

**A SERIES OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS
(VOLUME 2)**

by

Helen Jane Johnson

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Section		Page(s)
Chapter 1		Overview of Volume 2	
	1	Introduction	1
	2	Service Delivery Context	1
	3	Political Landscape	3
	4	Model of Service Delivery	4
	5	Introduction to Professional Practice Reports	5
	6	Overview of Professional Practice Report 1	5
	7	Overview of Professional Practice Report 2	6
	8	Overview of Professional Practice Report 3	6
	9	Overview of Professional Practice Report 4	6
	10	Reflections	7
		References	8
Chapter 2		PPR1: A Case Study of Pupil Referral Units from Mainstream Schools Perspective	9
		References	51
Appendices	1	Reasons for Attendance at Pupil Referral Units	55
	2	Research Aims for PRU Case Study	56
	3	Case Study Protocol	57
	4	Timeline for Research	58
	5	Interview Schedule	59
	6	Six Stages of Thematic Analysis	60
	7	Key Research Findings	61
Chapter 3		PPR 2: The Role of Educational Psychologists Working with Deaf Pupils in Mainstream Schools	66
		References	96
Appendices	1	Definitions of Deafness	101
	2	Five Descriptive Variables of Deaf and Hearing Impaired Pupils	102
	3	Research Findings Reported by Kluwin et al., (2002)	103
Chapter 4		PPR 3: An Exploration of the Role of Educational Psychologists Responding to Critical Incidents	104
		References	150

Appendices	1	Reflection on Response to Critical Incidents	153
	2	Overview of Critical Incident Policy	155
	3	Activity System with Linked Interview Questions	156
	4	Six Stages of Thematic Analysis	157
	5	Key Research Findings to Research Questions	158
Chapter 5		PPR 4: A Report Focussing on the Use of Appreciative inquiry as a Method of Organisational Change to Develop Peer Supervision within an Educational Psychology Service	162
		References	219
Appendices	1	Summary of the Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry	223
	2	Stages of the 4-D Cycle	224
	3	Stages of an Appreciative Inquiry within an Educational Psychology Service	225
	4	Elements of Supervision	229
	5	Questionnaire	230
	6	Focus Group Questions	232

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF VOLUME TWO

1.1 Introduction

The University of Birmingham requires Trainee Educational Psychologists (TEPs) to complete a two volume thesis during the second and third years of the Applied Educational and Child Psychology training course. The first volume reports an original piece of research undertaken by the TEP. This second volume comprises four Professional Practice Reports (PPRs) which are completed during fieldwork practice and is split into five chapters.

This first chapter provides an introduction to the work and contextual background. It begins with a brief description of the Local Authority (LA) in which I completed my research and discusses how this impacted on my choice of foci. The remaining chapters detail four individual PPRs each of which describe an enquiry into an aspect Educational Psychology practice. In addition to providing examples of small-scale research in their own right, each PPR also contains my own reflections on the topics addressed and the challenges I faced. Furthermore these reports also illustrate my developing practice as a TEP and highlight some of the issues which I have had to consider and reflect upon during my training.

1.2 Service Delivery Context

All four of the PPRs were completed whilst I was employed in Westshire Local Authority (Westshire is a pseudonym). Westshire is a large, primarily rural county which serves a diverse socio-economic demographic community. It contains areas

of considerable affluence alongside areas of deprivation. The population is approximately 553,000 with a quarter being under 20 years of age (Ofsted, 2008). Only 5.5 percent of children and young people are from black or minority ethnic backgrounds which is lower than both the regional and national average. Westshire also contains a population of approximately 5,000 Gypsy Travellers of which just under 400 are children and young people aged between 4 to 16 years (Ofsted, 2008).

The school system within Westshire contains settings in both rural and urban areas. The schools in this county are a mixture of first, primary, middle, secondary and high school settings. During my second and third years of study I was the named psychologist for five primary and two secondary schools. I also completed a range of early years work at the request of the LA.

The Westshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS) currently has twenty-five Educational Psychologists (EPs), both full-time and part-time. This service has demonstrated a commitment to the new three-year doctorate training course through employing a high number of TEPs. Westshire EPS regards the research conducted by TEPs as an integral part of their role and as such supports trainees to negotiate research briefs with a range of stakeholders within the LA.

1.3 Political Landscape

The general election in May 2010 led to a change from a Labour Government to a Conservative/Liberal democrat coalition Government. This change was set against a backdrop of pre-existing budget cuts within Westshire Council. These cuts led to a revision to the EPS structure and revised models of working.

When I began my employment in Westshire Council the EPS was part of a Community Education Team which consisted of EPs, Family Support Workers and Education Welfare Officers. Although an EP acted as a supervisor and professional lead, the team manager was from a social care background. From September 2010 the EPS reverted to a more traditional structure under the management of a Principal EP. Significant budget cuts resulted in the removal of ringed-fenced funding from schools. This led to the EPS becoming a traded service which entailed having to sell services to schools on an annual basis. This was a time of particular uncertainty within the EPS as from December 2010 until April 2011 all EPs were at risk of redundancy.

This change in the political climate is reflected throughout all my PPRs. In PPR 1 the focus is on the limited provision available when reintegrating pupils back into mainstream school after a period of time in a Pupil Referral Unit. PPR2 explores the new role of the EP working within a hearing impaired team. This role was created as services were given more control over their budgets and able to buy-in other professional groups. PPR 3 examines the role of EPs when responding to Critical Incidents within schools and in part examines the function which EPs are

having to fulfil in newly structured LA settings. PPR 4 explores in more detail the impact of organisational change within the LA on the EPS and how this was managed through the use of Appreciative Inquiry.

1.4 Model of Service Delivery

My work in my allocated schools is planned termly in collaboration with Special Educational Needs Coordinators (SENCo) with a time allocation model placing schools in bandings according to their level of needs. Westshire EPS recognises the importance of offering a range of services to schools and, as such, individual and group work is completed with children and young people, consultations are conducted with parents, school staff and other professionals and there is also support offered through training and project work.

A consultative approach underlines the work within the EPS. This approach is aligned with the description given by Wagner (2000) who proposes that consultation is a process in which *“concerns are raised, and a collaborative and recursive process is initiated that combines joint exploration, assessment, intervention and review”* (p. 11). Within my own work I am also committed to an ecological model of thinking (Bronfenbrenner 1979; 2005) which constantly considers the influence of a child’s systemic landscape from a wide variety of influences on their learning and development.

1.5 Introduction to Professional Practice Reports

The University of Birmingham guidelines for completing PPRs provide advice concerning the range and content of these reports. There is however flexibility to negotiate the focus of work with LAs to ensure the reports take into account both the individual learners needs and also those of their employers. In my own LA I was requested by the Principal EP to complete a piece of research focussing on EP experiences of critical incidents which formed the basis of PPR3. I was also asked to conduct an evaluation of peer supervision by a group of colleagues which fed into my work on PPR4.

The PPRs also allowed me to develop my own interests and knowledge. PPR1 focusses on provision in Pupil Referral Units which was an area I identified early in my placement as requiring additional support. Finally PPR2 enabled me to explore the experiences of pupils with hearing impairment in greater detail which was an area of personal interest for me.

1.6 Overview of Professional Practice Report 1

Professional Practice Report 1 (Chapter 2) provides a case study of two mainstream schools' experiences in accessing PRU provision for their pupils due to issues of exclusion. Using Thematic Analysis the experiences of mainstream staff were explored in terms of what leads them to consider PRU provision

necessary, what they expect from a PRU placement and how they experience the reintegration of pupils back into the mainstream setting.

1.7 Overview of Professional Practice Report 2

Professional Practice Report 2 (Chapter 3) provides a critical evaluation of the literature and research surrounding the factors that act as either facilitators or barriers to inclusion of deaf pupils from the perspectives of peers, parents and teaching staff. Further to this, the report also considers how these research findings can be translated into EP practice within a multi-agency Hearing Impairment team setting.

1.8 Overview of Professional Practice Report 3

Professional Practice Report 3 (Chapter 4) uses Activity Theory to investigate how EPs respond to Critical Incidents (CIs) in Westshire LA. The views and experiences of EPs were explored in terms of the role they played when responding to CIs, what factors acted as facilitators or barriers to their response and how they believed they could improve their practice in the future.

1.9 Overview of Professional Practice Report 4

Professional Practice Report 4 (Chapter 5) details an eighteen month project in which Westshire EPS conducted an Appreciative Inquiry (AI) in order to manage organisation change in a positive manner. The PPR is divided into two parts, the first of which contextualises the project by exploring in-depth the theoretical background and development of AI and considering the research focussing on its effectiveness. The second part details a peer supervision pilot project which arose

as a direct result of the AI. A mixed-methods approach was adopted using questionnaires and a focus group in order to evaluate the effectiveness of, and requirement for, peer supervision within the EPS.

1.10 Reflections

The four PPRs contained within this volume represent a range of different activities undertaken by EPs including working with children, young people and their families at school level and within the LA. With regards to my own learning and development, the PPRs have enabled me to engage with a range of topics in depth and to develop my skills of critical evaluation and reflective practice. Furthermore three of the PPRs (numbers one, three and four) have enabled me to develop my research skills reflecting my personal view that EPs should be able to provide sound research and knowledge about evidence-based practice within an LA context.

PPR 1 enabled me to be able to understand the role that research can play in empowering professionals and developing practice. PPRs 2 and 3 were particularly relevant as they reflected the unique contributions that EPs can make. This is valuable at a time when EPs are striving to make a distinctive contribution to service provision within LAs. PPR 4 was of particular importance for me as it enabled me to be involved in a significant piece of organisational change within my EPS, a change that is now having positive benefits for my colleagues.

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CHAPTER TWO: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORT 1

A Case Study of Pupil Referral Unit Provision from Mainstream Schools Perspective

Abstract

It is estimated that at any one time approximately one percent of the school population (70 000 pupils) are in alternative education provision. One of the main types of alternative provision are Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2009). The role and effectiveness of PRUs has come under scrutiny in recent years culminating in the Back on Track White Paper published in May 2008 (DCSF, 2008a). Whilst there has been research focusing on the experiences of the pupils who attend PRUs (Munn and Lloyd, 2005) and also on staff working in PRUs (Meo and Parker, 2004), there would appear to be little investigation focusing on the views of mainstream school staff. This would appear to be of consequence as PRU provision is only designed to be short-term, with the goal being the return of the pupils to mainstream education (DCSF, 2008a). The present Professional Practice Report provides a case study of two mainstream school experiences of accessing PRU provision for their pupils due to issues of exclusion. Using Thematic Analysis the experiences of mainstream staff are explored in terms of what leads them to consider PRU provision necessary, what they expect from a PRU placement and how they experience the reintegration of pupils back into the mainstream setting. The results indicate that whilst there appears to be clear reasoning behind considering PRU placements there are difficulties experienced in terms of continuity of education, liaison between settings and reintegration of pupils at the end of placement.

Introduction

The issue of pupil exclusion has been pertinent in U.K. educational policy for more than 20 years (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000). This has been reflected in terms of increased pressures concerning educational accountability and successive Government target setting focusing on reducing pupil exclusion (Meo and Parker, 2004). School exclusion has also been linked to the wider debate surrounding social exclusion, including areas as diverse as criminal offending, social control and human rights (Macrae et al., 2003).

In order to address concern regarding school exclusion and its potential wider impact the New Labour Government, which came to power in 1997, ratified Local Authority (LA) responsibility to provide suitable education for pupils excluded from school (DfES, 2001). This was predominantly addressed through increased alternative education provision, including Pupil Referral Units (PRUs), which were designed to provide short-term support to enable pupils to reintegrate into mainstream schooling (Meo and Parker, 2004).

The role and effectiveness of PRUs has come under scrutiny in recent years culminating in the Back on Track White Paper published in May 2008 (DCSF, 2008a). This highlighted the need for reform in terms of the level of quality and accountability of PRU provision. Furthermore it proposed that PRUs should be at

the forefront of providing early intervention to tackle issues pupils are facing before leading to permanent exclusion (DCSF, 2008b).

This Professional Practice Report (PPR) provides a case study of two mainstream schools experiences of accessing PRU provision for their pupils due to exclusion issues. Whilst there has been research focusing on the experiences of the pupils who attend PRUs (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010) and on staff working in PRUs (Meo and Parker, 2004), there would appear to be little investigation of the views of mainstream school staff. This would appear to be of consequence as PRU provision is only designed to be short-term with the goal being the return of pupils to mainstream education (DCSF, 2008a).

The following report will begin with consideration of the theoretical and research background focusing on school exclusion and social exclusion. This will be followed by an exploration of PRU provision and its role within the present education context. The rationale for employing a case study methodology will then be considered followed by an exploration of the methods used. The results of the research process will then be presented alongside a discussion of the implications for practice.

School Exclusion

School exclusion refers to the procedure whereby a head teacher determines that a pupil is not able to attend their present school. This decision can be in the form of either:

- *fixed-term* exclusion (for a set number of days); or
- *permanent* exclusion (removing the pupil completely from the school role) (Vulliamy & Webb, 2000).

In terms of patterns of school exclusion, Government statistics estimate that in England in the academic year 2008/2009 there were:

- 6550 permanent exclusions; and
- 363280 fixed term exclusions (DfE, 2010).

It has however been argued that figures reported by LAs may not reflect the true extent of pupil exclusion. Stirling (1996) highlights that in many instances 'unofficial' exclusions may be used, such as moving pupils to another school before permanent exclusion occurs. Further to this, pupils may be subject to 'internal' exclusions whereby they remain on school premises but are placed with another member of staff or in a different age cohort.

Blyth and Milner (1996) suggest that both of these methods are employed by schools due to them being promoted as child/parent friendly alternatives to permanent exclusion. It has however been argued that the outcome for the child

is the same, namely exclusion from a full curriculum and everyday classroom activities (Macrae et al., 2003).

Vulliamy and Webb (2000) further criticise reliance on Government statistics, arguing that they do not reflect the reality of circumstances schools encounter. For example, over-subscribed schools have the option of moving pupils to under-subscribed schools to avoid adding to their exclusion rates. This route is not available to under-subscribed schools and can result in such schools reporting the need to support a higher number of socially and educationally vulnerable pupils with no extra resources or support. It would appear that in order to understand school exclusion more fully, it is important to move away from primarily focusing on statistics and within child factors and start considering the wider context.

