecological orientation, I opted not to focus in on the potential differential impact of specific types of additional educational needs on transition experiences and/or outcomes: a position that is reflected in my choice of research questions. The possibility that differing types of additional needs have

differential impacts on transition experiences and outcomes is acknowledged (as suggested by Dewson et al, 2005); however, this was not a focus of the current study.

Research Question 2: What are the transition planning and support experiences of students with additional educational needs (including those at School Action Plus and those with statements)?

Key findings: There were clear distinctions in the extent to which the descriptions of transition support provided by the young people and school staff aligned with the "holistic, supportive evolving and collaborative" framework outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). The identified discrepancies highlight the very different subjective experiences of this process, of the different respondents: in particular the fact that staff accounts were in many instances more positive than those of the students suggests that the universal entitlement to high quality, responsive support may remain elusive for some of the young people, at least, and that there exists a gap between the espoused theory and theory in action of the staff members (Agyris and Schön, 1974).

Key findings from staff narratives: The Staff perspective that emerged suggested that longitudinal transition planning and support was provided to pupils over an extended period of time, guided by the transition framework outlined within the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001). Staff had reported that this support could include the involvement of professionals from a range of outside agencies and always utilised the Connexions PA as a central figure. Staff felt that parental involvement was limited, but beneficial when it did take place, investing responsibility for developing parental

involvement within the transition planning process in the Connexions PA. School staff described how young people with Statements were prioritised, but asserted that mechanisms were in place to cater for young people with AEN without a statement when they considered that this was required or it was requested by a parent.

The staff perspectives which emerged in this study were positive about the work of the Connexions PA, adding to the research base that generally indicates that despite specified concerns (for instance in relation to training and Service capacity) there is genuine regard for, and positive appraisal of the role of the Connexions PA in supporting transition planning for young people with additional educational needs (e.g. Grove & Giraud-Saunders, 2003; Dockrell et al, 2007). The findings of the present study indicated a need for the further development of the Connexions PA's role in supporting transition for the students who were consulted in the research process.

Staff accounts of young people's experiences were positioned from a third party perspective as they themselves had not "lived" the transition experience as a pupils with additional educational needs. Inevitably therefore, staff narratives do not answer this research question directly, but provide interesting complementary insight into the views of people responsible for, and closely involved in the process, on what they believe to be the nature of the pupils' lived experiences.

Key findings from the pupil narratives: Pupils' descriptions of their transition planning experiences were fairly limited, suggesting that these young people did not

view themselves as actively engaged with a meaningful transition planning process. Several of them described one or more meetings with a Connexions PA in which they had discussed options or done some research, but they did not describe any plan that had been developed or discuss attendance at a transition review meeting. They were not able to describe in any detail what their plans were in regard to transition planning over the final few months in school. The narratives of the young people further support the concerns highlighted within the literature (e.g. the study by Ward et al (2003), within a special school setting), in regard to the overall quality and nature of transition support provided for AEN pupils. Within the current study, pupil reports suggest that the formal mechanisms outlined in the SEN Code of Practice, may not always take place within this mainstream setting.

Overall, the concerns raised in the literature review in regard to a lack of meaningful participation by young people with additional needs (e.g. Heslop et al, 2002) is strongly supported by the pupil perspectives in this study. Recommendations for the development of methods which can better ensure more meaningful participation by young people with additional needs in the transition planning process therefore feature in my discussion of implications for practice, outlined in Section 5.3.

Research Question 3: How do young people feel about their transition and the planning and support that they have experienced in school?

Key findings: Overall, the young people expressed some anxieties relating to their transition, such as anxiety associated with the perceived pressure to gain the grades they needed to achieve, as well as anxieties about the expectations and changes

they may face after leaving school. The young people had not articulated strong views about the transition planning and support that they had experienced, since, as noted above, there was little to suggest that they had engaged actively with the process. They did not articulate well developed understanding about what their post-16 options might be. Despite the fact that staff stated the positive role that they believed outside agencies played in supporting transition planning, this was not reflected in the narratives of the young people.

These findings support the view that the process of transition can contribute to a change in the way in which young people view themselves (Dee, 2006) and that this should be considered during the transition process. The pupils' descriptions of their feelings of anxiety and uncertainty are congruent with the finding in the literature that transition can be an unsettling time for young people with AEN (Heslop et al, 2002); none of the participants indicated that these feelings had been discussed or addressed. However, the young people's narratives did not suggest that they experienced their transition planning as too public or overly bureaucratic, as suggested by the research of Dee (2006).

I am mindful that the method I used to gain the perspectives of the pupils will have been influential in determining the quality of data elicited in order to address research questions 2 and 3. A detailed reflection and critical discussion of my chosen method (semi-structured interviews) and the quality of the application of the method is provided in Section 5.2.

Research Question 4: Within the support available for young people with additional needs as they approach transition, how do a Connexions PA, SENCo and a teacher endeavour to support young people, and what are their respective experiences of the support that they/other professionals provide?

Key Findings: Staff described the features of the transition planning and support package in school, as comprising a combination of: early identification, transition review meetings, regular access to a Connexions PA (including the completion of a Section 139a report if required), involvement of outside agencies as appropriate, and opportunities to gain further information, as relevant from visiting service providers from a number of agencies. The SENCo and teacher saw their roles as primarily relating to sharing information with the Connexions PA and supporting her work as necessary; they did not consider that they themselves had a specified role within the transition planning process.

There were some mixed views within the reviewed literature in regard to the usefulness and utility of the Section 139a assessments completed by Connexions Personal Advisors for pupils with additional educational needs (e.g. Dockrell, 2007; Rowland-Crosby et al, 2002). However in this context, the staff reported that this was a useful process for Statemented pupils, which was able to inform post-16 providers about pupils' individual support needs; so useful did they consider this process that they had extended its use to include some pupils at School Action Plus, where they considered that this would be beneficial. The findings in the current study do not reflect the concerns raised by Dewson et al (2003) in regard to the specific vulnerability of non-statemented pupils with a BESD; however, as noted previously,

my research design may not have been sensitive to any such trend since little consideration was given to the specific nature of the four pupils' needs.