Wider Context of School Exclusion

Concerns regarding school exclusion were prominent throughout the 1990s with the Social Exclusion Unit (1998) describing school exclusions as having reached crisis point. In response, the New Labour Government argued that school exclusion could only be understood if placed within the broader agenda of social exclusion which resulted in a number of Government and educational policy changes such as the introduction of Education Action Zones (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000).

The connection between social and school exclusion primarily focused on arguments which contended that educational involvement for all pupils was crucial

as it was a key element in social progression (Meo and Parker, 2004). It was suggested that being unable to attend school could ultimately impact on an individuals' ability to participate fully in society in later life (Wright et al., 2000).

This argument was not however without controversy. Vulliamy and Webb (2000) suggest that the high financial implications of providing alternative education may have raised concerns regarding reducing school exclusions. Furthermore whilst the New Labour Government had set out an agenda for special educational needs with a strong inclusionist message (Cole et al., 2003) it has been suggested that this was ultimately thwarted due to the legacy of league tables and targets introduced by the previous Conservative Government and maintained by New Labour (Parsons, 1999).

It is argued that New Labour introduced the Standards agenda which focused on numerous areas including literacy and numeracy levels and school exclusions. A key part of this approach involved highlighting the existence of differing performance patterns in schools of similar levels of social disadvantage and through applying research findings on school effectiveness and improvement alongside target setting devising strategies whereby 'failing' schools could be improved. This ultimately involved Local Education Authorities ensuring that their targets were met by setting individual targets for individual schools (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000).

It could be argued that this was a positive move which broadened school effectiveness criteria from the more traditional academic focus. However the weakness of such a strategy has received a great deal of attention, for example it has been suggested that there has been a lack of interest in understanding and acknowledging the context specific factors which may lead to successful or failing schools. Furthermore it has been argued that individual schools are being blamed for problems which are caused by social, educational and economic inequalities which are exacerbated by open school enrolment (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000).

These conflicting arguments focusing on school exclusion and its place in the wider debate on social exclusion led researchers to investigate whether there was a link between the two factors. One factor that is often presented as an indicator of social exclusion is that of children receiving free school meals (FSM) which it is argued is a reliable indicator of socio-economic status (Stansfeld et al. 2004).

Parsons (1999) argued that being in receipt of free school meals was a predominant indicator of greater likelihood of school exclusion. This would appear to be supported by recent Government statistics which indicate that pupils who are eligible for FSM are around three times more likely to receive either a permanent or fixed period exclusion than children who are not eligible (DfE 2010b). There has however been recent concern about researchers using FSM data. Hobbs and Vognoles (2004) conclude that researchers should be cautious in drawing inferences from research reliant on the FSM measure as this data is an imperfect proxy of low income families.

A further consequence of school exclusion that has been linked to long-term social exclusion is teenage parenthood. This was explored by Bonell et al. (2003) who conducted a large scale study involving 8766 pupils in Year 9. Their results indicated that young people who are alienated from school are more likely to view teenage pregnancy as inevitable or a positive alternative to continuing education.

This result is of consequence as Harden et al. (2006) argue that teenage parenthood is strongly associated with adverse outcomes in later life including lack of qualifications, living in social housing and higher levels of depression. Bonell et al. (2003) do however suggest caution when drawing conclusions regarding causality from their results suggesting that it may be engagement in early sexual activity which increases young people's disengagement from school.

A final area of social exclusion which has received considerable attention in terms its links to school exclusion is criminal behaviour. McCrystal et al., (2006) investigated the level of contact with the criminal justice system of young people who were either in mainstream education or who had been excluded. The results indicated that nearly half of the excluded pupils sampled had been brought to the attention of the criminal justice system (police or courts), as opposed to just over one fifth of the mainstream school group.

It is however suggested that a cautious approach should be taken when interpreting such results as demonstrating a direct link between school exclusion and wider areas of social exclusion, including criminal behaviour. Hodgson and

Webb (2005) investigated the relationship between school exclusion and youth crime through interviewing secondary age pupils who had been excluded from school.

Their results indicated that 90% of their sample stated that the onset of their offending behaviour commenced prior to their first exclusion. This result would appear to suggest that whilst school exclusion may be present in a young offender's life, it does not have a direct link to the likelihood of participating in criminal behaviour. Furthermore Hodgson and Webb (2005) highlight that school exclusion can also have a positive effect in terms of reducing criminal behaviour as a number of pupils interviewed stated that increased levels of parental supervision during periods of exclusion removed or limited opportunities for offending.

Findings such as these suggest that issues regarding school exclusion are dynamic and complex and impact not only on individual pupils but also their families, schools and wider society. Macrae et al., (2003) therefore suggests that it is essential for those involved in education to question and justify the appropriateness, effectiveness and impact of school exclusions and the resources provided to support pupils, including PRUs.

Pupil Referral Units

It is estimated that at any one time approximately one percent of the school population (70 000 pupils) are in alternative education provision including PRUs (DCFS, 2008a). PRUs are educational establishments which cater for pupils of compulsory school age who are unable to meet the demands of mainstream or special school settings (Mainwaring and Hallam, 2010). One of the main reasons for attendance at a PRU follows pupil's permanent exclusion as schools and LAs have a legal duty to provide suitable full-time education from the 6th day of any exclusion of a pupil of compulsory school age. There are however no set entry criteria and therefore reasons for attendance at a PRU are wide-ranging including pupils suffering from school phobia and young parents (DCSF, 2009) (see Appendix 1 for further details).

The Department of Education School Census indicated that in the academic year 2008/09 13240 pupils attended a PRU for all or part of their education. The characteristics and educational needs of this group of pupils can be broken down as follows:

- 71% were boys;
- 91% were aged between 11 to 15 years;
- 13% have statements (national average in state-funded school is 1.37%);
and
- 61.5% have special needs (19.1% national average) (DfE 2010b).

Pirrie and Macleod (2009) highlight that PRUs are a unique form of educational provision in that there are significant variations in PRU provision across and even within LAs including size, location and length of placement. PRUs are not intended to be long-term placements and should not be regarded as part of the LA Special Educational Needs provision (DCSF, 2008c). However this is not always the case, for example in some LAs with no designated special schools for behavioural, social and emotional difficulties almost all the pupils in PRUs had statements for these needs. Furthermore, pupils with statements who are admitted to PRUs without decisions being made about their future provision generally stay there indefinitely (Ofsted, 2007).

Meo and Parker (2004) suggest however that the majority of pupils are offered PRU places due to issues concerning school exclusion primarily resulting from incidents of challenging behaviour. Further to this it has also been argued that PRUs are often viewed as 'escape valves' which allow the convenient removal of pupils from regular schooling (Vincent et al., 2007). It could be suggested that such arguments portray a within-child and deficit model when focusing on the way that PRUs operate in a time when educational policy focus has been upon inclusion. Meo and Parker (2004) suggest that PRUs by their very nature and existence promote exclusionary practice and as such there is a fine line between political ideals and the realities of practice. Further to this, more recent political policy from the new coalition Government would appear to further focus on within-child factors with support for head teachers to exclude 'disruptive' and 'undisciplined' pupils (Prus.org.uk, 2010).

In recent years the effectiveness of PRU provision has come under increasing scrutiny (DCSF, 2008b). The Back on Track White paper published in May 2008 indicated that pupils should be entitled to receive a core curriculum which is flexible to their needs and there should be increased communication between schools and PRUs. Further to this it was argued that pupils and their parents have a responsibility to turn their behaviour around and that PRUs have a significant role to play in enabling this to occur (DCSF, 2008a).

There has also been increasing interest in the role that PRUs can play in providing early intervention. The Back of Track paper suggested that PRUs should be at the centre of work on early intervention and should be instrumental in aiding pupils to avoid permanent exclusion. Whilst it was argued that this could result in more pupils coming into contact with PRU provision it was suggested that it would be for shorter periods of time. It was however highlighted that this would only be possible if resources were made available to enable schools to access such intervention without running into issues surrounding lack of capacity. Furthermore it was argued that short-term intervention work required specific planning alongside other interventions for pupils requiring longer-term input (DCSF, 2008b).

This type of provision for early intervention work still focuses on the removal of the pupil from their mainstream school setting and into another provision, thus remaining focused on within-child factors and deficit model when exploring reasons for possible school exclusion. More recently the coalition Government has suggested that when focusing on early intervention, PRUs should use the

expertise of PRU staff to work in collaboration with mainstream schools to try to understand the behaviour of pupils with complex needs (Prus.org.uk, 2010). Whilst this may not be a direct move away from a within-child focus it is encouraging to note the suggestion of pupils remaining in mainstream school settings and the possible wider exploration of their needs.

The Back on Track (2008) paper was an important element of New Labour's priority to improve the education of pupils who are excluded from mainstream schools or unable to attend for a wide variety of reasons. It followed on from the Children's Plan (DCSF, 2007) which highlighted that parents felt that good discipline and behaviour in schools was important and that schools wanted quality alternative provision which would enable them to help pupils more effectively (DCSF, 2008b).

The paper highlighted a wide range of issues which it argued required to be addressed in order for alternative education provision to be more effective. One of the main areas focused upon the need to ensure that alternative education offered a more individualised and differentiated provision in order to meet the widely divergent needs of pupils accessing this type of provision.

This area was heavily influenced by Ofsted (2007) Pupil Referral Unit report which suggested that whilst there was some excellent practice in alternative education this was not always the case. The report highlighted a number of areas required development in order to ensure that the needs of all pupils were met including

flexibility in curriculum content, more robust measures for passing information between settings in order to establish attainment levels and clearer procedures for reintegration back into mainstream schooling.

It is important to acknowledge that the Ofsted (2007) report was only based upon inspections in 28 PRUs. Whilst these were spread across 22 LAs this is still a relatively small sample. Furthermore in terms of the impact these findings may have had on the Back on Track (2008b) paper the inspections only took place in Key Stage 3 and 4 settings therefore suggesting that recommendations that fed into the paper may have been more suitable for older pupils rather than those of primary schools age. Overall the Back on Track (2008b) paper does highlight the importance of quality provision for pupils in alternative education and gives a range of strategies for meeting pupil needs whilst at the same time acknowledging the vulnerability of this group.

In order to understand the political policy surrounding PRUs and how appropriate it may be, it is necessary to consider some of the findings from research which has taken place in PRU settings. Whilst research within this area is relatively limited (Meo & Parker, 2004) there has been consideration of the experiences of PRU provision from both pupil and staff perspectives.

Mainwaring and Hallam (2010) examined the effectiveness of PRUs from the pupil perspective focusing on the motivation of pupils. This particular study addressed this issue through employing a post-modernist approach to self-concept namely

‘possible selves’. Possible selves are described as a psychological construct that enables the exploration of motivation in terms of cognitive form, organisation, direction and self-relevant meaning (Markus and Nurius, 1986). The study was based on interviews with 25 students in their final year of schooling either in PRU provision ($n = 16$) or mainstream schooling ($n = 9$). The results indicated that the pupils in the PRU population appeared less able to generate a positive possible self and viewed themselves more negatively.

Mainwaring and Hallam (2009) argue that these results suggest that pupils who attended PRUs had fragile positive selves and more negative perceptions of their future prospects. Whilst acknowledging the limitations of generalising from small-scale research, they suggest that the results may indicate that in terms of intervention planning it may be beneficial for PRUs to focus on ensuring that pupils can see the connection between their current behaviour and future positive or negative possible selves. This finding would support calls for a requirement for information to be passed between settings concerning pupils’ aspirations and interests and self-confidence (DCSF, 2008b). Furthermore it may also be beneficial for consideration to be given to measures which could capture pupil experiences in these areas before, during and after PRU placements.

Meo and Parker (2004) investigated how staff working in a PRU experience the conditions and consequences of educational exclusion. Their findings indicated that teachers in this PRU were able to offer respite to mainstream schools and reduce school exclusion rates through offering places to pupils who would

otherwise have been permanently excluded. Furthermore the research suggested that this particular PRU was able to contribute towards the effective assessment of special educational needs. This was primarily due to pupils being designated one member of staff who was responsible for tracking progress before, during and after placement at the PRU.

The researchers did however report that staff did not appear to be effective in enabling pupils to improve or manage their own behaviour or develop their attitudes to formal education. Whilst it is acknowledged that this study only focused upon one PRU setting, the results are of consequence in terms of the Back on Track priority highlighting the part PRUs should play in enabling pupils to take responsibility for behaviour issues (DCSF, 2008a).

Further to this, the results of this study did not find evidence of PRU staff contributing to early intervention work which forms a crucial part of the Back on Track strategy and has been argued is essential in tackling school exclusion and related emotional and behavioural difficulties (Panayiotopoulos & Kerfoot, 2004). The study also indicated that PRU staff were not effective in preparing pupils for reintegration into mainstream settings. This would appear to be an important finding as PRUs are only designed to provide short-term placements (DCSF, 2008c).

There would appear to be paucity of research focusing on mainstream school staff perspectives of pupil reintegration into mainstream schools after a PRU

placement. Lown (2005) investigated the perceptions of school staff concerning their experiences of reintegrating permanently excluded pupils into new mainstream settings. The study highlighted that for both staff and pupils a key factor of reintegration success was the building of positive adult-pupil relationships. It was however suggested that pupils who have been excluded may find developing positive relationships with staff difficult and therefore it was of crucial importance that the staff in the new mainstream school setting initiated and supported pupils in these relationships.

The issues surrounding mainstream school staff working with excluded pupils was also examined by Vulliamy and Webb (2000). They suggested that given the pressures faced in terms of measurable academic outcomes, staff require resources to be able to work with pupils who may be viewed as highly disruptive. The researchers argue that additional specialist staff attached to schools, often with social work training, are able to support not only the pupils but also their families and teachers. Results suggest that long term interventions have the best results in terms of being able to support school mechanisms and that the pay-off in terms of reduction in exclusions is considerable (Vulliamy and Webb, 1999).

The findings of these two studies suggest that a key element of successful reintegration into mainstream settings from PRU placements may involve providing support to pupils and to staff to develop sound relationships. This potentially is of greater significance in cases of reintegration back into schools where relationships prior to exclusion may have broken down.

I would suggest therefore that it is appropriate and timely to explore PRU provision from a mainstream perspective focusing specifically on the experiences of staff who work with pupils before, during and after their PRU placements. The specific research aims for the present PPR are given below (for further details see Appendix 2).

Research Aims for School Exclusion Case Study	
1	To explore the factors which lead mainstream schools to consider a PRU placement appropriate or necessary for a pupil
2	To ascertain the expectations of mainstream schools in terms of what a PRU placement will provide for the school and the pupil
3	To explore the experiences of mainstream schools regarding pupils who have attended a PRU placement and are being reintegrated into their feeder school

Table 1: Research Aims

Rationale for Employing Case Study Design

The present research employed a case study design. Yin (1994) describes case studies as a unique method which enables researchers to examine a particular phenomenon involving real people in real situations. The case is whatever the researcher is interested in and can therefore be a situation, individual, group or organisation (Robson, 2002).

Tellis (1997) highlights that the application of case study methodology has become increasingly prevalent in educational research for a variety of reasons including:

- its flexibility to study issues which would not be possible when using experimental or quasi-experimental methods; and
- its ability to give an holistic understanding of the situation under consideration.

This is not to say that using case study as a method of investigation has been without criticism. Robson (2002) highlights that case studies can be viewed as a soft option and only suitable for exploratory work. Further to this there have been concerns raised regarding issues of validity, reliability and generalisability.

With regard to issues of validity Tellis (1997) highlights that construct validity is often cited as problematic due to researcher subjectivity. Yin (1994) however suggests that through offering participants the opportunity to review the research findings before completion of the study, the likelihood of research subjectivity can be minimised.

In terms of issues surrounding reliability, Cohen et al., (2007) suggest that given the uniqueness of situations often studied using this method results may be inconsistent with other case studies. In order to address issues pertaining to reliability in the present study, a case study protocol was designed (see Appendix 3). Tellis (1997) argues that the use of such as a tool enables the researcher to

explicitly state the procedure to be followed prior to the data collection phase thus ensuring that all data is handled in the same manner.

Finally the generalisability of case study research has also been cited as problematic due to the small sample sizes employed (Myers, 2000). This argument has been countered by Robson (2002) who suggests that case study research is capable of analytic generalisation rather than statistical generalisation found in more positivist studies. The ability to provide analytic generalisation is beneficial as it assists researchers to develop theories which in turn enable them to understand similar cases in future research.

Despite these highlighted issues, employing a case study methodology was deemed appropriate for the present research. Benbasat et al., (1987) argue that case study is beneficial for researchers focusing on areas of study with only a limited theoretical base (as is the case for the present research). Further to this it has been highlighted that issues of school exclusion are complex and dynamic. Cohen et al., (2007) suggest that case study methodology enables researchers to explore such issues as it can focus on unfolding interactions and human relationships. This is of particular importance for the present study given the focus on exploring and understanding the views and experiences of the mainstream school staff in terms of their interactions and relationships with the pupils who attended the PRUs and the PRU staff.

Method

Case Selection

Soy (1997) highlights that it is important for the researcher to establish the types of cases which will be used in a research study of this nature. These decisions include consideration of the use of single or multiple cases and whether cases chosen should reflect unique or typical perspectives. It is suggested that consideration of the purpose of the study and research questions posed are required in order to focus attention on suitable cases.

In terms of the present research it was considered that multiple cases would be required in order to explore mainstream school perspectives in both primary and secondary schools. This decision was based on the fact that in the LA where the research was being conducted there were different PRU settings for primary and secondary pupils and therefore it was deemed important to explore both areas.

Further to this it was also decided that it would be beneficial to consider perspectives from different levels of seniority within schools in order to gain an understanding of the experiences of staff who have differing professional responsibilities in terms of working with pupils who require PRU settings. Once the methodology had been selected a timeline for conducting the study was devised (see Appendix 4).

Two schools (one primary and one secondary) were approached to take part in the study. It was deemed that it would be more appropriate to focus on two schools

rather than a larger number as this would allow an in-depth picture to be drawn in the timescale allocated for this study. Both schools were in the same LA which consisted of over 200 maintained schools and six PRUs. In the primary school the Head Teacher (HT) and Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) agreed to participate. It was hoped that similar participation would be achieved from the secondary school, however due to events within the school it was only possible for the HT to participate.

In terms of ethical considerations issues of confidentiality were discussed with participants. It was agreed with participants that their names and details of their schools would not be used in the research report. Further to this it was agreed that specific details of the participants' employing LA would not be given. Participants were given the option whether to have their interviews recorded. All three participants requested that notes be taken during the interview rather than recording.

Cohen et al., (2007) highlight that participants may find having a mechanical means recording of interviews threatening which may lead them to request another method of data collection. Whilst it is suggested that an interviewer taking notes during data collection may also be off-putting, in the case of the professionals participating in this study it is highly likely that they are comfortable with notes being taken whilst they talk in other areas of their work and this may explain their decision to opt for this method instead of audio recording.

Data Gathering

Soy (1997) highlights that the techniques used for gathering data are a key area to consider when designing case study research. The present research employed semi-structured interviews as the data gathering method. The decision to use semi-structured interviews was initially influenced by the epistemological stance taken. Cavaye (1996) argues that case studies can be conducted from both positivist and interpretist perspectives and that it is crucial for researchers to state the particular orientation.

The present study takes an interpretist perspective which reflects the researcher's standpoint that multiple realities exist and that world is socially constructed (Vries, 2004). It was considered that each participant would have their own unique beliefs, opinions and ideas about the research questions. Clark-Carter (2004) argues that employing a semi-structured interview method moves away from viewing data as external to the individual and objective, and towards a more subjective position which acknowledges the importance of human interaction as part of knowledge production.

The interview schedule contained open-ended questions (see Appendix 5). This was considered important as the present study was designed to explore areas which had little or no previous investigation. Cohen et al., (2007) argue that the use of open-ended questions is beneficial in such situations as they enable the researcher to probe in more depth and also to clear up misunderstandings.

Furthermore, this type of question can also result in unexpected answers which can ultimately lead to new and unanticipated ways of thinking and learning.

Analysis of Data

In order to analyse the data gathered Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed. TA has been described as a flexible tool which enables the researcher to provide a detailed account of the data gathered and provides a method for identifying, reporting and organising themes within data gathered (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The decision to employ TA as a method of analysis was reached as it was considered to be the most appropriate given epistemological approach. Initially it had been considered that Grounded Theory (GT) may be appropriate as this places the emphasis on participants own accounts of the phenomena being studied (Richardson, 1996). However GT requires the data to become saturated which would not be possible due to the sample size. Furthermore GT emphasises the building of a theory to explain phenomena (Sigel and Leiper, 2004) which was not the aim of the present study.

When employing TA to analyse, data themes can be identified in either an inductive or deductive manner. An inductive or 'bottom up' approach focuses on collecting and analysing data which is read and re-read by the researcher who remains open to what themes might emerge (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The themes identified are closely related to the data set but may bear little relation to the interview questions posed to participants (Gray, 2009).

On the other hand a deductive or 'top down' approach to TA data analysis approaches the data with a specific interest derived from theory. This method of analysis generally provides a less detailed description and analysis of the data and is more bound to the research questions which are related to the theoretical approach taken by the researcher (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The present study utilised an inductive approach in order to enable the data to drive the formulation of themes. The data that was collected was therefore coded without trying to fit it into any specific coding frame and without influence from the researcher's theoretical background. Whilst it was acknowledged that previous engagement with literature may have had the potential to influence the interpretation of the data it was believed that for the present study TA would provide a flexible tool which would ultimately enable a detailed account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

The present study followed the six stage procedure for TA (see Appendix 6). An initial difficulty faced was the request of participants not to have their interviews recorded. However it was considered appropriate to use TA as it does not require the same level of description as other forms of qualitative data analysis such as GT or Discourse Analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Findings

A summary of the key findings relating to the initial research questions are presented below detailing the key themes which emerged (for further detail see Appendix 7).

1) Factors which lead to mainstream schools considering that a PRU placement is appropriate or necessary for a pupil	
<i>Pupil Needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High behaviour demands - Mismatch between needs and setting - No more within school intervention available
<i>Avoiding Exclusion</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exclusion alternatives - Engaging parents - Breaking the cycle of exclusion
2) Expectations of a mainstream school in terms of what a PRU placement will be able to provide for the school and the pupil	
<i>Continuity</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuing basic education - Development of personal and social skills
<i>Liaison</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited opportunities - Lack of data transfer to mainstream schools
3) Experiences of mainstream schools regarding the reintegration of pupils who have attended PRU placements	
<i>Length of Placement</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties experienced by pupils in adjusting to expectations of settings in short periods of time - Impact of short placements on the types of interventions offered
<i>Specialist Support</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for pupils - Support for staff

Table 2: Key Findings

Discussion of Results

The findings from the interviews are expanded below and are considered in terms of links to literature.

- 1) Factors which lead to mainstream schools considering that a PRU placement is appropriate or necessary for a pupil

Pupil Needs

The first theme to emerge from the interview data suggested that the main reason for considering a PRU placement appropriate occurred when a school no longer felt the needs of the pupil could be met within a mainstream setting. In the primary school these needs were predominantly viewed in terms of behaviours which put either the pupil themselves or others at risk of harm;

“ if a child is endangering themselves or others you have to do something”

(Primary HT)

This would appear to support the findings of Meo and Parker (2004) who suggested that the majority of referrals made to PRUs concerned pupils displaying challenging behaviours which mainstream schools felt unable to manage.

The primary school SENCo also suggested that PRU placements became necessary when the needs of a pupil could no longer be met in classrooms due to the impact their behaviour was having on other pupils learning. For example, if

classroom teachers were consistently having to give a disproportionate amount of time to one pupil due to high behavioural demands this often resulted in this pupil being removed from the classroom by a senior member of staff;

“a PRU would be considered if a child is spending the majority of their time outside their class” (Primary SENCo)

The SENCo highlighted that this approach was not suitable to meet the long-term needs of the pupil and therefore, in these cases, PRU placements were often considered appropriate. This finding would suggest that the staff within the primary school support the argument of Blyth and Milner (1996) that the use of such internal exclusions is not entirely appropriate or effective. However it would not appear that in this instance PRU placements are being used to avoid permanent exclusion as suggested by Stirling (1996) but as a method of supporting and understanding pupil needs for them to integrate back into mainstream classroom settings.

The secondary HT highlighted PRU placements were often considered necessary when there was a mismatch between the needs of the pupil and the level of support available within a mainstream setting. It was suggested that many pupils who were considered for PRU placements exhibited complex social, emotional and behavioural difficulties which the school did not feel they had the resources to manage appropriately;

“a PRU would be considered when there is an increasing inability to meet pupil needs...when there is a mismatch between pupil needs and what a school can offer” (Secondary HT)

This suggestion made by the secondary HT is interesting in that it would appear to focus more heavily on the needs of the individual child thus suggesting a within child focus. The HT did not consider other areas such as poor teaching methods or the home circumstances a child may be experiencing. This finding does however appear to extend the research of Panayiotopoulos and Kerfoot (2004) who suggested that the most common situations leading to school exclusion in primary schools related to emotional and behavioural difficulties.

A final area when considering the necessity for PRU placements was highlighted by the primary HT who suggested that such an intervention was only considered once it was ascertained that all within-school resources had been unable to meet a pupils needs. This stance of using PRU placements as a last resort was reported by the primary HT as being partly acerbated by LA policy which required schools to demonstrate that they had attempted to meet a pupils needs within school.

It does however raise questions about the implementation of the recommendations of the Back of Track (2008) paper which highlighted that PRUs should be contributing to early intervention work with pupil. The findings of the present research would suggest that staff in both the primary and secondary mainstream

settings perceived that PRUs were not being used to implement early intervention strategies.

Avoiding Exclusion

The second theme which arose through analysis of interview data concerned the view expressed by both mainstream settings that PRU placement was viewed as a positive alternative to exclusion of pupils. The secondary HT argued that hardly anything positive came from exclusion in terms of benefits for the pupil and that it was therefore only ever used as a measure of last resort. Exclusion was viewed as an ineffective strategy as it did not generally move the situation forward;

“PRUs are a much superior alternative to exclusion...exclusion benefits only the school” (Secondary HT)

Further to this the secondary HT highlighted that the use of exclusion often resulted in difficulty in engaging parents. On the other hand it was suggested that when parents were approached about their child being offered a PRU placement this was primarily viewed as a supportive and proactive measure;

“Parents are generally not resistant...see it as a supportive measure”
(Secondary HT)

This suggestion was further supported by the primary SENCo who highlighted that whilst parents may initially be concerned about their child attending a PRU, once

they were given information about the aims of these settings they overwhelmingly felt that a PRU placement would be beneficial;

“Parents are never unhappy, they see it as the school doing something”

(Primary SENCo)

It would appear that in terms of the Back on Track (2008) strategy highlighting the need for parents to engage and to work with schools, PRU placements appear to be a favourable option from the mainstream schools staff perspectives. It would be beneficial to explore this from the perspective of the parents to ascertain if this is a true reflection.

The desire to avoid exclusion through the use of PRU placements was further expanded upon by the primary SENCo. It was suggested that behaviour which results in exclusion can easily become a cycle of which it can be hard to break for the pupil, their family and the school. It would appear that rather than PRU placements being used as an ‘escape valve’ for the convenient removal of disruptive pupils as suggested by Vincent et al., (2007) they were actually being viewed in a more positive light as they enabled everyone involved to break the cycle and move forward.

- 2) Expectations of a mainstream school in terms of what a PRU placement will be able to provide for the school and the pupil

Continuity

The first theme focusing on the expectations of mainstream staff for PRU placements was that of continuity. All three staff interviewed highlighted that they felt it was crucial that when pupils attended a PRU they should be guaranteed continuing basic education (literacy and numeracy) alongside other more specialist interventions. These were described as being interventions which would not be readily available in mainstream schools such as specialist behaviour management and individual therapeutic input. The primary HT highlighted that;

“PRUs need to continue the learning and monitor the child’s progress...

they need to continue from where the school thinks they are” (Primary HT)

The issue of pupil entitlement to a core curriculum was highlighted in the Back on Track (2008) paper which suggested that whilst PRUs had been required by law to offer a broad and balanced curriculum this was not always the case. This was based on evidence which suggested that due to the lack of specific legislation surrounding this issue there was a wide range of curriculum provision in PRUs. Furthermore as only pupils who had been permanently excluded from mainstream school were entitled to full-time education, many other PRU pupils were only in the setting on part-time timetables due to limited funding and/or capacity. It was suggested that the complexity and range of needs displayed by pupils accessing

PRU placements required a flexible and tailored approach, however this should not overshadow the need to provide full-time education focusing on developing functional literacy and numeracy (DCSF, 2008b).