5.2 Methodological Reflections

As a researcher it is important to recognise the limitations of the chosen design, methods and their application. Although confident that the process of discussing my interview schedule with the SENCo and using the first interview as a pilot went a significant way to ensuring the credibility and validity of the narratives elicited from the pupils through the semi-structured interview process, I am mindful that these young people had additional needs which may have influenced their communicative capacities to varying degrees. Researchers working with young witnesses and young people with learning disabilities and speech, language and communication needs recognise the importance of modifying interview techniques in order to elicit young people's views and perspectives with fidelity and the maximum level of detail that is feasible. Researchers (e.g. Bull, 1992; Lewis, 2009; Lewis and Lindsay 2000; Lewis and Porter 2007) have identified the ways in which increased validity and reliability of accounts elicited from young people, including those with additional educational needs may be achieved. Some of the key techniques suggested by Lewis (2009) and heavily influenced by the earlier work of Bull, (1992) are outlined below:

- permitting/encouraging 'don't know' responses and requests for clarification -
There is evidence that encouraging children explicitly to say that they do not know the 'answer' or do not understand a question is valuable, especially when exploring more abstract concepts;

- stressing that the interviewer does not know the answers to the questions she poses, in order to counter the child's assumption that the adult knows the answer;
- use of statements requiring comparisons, instead of questions - using statements to elicit responses, rather than direct questions has been shown to be valuable;
- Use of repeat questions – research has indicated that there can be value in repeating the focus of an open question in gaining a full and accurate response from children with learning difficulties. However, care needs to be taken when so doing to avoid connoting that the child's earlier responses were unsatisfactory in some way.
- use of successive prompts – Successive prompting may lead to inaccurate information being given if the young people feel that they need to “fill in” the details, as there is potential that they may misinterpret this as a desire for additional or alternative information.
- accepting children's right to silence – It is important to respect the fact that in some situations children may decide that they do not wish to express their views. This was explained by Lewis and Porter (2007) as follows: *“We need to recognise the choice of a child to be silent but also recognise that silence gives a message of its own that we should hear.”* Lewis and Porter 2007: 230.

Researchers who have specifically sought to explore the views of young people with speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) have been informed by the research in this field (such as the application of the techniques described above) to

greater and lesser degrees in their endeavour to gain accurate information for young people with a range of communication needs. Some pieces of research which aim to gain the views of this population (e.g. Durkin et al 2009) have done so without explicit recognition of how the young peoples' specific language impairments may have impacted on their capacity to accurately gain their perspective on their post-school progress, although in Durkin et al's study (2009) this was to some degree implicitly communicated in the paper in their use of very simple questions requiring only "yes" or "no" or other very basic responses from the participants. This may mean that although their responses may be accurate the young people may not have been given the opportunity to communicate their full range of views on the topic matter. In a further study by Palikara et al (2009) which again sought to gain the views of young people with a history of speech, language and communication needs they stress from the outset the importance of the need for the voices of young people to be heard in relation to their experiences, and again recognise some of the difficulties in undertaking the task of eliciting valid responses through the application of appropriate methods. They again attempted to overcome these challenges through the use of using both structured and unstructured formats, which they argue provided an appropriate balance between consistency of data collection as well as providing an opportunity for the young people to explore issues. Prompts were also used to support young people in providing responses.

An example of researchers more fully applying their understanding of the research in this area is presented in the work of Carroll and Dockrell (2010) who sought to explore the post-16 academic, employment and social outcomes of young people

with specific language impairments. In their work they were able to apply interview techniques incorporating both open and closed questions in order to explore narratives in relation to a range of issues and their techniques were directly informed by research on interviewing young people with a range of communication difficulties. The researchers are clear in their article that the research literature directed them to ensure that the language was accessible a summary of interview topics was provided before hand and the young people were permitted to take breaks and seek clarification during the interview process.

In this study I was able to demonstrate some of the methods that have been used by other researchers eliciting the views of young people with learning and communication difficulties. For instance the fact that, prior to its use with young people, the draft interview schedule was discussed with the SENCo, and her formative feedback requested, offered reassurance that the language used would be accessible to my participants. During the interview process I applied some of the techniques described by Lewis (2009) such as encouraging pupils to seek clarification, reassuring them that there was not any prescribed correct answer, and also accepting silences.

I consider that the validity and credibility of the narratives elicited from the pupil participants may have been strengthened by providing them with a written summary of the interview topics during my initial introductory session (during which I introduced the research orally, and provided a written information sheet about the study), and by

further use of some of the techniques described by Lewis (2009) during the interviews.

The methods used in this study have enabled me to illuminate the reported experiences and perspectives of young people with additional educational needs and the adults working to support them, within a given context. The process of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006) supported exploration of these perspectives in a thorough and systematic way relevant to the research questions. I will now introduce the potential implications for practice emerging from the research findings.

5.3 Implications for practice

Many of the research findings presented have a range of potential implications for practice in the setting in which the research took place, and these potential implications for consideration are highlighted in the table 5.1. The research findings and the range of implications arising from it will be discussed with school staff in order to promote continuing development.

Table 5.1: Potential implications for practice:

Research finding	Implications for Practice
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. There is a gap between the espoused theory (described by the staff) and theory in action (described by the pupils) in regard to transition planning and support provided in school. 2. There is no explicit framework articulating the purpose and role of outside agencies and professionals in the post-16 transition planning for young people with AEN 3. A) The Connexions PA is positioned as the key figure in transition planning, and is highly valued by other staff, but is not highly valued by the young people with additional needs. B) There are no indications that the Connexions PA had any formal training in AEN to inform her work with this population of young people. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School to aim to achieve greater congruence between espoused theory and theory in action in relation to transition planning and support. - School, in partnership with external services to develop a framework to guide the involvement of outside agencies and professionals in transition planning work. - Develop and support young people's understanding of the purpose and role of the Connexions Personal Advisor in school in supporting their transition planning. - School to provide access to professional development opportunities to support the Connexions PA's capacity to support pupils with a range of additional educational needs. In-school PAs to receive support and supervision from colleagues with specialist expertise in the field of AEN (for instance supervision from or collaboration with an EP).

<p>4. The high level of learning support provided to the AEN pupils throughout school is not reflected in appropriately targeted preparatory work or support during the transition planning. As a result the young people's involvement in their transition planning is neither as active nor meaningful as it could be.</p> <p>5. Despite the fact that parental involvement can have a considerable impact on the level of support that a child receives, parental involvement in transition planning is poor and evidence suggests they do not have a good understanding of the SEN Code of Practice or the framework of support that should be available for transition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School to increase the focus on delivering high-level holistic and long-term support for young people with additional educational needs, with a key focus on transition and beyond. - School staff to consider how to promote and encourage the active participation of young people in a collaborative process of enquiry and decision-making in regard to their transition. - School to place greater emphasis on and actively encourage the involvement of parents in transition planning, and actively seeking their views. - To develop clear pathways for sharing information on the SEN Code of Practice and the framework of transition support used in school to share with parents, beginning no later than the final Key Stage 3 annual review to ensure transition planning is considered in a timely manner.
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<p>6. Several of the young people voiced a preference to stay on in their 6th form, despite there not being opportunities for them to do so because of their expected low level of attainment.</p> <p>7. The school does not appear to evaluate, elicit or receive feedback on their delivery of transition planning and support. This absence of feedback is likely to contribute to ongoing patterns of practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - School to re-consider their responsibilities in regard to providing post -16 provision for vulnerable AEN pupils, within the school's own sixth form - The development of mechanisms to ensure the school is provided with reliable, multi-perspectives feedback on the transition planning and support frameworks in place, to contribute to ongoing improvements to practice in this area. This should include the perspectives of young people and their parents.
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5.4 Final Conclusions

5.4.1 Summary: The findings of this study have addressed a series of research questions, illuminating the transition planning and support experiences of young people with additional educational needs within a mainstream setting.