The difficulties of providing an education which incorporated a broad and balanced curriculum were explored in the research of Meo and Parker (2004) who suggested that, for teachers working in PRUs, the delivery of National Curriculum was viewed as relatively unimportant compared to the provision designed to develop personal and social skills. This difference in perspective was highlighted by the primary SENCo who stated that;

“PRUs need to provide intervention to bring pupils on academically...when they come back to school they still count towards assessment tracking”
(Primary SENCO)

Whilst it is important to acknowledge that this piece of research reflects only the findings of a small-scale study it is interesting to note the differing professional perspectives. Furthermore it highlights the need for greater liaison between the settings in terms of their expectations and needs. It would appear that a more formal structure might benefit this liaison.

This was considered in the Back on Track (2008) paper which suggested that Information Passports would be beneficial as they would provide an agreed LA protocol for the sharing of information when pupils move between mainstream and

PRU settings. Whilst it was acknowledged that it would be important to ensure that such a strategy did not duplicate information being communicated, it was argued that such a scheme was crucial in order to ensure that suitable provision can be planned for in advance (DCSF, 2008b). This area is further considered in the next theme explored.

Liaison

The expectation of liaison between mainstream and PRU settings was of considerable importance to all staff interviewed. The primary SENCo highlighted that whilst it was acknowledged that it would be beneficial to be able to spend time discussing pupils and their individual needs with PRU staff, this was generally not possible due to limited opportunities for teaching staff to be released. The secondary HT also suggested that other factors could impede opportunities for face-to-face meetings, such as the distance between the school and the PRU provision;

“...practical difficulties mean that there are no actual meetings between school staff and PRU staff” (Secondary HT)

These findings would appear to constitute a significant challenge for all staff involved. It is of further concern when considered alongside the research of Mainwaring and Hallam (2009) who argued that PRU pupils had more fragile positive selves and more negative perceptions of their future prospects. This

research argued that knowledge of this was crucial for PRUs in order to plan interventions which enabled pupils to understand the links between their current behaviour and their future. It would appear that as PRUs have variable amounts of time to work with pupils, they may not be able to do this as effectively if there is not an opportunity for mainstream schools to pass on the detailed information they have gathered about a pupil over time.

The difficulties in terms of liaison were not only confined to face-to-face interactions. The primary SENCo highlighted that there was considerable concern regarding the lack of data that was passed to the mainstream setting both during and at the end of the PRU placement;

“sometimes there is no information coming back...sharing of information is difficult” (Primary SENCO)

Whilst the mainstream school acknowledged that it was difficult for PRUs to manage the differing assessment and tracking systems employed by schools this was of consequence as when pupils returned to mainstream provisions there was regularly a mismatch in data. In some instances pupils had returned to school after a six week PRU placement with no data. It was reported by the staff interviewed that this proved particularly problematic if mainstream schools were considering Statutory Assessment as there was no continuous trail of intervention and evaluation over time.

This particular finding focusing on the lack of information being passed back to mainstream school settings is of interest given the emphasis the Back on Track (2008) paper places on information sharing. This has primarily focused upon information being given to the PRUs before pupils attend in order for a suitable provision package to be in place once the pupil begins. The results of this study would appear to suggest that there are also issues regarding the information sharing both during and after the PRU placement. As has been suggested previously the use of Information Passports may be beneficial in this instance to aid the reintegration of pupils back into their mainstream settings.

These particular findings do not appear to support the research of Meo and Parker (2004) who argued that PRU staff could contribute to the effective assessment of special educational needs. It does however support the argument made in the Back on Track (2008) paper which suggested that better communication and partnership is required between PRUs and mainstream provision. It is interesting to note that this is primarily referred to in terms of PRU's receiving information from mainstream schools. There would appear to be little consideration of the needs of schools when reintegrating pupils back into a mainstream setting.

3) Experiences of mainstream schools regarding the reintegration of pupils who have attended PRU placements

Length of Placement

The first theme highlighted by all staff interviewed focused upon how the short length of PRU placements (usually six weeks in the LA where the research was conducted) impacted upon successful reintegration of pupils into mainstream settings. The primary HT discussed difficulties in terms of pupils having to adjust quickly from the expectations of the PRU back to their mainstream school. It was suggested that in PRU settings pupils only had to negotiate working in small classrooms with high adult to pupil ratios and any experiences outside the classroom (such as playtime) were closely supervised.

Due to the short length of PRU placements there was limited possibility for offering a phased reintegration which caused particular difficulty due to pupils having to quickly adjust to different expectations in their mainstream setting;

“...they (the pupils) get used to the higher adult ratio...then suddenly they’re back in with us” (Primary HT)

This theme was further explored in terms of the expectations that mainstream staff had of the interventions which would be available during attendance at a PRU.

The secondary HT highlighted that a key expectation was that pupils would be able to engage in intensive tutoring in terms of self-esteem building or coaching focusing on how to manage in mainstream school settings. This theme was further explored by the primary SENCo who suggested that often pupils who were chosen for PRU placements came from challenging home backgrounds and the PRU placement was viewed by mainstream settings as an opportunity for them to receive therapeutic type input focusing on understanding their anger;

“it gives them space to talk through things in a calm space” (Primary SENCo)

It was suggested by all the participants that due to the short term nature of PRU placements pupils were not able to fully benefit from these interventions. This therefore made reintegration difficult as pupils were returning to their mainstream settings without having had the opportunity to explore in-depth the issues which were causing accessing these provisions difficult.

The views expressed by the mainstream teachers do appear to focus primarily on within child issues although there was some acknowledgement of the complex home backgrounds some of the pupils may experience. It is possible that this focus is prevalent due to the nature of PRU provision which highlights that it is the child that has to be removed from the school. It would be beneficial to explore

whether the planned introduction of early intervention initiatives which encourage PRU staff to share expertise in mainstream settings will have an impact in terms of focusing on factors outside the child which may be contributing to their behaviour.

These findings focusing upon the expectations expressed by mainstream staff that pupils would be able to explore issues surrounding their self-esteem and how this may impact upon their behaviour would appear to partially support the research of Mainwaring and Hallam (2009) who argued that PRUs had a key part to play in aiding pupils to develop this understanding. It would however appear that the staff interviewed for the present study suggest that the short length of placements is ultimately impacting on the success of such interventions.

Specialist Support

The second reintegration theme concerned the type of support available to pupils and mainstream staff. The primary SENCo suggested that it was crucial for pupils to be supported both during and after reintegration into their mainstream setting. It was suggested that the most successful reintegrations occurred when pupils were able to receive one-to-one specialist support from a member of the PRU staff once they returned to their mainstream school. This finding would therefore appear not to support the research of Panayiotopoulous and Kerfoot (2004) who suggested that PRU staff were not effective in supporting pupils during reintegration into mainstream settings.

The primary SENCo further expanded her argument for PRU staff support during and after reintegration, suggesting that the presence of specialist staff was of benefit to the pupil as they were able to be reminded of the strategies they had learnt and the successes they had experienced whilst attending the PRU. Furthermore this type of support was also of benefit to mainstream teachers as they were able to discuss with PRU staff strategies that had been successful for pupils and integrate these into their classroom practice;

“it’s great when a child can bring back strategies” (Primary SENCo)

The findings focusing on the importance and effectiveness of specialist support would appear to endorse the research of Vulliamy and Webb (2000) who suggested that staff require additional support when working with pupils who can display disruptive behaviour patterns. Whilst it may be hoped that once pupils have attended a PRU placement they will no longer display such behaviours, it would appear from the findings presented above that this is not always the case. In terms of the present study it was reported that a primary factor in this was the short lengths of placement. It would be beneficial to explore this area further in other LAs to determine further whether length of placement is a factor in the successful reintegration into mainstream settings.

Conclusion

This Professional Practice Report has highlighted the importance of considering the different perspectives of professionals involved in organising and delivering PRU educational provision. The results indicate that, in the three areas investigated, mainstream staff have strong opinions and expectations of this type of educational setting. It would appear that whilst some of these expectations are being realised others are not which can lead to mainstream staff questioning the effectiveness of PRU provision. Whilst the present study only represents a small sample of mainstream school opinion it has highlighted some areas which require further investigation.

In terms of the results focusing on why mainstream school consider PRU placements necessary for pupils, there would appear to be strong belief that school exclusions are generally considered as a last resort and that the needs of the pupil are of primary concern. It may be beneficial to consider how these needs could be met through schools and PRUs working together in a more targeted early intervention manner before alternative education provision becomes the only option left for pupils to avoid exclusion. The present strategy of the coalition Government to focus on PRU staff sharing their expertise with teachers in mainstream settings would appear to be a positive way forward and one which could also help staff move away from a focus of within child needs leading to behaviour problems.

The results focusing on the expectations of the mainstream schools in terms of PRU provision highlight greater areas of dissatisfaction. There would appear to be a strong expectation from mainstream staff that pupils will receive continuity in their education and this is not always being realised. In order to address this issue staff from both settings could be supported to liaise more closely in order to explore what is realistic in terms of provision and to engage in discussion concerning the practical difficulties and possible solutions. The introduction of Information Passports may provide some solutions to this, but it would appear that a greater emphasis is required on ensuring the passing of information between settings; this may require additional resources which enable teaching staff to be released from school for this to occur.

The final area explored concerned the experiences of reintegration into mainstream settings. The results indicated that the length of PRU placements was impacting on the reintegration of pupils. Mainstream staff were however able to suggest how reintegration could be more successful in terms of phased planning or greater support from PRU staff and it may now be beneficial to explore how these suggestions could be implemented and evaluated.

Overall it would appear that there are a number of areas which could be studied in order to enhance the experiences of staff and pupils when accessing PRU provision. Further exploration could also consider the opinions of PRU staff and the pupils themselves in order to create a fuller picture and potentially enhance the experiences of all involved in PRU provision.

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Appendix 1

REASONS FOR ATTENDANCE AT A PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

Pupils who attend PRUs are:

- Excluded from school on a permanent or fixed-term basis (more than 5 days);
- Pregnant schoolgirls or school-age mothers
- Anxious and vulnerable pupils
- School refusers, school phobics and young carers
- Pupils unable to attend due to medical reasons
- Any pupil moving into a LA who is unable to find a school place because of insufficiency of school places within the LA
- Children who, because of entering pupil care or moving care placements, require a change of school and are unable to gain access to a school place
- Asylum seekers and refugees who have no school place
- Pupils with statements of special educational need whose placements are not yet agreed, and pupils awaiting assessment of learning difficulties and/or disabilities (prus.org.uk, 2010)

Appendix 2

RESEARCH AIMS FOR PRU CASE STUDY

- 1 To explore the factors which lead a mainstream school to consider a PRU placement appropriate or necessary for a pupil**
 - What circumstances lead a mainstream school to considering that a PRU placement may be suitable for a pupil?

- 2 To ascertain the expectations of a mainstream school in terms of what a PRU placement will be able to provide for the school and the pupil**
 - What do mainstream schools believe the benefits of a PRU placement will be for the child/school/parents?
 - What do mainstream schools expect PRUs will be able to provide for pupils?
 - What do mainstream schools expect in terms of liaison between mainstream and PRU settings?

- 3 To explore the experiences of a mainstream schools regarding the reintegration of pupils who have attended a PRU placement**
 - What have been mainstream schools experiences of reintegration of pupils after PRU placements?
 - How successful was the reintegration?
 - Would the mainstream schools change any aspects of the reintegration process?

Appendix 3

CASE STUDY PROTOCOL

Overview of Case Study Project

The role and effectiveness of PRUs has come under scrutiny in recent years culminating in the Back on Track White Paper published in May 2008 (DCSF, 2008a). Whilst there has been research focusing on the experiences of the pupils who attend PRUs (Munn and Lloyd, 2005) and also on staff working in PRUs (Meo and Parker, 2004) there would appear to be little investigation focusing on the views of mainstream staff. This would appear to be of consequence as PRU provision is only designed to be short-term with the goal being the return to mainstream education (DCSF, 2008a). The present Professional Practice Report provides a case study of two mainstream school experiences of accessing PRU provision for their pupils due to issues of exclusion. Using Thematic Analysis the experiences of mainstream staff are explored in terms of what leads them to consider PRU provision necessary, what they expect from a PRU placement and how they experience reintegration of pupils back into the mainstream setting.

Field Procedures

3 semi-structured interviews scheduled:

- Primary HT (06.12.10)
- Secondary HT (07.12.10)
- Primary SENCo (08.12.10)

Case Study Questions

1. What factors which lead to a mainstream school to considering a PRU placement appropriate or necessary for a pupil?
2. What expectations do mainstream school have in terms of what a PRU placement will be able to provide for the school and the pupil?
3. What have been the experiences of mainstream schools regarding the reintegration of pupils who have attended a PRU placement?

Case Study Report

- Introduction
- Literature Review
- Method
- Results and Discussion

Appendix 4

TIMELINE OF RESEARCH

October 2010	Initial visits to PRUs in Local Authority Complete literature review
November 2010	Negotiate research aims with Local Authority Decide on research methodology Contact schools with initial information and request participation
December 2010	Carry out semi-structured interviews Analyse data
January 2011	Write up of results

Appendix 5

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Q1 What leads you to considering a child may require a PRU placement?

- In what circumstances have you primarily chosen to use PRU placements?

Q2 What do you as a school hope a PRU placement will achieve?

- For the pupil
- For the school
- For the parents
- For anyone else

Q3 What are your expectations of a PRU placement?

- What do you understand a PRU placement to consist of?

Q4 What has been your experience concerning liaison between your school and the PRU?

- Is there enough liaison?
- What information were you asked for?
- Would you change anything?

Q5 How is transition back into mainstream school managed at the end of the PRU placement?

- Is this arrangement suitable for the child / school / parents?

Q6 How successful have PRU placement been?

How do you measure this success?

Q7 Are there any aspects that you would change about the system?

Appendix 6

SIX STAGES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS
1. Familiarising with the Data	Read and re-read data noting down initial ideas
2. Generating Initial Codes	Code interesting feature throughout data and collate data for each code
3. Searching for Themes	Collate codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing Themes	Check themes work in terms of coded extracts and entire data set
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Ongoing analysis to refine each theme and generation of names for each theme
6. Producing the Report	Selection of compelling extracts relating back to research questions and literature review

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Appendix 7

Key Research Findings

1) Factors which lead to mainstream schools considering that a PRU placement is appropriate or necessary for a pupil	
<i>Pupil Needs</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High behaviour demands <i>Mainstream school staff feeling that pupil needs can no longer be met;</i> <i>Concern the child is placing themselves or others in danger;</i> <i>Child displaying behaviours which are considered dangerous;</i> <i>Pupils behaviour having an impact on other pupils learning;</i> <i>Teachers having to spend disproportionate amount of time with one pupil due to behaviour demands;</i> <i>Behavioural demands regularly result in removal of pupil from the classroom;</i> <i>Pupils spending the majority of their time outside their class (not a suitable long-term strategy).</i> - Mismatch between needs and setting <i>Mainstream school not having the resources to deal with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs;</i> <i>Pupils displaying behaviours which mainstream school staff feel uncomfortable and/or untrained to deal with;</i> <i>Primary focus on within child factors – limited consideration of other factors which may lead to or explain behaviours.</i> - No more within-school intervention available <i>All within-school resources have been used with little or no effect;</i> <i>LA policy states that all within school intervention have to be tried before PRU placement is</i>

	<i>considered which exacerbates difficulties – limited options for using PRUs for early intervention.</i>
Avoiding Exclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Exclusion alternatives <i>PRU placements viewed as a positive alternative to school exclusion; Belief that school exclusions are a last resort; School exclusions viewed as a generally ineffective strategy which does not move the situation forward for the pupil or the school.</i> - Engaging parents <i>School exclusions often result in difficulty in engaging parents; PRU placements generally viewed by parents as a supportive and proactive measure; Parents require information about PRU placements but then generally view them as positive.</i> - Breaking the cycle of exclusion <i>Exclusion from school can become a cycle which is difficult to break; This cycle can involve the child, the school and their parents; PRU placements can enable this cycle to be broken and for all involved to move forward.</i>
2) Expectations of a mainstream school in terms of what a PRU placement will be able to provide for the school and the pupil	
Continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Continuing basic education <i>Mainstream staff want pupils attending PRUs to be guaranteed continuing basic literacy and numeracy education;</i>

	<p><i>Mainstream staff concerned that pupils receive continuing education as their data will still count towards school levels when they return to their mainstream setting.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of personal and social skills <p><i>Mainstream staff believe that PRUs should also offer more specialist input such as therapeutic interventions;</i></p> <p><i>There should be an opportunity for pupils to receive specialist support to develop their personal and social skills which would not be available at mainstream schools.</i></p>
Liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited opportunities <p><i>Expectation of liaison between mainstream and PRU settings but this was not always realised;</i></p> <p><i>Factors such as time, limited resources to enable teachers to be released from their classrooms and distance between PRUs and mainstream school all contributed towards limited liaison.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Lack of data transfer to mainstream schools <p><i>Lack of data passed from PRUs to mainstream setting both during and after placements;</i></p> <p><i>Mainstream school regularly left with a 6 week gap in their assessment and tracking data</i></p>
3) Experiences of mainstream schools regarding the reintegration of pupils who have attended PRU placements	
Length of Placement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficulties experienced by pupils in adjusting to expectations of settings in short periods of time <p><i>Short placements (usually 6 weeks) mean that pupils have to adjust quickly to expectations of</i></p>

	<p><i>PRU placements and then back to expectation of mainstream settings;</i></p> <p><i>Pupils find expectations of PRUs easier to manage due to high adult to child ratios and experiences outside the classroom (such as playtime) being closely supervised;</i></p> <p><i>Short length of PRU placements means that there is very limited opportunity for reintegration and pupils therefore have to adjust back to mainstream settings quickly.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact of short placements on the types of interventions offered <p><i>Key expectation of mainstream staff is that pupils will be offered specialist interventions at PRUs such as intensive self-esteem work or therapeutic input;</i></p> <p><i>Short lengths of placement mean that pupils were no able to fully benefit from these types of interventions;</i></p> <p><i>This lack of intensive support could make reintegration difficult as the pupils had not been able to explore the issues which had caused accessing mainstream setting to be difficult.</i></p>
Specialist Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for pupils <p><i>Crucial for pupils to be supported both during and after reintegration into mainstream setting;</i></p> <p><i>Most successful reintegration occurred when pupil was able to be supported one-to-one by a member of the PRU staff;</i></p> <p><i>Staff from the PRU being available in mainstream settings enabled pupils to be reminded of the strategies they have learnt at the PRU and also their successes;</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support for staff <p><i>Beneficial when PRU staff were able to discuss strategies that had worked with mainstream</i></p>

	<p><i>staff;</i></p> <p><i>This also offered support to mainstream staff when reintegrating pupils and enabled them to feel more confident.</i></p>
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CHAPTER THREE: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORT 2

The Role of Educational Psychologists Working with Deaf Pupils in Mainstream Schools

Abstract

The education of deaf and hearing impaired pupils has been the subject of debate and beset with controversy for many years. There have been numerous suggestions that the education system has failed these pupils resulting in low levels of achievement across academic subjects (Traxler, 2000) and reduced long-term prospects compared to their hearing peers (Jones, 2004). This is not to say that there have been no positive developments. In recent years there has been greater recognition of British Sign Language as a full language (Swanwick, 1998) and increasing acknowledgement of the need for the Deaf community to be actively involved in the development of education initiatives (Simms and Thumann, 2007). The present Professional Practice Report explores the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) as part of a multi-agency hearing impaired team. The paper specifically focuses on the distinctive contribution EPs can bring to such a team in terms of supporting the inclusion of deaf pupils in mainstream schools. Farrell (2006) argues that it is crucial for EPs who are committed to inclusion to be seen to be working not only at the individual child level but also taking into account the systems in which a child lives. This paper therefore focuses on a critical evaluation of the literature and research surrounding the factors that act as either facilitators or barriers to inclusion of deaf pupils from the perspectives of peers, parents and teaching staff. Further to this the report also considers how these research findings can be translated into EP practice within a multi-agency Hearing Impairment team setting.

Introduction

The education of deaf and hearing impaired (HI) pupils has been the subject of debate and beset with controversy for many years. There have been numerous suggestions that the education system has failed these pupils resulting in low levels of achievement across academic subjects (Traxler, 2000) and low academic status compared to their hearing peers (Most, 2006). Further to this there has been increasing concern focusing on the long-term prospects of deaf and HI pupils in relation to low employment rates and earnings potential (Jones, 2004).

A number of factors have been suggested as prominent in this pattern of findings. Deaf education has traditionally emphasised a medical pathological view of this community and as such has not extensively explored the appropriate pedagogies to inform the most effective types of education (Simms and Thumann, 2007). Furthermore there has been significant debate surrounding the location of education (mainstream schools with hearing children or special school with other deaf children) and which form of language and communication to use (signing or oral approach) (Gregory et al., 1998).

This is not to say that there have been no positive developments in terms of educational provision for deaf and HI pupils. The recognition of British Sign Language (BSL) as a full language has had significant impact in terms of understanding and provision. There has also been growing acknowledgment that

in order to understand and provide effective education initiatives, it is crucial for educational professionals to take their lead from the Deaf community (Simms and Thumann, 2007).

The issue of quality and effective education for deaf and HI pupils is of consequence given the number of pupils who potentially fall within this group. It is estimated that in the U.K:

- one in 1000 children are deaf at three years of age;
- this rises to two in every 1000 for children aged between nine to 16 years;
- 12,000 children aged 0 to 15 years were born deaf; and
- 20,000 children aged 0 to 15 years are moderately to profoundly deaf (for further definitions see Appendix 1) (RNID, 2006)

Rationale for Professional Practice Report

The present Professional Practice Report (PPR) focuses upon the role of Educational Psychologists (EPs) working as part of a Hearing Impaired Team. I have been interested in working within this field for a number of years having previously taught a deaf child within a mainstream class. This experience led me to become qualified in BSL which in turn enabled me to become more aware of the Deaf community.

As a trainee EP I have recently been given the opportunity to join a Hearing Impaired Team which is a new position within my employing EP Service. Whilst welcoming this opportunity I was aware that I would be working alongside a group of professionals with a deep and specialist knowledge which left me questioning what contribution an EP could make to such a team. Collaborative partnerships between different professional groups have increasingly been investigated and it has been suggested that they produce more effective outcomes if professionals are able to use their skills and knowledge without breaching the parameters of their own or others practice (Eernisse & Warren, 2007).

In order to explore this area further I consulted with EP colleagues about deaf pupils they had supported in educational settings. This consultation led to an understanding that the majority of cases where EPs had been asked to become involved revolved around issues of inclusion. More specifically EPs reported that they had been consulted due to concerns raised by teaching staff, parents and other professionals regarding the most effective methods to include deaf pupils in mainstream classes particularly in terms of social and emotional development. This area was therefore deemed relevant for further investigation given my new position within the HI team and was chosen as a topic for the present PPR in order to develop not only my own knowledge but also that of the EP service.

The following PPR will begin with a consideration of the terminology used when working with deaf and HI pupils. This is followed by an exploration of the research

focusing upon the contribution EPs can make when working as part of multi-agency teams. Consideration will then be given to the issues that have surrounded the inclusion of deaf pupils in educational settings giving particular attention to the role of peers, teachers and parents. Finally the contribution of the EP is explored in terms of facilitating and supporting inclusion.

Terminology

The terminology used in defining deaf and HI pupils is complex and represents many different perspectives (Watson et al., 1999). Baines (2007) suggests that the various classifications reflect individuals' physical, psychological and social experiences. Furthermore it is argued that a single term is untenable due to the need to recognise the different communication styles used.

It has been suggested that employing the term 'deaf and hearing impaired' encompasses all pupils with hearing loss (Watson et al., 1999). Quigley and Kretschmer (1982) however argue that these pupils do not constitute a homogenous group and propose that five descriptive variables can be used to distinguish the subgroups within the deaf and HI community namely:

- 1) degree of hearing impairment
- 2) age of onset
- 3) type of hearing impairment
- 4) aetiology of the hearing impairment
- 5) hearing status of parents/carers (see Appendix 2 for further details)

The term 'hearing impaired' was originally introduced as it was thought to be more positive than 'deaf' and is commonly used in education. It is also the term favoured by the Department for Education (2010). The term has however been rejected by some due to its focus on the element that is not present. Many people affected by hearing loss prefer to use the term 'deaf' as it enables them to assert their deafness as a positive attribute. Further to this, deaf people can also choose to describe themselves as 'Deaf', with a capital D, highlighting their identity as part of the Deaf community with their own culture and language (BSL) (Knight and Swanwick, 2002).

Clark (1998) argues that it is vital when considering any terminology that deaf people themselves are active participants in its construction. The phrase 'hitchhiker' has been used to represent the errors made when hearing persons try to understand deaf individuals from a hearing perspective. It is argued that deafness requires to be viewed as a social construction and in the lives and experiences of deaf people, deafness is not always a defining characteristic (Gregory and Hartley, 2002).

As a hearing individual I feel that it is difficult for me to subscribe to any one definition and in my professional practice I would ask individuals I am working with how they choose to identify themselves. For the purposes of this paper I will however employ the term 'deaf' as it is the term which has been favoured by the majority of individuals with hearing loss that I have worked with.

Issues Concerning EPs Working in Multi-Agency Teams

The past decade has seen the role of multi-agency working becoming a core concept in educational practice (Gasper, 2010). The Children Act 2004 required the development of local authority children's services which not only brought together professionals in education and social care but also highlighted the need for partnership between all agencies working with children and their families (Booker, 2005).

Further to this the Every Child Matters (ECM) (DfES, 2003) legislation constituted a major change in models and principles of professional practice for those involved in providing children's services (Farrell et al., 2006). Gasper (2010) highlights that prior to this legislation, agencies working with families did so separately and favoured a 'top-down' approach dictating what would be provided to service users supported by service organisation which focused upon specialism. The introduction of the ECM legislation however required agencies to move towards models of more 'joined-up' thinking placing emphasis on working together to form teams around the child and their family (Hughes, 2006).

The change in policy has not been without controversy. Soan (2006) highlights that there have been debates surrounding whether this movement was driven by Government desire to cut costs and limit the power of professionals. There has also been extensive consideration in terms of how the professionals involved in multi-agency teams view themselves and their professional identity within such settings (Robinson et al., 2005).

It has however been argued that whilst these suggestions may be valid areas for exploration, overall the policy has demonstrated a commitment to raising standards for all and facilitating social change (Glaister and Glaister, 2005). An example of this commitment in terms of supporting deaf children and their families is the Early Support Monitoring Protocol (DfES, 2006) which was designed to provide a framework to enable parents and professionals to monitor a child's progress and share what they know using a common point of reference.

It is not possible however to state that working in a multi-agency manner has been without issues. In terms of more concrete factors which may impede multi-agency work, obstacles such as geographical boundaries, budgetary priorities and differing statutory frameworks all require consideration (DfES, 2004). Robinson and Cottrell (2005) argue that consideration of other factors which may not be as easy to address is also required. Through employing Wenger's (1998) communities of practice theoretical framework the researchers suggested that issues such as professional identity, knowledge and ways of working also impact on the ability of professionals to function in a multi-agency setting.

The contribution that EPs can make to multi-agency teams has been increasingly explored. Farrell et al., (2006) in their research focussing on the role of EPs highlighted that one significant area focussed on their work across multiple settings and with a wide variety of professionals and stakeholders. It was argued that this position within the local authority enables EPs to gain a distinctive

knowledge which in turn can be used to understand the needs of the child more fully and to aid other agencies in working together.

There have however been a number of issues highlighted as potential barriers to EP multi-agency working. Educational Psychologists have suggested that, in order for quality multi-agency working to occur it is not only necessary for agencies to develop a shared vision but also to understand the distinctive contribution each profession brings to the setting. This was further expanded with the argument that maintaining professional identity was crucial in order to contribute effectively to multi-agency settings. It was suggested that this could be achieved through access to professional development and supervision with other EPs (Farrell et al., 2006).

The difficulty in developing and maintaining a professional identity has been of considerable debate for EPs for a number of years. Cameron (2006) highlighted that whilst EPs had attempted to define professional distinctiveness through a number of means such as recommending improved strategy for EP services (Evans, 2005) or arguing the need to widen practice beyond traditional client groups (Baxter and Frederickson, 2005) this did not fully address the distinctive contributions EPs could make.

Gaskill and Leadbetter (2009) further explored this area using second generation Activity Theory to compare the roles of EPs working in multi-agency teams. In terms of professional identity the EPs reported that initially there was a feeling of

‘deskilling’ in multi-agency setting. This however appeared to diminish over time with EPs becoming more aware of their individual areas of strength and contributions.

This particular piece of research is of interest for a number of reasons. Activity Theory has been identified as being particularly appropriate to study how members of multi-agency teams create working practices and explore differences (Robinson and Cottrell, 2005). Whilst the research conducted by Gaskill and Leadbetter (2009) was small scale ($n = 10$) it did investigate the views of EPs working in teams with both educational and health professionals which is of consequence to the present PPR given the structure of the HI team which I am due to join.