The findings have not only addressed the specific research questions as described in section 5.1 , but they have also been linked with an existing theoretical framework as described in chapters 4.4 and 4.5. Links have also been made with the existing literature that was presented in chapter 2. As a result a range of pertinent issues in regard to the area of enquiry have been highlighted for consideration both within this setting and beyond.

Overall, the findings of this study suggest that in the specific context which formed the focus of the research, the contributions to, experiences of and outcomes of transition planning and support experiences of young people with additional educational needs in their mainstream school, were not simply a function of their own attributes and needs, but rather were mediated both directly and indirectly by features of the systemic landscape of which they were at the heart. Key mediating factors included the quality of the interactions with key members of staff including the SENCo and the school's Connexions Personal Advisor and the level of active involvement of their parents. There was a clear indication that the role of the Connexions PA was valued in school, but considerable areas for development of this role emerged which if addressed could support them in meeting the needs of this

population. The quality of the involvement of parents also formed an area of considerable development.

Indirect influences operating via the staff and school systems were also identified as impacting on the young people's experiences. For instance influence of the transition framework outlined in the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2003), emerged as guiding key aspects of the school's work, despite there being no clear mechanism for reviewing the quality of the application of this framework in securing positive long term outcomes for young people.

The training and further education opportunities available to this population also influenced the trajectory of their planning and support; most significantly the work highlighted the limited options for low attaining students in their current school's sixth form despite a message from two of the four the young people that this would be their preferred route.

Another key feature of the research findings is the evident gap between the services described by the staff as compared with the narratives of the young people in regard to their experiences. This is interpreted as potentially indicative of a gap between the espoused theory described by the staff and the theory in action described by the young people as outlined in Argyris and Schon's Theory of Action (1974).

Overall, these research findings address a significant gap in the literature, which, despite highlighting the impact of individual and contextual factors in relation to

transition in special schools, had failed to fully consider the adequacy of support for children with additional educational needs in mainstream settings with a range of additional educational needs. This study suggests that many of the key findings highlighted in chapter 2, relating to young people in special schools also applied to this mainstream population, although further research would be required in order to develop and test this theory further.

More generally the research links with the existing models of transition introduced in chapter 2 (and described in table 2.1). The findings highlight how the schools current approach aligned itself most with the phase related model of transition, which sees transition as a single point in time and which makes implicit assumptions about the expected trajectories of young people's development. However, the findings also indicate that post-16 transition for young people within additional educational needs may be better described with reference to time related and agency models of transition. These models take a more ecological perspective in recognising the impact of influences beyond the individual child, such as societal influences (e.g. the marginalisation of those with disabilities) and which recognise that transition is part of a life long journey, therefore advocating consideration of a perspective that looks beyond the school gate.

The key findings have been considered and implications for practice identified and described, in order to contribute to the effective development of the services that the school of focus provides to its young people with additional educational needs. The findings can also be considered as contributing an additional dimension to the

existing literature in this area; a body of work which collectively highlight key areas for consideration for schools who may decide to consider the ways in which they addresses the transition needs of young people with AEN.

5.4.2 Theoretical and analytical generalisation

This study explored the transition experiences of several young people as well as considering the perspectives of the staff involved in supporting them. In the current study, my identity as a psychologist with several years of experience of working within the host local authority contributed to a strong practitioner orientation. This was further strengthened by the informed knowledge of the topic under investigation that I had abstracted from the process of critically reviewing relevant literature on the area of enquiry. This position supported me in meeting the three broad principles for assisting the quality of qualitative psychological research, described by Yardley (2000) as:

- sensitivity to the context;
- commitment, rigour, transparency and coherence; and
- impact and importance.

These principles were met specifically through my endeavours to ensure clarity of planning and in my description of the study design. I also ensured that this clarity was maintained both in the process of analysis and in the reporting of my findings. This included providing an outline of all stages of the data analysis process, and the combined use of inductive and deductive analysis in order to maximise prospects of

capturing the subjective impact of the transition process on those whom it is intended to support.

Following the recognition of the influence of systemic factors emerging from the research base addressed in my literature review, it was considered appropriate to consider systemic perspectives as part of the analytic process (described in chapter 3.6.6). More specifically the theory developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979 & 2010) was used as a conceptual lens through which my data could be considered, alongside my inductive phase of analysis. The purpose of this approach was to identify if my findings were able to contribute to this existing theory.

In applying this rigorous approach, including a second phase of deductive analysis, I was able to highlight that the findings did map well on to this systemic model and enabled me to draw attention to the particular systemic influences on transition planning experiences. In particular it highlighted the relevant features of the research findings in relation to the person, process, context and time model, as described in Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (2005).

Through the application of this process I have therefore been able to make clear links between my research findings, an existing theory and body of research, through providing rich accounts from the research context; and in doing so I aimed to aid the reader to make informed judgements about the applicability of my findings to other contexts. Morse (1999) argues that knowledge gained from qualitative data derived from small scale, subjectivist studies is not limited to demographic variables; it is the

fit to the topic or the comparability of the problem that is of concern. Therefore, if the benchmarks of Yardley (2000) and Morse (1999) are applied then claims of analytical and theoretical generalisation can be made.

5.4.3 Ethical considerations and limitations of the research

It is necessary to elaborate upon some of the principal ethical challenges of the study. I found that some of the areas of discussion with the young people were constrained by my own concern to avoid raising their anxiety levels or causing distress in regard to their imminent transitions. This meant that the level of probing in regard to those aspects of transition planning identified as not taking place was limited, and the questions were deliberately general. This meant that distress was avoided, but the level of specificity I was able to extract from pupil's responses about what they had or hadn't experienced was more restricted than I would've liked. It is possible that this could offer some explanation for the more general nature of the pupil narratives that emerged the interpretation of which has been a difference in espoused theory and theory in action. The inability to probe pupils in more detail in regard to their experiences is therefore recognised as a limitation of this study. Another limitation of this research was not being able to secure the participation of parents, and I was disappointed that I was unable to do so when they each indicated that they did not wish to take part. This meant that I was unable to include their perspectives in this work. I consider this to be a key area for future research; especially in light of the fact that parental involvement was highlighted in the literature review and in my findings as a key influencing factor in transition planning and support experiences for young people with additional educational needs.