In terms of the distinctive contribution that EPs can make to multi-agency settings the need to be able to apply psychological perspectives and problem solving dimensions has been highlighted by a number of researchers (Hughes, 2006; Cameron, 2006; Farrell et al., 2006). Alexander and Sked (2010) investigated this contribution through their research focusing on the implementation of solution-focused strategies into multi-agency meetings.

The researchers concluded that such meetings contributed to effective multi-agency working and good communication. There was however concern that not all professionals adhered to the solution-focused principles of the meetings which in

turn led to a heavy burden on EPs to attend all such meetings. Alexander and Sked (2010) suggested that this could be improved through additional training. However upon reflection this could possibly be the unique contribution made by EPs and therefore not an area which all multi-agency members have to become proficient in order for this format of multi-agency working to be successful.

Further areas highlighted by Gaskill and Leadbetter (2009) as important contributions made by EPs to multi-agency teams included taking a holistic view and the use of evidence-based practice. Both of these areas have strongly influenced the EP profession in terms of the perspective it brings when focusing on issues of inclusion. Farrell (2006) highlights that EPs are able to demonstrate ways of working which are more inclusive such as consultation which takes into account the need for a detailed knowledge of the system in which a child lives and does not accept a within child model. Furthermore EPs are able to contribute specific skills to multi-agency teams such as research abilities which enable a greater understanding of the issues surrounding inclusion (Ainscow et al., 2006).

In terms of my own role within the multi-agency team HI team I consider the finding of Gaskill and Leadbetter (2009) concerning the contribution of EPs in terms of developing a holistic picture of the child particularly pertinent. I base a great deal of my work and thinking around Bronfenbrenner's (1994) Ecological Systems Theory which proposes that child development takes place through processes of progressively more complex interactions. Experience of multi-agency

teams suggests that liaising between and understanding the perspectives of different stakeholders (parents, professionals and the child) is a role primarily fulfilled by EPs and is a contribution I can bring to the HI team.

I am also interested in the finding that EPs consider the use of evidence based practice an important contribution to multi-agency working (Gaskill and Leadbetter, 2009). Increasingly the EP profession is acknowledging the role it can play in evaluating the evidence bases for assessments and interventions and also in contributing towards them (Frederickson, 2002; Eodanable and Lauchlan, 2009). I therefore hope that, through this PPR and also my continuing professional development in this area, I will be able to make a contribution to the HI team concerning the research evidence available for working with deaf children in mainstream schools.

Issues of Inclusion of Deaf Pupils

Educational inclusion is a dynamic and complex issue that challenges everyone involved (Hung and Paul, 2006). The placement of pupils with special educational needs in mainstream settings has increasingly been argued to be crucial in order to promote the wider agenda of social inclusion which in turn it is suggested will bring about a more equal and cohesive society (Jarvis and Iantaffi, 2006).

Milner (2000) suggests that all pupils, regardless of their needs, should have access to the educational and social aspects afforded through mainstream schooling. This is further expanded by Hung and Paul (2006) who argue that the goal of inclusion is to assist all pupils reach their maximum potential in educational and social terms. This focus on the benefits that mainstream inclusion can bring in terms of social as well as educational benefits has, however, not been without controversy and has developed alongside arguments suggesting that pupils' learning needs should be considered as more important than the social aspects of schooling (Wilson, 1999).

In terms of the inclusion of deaf pupils into mainstream settings, Watson and Parsons (1998) argue that there has been a revolutionary change in attitudes and provision. A Unesco study (Bowen, 1986) suggested that one of the major factors impeding deaf pupils inclusion into mainstream schooling was teacher attitudes. The research suggested that pupils with moderate learning difficulties or with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties were more favoured for mainstream inclusion than deaf pupils.

This was further explored by Ward et al., (1994) who highlighted that whilst mainstream teachers felt able to include pupils with mild hearing loss not requiring additional instructional or management skills, they did not feel competent to include students with moderate or profound hearing loss. The teachers suggested that this was primarily due to their beliefs that they required additional specialist

support in order to ensure that deaf pupils were likely to succeed in mainstream settings.

In terms of more recent changes to the education of deaf pupils, Jarvis and Iantaffi (2006) suggest that in the U.K. the majority of pupils are now taught in mainstream schools. This move towards a more inclusive educational policy has received support as it has been argued that such moves ultimately increase the likelihood of deaf pupils becoming active participants in all aspects of society (Angelides and Aravi, 2007).

This suggestion has been expanded further with arguments stating that inclusion should actually be viewed as a political human rights issue where no pupil is segregated from the mainstream of society (Aromolaran, 2004). This is not to say that all differences between learners should be ignored, but that each pupil should be able to belong to an educational community which values, accepts and validates their individuality (Ademoloya, 2008).

The inclusive movement for deaf pupils has been further supported by a trend towards offering deaf students in-class support rather than withdrawal from class. It has been suggested that this move fits in with inclusion policy as it enables all pupils, regardless of their needs, to be fully integrated into all aspects of school life (Watson and Parsons, 1998). It has been suggested that this type of support can

ultimately be detrimental to deaf pupils' educational progress as mainstream teachers can work through and interact more with the specialist teacher rather than the pupil. However it has been argued that, through joint planning and team teaching, not only deaf pupils but also whole classes can benefit through focusing on and employing each teachers strengths (Watson and Parsons, 1998).

Angelides and Aravi (2007) investigated the impact that the inclusion of deaf pupils can have in terms of whole school development of inclusive practices. Their study focused on one Cypriot school and used a range of qualitative methods (including observations and interviews) to gather data regarding the inclusion of nine 13 and 14 year old deaf pupils in a mainstream secondary school.

The results indicated that the inclusion had a positive impact in terms of whole school development of inclusive practices. These included increased discussion and exchange of ideas to improve methods of working and revision of existing practice and differentiation. Angelides and Aravi (2007) suggest that the development of inclusive practices not only benefitted the deaf pupils but all students. It was argued that inclusion of deaf pupils enabled teachers to gain deeper understanding and insights into the abilities of all pupils and represented a 'hidden voice' that directed teachers towards improved teaching methods.

The research did have limitations in that it was small-scale focusing on only one school. Angelides and Aravi (2007) however argue that it is still of consequence given the in-depth nature of the data gathered. Further to this, whilst the research was conducted in Cyprus, the authors argue that the findings are similar to those of other international studies including those in England (see Tilstone et al., 1998; Ainscow, 1999).

Further research has also explored the considerable impact the attitudes of mainstream teachers can play in terms of inclusion of deaf pupils. Jarvis and Iantaffi (2006) investigated how the use of narrative approaches could engage student teachers in the inclusion debate. Each of the participants engaged in three elements of the research process namely:

- 1) using stories to enable greater appreciation and different ways of viewing the world;
- 2) writing stories to find out about different experiences and put them in a personal context; and
- 3) reflection on learning and areas for professional development.

Jarvis and Iantaffi (2007) argue that the results of the research indicate that student teachers had their understanding and expectations of the inclusion of deaf

pupils altered in a number of ways. These included questioning assumptions about learning such as the emphasis on verbal and written materials. Furthermore the research suggested that the student teachers became more aware of children's voice which in turn moved from discourse surrounding ability to one which focused on equity.

Overall the research presented suggests that whilst the inclusion of deaf pupils into mainstream settings can ultimately have a positive impact on a number of levels (Angelides and Aravi, 2007) the success of such inclusion can be heavily influenced by staff within these settings. It would appear that an important function of multi-agency teams working with deaf pupils and their educational settings is to facilitate staff knowledge and understanding and thus increase feelings of competence.

In terms of my role within the HI team the findings concerning the power of the voice of the child (Jarvis and Iantaffi, 2007) are particularly pertinent. Research suggests that EPs are well placed to highlight the importance and benefits of listening and responding to the voice of the child (Woolfson and Harker, 2002) and I believe that this is an area in which I could make a significant contribution within a multi-agency team.

The Contribution of an EP to a Multi-Agency HI Team

It would appear from the research presented that the inclusion of deaf pupils into mainstream classes can potentially have a number of benefits for all pupils and staff. These benefits can however be overshadowed if focus remains upon a deficit model which views a deaf pupil's needs as within child and does not explore all aspects of a pupil's life. Farrell (2006) argues that it is crucial for EPs committed to inclusion to be seen as working not only at an individual child level but also taking into account the systems in which a child lives.

In order to explore the role of EPs working with deaf pupils and issues of inclusion an extensive literature search was conducted. A search was conducted using the keywords *deaf*, *hearing impaired* and *school* in February 2011. A range of educational and psychological databases were used (namely ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; British Education Index; Educational Research Abstracts Online; ERIC: Educational Resources Information Centre; PsycARTICLES and SwetsWise). A total of 159 articles were identified with the vast majority being published from 2005 onwards.

In order to narrow the focus of this search, articles focusing on research investigating issues of deaf pupils' social and emotional development when included in mainstream schooling were selected from the original search. This was deemed appropriate as whilst there has been considerable research focusing on the cognitive and linguistic developmental benefits of inclusion of deaf pupils in mainstream settings (Cambra, 2005) there would appear to be more divided

opinion regarding the impact mainstream inclusion can have in terms of deaf pupils social and emotional development (Hung and Paul, 2006).

It was considered important that the literature search should move away from a within child model and therefore the research findings were divided into areas which would enable an EP to bring a more holistic understanding of the issues of, and an evidence-base for the inclusion of, deaf pupils into mainstream settings. The most pertinent findings are explored below in three key areas namely:

- peers;
- teachers; and
- parents.

Deaf Pupils and their Peers in Mainstream Settings

The first area to be explored focused on peer relationships between deaf and hearing pupils and the impact these can have in terms of inclusion experiences in mainstream settings. In order to gain an overview of research within this area a review of studies conducted by Kluwin et al., (2002) was initially explored. This review focused upon 33 studies dated from 1980 onwards concerning peer relationships between deaf and hearing pupils.

The researchers conducted this review in order to gain a fuller understanding of the social processes and outcomes for deaf pupils who were educated alongside hearing peers. Kluwin et al., (2002) categorised the findings into four main areas

namely social skills, interaction / participations, sociometric status / acceptance and affective functioning (for further details of the findings see Appendix 3).

One of the main findings from the review in terms of peer interactions and inclusion suggested that deaf pupils may find relationships with hearing peers difficult and may not fully enjoy these. Kluwin et al., (2002) highlight that in terms of relatedness, deaf pupils reported greater relatedness with deaf peers than hearing pupils. Furthermore whilst the studies reviewed indicated that hearing peers accepted deaf pupils into mainstream classes, factors such as gender and extent of contact may have an effect.

Kluwin et al., (2002) did however suggest that whilst the studies reviewed investigated a variety of age groups there was an emphasis in this area on adolescents. It could be argued that focusing within this age range may impact on results due to the importance these pupils may place on definition through personal interaction and the possibility that they would therefore prefer to build relationships with a 'like group'. Furthermore whilst the review conducted by Kluwin et al., (2002) gives an interesting insight into the patterns of results of inclusion research within this area it only takes into account studies conducted until 2002. Given the fast moving nature of educational reform within this area it is also important to consider more recent research.

In order to explore what may contribute as facilitators or barriers to inclusion Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) used focus groups to study the experiences of 16 deaf pupils

educated in mainstream settings in terms of their experiences with hearing peers. It has been suggested that a focus group method is beneficial as it enables participants to make comments in their own words whilst also having their thoughts stimulated by others in the group (Robson, 2002).

The results indicated that a main factor in facilitating inclusion was the attitudes and sensitivity of hearing peers. This was reported to occur in a number of situations such as hearing peers acting as note takers in the classroom or as social interpreters. The deaf pupils suggested that it was important that successful relationships were built on hearing peers being sensitive to their needs without overemphasising them.

Eriks-Brophy et al. (2006) do however highlight that all the deaf pupils who participated in the study reported incidences of being teased which they perceived was due to their hearing loss rather than any other factors. Some of the participants also suggested that they had experienced resentment from their hearing peers due to being identified as having received favouritism from teachers and having reduced classroom demands placed upon them.

There are limitations to this study which require to be acknowledged. Firstly the participants who took part in the focus groups were aged between 15 to 30 years (mean age = 19.7 years). The researchers do not give a rationale for the inclusion of such a wide range of ages and also for including participants who would have left school over a decade before the research was conducted. As has been stated

previously, educational inclusion is a fast moving issue and therefore it can be suggested that the experiences of participants now aged 30 may have been significantly different from the current education system.

Overall the results of the research conducted by Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) would appear to suggest that whilst hearing peers may at times act as barriers to inclusion of deaf pupils they can also play an important role as facilitators. Given that previous research has also indicated that attitudes of non-disabled pupils can impact on the learning experiences of disabled pupils (Salend, 1998) it would therefore appear important to consider the attitudes and experiences of not only the deaf pupils but also their hearing peers.

Hung and Paul (2006) conducted research to gain the perspectives of hearing pupils towards the inclusion of deaf pupils in their own classroom environments.

A questionnaire was developed containing items focusing on inclusion, contact, closeness and class norms. The researchers suggest that this methodology was appropriate given that previous research in this area has generally focussed upon pupils' views to hypothetical groups of deaf pupils rather than pupils who are actually attending mainstream schools.

The results of the study indicated that hearing pupils in inclusive classes (classes which contained deaf pupils) demonstrated more positive attitudes towards deaf peers than those in general classes. The research also suggested that females held more positive attitudes and that older students held more favourable views.

The result concerning gender would appear to support the review of research conducted by Kluwin et al., (2002) reported previously. Further to this the findings focusing on older students having more favourable attitudes is of interest given that it does not support previous research which has suggested younger pupils held more positive views (Yuker, 1994). Hung and Paul (2006) propose that the finding in their study may have been due to the older pupils having prior greater lengths of inclusion. This in turn would support the results of Kluwin et al., (2002) suggesting that extent of contact is a contributing factor to hearing pupils' acceptance of deaf peers.

This research does give an interesting insight into how the inclusion of deaf pupils can have an impact on the attitudes of hearing students. The questionnaire employed by the researchers enabled a relatively large sample of students ($n = 241$) to participate and was found to have good levels of validity and high reliability (overall coefficient was 0.93). The research also took place in one school which suggests that the differences found in students attitudes could be attributed to the inclusion or not of deaf pupils rather than other factors such as school policy. It would now be valuable to consider research with a greater qualitative stance in order to understand more fully and in greater depth the attitudes of the hearing pupils.