5.4.4 Emerging policy and economic context

During the planning and writing of this research a general election led to a change from a Labour government to a coalition Conservative/Liberal Democrat government in May 2010. This change was accompanied by proposals of widespread reform within public services and education: changes which, at the time of writing (August 2011) are beginning to be implemented. For instance a comprehensive spending review has resulted in significant cuts within the public sector, impacting directly in the Connexions Service. Further, the professional roles of support services involved in supporting young people with Special Educational Needs, have been considered as part of a review conducted by the Coalition Government into provision of services for young people with special educational needs (SEN). This Green Paper "Support and Aspiration: A New Approach to Special Education and Disability" (DfE, 2011) outlines a range of proposed changes to the current SEN system, which could potentially impact significantly on the future role that the Connexions Service play in support for post-16 transition of pupils with SEN. The most pertinent developments which may follow on from the 2011 SEN Green Paper include the following:

- the government will trial personal budgets for young people with SEN so that parents have greater freedom in choosing support and provision;
- special schools will be further endorsed and parents and teachers will be encouraged to set up Free Schools to provide some of this provision;
- there is a proposal to establish a new, single 'Education and Health Care Plan' for individuals; following a new streamlined assessment process (this indicates changes to the current Statutory Assessment process and 'statement'); and

- targeted funding will be made available to voluntary and community sector organisations to support this area of work.

In relation to transition, the Green Paper recognises the challenges faced by young people with additional educational needs (AEN) as they approach transition, as is reflected in the inclusion of a chapter entitled “Preparing for Adulthood” (Chapter 4). Here, the authors describe how *“Too often the opportunities and support available to disabled young people and young people with SEN fall short of what they need to make a successful transition to adult life.”* (p.80). They propose that identified shortcomings within the current system of support (including support not being focussed on young people’s ambitions for adulthood, limited choices, poor quality work experience, and poorly coordinated support) need to be addressed, and suggest this may be achieved in the following ways:

- early and well-integrated support for, and advice on, their future as part of the proposed birth-to-25 single assessment process and ‘Education, Health and Care Plan’, spanning education, health, social care, and support into employment;
- access to better quality vocational and work-related learning options to enable young people to progress in their learning post-16;
- good opportunities and support in order to secure and keep a job; and
- a well-coordinated transition from children’s to adult health services, and contingent exploration of the feasibility of annual health checks from GPs for all disabled young people from the age of 16.

(Taken from: DfE, 2011 p.11)

Despite the fact that the Green Paper (DfE, 2011) recognises the value of a range of transition projects that have taken place nationally, and supports the continued development of work in this area, it does not mention the Connexions Service or the role of Connexions PAs specifically. This could be a tacit indication that the government believes that this type of work could potentially be taken on by alternative providers, including those within the voluntary and community sectors. This potentially leaves Connexions PAs vulnerable in regard to their current statutory function of supporting young people with Statements of SEN.

The outcome of the Governments' spending review also appears to reflect this changing position in regard to the role of Connexions. Many council budgets have been significantly reduced and this has resulted in contingent significant cuts in Connexions Service budgets across the country, resulting in job cuts and impacting on service delivery. At the point of writing (August 2011) one of the Connexions offices within the county of Westshire where the research took place has been identified for closure, and 23 posts, including 17.3 Personal Advisors posts, are under threat of redundancy. More widely Connexions no longer has responsibility for tracking young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) post-16.

These changes raise significant questions about how the vital work led by Connexions Services in the recent past will be completed if this service is no longer available to support the most vulnerable pupils as they approach the all-important transitions from childhood to young adulthood, within the lifespan developmental process. This potential loss is worthy of note, in light of the high value placed on

the service by school professionals within the current study.

Moreover, if an established statutory service did not make a notable impact from the pupils' perspectives, or succeed in engaging parental participation, there may be grounds for concern as to whether these challenging role requirements will be better realised by more diffused services, if responsibilities to indeed transfer from Connexions Services.

5.4.5 Implications of the research findings for educational psychologists (EPs)

My search of the literature produced no accounts describing collaborative working between educational psychologists and Connexions, although anecdotal accounts from EP colleagues indicate that collaborative working in schools does sometimes take place (for instance through EPs' and Connexions PAs' joint attendance at transition review meetings). It is therefore important to consider the ways in which the research findings could be used to inform, enhance and develop this area of educational psychology practice.

Educational psychologists are regularly involved with supporting the transition of young people with additional educational needs (AEN) through transitions from pre-school settings into primary settings, and from primary into secondary settings. This area of EP work is more widely reported (e.g. Qualter et al. 2007) and the potential negative impact of transition from primary to secondary school is widely considered (e.g. Anderson et al, 2000). This indicates an existing skills base within the

profession which could be developed and applied to the area of supporting post-16 transition work.

Accepted dimensions of the EP role described within a range of literature (e.g. Farrell et al, 2006) include research & evaluation, assessment and intervention, training, systems level working, multi-agency working and consultation. Each of these dimensions of the professional role could potentially be applied and developed to support and enhance the transition support experiences of young people with additional educational needs into post-16 provision, through addressing pertinent aspects of the research findings.

Several key issues emerging from current research, which could be addressed through the application of EP skills, include:

- Supporting and developing the engagement of parents;
- increasing the quality of pupils engagement and participation and;
- supporting the role of Connexions PAs via training and supervision.

Table 5.2 highlights in more detail the range of ways in which EPs could potentially transfer, develop and apply their various areas of knowledge and skill to address each of these identified key areas, emerging from this research. This would provide opportunities to begin to develop post-16 transition work as a more embedded area of professional practice and research within the profession, and allow us to contribute further to supporting and securing the positive long term outcomes of young people with additional educational needs.

Table 5.2 Potential EP contribution to this area of work

Area of development	Potential EP Contribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the engagement of parents in the transition planning process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with school staff in regard to increasing parental engagement. Consultation with parents, including home visits. Facilitating joint meetings and supporting attendance at transition review meeting. Facilitating the sharing of information. Supporting parents in communicating their views at meetings in school.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing the quality of pupils' engagement and participation in transition planning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consultation with school staff in regard to increasing the quality of pupil participation e.g. consideration of the application of the ladder of participation (Hart, 1992). Individual work with young people with AEN to help them to explore their options, for instance through the application of solution-focussed approaches (Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995). Advocating for and encouraging the attendance of pupils at their transition review meetings and supporting them in communicating their views. Group work with young people exploring feelings towards transition and planning for a successful transition.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting the work of the Connexions PAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing training in regard to a range of additional/special educational needs and their impact. Providing training on effective interviewing of pupils with AEN (informed for example by Lewis et al, 2009 and Bull, 1992). Supervising Connexions PAs' or facilitating the development of a model of group supervision between PAs.

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APPENDIX 1:

List of Databases and Keywords Used for the Literature Search

List of Databases

- Sage Full-Text Collection (Education and Psychology)
- ASSIA (applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts)
- Elsevier
- Medline
- JSTOR
- Social Science Research Network
- Ingenta Connect
- Informaworld
- Science Direct
- Springer
- ERIC
- Wiley Inter-Science

Key words and search terms used in isolation and combination:

- Transition
- Transition support
- Transition planning
- Transition policy and guidance
- Post-16 transition
- Special educational needs and transition
- SEN Code of Practice & transition
- Parental involvement & transition
- Multi-agency working and transition
- Connexions & special educational needs
- Connexions & transition
- Connexions Personal Advisor & Special Educational Needs
- Pupil involvement & transition
- Pupil views & transition
- NEET
- Not in education, employment or training and Special Educational Needs

APPENDIX 2: Public Domain Briefing

Public Domain Briefing

<p><u>An exploration of the transition planning experiences of young people with additional educational needs, as they consider their post-16 plans</u></p>
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Context: This research was conducted within the supervised professional practice component of the curriculum of my programme of postgraduate professional training in Applied Educational and Child Psychology at the University of Birmingham. On completion of my training I will be qualified to practise as an Educational Psychologist.

The study was completed with the support and agreement of Westshire County Council's Educational Psychology Service which has employed me as a Trainee Educational Psychologist during the final two years of this training course.

Introduction: There has been much research exploring the transition needs of young people in the general population and for those with learning difficulties and complex needs who have been educated within specialist settings. However, limited attention has been paid to young people with additional needs who are educated within mainstream schools, although the complexities of transition processes for this is beginning to be recognised (e.g. Kaehne et al, 2008).

The broad aims of my own study were:

- to provide an insight into the experiences of transition support in school for pupils with additional educational needs;
- to explore the views of professionals who directly support this area of work in schools; and
- To identify any impact of having a Statement of SEN, cf. having needs and provisions specified within a School Action Plus Individual Plan (IEP) on transition support experiences.

The study sought to address the following research questions:

5. What are the facilitators and barriers to effective transition planning to support transition to further education, training or work for young people with an additional educational need, within this mainstream educational setting?
6. What are the transition planning and support experiences of students with educational needs (including those at School Action Plus and those with statements)?

7. How do young people feel about their transition and the planning and support that they have experienced in school?
8. Within this support available for young people with additional needs as they approach transition, how do a Connexions PA, SENCo and a teacher endeavour to support young people, and what are their respective experiences of the support that they/other professionals provide?

Methodology:

As a researcher I was interested in how people make sense of, interpret and construct their experiences and sought a research methodology which afforded value to these individual narratives. This research perspective is often referred to as “Interpretivist” or “Constructivist”. In this study, I was interested in exploring and interpreting how individuals involved in transition planning made sense of their individual experiences and in doing so, acknowledged that individuals were likely to do this in different ways.

Research Sample:

I was able to elicit feedback from:

- 2 Year 11 pupils with a Statement of SEN
- 2 Year 11 pupils at School Action Plus of the SEN Code of Practice.
- 1 secondary school SENCo
- 1 school- based Connexions Personal Advisor (PA)
- 1 teacher involved in teaching all 4 pupils.

All seven participants attended or worked in the same Westshire high school.

I had been keen to engage the parents of the four Year 11 pupils in the study, but I was unable to secure their participation.

Data Collection:

The data for this study were collected using semi-structured interviews, which involve having a set of pre-prepared questions, with prompts and further questions incorporated during the interview, with the intention of developing a conversational approach with the interviewees. The purpose of this method is to support the participants in sharing rich accounts of their experiences and narratives.

Ethical Considerations:

This research was given full ethical approval from the Ethics Committee at the University of Birmingham with Particular attention was given to securing freely given informed consent and ensuring anonymity and confidentiality.

Method of Analysis:

The method used to analyse the data collected in this study is known as thematic analysis (Braun et al, 2006). This involved transcribing the interviews and subjecting them to qualitative analysis where you look for themes within each person's narratives and within the respondent data sets (i.e. common with the four pupils, shared by the three adults and any shared trends across the data set as a whole.)

Key findings:

The key findings arising emerging form this research include:

Positive Findings:

- When parents are informed and involved in transition planning they can have a positive influence on the process.
- The Connexions PA is in a position to be a key facilitator in this work with young people with additional educational needs.
- The school building and existing school systems can act as a base for transition work to take place, for instance through meetings and assemblies.
- Staff perceived the contribution of and value of the contribution of outside agencies positively in relation to transition planning work.
- The SEN Code of Practice outlines an existing framework for transition planning that your school consider to be useful in guiding their work.

Areas for Development:

- Pupil engagement with the Connexions service emerged as somewhat limited from their perspective, and there are potential areas for development with this role, including for instance:
 - specific training on additional needs; and
 - developing pupils understanding of the role.
- Parents do not always have a good understanding of the framework of SEN support used in school, and what this might mean for their child and this may be linked with low levels of parental involvement in transition planning.
- There are limited opportunities in the schools sixth form to cater for young people with AEN, despite the fact that several said they would like to stay on there.
- There is no explicit framework articulating the purpose and role of outside agencies and professionals in the post-16 transition planning for young people with AEN.
- More generally the young people expressed some anxieties relating to their transition, associated to the grades they needed to achieve and the changes they may face and what new expectations of them may be.
- Young people did not articulate strong views about the transition planning and support that they had experienced, as they did not come across as actively engaged with the process.

From these findings it has been possible to identify for areas that you may chose to address or develop as a school, and I have listed some of these below:

- School, in partnership with external services to develop a framework to guide the involvement of outside agencies and professionals in transition planning work.
- Develop and support young people's understanding of the purpose and role of the Connexions Personal Advisor in school in supporting their transition planning.
- School to provide access to professional development opportunities to support the Connexions PA's capacity to support pupils with a range of additional educational needs. In-school PAs to receive support and supervision from colleagues with specialist expertise in the field of AEN (for instance supervision from an EP).

- School to increase the focus on delivering high-level holistic and long-term support for young people with additional educational needs, with a key focus on transition and beyond.
- School staff to consider how to promote and encourage the active participation of young people in a collaborative process of enquiry and decision-making in regard to their transition.
- School to place greater emphasis on and actively encourage the involvement of parents in transition planning, and actively seeking their views.
- To develop clear pathways for sharing information on the SEN Code of Practice and the framework of transition support used in school to share with parents, beginning no later than the final Key Stage 3 annual review to ensure transition planning is considered in a timely manner.

Appendix 3: Participant information sheets

Research Information Sheet – Pupils

Thank you for considering taking part in my research project.

The Research: I want to find out what it is like to plan for leaving school when you have a Special Educational Need. I want to know about how you are finding things and what you think could be done better.

Who is doing the research?

My name is Helen. I am Trainee Psychologist. For some of my time I study at university.

Do I have to take part?

- No. Taking part in this project is voluntary. This means that you can choose if you would like to take part or not.
- If you do not want to take part you do not have to.
- You can decide to stop taking part at any time.
- You are being asked to take part, because you will be leaving school soon.
- I would like to gain your views by conducting an interview with you.

What will taking part involve?