Teachers Attitudes and Experiences of Inclusion of Deaf

The second area investigated concerned the attitudes and experiences of mainstream teachers towards inclusion of deaf pupils. Simms and Thumann

(2007) argue that a great difficulty faced by teaching professionals when considering their position and feelings of competence in terms of including deaf pupils in mainstream settings, is that they are predominantly influenced by literature from a medical perspective which emphasises difficulties *in* deaf pupils. Further to this it has been suggested that initial teacher training programmes retain a focus on audism (placing higher value on hearing and oral/aural education). This in turn leads to an emphasis on English over other forms of language (such as BSL) and lower teacher expectations of deaf pupils' abilities.

Jarvis (2003) used a constructivist approach to investigate the experiences of deaf pupils concerning how mainstream teachers had either facilitated or acted as barrier to their inclusion. Constructivist research focuses on the tenet that reality is socially constructed (Robson, 2002). Sixty-one deaf secondary school pupils took part in a combination of individual interviews and focus groups. The results indicated that mainstream teachers were often viewed as not understanding the pupils' needs, for example pupils reported being asked to remove radio hearing aids due to the assumption they were listening to music.

The pupils did, however, suggest a wide range of basic strategies which acted as facilitators, such as keeping the general classroom noise low and using visual aids to support language. Interestingly Jarvis (2003) highlights that the majority of the strategies suggested by deaf pupils are also potentially beneficial for hearing students. This would appear to support the research of Angelides and Aravi (2007)

which suggested that the development of inclusive practices may not only be of benefit to deaf pupils but to all students.

Research has also been conducted from the perspective of mainstream teachers. For example Argyropoulous and Nikolarazi (2009) investigated why teachers can find inclusion of deaf students difficult. The researchers employed an action research model and worked alongside a school counsellor, a class teacher and a student teacher. The research focused upon one deaf pupil who the class teacher had highlighted due to concerns regarding her inclusion in a mainstream setting. The action research model took the form of three cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting in which the class teacher and student teacher were supported by the researcher and school counsellor.

The results of the study indicated that after participating in the research both teachers felt they were more able to interrogate their teaching practices and use self-reflection to evaluate whether their teaching was effective for this pupil in this setting. The teachers reported that through the changes they had made to their own teaching methods the deaf pupil appeared to display a better understanding of the classroom routine, her behaviour had changed and she had become more independent.

Argyropoulous and Nikolarazi (2009) acknowledge that the results of their research had a degree of subjectivity and were not generalisable as models of 'ideal practice'. However the researchers argue that their findings suggest that

models and schemes for inclusion should include opportunities for teaching staff to participate in and be supported by opportunities for constant reflection, interpretation and assessment. Furthermore it would appear that this process may enable teachers to move away from viewing inclusion in terms of within child issues and towards an approach encompassing a more holistic perspective.

The Role of Parents in Inclusion of Deaf Pupils in Mainstream Settings

The final area considered through the literature search focused upon the role and experiences of parents in terms of their child's inclusion in mainstream schooling. This area was deemed important as it has been suggested that EPs working in multi-agency teams can contribute a unique perspective through their ability to highlight factors outside school which may impact in inclusion (Farrell, 2006).

Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) investigated the experiences of 24 parents of deaf pupils with regards to their inclusion in mainstream settings. The parents participated in focus groups which explored their perceptions of what factors had acted as facilitators or barriers to inclusion. The results suggested that the parents reported having to take a very active part in their child's education in order to ensure effective inclusion.

Parents described having to develop advocacy skills in order to ensure that their child's needs were met. Furthermore parents suggested that in order to facilitate successful inclusion, they had to actively build positive relationships with school

staff and support their child outside school in terms of following up on topics covered and facilitating intensive speech and language work.

The research appears to indicate that in terms of parent perceptions there is an acceptance that they will have to be actively involved in their child's school life in order for inclusion to be successful. Whilst it could be suggested that the parents who were attracted to participate in this study were more inclined to do so due to their high levels of involvement in their child's schooling, Eriks-Brophy et al., (2006) report that the participants were aware of others who were facing barriers to their child's inclusion. These barriers included lack of advocacy skills, worry about being labelled as excessive complainers and limited time and/or resources to implement additional work at home.

Hintermair (2006) also investigated the experiences of parents accessing support when dealing with issues of education for their deaf child. The researcher used an array of questionnaires to explore the experiences of 231 mother and fathers. The research was particularly interested in the levels of stress experienced by parents the impact that could potentially have on their child in terms of socioemotional difficulties.

The findings indicated that parental stress was considerably reduced if parents were offered consulting and supportive strategies by professionals which highlighted a resource-orientated approach. This type of approach is orientated towards a parent's strength and capabilities and thus moves away from a deficit

model. This would appear to be an important factor to be borne in mind for EPs who are likely to be working with parents in order to support them whether they are actively involved in their child's education or requiring additional support.

Implications

The research explored for this PPR has highlighted a wide range of facilitators and barriers to the inclusion of deaf pupils in mainstream settings. The implications of these findings in terms of my role within and contribution to the HI team are summarised in the table below:

Implications of EP Practice from Research Findings

Area of Work	Research Finding	Implications
Work with Pupils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All pupils should be educated in a setting which accepts and validates their individuality (Ademoloya, 2008) - Deaf pupils may find relationships with hearing peers difficult (Kluwin et al. 2002) - Attitudes and sensitivity to hearing loss by peers was a facilitator in deaf pupils inclusion (Eriks-Brophy, 2006) - Pupils in inclusive classes demonstrate more positive attitudes towards deaf pupils (Hung & Paul, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting as an advocate for the pupil focusing on the strategies which are acting as facilitators or barriers to inclusion and to add to the holistic picture of the child - Developing inclusive groups such as Circle of Friends (Newton et al., 1996) - Work with other pupils to develop their knowledge and understanding of inclusion and issues surrounding the education of deaf pupils
Working with Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents report the need to develop advocacy skills and build positive relationships with schools (Eriks-Brophy, 2006) - Parents report having to facilitate additional input such as speech and language work (Eriks-Brophy, 2006) - Parents stress reduced if offered consulting and supportive strategies by professionals (Hintermair, 2006) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting as facilitator for liaison between parents and school and/or other professionals - Developing strategies for passing information between school and parents - Signposting to support groups for parents such as Parent Partnership - Consulting with parents to develop a holistic picture
Working with Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers feel less competent to include deaf pupils without additional specialist support (Ward et al., 1994) - All pupils should be educated in a setting which accepts and validates their individuality (Ademoloya, 2008) - In-class support can lead to class teachers working through the specialist support rather than with the child (Watson & Parsons, 1998) - Inclusion of deaf pupils can have a positive impact in terms of school development of inclusive practices (Angelides & Aravi, 2007) - Staff attitudes towards inclusion can be altered if given reflection opportunities (Jarvis & Iantaffi, 2007) - Teachers understanding of pupils needs (Jarvis, 2003) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Liaising between teachers and specialist staff to develop links and support - Highlighting the views of the child and parents in terms of facilitators and barriers to inclusion - Supporting liaison between school staff and parents for example employing solution focused methods to enable dialogue - Working with staff to gain a holistic picture of the child across a variety of settings - Supporting schools with anti-bullying strategy and policy - Providing opportunities for school staff to reflect on their practice and its impact on pupils

Table 1: Implications of Research Findings for EP Practice

Conclusion

The review of literature has highlighted that there would appear to be a distinctive area of contribution for EPs to make as part of multi-agency teams working with deaf pupils. In terms of work with individual pupils, an important role for EPs is to act as an advocate on behalf of the child. This work could include aiding the pupil to explore issues which may be acting as facilitators or barriers to inclusion such as peer relationships.

The review also highlights the role EPs can contribute in liaising and supporting parents. Whilst this can involve working with parents and the school settings in which their child is enrolled, it can also entail liaising with other agencies in order to ensure a holistic understanding of each child's strengths and areas of need. Finally it would appear that it is important for EPs to support schools in terms of their feelings of capability when working with deaf pupils as this can potentially have a wider impact in terms of the attitudes towards inclusion and teaching practices.

In terms of my own professional development and new position with a HI team this PPR has highlighted that, whilst I may not have specialist knowledge of deaf educational issues, there is a distinctive contribution I can make. This review has enabled me to begin to clarify my thinking around my role not only in this team, but in multi-agency teams more generally. It has also supported my perception that EPs are well placed and skilled to understand the strengths and areas of need of the whole child from a wide range of perspectives.

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Appendix 1

DEFINITIONS OF DEAFNESS

Mild deafness	People with mild deafness have some difficulty following speech, mainly in noisy situations. The quietest sounds they can hear in their better ear average between 25 and 39 decibels.
Moderate deafness	People with moderate deafness have difficulty in following speech without a hearing aid. The quietest sounds they can hear in their better ear average between 40 and 69 decibels.
Severe deafness	People with severe deafness rely a lot on lipreading, even with a hearing aid. BSL may be their first or preferred language. The quietest sounds they can hear in their better ear average between 70 and 94 decibels.
Profound deafness	People who are profoundly deaf communicate by lipreading. BSL may be their first or preferred language. The quietest sounds they can hear in their better ear average 95 decibels or more (RNID, 2006).

Appendix 2

FIVE DESCRIPTIVE VARIABLES OF DEAF AND HEARING IMAPIED PUPILS

Variable	Description
Degree of Hearing Loss	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hearing impairment no greater than a marked loss (less than 70 dB) are generally considered hard-of-hearing• Profound loss (greater than 90 dB) generally considered deaf
Age of Onset	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Congenital</i> refers to hearing impairment which is sustained at birth• <i>Acquired</i> refers to hearing impairment which is sustained some time after birth• <i>Prelingually</i> hearing impaired refers to hearing loss which is sustained sometime prior to the establishment of language• <i>Postlingually</i> hearing impaired refers to hearing loss which is sustained during or after the establishment of language (approximately 2-3 years of age)
Type of Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Conductive</i> hearing impairment refers to a disruption within all or part of the conductive mechanism of the out or middle ear• <i>Sensorineural</i> hearing impairment are the result of damage to the inner ear in which sensory or neural aspects of hearing begin• <i>Mixed loss</i> refers to individuals who have both conductive and sensorinural hearing impairment• <i>Central</i> hearing impairments result from damage to the auditory neural network
Etiology of Hearing Impairment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Endogenous</i> aetiology is a result of some biological cause or process• <i>Exogenous</i> aetiologies are the result of some accident, foreign object or agent blocking or destroying some part of the auditory mechanism (this includes bacterial infections, birth accidents and viral infections)
Hearing Status of Parents / Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deaf children with two deaf parents/carers• Deaf children with one deaf parent/carer and one hearing parent/carer• Deaf children with hearing parents/carers

Appendix 3

RESEARCH FINDINGS RREPORTED BY KLUWIN ET AL., (2002)

Dimension	Summary of Findings
Social Skills / Social Maturity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Middle school hearing pupils are more socially aware than deaf pupils- Adolescent mainstreamed deaf pupils more socially mature than non-mainstreamed deaf pupils- Deaf students selected for mainstream school based on their social maturity
Social Interaction / Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Fairly consistent pattern of interaction between deaf and hearing pupils- Deaf pupils favour interaction with other deaf pupils- Exposure of deaf and hearing pupils to each other over time may increase interactions- Cooperative learning interventions can increase interactions- Deaf pupils primarily report interacting with other deaf pupils
Sociometric Status / Acceptance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Extent of contact and gender may impact on hearing peers acceptance of deaf pupils- Deaf pupils report greater relatedness to other deaf pupils- Greater contact between deaf and hearing pupils increased participation- Difficulties in communication may impact on deaf and hearing pupils establishing close relationships
Affective Functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- There would appear to be no difference in deaf pupils reports of self-image or self-esteem in either segregated or mainstream settings

CHAPTER FOUR: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORT 3

An Exploration of the Role of Educational Psychologists Responding to Critical Incidents

Abstract

Critical Incidents (CIs) involving schools are events which threaten pupils or staff, their families and the wider school community. They involve sudden and unexpected events that have an 'emergency quality' and are characterised by an inability to cope using usual methods. It has been argued that schools experiencing CIs require support which understands the local contexts and needs. This has resulted in Educational Psychologists (EPs) becoming heavily involved in this area as they are well placed to offer support during complex situations such as CIs as they can apply psychology to provide an integrated and coherent perspective. This Professional Practice Report uses Activity Theory to investigate how EPs respond to CIs in one West Midland's Local Authority. The views and experiences of EPs are explored in terms of the role they play when responding to CIs, what factors act as facilitators or barriers to their response and how they believe they could improve their practice in the future. The results indicate that EPs report that responding to CIs is a core feature of their work. Whilst there are a number of factors which facilitate this work, including employing a wide range of psychological models and support from colleagues, there were also barriers such as unclear expectations of the role of the EP and concern regarding lack of specific skills required. In order to improve their response to CIs in the future EPs suggest that further training and additional resources would be beneficial.

Introduction

Critical Incidents (CIs) involving schools are events which threaten pupils or staff, their families and the wider school community (Allen et al., 2002). Johnson (2000) suggests that CIs in schools involve an undermining of the safety and stability of the setting and expose those involved to traumatic stimuli and threats to their security. It has been argued that CIs are characterised by an inability to cope using usual methods (Slaikeu, 1990) and involve sudden and unexpected events that have an emergency quality (Brock et al., 1996).

There is by no means an exhaustive list of the types of events which may be considered as a CI but they include suicide, serious accidents, medical emergencies and natural disasters (MacNeil and Topping, 2007). Allen et al., (2002) argue that whilst CIs in schools may present features similar to those in other contexts they require additional consideration due to the unique structure and community of these settings.

It has been increasingly acknowledged that schools experiencing CIs require more than just the immediate response of emergency services and it is argued that support which understands local contexts and needs is crucial (MacNeil and Topping, 2007). Many Local Authorities (LAs) have therefore looked within their own resources when planning how to respond to CIs in schools which has

increasingly led to Educational Psychology Services being involved in this area (Rees and Seaton, 2011).

Cameron (2006) argues that Educational Psychologists (EPs) are well placed to offer support during complex situations such as CIs as they are able to apply psychology to provide an integrated and coherent perspective. This has resulted in many EP Services offering support to schools experiencing CIs as part of their service delivery plans (Posada, 2006). In addition to this, Farrell et al., (2006) suggest that many LAs rely upon EP Services to not only respond to CIs but also to lead planning and development in this area.