If you decide you would like to take part you need sign the consent form and give it to Mrs XXX who will return it to me. You will then be told a date and time to meet me for your interview in school.

What will happen then?

- I will ask you what you hope to do when you leave school and how your school is helping you to make plans.
- All the information from the interview that you share will be kept confidential. This means that no one will be able to see it
- All of the information will be anonymised which means that no details about you will be recorded.
- As the researcher I will be the only person who has access to the information that you provide.

What are the potential benefits to taking part?

The information you give me will help to make plans so that other young people in the future with being able to get good support that helps them when the time comes for them to leave school.

What if I decide that I no longer want to take part?: You are able to stop taking part in the study at anytime and all of your data will be destroyed.

What will happen with the results of this study?

This study will be written up for university and some of my teachers will see it. It will be available in the University library for several years. None of the young people, teachers or anyone else will be name in this report, everyone will be anonymous. I will also write a much shorter research report which you, your parents, and maybe other people in XXXXXXXXX (county) may be interested to read.

Who is organising this research?

This research is being completed as part of my university studies.

Research Participants Information Sheet – Parents.

Study Title: An investigation to the experiences of young people in a mainstream setting with either a Statement of SEN or at School Action Plus on the SEN Code of Practice, as they consider their post-16 plans for education, work-based training or employment.

Thank you for considering the request to part in my research project.

Researcher:

My name is Helen Tyson and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in my third year of training at The University of Birmingham and I am currently employed by XXXXXXXX County Council.

Project Aim:

The aim of this study is to explore the support that is provided for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as they make plans to leave school and enter work, college or training. I am particularly interested in the different types of support that young people with different levels of need (as outlined by the SEN Code of Practice, DfES, 2003) receive.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this project is entirely voluntary, but I would like you to consent to take part as I believe that you and your child can make an important contribution to this research. However If you or your child do not want to take part you do not have to. You are being asked to take part, because your child has an identified Special Educational Need and is currently planning their transition into further education, work or training and I would like to gain your views on this process via a short interview. I would like to gain your child's views by conducting an interview with them in school where I hope to obtain their views.

What will taking part involve?

You: If you decide to take part, you will need to read this information sheet, sign the consent form and return it to me. Once this process is complete I will contact you to arrange a time to conduct the interview that is convenient to you.

Your Child: You will also need to give your consent for your child to take part. Once I have received consent from you for your child to take part, I will also approach your child to obtain their independent consent. Once your child's consent is contained they will take part in a semi-structured interview that will take place in school. This will be recorded and then transcribed, prior to analysis.

You will be asked to answer questions about your experiences as a parent of a child with an identified SEN who is planning for further education, training or work. Your child will be asked about their plans for when they leave school and the support they have received from school and other agencies (e.g. Connexions). All the information that you and your child provide will be kept confidential at all times.

What happens if you (and/or your child) change their minds about joining the study?

You are able to stop taking part in the study at anytime and all of your data will be destroyed.

What are the potential benefits to taking part?

Although there may not be any personal benefits to you and your child from taking part in this study, you will be contributing to the potential future development in this area within Westshire.

Will taking part in this study be confidential?

Yes. All of the information that you provide will remain confidential. As the researcher I will be the only person who has access to it. All data collection and storage will be in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). No identifiable responses will be provided to third parties. Any information that emerges from the research will be described in an unattributable format.

Ethics Committee Clearance:

This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee for Human Research at the University of Birmingham.

What will happen with the results of this study?

This study will be included in my Doctoral thesis. This means that it will be accessible via the university library and will be read by several examiners. Within the Local Authority the research findings will also be shared in a shorter report. You will be given a copy of this short report.

Who is organising this research?

This research is being completed as part of my Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology, which is the professional training I am required to complete in order to practice as an Educational Psychologist. It has been negotiated with XXXXXX Country Council who employ me as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and is supervised by my tutor at The University of Birmingham.

Research Participants Information Sheet - Staff

Study Title: An investigation of the experiences of young people in a mainstream setting with either a Statement of SEN or at School Action Plus on the SEN Code of Practice, as they consider their post-16 plans for education, work-based training or employment.

Thank you for considering taking part in my research project.

Researcher:

My name is Helen Tyson and I am a Trainee Educational Psychologist in my third year of training at The University of Birmingham and I am currently employed by XXXXXXXXX County Council.

Project Aim:

The aim of this study is to explore the support that is provided for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) as they make plans to leave school and enter work, college or training. I am particularly interested in the different types of support that young people with different levels of need (as outlined by the SEN Code of Practice, DfES, 2003) receive.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this project is entirely voluntary and I would like you to consent to take part as I believe that you can make an important contribution to this research. However If you do not want to take part you do not have to. However you are being asked to take part, because your role in school involves supporting young people who have an identified Special Educational Need and are currently planning their transition into further education, work or training. I would like to gain your views by conducting an interview with you.

What will taking part involve?

If you decide to take part I will ask you to read this information sheet, sign the consent form and return it to me. Once this process is complete I will arrange a time to meet with you and conduct the interview.

What are the potential benefits to you taking part?

Although there may not be any personal benefits to you and your child from taking part in this study, you will be contributing to the potential future development in this area within XXXXXXXXX and I hope this will benefit young people in the future.

Will taking part in this study be confidential?

Yes. All of the information that you provide will remain confidential. As the researcher I will be the only person who has access to it. All data collection and storage will be in line with the Data Protection Act (1998). No identifiable responses will be provided to third parties. Any information that emerges from the research will be described in an unattributable format at all times including when it is published as part of my Doctoral thesis and shared with the Local Authority.

Withdrawal: Should you wish you are able to stop taking part in the study at anytime and all of your data will be destroyed.

Ethics Committee Clearance:

This project has been approved by the Ethics Committee for Human Research at the University of Birmingham.

What will happen with the results of this study?

This study will be included in my Doctoral thesis. This means that it will be accessible via the university library and will be read by several examiners. Results will also be shared within the Local Authority in the form of a shorter report which you will be given a copy of.

Who is organising this research?

This research is being completed as part of my Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology, which is the professional training I am required to complete in order to practise as an Educational Psychologist. It has been negotiated with XXXXXXX Country Council who employ me as a Trainee Educational Psychologist and is supervised by my tutor at The University of Birmingham.

Appendix 4: Consent forms

Participant Consent Form (pupils):

I wish to participate in the above project about my plans for when I leave school.

I have read the information sheet and talked it through with an adult.

I understand that (Please tick each box):

- I am free to stop taking part at anytime ☐
- The information I provide will be dealt with confidentially, which means that no one will be able to see it, and i will not be identified in any way ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

If you would like to see a summary of the report when it is finished, please include your address below.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Participant Consent Form (Parent(s)):

Study Title: An investigation of the experiences of young people in a mainstream setting with either a Statement of SEN or at School Action Plus on the SEN Code of Practice, as they consider their post-16 plans for education, work-based training or employment.

I wish to participate in the above project.

I have read the participant information sheet and understand the following (Please tick each box):

- I am free to withdraw at anytime ☐
- The information I provide will be dealt with confidentially ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

I also give permission for my child to participate in this study, if they consent.

I understand the following (Please tick each box):

- My child will be informed that they have the right to withdraw at anytime ☐
- The information that my child provides will be dealt with confidentially ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

A summary of the research report can be forwarded to you in June 2011. If you would like to receive a copy of the report, please include your address below.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Participant Consent Form (Staff):

Study Title: An investigation of the experiences of young people in a mainstream setting with either a Statement of SEN or at School Action Plus on the SEN Code of Practice, as they consider their post-16 plans for education, work-based training or employment.

I wish to participate in the above project.

I have read the participant information sheet and understand the following (Please tick each box):

- I am free to withdraw at anytime ☐
- The information I provide will be dealt with confidentially ☐

Signed.....

Date.....

A summary of the research report can be forwarded to you when published in June 2011. If you would like to receive a copy of the report, please include your address below.

Name.....

Address.....

.....

Appendix 5: Interview schedules

Semi Structured Interview Schedule **Pupil Interviews**

In this schedule bullet points are used to highlight the key areas for discussion during the interview. Some but not all areas are phrased as a question on this schedule, so as to facilitate a natural questioning style and avoid the use of rote style questioning. I will ensure that the questions are asked in a developmentally appropriate manner.

Areas to cover in the interview:

Pupil Background:

- Ice-breaker questioning. About yourself: can you tell me about yourself? Hobbies, interests, who you live with etc.

Experience of school

- Best friends, favourite subjects, things you like/don't like.

Experience of SEN:

- What areas of learning/school life do you find more difficult than others? Is your school doing anything to support you with this? How? What support have you received as you have moved through school?

Plans for the future

- Are you looking forward to leaving school (why/)?
- What are you hoping to do when you leave school?
- Where will this be (college, work placement etc). How have you reached this decision?
- Can you describe your ideal experience that you hope for when you leave school?
- Do you have any worries or concerns about when you leave school? Can you tell me about this?

Experience of transition support from school and other support services:

- What support have you received in school to support planning and decision making for when you leave school? (e.g. attendance at Annual reviews? Access to Connexions workers, visiting speakers, opportunities for visits, work experience etc)
- Have you had any other help advice?
- What has been most useful/least useful in supporting your planning?
- Have you found it easy/difficult to access support so far?

Awareness of services available:

- What has helped you to with thinking about or deciding what you will do when you leave school so far (Parents, school etc)?
- Have you been told about any other services that may be available to help you with your planning this year? (when, by whom?) Are you planning to use these services? (when/how/why not etc)
- Who will you ask for support from if you find things difficult once you have left school? (Parents/Connexions/don't know etc).
- Do you know how long you will be able to receive support for once you leave school?

Areas for Improvement

- What more could your school do now to help you as you approach the end of schooling?
- If you could change anything about what has happened so far, what would you change.

Additional Information:

- Is there anything else that you would like to share about your hopes and fears for the future?

Semi Structured Interview Schedule

SENCo Interview

In this schedule bullet points are used to highlight the key areas for discussion during the interview. Some, but not all areas are phrased as a question on this schedule, so as to facilitate a natural questioning style and avoid the use of rote style questioning.

Areas to cover in the interview:

SENCo Background:

- Ice-breaker questioning. About yourself: can you tell me about your role as SENCo, how you found yourself at this school? What does the role entail?

Experience of the role

- Can you describe how you support pupils with SEN who are approaching transition?
- What are the facilitators and barriers to this type of work?
- Can you describe any differences between the support given to young people with a statement as compared to those at School Action Plus at this transition planning stage?
- Do you feel that any disparity in support is problematic?
- What do you consider the implications of this might be?
- Can you think of a concrete example where this has had a negative impact on a pupil's transition?
- Do you find it the same or more/less difficult to access support from outside agencies depending on where a student is placed on the Code of Practice?
- Do you consider that parents have an understanding on the potential implications of their child's position on the Code of Practice as he/she approaches transition?
- Have parents ever raised this as an issue? If so can you give an example of this?

Support from school and other support services:

- Do you think that transition support for young people with AEN could be improved in school, and if so how?
- What would you like to be able to offer in addition to what you do at the moment?
- Do you feel like there is could collaboration with support services in supporting the transition process? If not how do you feel this could be improved?
- Do you think services for young people/parents/carers could be improved in any other ways?
- Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the support for pupils with AEN who are approaching transition in your school?

Appendix 6: Extract of the analysis grid with details of initial codes

Theme 2: The role played by school

<u>Subthemes</u>	<u>Extract</u>	<u>Transcription Location</u>
<u>The key role of the SENCo for supporting transition planning and support for SEN pupils</u>	"We (SEN dept) tend to be more supportive in terms of helping them to identify courses, linking them up with Connexions, and obviously helping to fill in application forms and things"	<u>P1- lines 41-43</u>
	"Statemented ones are probably more generated by us (SEN dept) in terms of telling Connexions who they are".	<u>P1- lines 118-119</u>
	"Obviously what we will ensure is that primarily the Statements are sorted, but again we will be aware of the School Action Plus kids who need that extra input to say 'come on, what is it you're going to do next year?'"	<u>P1- lines 127-130</u>
	"I guess we're just more high profile at ensuring the kids with the Statement are sorted, because of [REDACTED] having to complete the ones with 139a's, and that goes with them so we kind of focus in on that so that [REDACTED] has got all the information to fill that form in for that to enable it go with them."	<u>P1- lines 150-154</u>
	"Interviewer: So does that planning then come through the SEN Dept? Interviewee: Yeah yeah, I mean it would be, I mean [REDACTED] would be the person to speak to ... "	<u>P2 lines 110-113</u>

<p><u>Provides a range of support for SEN pupils in transition planning</u></p>	<p>"We tend to be more supportive in terms of helping them to identify courses, linking them up with Connexions, and obviously helping to fill in application forms and things"</p> <p>"We've got Connexions in school, we have done some more work through Connexions in my lessons last year (ASDAN lessons) and I will do some more as well through the year. It involves Connexions K coming in explaining what they would need to be, what they would want to do, go and find out on the internet. Putting together an action plan to actually arrive at those aims.</p> <p>"Interviewer: So how did he (individual previous Statemented pupil) get to that point? Interviewee: Well through massive support from school you know, from the support in lessons to support into how to deal with you know like taking him on various different excursions, which you know I was part of some of those, giving him the confidence to be able to do this which he could never have done on his own."</p> <p>"It's all about their Social skills, the last thing that they do is their course. The hard work going into it is all the preparation not ignoring how do we get there, how are they able to be independent enough to be there. The only way they can do that is by practising and having a lot of support."</p> <p>" I mean from my point of view I just look at things that's possibly are going to help them life skills wise. I mean what we do (in ASDAN) is to do with actually experiencing..... I mean they obviously have to do some written stuff and I always try and make sure to keep up with it"</p> <p>"I can only speak from what I've done. I've done things with them that tend to be focussed on being a bit more independent but nothing specific to about</p>	<p><u>P1- lines 41-43</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 55-59</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines -92-97</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 104-108</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 162-174</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 125-132 lines</u></p>
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	<p>going to college. Saying that I did ring [REDACTED] with regard to a visit, but they didn't get back to me."</p> <p>"there's good people in school that set all that up, you know, and people that work on things, like their work experience and that's another thing we did last year, they did a week's work experience, all the year 10's. The work experience was fabulous for them (SEN pupils) because it gives them a bit of, again, independence getting to work, with what they are doing. "</p> <p>"Now the other thing which is something that I've taken on is their references so they've got them ready to go, I mean, once it's set up its basically self running but it needs to be set up they all need a reference and they all need to know that when they leave school"</p> <p>"I think for this group (SEN pupils) of kids they are reasonably well catered for, for a big comprehensive I think they are well supported."</p> <p>"I left a tutor group before I came here and when they got to year 11, I had a really good relationship with them and I know that when they were leaving, I said to them, 'you know that when you leave, no one's going to care about you anymore. You won't have someone like me, nagging you to death. If you don't come to school in the morning – sorry, if you don't go to college, they won't ring up after you and say where's so-in-so, and there was this sudden realisation, that actually, if you want to stop in bed all day, do it. No one cares. I think it is for some of them, because they have been institutionalised."</p> <p>"there's good people in school that set all that up, you know, and people that work on things, like their work experience and that's another thing we did last year, they did a week's work experience, all the year 10's. The work</p>	<p><u>P2 lines 191-195</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 237-240</u></p> <p><u>P1- lines 406-414</u></p> <p><u>P2 Lines 82-90</u></p> <p><u>2 lines 191-195</u></p>
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	experience was fabulous for them (SEN pupils) because it gives them a bit of, again, independence getting to work, with what they are doing."	
<u>Influence of the COP on level of transition support provided</u>	<p>"Obviously what we will ensure is that primarily the Statements are sorted, but again we will be aware of the School Action Plus kids who need that extra input to say 'come on, what is it you're going to do next year?'"</p> <p>"I guess we're just more high profile at ensuring the kids with the Statement are sorted, because of [REDACTED] having to complete the ones with 139a's, and that goes with them so we kind of focus in on that so that [REDACTED] has got all the information to fill that form in for that to enable it go with them."</p> <p>"Obviously, Statements stop, but they do a form called, is it a 139a, that then goes with them and there's an expectation of wherever they go, will in effect, provide some support for them."</p> <p>Interviewer: "And they get this support regardless of whether they are School Action Plus or Statemented.</p> <p>Interviewee: Well I'm not certain about that, but yes I would say so yeah. I mean I can only deal with what I've dealt with and these kids in my group definitely do"</p> <p>"Interviewer: So how did he (individual previous Statemented pupil) get to that point?</p> <p>Interviewee: Well through massive support from school you know, from the support in lessons to support into how to deal with you know like taking him on various different excursions, which you know I was part of some of those, giving him the confidence to be able to do this which he could never have</p>	<p><u>P1- lines 127-130</u></p> <p><u>P1- lines 150-154</u></p> <p><u>P1-lines 56-59</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 62-67</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 92-97</u></p>

	<p>done on his own."</p> <p>"No, just Statements. A lot of the PA's choose to do School Action Plus. They do it, at what level they're at if they need it really. I do a few, but mainly i do Statements."</p> <p>"you get to know that there is a fine line between Statement and School Action Plus. You get to realise that and I personally think it can be quite unfair for one person to have so much help and somebody with a tiny little gap in their abilities gets so much less, so yes to be able to do that (Use personal judgement) . We are also able to to write 139a reports for School Action Plus if we think it will be important for them."</p> <p>"It's an advised legal document to make it an extension of the statement, advising colleges that they would be mad really not to continue with this support. It make sure something is there if you see them struggling. I can watch someone who's had help their lives struggle, and the colleges do take it very seriously. They are brilliant at offering a great level of support. It's a very good document, but we as Connexions advisors do write them at School Action Plus, although we don't have to, we do. It's a good practice approach."</p> <p>Interviewer:" Nationally, there's no directive that School Action Plus pupils should have a section 139a ...Do you think that would be beneficial if it were?" Respondent: "I do in the majority of cases, yes, because it can be so miniscule, the difference to getting a Statement."</p> <p>Interviewer: What do you think the potential implications could be of say a child at School Action Plus as compared to one with a Statement not receiving that Section 139a? Respondent: "It could be massive. It depends what their School Action Plus</p>	<p><u>P3 lines 85-87</u></p> <p><u>P3 lines 96-101</u></p> <p><u>P3 lines 110-117</u></p>
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	<p>is, especially with behaviour, you know, if you have two pupils going into a similar course and one has a Statement. They're interviewed differently, the SEN person from college is usually meant to, and quite often does in this area go into that interview and sits and assesses what they will need with them. The funding is sent out for them. Then you have somebody going in and doing the same interview who has not got that Section 139A who is at School Action plus and it won't be recognised that they have had this need.</p>	
<p><u>SEN depts. Role in working with other professionals and sharing information.</u></p>	<p>“but I guess a lot of that is probably us linking them up with Connexions”</p> <p>Researcher: "you have obviously got a good relationship with those staff where they will be responsive to your needs and stuff like that and it's not too rigid." SENCo: "Yes "</p> <p>"I mean Connexions are in school, most days somebody in. Obviously the time we get from EPs or NST or Behaviour Support comes in hours, but I have to say the agencies we work with are very flexible with their hours. I'm not saying we get more than anybody else, but obviously if we're coming towards the end of the financial year and I've got some kiddie to be seen. They'll very often say I'll see them and add them onto the next allocation."</p> <p>“very often what happens is once they have started, we get an email saying we have got so-in-so just started, can you tell us what support you gave them when they were there, or this kid with no dispensation for exams and we send them a copy of what we've got so they know what they have had when they are here. “</p>	<p><u>P1- lines 50</u></p> <p><u>P1-lines: 263-365</u></p> <p><u>P1 lines 224-230</u></p> <p><u>P1- lines 189-193</u></p>

	<p>"If there's an issue with the child then they (the college) will contact us to ask us what it is ... "</p> <p>"We've got Connexions in school, we have done some more work through Connexions in my lessons last year (ASDAN lessons) and I will do some more as well through the year. It involves Connexions K coming in explaining what they would need to be, what they would want to do, go and find out on the internet. Putting together an action plan to actually arrive at those aims.</p>	<p><u>P1- lines 204</u></p> <p><u>P2 lines 55-59</u></p>
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Appendix 7: Thematic map