Rationale for Professional Practice Report

This Professional Practice Report (PPR) focuses on the views and experiences of EPs employed in a West Midlands LA who have responded to CIs in local schools. The report employs Activity Theory to explore a number of areas including:

- how EPs responded to CIs;
- their reflections on the facilitators and barriers they encountered; and
- any changes they would make to their practice in the future.

There were a number of factors which impacted upon my decision to focus upon CIs as a topic for investigation. Initially I became interested in this area as a result

of having to respond to a CI in one of my assigned schools during the second year of my EP training. This experience caused me to reflect upon the role of EPs both immediately after such events but also in the longer term (see Appendix 1 for my personal reflection of CI which I shared with a Senior EP during a supervision session).

Further to this, through group supervision sessions in my team it became apparent that my colleagues were interested in how EPs had responded to CIs particularly in terms of the resources they had used, the support they had required and feelings of competence when involved in CI situations. Finally my Principal EP indicated that whilst the service had developed a CI policy for schools (see Appendix 2 for details) which was used alongside the wider LA policy, it would be beneficial to focus in greater depth on the theoretical and research background concerning CI response in schools.

In addition to these work-based experiences it has been suggested that input focusing on CIs should be incorporated into initial EP training programmes (Cameron et al., 1995) and therefore it would appear that this investigation would support my development as a trainee EP. Finally Allen et al., (2002) argue that EPs require academic exposure to topics surrounding CI response in order for them to be able to respond in an ethical and safe manner.

This PPR will begin by considering the theoretical and research background focusing on CIs response. In order to explore this area an extensive literature search was conducted using the keywords *critical incidents*, *traumatic incidents*, *crisis response* and *school* in August 2011. A range of educational and psychological databases were used (namely ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; British Education Index; Educational Research Abstracts Online; ERIC: Educational Resources Information Centre; PsycARTICLES and SwetsWise). A total of 181 articles were identified with the vast majority being published from 2002 onwards. Literature from both the U.K. and international sources was consulted as until recently the vast majority of research in this field was conducted outside the U.K.

This literature review will be followed by an exploration of the role of EPs during such events. The rationale for employing an Activity Theory based inquiry and the methods used will then be considered. The results of the research process will be presented followed by a discussion of the implications for practice within my own LA and the wider context.

Background to Critical Incident Responses

In the U.K. whilst LAs have responsibility for responding to civil emergencies under the Civil Contingencies Act (2004) there has been less guidance regarding CI response in school settings (Posada, 2006). Rees and Seaton (2011) argue that

this has resulted due to a lack of statutory obligation and legislation to ensure that LAs have school CI plans in place.

MacNeil and Topping (2007) suggest that the lack of response planning may also be due to the wide range of terminology used to label events which leads to confusion regarding what types of incident require support. Through an extensive review of literature they identified a number of labels including;

- traumatic incidents;
- crises;
- disasters;
- emergencies; and
- critical incidents.

MacNeil and Topping (2007) highlight that a limitation of their review was the small amount of research currently available. They suggest that it was necessary to employ a 'best evidence synthesis' which enabled a wider selection of studies to be included even if they did not employ the most rigorous research methods. It may therefore be beneficial to revisit this area in the future in order to include more rigorous studies. Furthermore, when additional quality research is available, it may also be appropriate to conduct a meta-analysis which would provide an integrated view of research results (Robson, 2002).

In terms of my own LA the phrase 'critical incident' is used to describe events in schools which cause severe emotional and social distress without warning. Flannery and Evans (2000) propose that a 'critical incident' is any stressor event that has the potential to lead to a crisis response in an individual.

Despite the difficulties highlighted, many LAs and schools have been proactive in developing CI response plans (Posada, 2006). Tronc (1992) suggests that this is crucial as all schools have an obligation under 'duty of care' to consider how to respond to CIs. It has been argued that increased interest in establishing CI plans has primarily come about due to a marked rise in the frequency and severity of these events involving school communities (MacNeil and Topping, 2007) however Allen et al., (2002) suggest caution in accepting such claims arguing that reports of increases may have been exaggerated by the media.

Developing Critical Incident Plans

In terms of responding to CIs it has been suggested that any plan should aim to facilitate healthy adaption following the event (Jimerson et al., 2005). In order to achieve this it is proposed that CI plans should focus on:

- preventing and/or mitigating common stress reactions;
- identifying those who may develop psychopathology;
- preventing and/or mitigating dangerous coping behaviours; and
- providing appropriate referrals to mental health professionals (Brock and Jimerson, 2004).

Whilst this list may appear to have common sense appeal MacNeil and Topping (2007) propose that it is important to interrogate the content of CI plans as they are often based on clinical judgement or singular professional perspectives due the limited research evidence available. In terms of features specifically suggested by Brock and Jimerson (2004) it has been argued that focussing on stress reactions is an outdated concept. Hayes and Frederickson (2008) suggest that such a concept suffers from conflicting definitions and sits closely with the notion of threat, therefore encouraging the view that it is a harmful phenomenon. It is therefore argued that it is more meaningful to focus on emotions and emotional competencies when considering human reactions and need in CI situations.

A further issue focuses on CI plans stipulating the need to identify those who may develop psychopathology. Research has suggested that trauma can trigger post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety disorder and depression that can affect health and daily functioning (Silverman, 2000). However MacNeil and Topping (2007) argue that it is important for all involved in a CI response to exercise considerable

caution not to pathologise those involved too readily and to consider each case individually.

Models for Critical Incident Response

A number of models have been developed to aid the development of CI planning and have been used internationally (Jimerson et al., 2005). One such model is the Prevention, Preparation, Response, Recovery (PPRR) model which has been used extensively in countries such as the U.S.A and Australia and has now been widely adopted by LAs in the U.K (MacNeil and Topping, 2007). The PPRR model depicts a flow of events and highlights that all four areas are interrelated:



Figure 1: PPRR Model (Hosie and Smith, 2004)

MacNeil and Topping (2007) suggest that the popularity of this model is primarily due to it being simple to follow and understand. Furthermore whilst it is anticipated

that the 'preparation' phase is the logical beginning, the PPRR model does allow for the 'response' phase to be the starting point if major events occur and the 'preparation' phase has been inadequate. The PPRR model is also designed to be iterative and provide continued opportunities for learning from any CI (Hosie and Smith, 2004).

There has however been criticism of the PPRR model. Crondstedt (2002) suggests that this model is limited due to its sequential planning and implementation of actions. It is argued that this results in a lack of opportunity for adaption and flexibility as the CI evolves. Furthermore it is suggested that the PPRR model focuses too heavily on physical action rather than psychological vulnerability and the social situations of those involved.

Pfohl et al., (2002) suggest that age, developmental levels, previous exposure to trauma and familial support available are all important factors to consider when planning CI responses. Further to this, Capewell (2001) argues that it is crucial to understand the political, social, cultural and economic context in which the CI occurs.

The focus on greater emphasis on local understanding during CI responses in schools has had a significant impact on the professionals involved. Johnson (2000) suggests that prior to 1990 the responsibility for offering support to school

settings experiencing CIs was not clearly defined and primarily relied on mental health professionals outside the school system. This situation was further exacerbated by the lack of experience and training of senior managers in schools to respond to such situations (MacNeil and Topping, 2007).

Allen et al., (2002) suggest that increasingly schools have acknowledged that they prefer to receive support from professionals within the school system when they experience CIs in their settings. In many LAs this has ultimately led to EP support being written in CI policies as it is argued that EPs are able to provide in-depth knowledge of psychological issues surrounding the impact of CIs in a context which takes into account local and wider social, cultural and political issues (Rees and Seaton, 2011).

The Role of Educational Psychologists in Responding Critical Incidents

The role, structure and procedures followed by EPs when responding to CIs has been increasingly investigated over the past ten years (Hayes and Frederickson, 2008). Rees and Seaton (2011) suggest that the role played by EPs has developed considerably from one which originally relied upon the use of generic psychological theory and personal experience to one where there is greater recognition for a more structured and evidence based approach.

Posada (2006) suggests that EPs are ideally placed to respond to CIs as they have a fundamental understanding of psycho-social processes and are able to provide advice regarding normal stress reactions to such situations. Further to this Yates et al., (1989) highlight that people involved in CIs are active rather than passive participants and will require support to make some sense out of what they are experiencing. It is suggested that EPs are able to support people on both a cognitive as well as an emotional level through using skills and knowledge which has been built up through work in schools (Posada, 2006).

Further skills which EPs can bring to CI situations include empathetic listening which is crucial in terms of helping those involved to work through feelings of helplessness (Wilkinson and Vera, 1989). EPs are also ideally placed to offer support through active listening which is reassuring but does not push for emotional responses (Foa, 2001). Myers (1989) also suggests that a clear role for psychologists is highlighting the importance of providing information to those involved as this helps to reduce anxiety and promote a better sense of orientation and control.

On a more practical level Posada (2006) argues that including EPs in CI responses is beneficial as they usually have knowledge of the local community. Furthermore they are also familiar with multi-agency working. Indeed collaboration between EPs and clinical psychologists is considered particularly important as this can facilitate joined up working between the LA and the NHS.

Adamson and Peacock (2007) highlight that research focusing on EP responses to CIs has only recently begun to focus on the actual working practices and the experiences of those involved. This is of consequence given the diverse range of models in use, some of which focus on prevention, whereas others concentrate on response (MacNeil and Topping, 2007). Furthermore some models take a psycho-educational approach whereas others focus more on therapy-based intervention (Sandoval et al., 2009).

In order to explore the experiences of EPs responding to CIs Rees and Seaton (2011) conducted an international survey of 277 EPs. One aim of this survey was to investigate whether EPs in different countries had comparable experiences in terms of the crises they were asked to respond to and whether there were similar practices around the world. Therefore EPs were asked to participate from a wide variety of countries (including Australia, Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Slovakia, Switzerland, Turkey, U.K and U.S.A). The study focused on four areas namely:

- EPs experiences of responding to CIs;
- collaboration;
- training; and
- confidence.

The results of the survey indicated that a wide range of CIs are responded to by EPs and these primarily receive between one to three days support. EPs reported using a wide range of models and also relied on psychological theory such as cognitive behavioural therapy, solution focused theory and knowledge of group psychology. EPs received support through formal structures and policies devised by their services but also benefitted from informal discussions, working with colleagues, multi-agency interaction and formal supervision.

The findings regarding supervision are particularly interesting as the British Psychological Society (2002) recommends that any psychologist who undertakes CI work should receive supervision. Whilst there are no specific recommendations made regarding the model of supervision which should be provided, it is stipulated that the supervisor should have a good working knowledge and understanding of debriefing. Whilst highlighting that providing supervision is important to ensure effective self-care of EPs (Hayes and Frederickson, 2008) it is also argued that without this provision being made, any response to CIs would be ethically unsound (McCaffrey, 2004).

Rees and Seaton (2011) also report that the survey suggested that on the majority of occasions (83%) EPs worked alongside another colleague (primarily another EP). In terms of training 70% reported they had received input post qualification with only 13% reporting training during their initial EP programme. The researchers reported a significant correlation between an EPs confidence in their

ability to offer an effective CI response and a number of factors including length of training and years qualified.

Overall, the survey highlighted that EPs believe that responding to CIs is a core feature of their work which is best carried out alongside other colleagues. This research would also appear to support and extend the findings reported earlier by Jimerson et al., (2005) as it would appear that not only are a wide range of models being used by EPs when responding to CIs but also an extensive variety of psychological theories.

A feature which was not reported from this survey was whether EPs benefitted from preparation for CIs by being led through scenarios based on real or possible events. Hayes and Frederickson (2008) suggest that these types of sessions can provide opportunities for EPs to build competence in areas such as planning and knowledge of information required.

Whilst the methodology employed by Rees and Seaton (2011) enabled them to collect quantitative data from a wide range of psychologists working in a variety of international contexts, it did not lend itself to gathering detailed information regarding the actual experiences encountered by the EPs both on a practical but also emotional level.

Research Aims

The rationale for this study is based on a number of contributing factors. Firstly, whilst it has been acknowledged those who experience CIs prefer support from professionals within their own system (Allen et al., 2002), there has been limited research focussing on the exact roles professionals within the school system play. Furthermore given the findings that local knowledge is valued when responding to CIs it would appear important to investigate this area from a local viewpoint rather than a wider national or international perspective.

Finally, whilst many LAs have acknowledged the need for support from within the school system and consequently written EPs into CI policies, the research which has been conducted thus far has not considered in depth the actual working practices and experiences of this group of professionals (Adamson and Peacock, 2007). Given these factors I would suggest that it is appropriate and timely to study in greater detail the activities of EPs in one local area when responding to CIs.

Given this rationale the specific research aims for the present PPR are given below:

Research Questions for Critical Incident Research	
1	What is the role of EPs when responding to CIs in schools? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What activities do EPs carry out both initially and in the longer term? - Who determines the role of the EP? - Who do EPs work with as part of a CI response?
2	What factors impact on EPs responding to CIs in an effective and ethical manner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the factors which aid the EP in their role? - Are there any factors which hinder the EP role and if so how can these be overcome? - How prepared do EPs feel about responding to CIs?
3	How can EP responses to CIs be improved? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After having responded to a CI are there any changes EPs would make to their practice? - Are there changes that need to be made at a service level in order to improve EP responses to CIs?

Table 1: Research Questions

Rationale for Employing of Activity Theory

In order to explore the research questions posed, an Activity Theory (AT) inquiry was considered appropriate. Leadbetter (2006) argues that AT is particularly fitting when exploring applied EP practice as it embeds “individual action within wider systems of activity” (p. 22). Furthermore Robinson and Cottrell (2005) identified AT as being suitable when investigating how team members create working practices.

Activity Theory has been described as a powerful tool which enables researchers to focus on the interaction of human activity and consciousness within its relevant environmental context (Jonassen & Rohrer-Murphy, 1999). Engeström et al., (1999) argues that AT aids researchers to question and contest ideas thus enabling a shared understanding of the activity in question.

The present study employed Engeström's (1999) second generation AT (see Figure 2 below). This builds on from first generation AT which linked the subject and the object through a range of tools. In terms of this research the *subject* was the EPs who had been involved in CIs and the *object* was the work the EP carried out during the CI and the school communities they supported. The *tools* included both the concrete materials used by EPs including the CI policy designed by the LA and also the more abstract artefacts such as psychological models employed (Leadbetter, 2005).

Second generation AT expands on these three elements to include the contextual, cultural and historical factors present in the activity system and focuses on the interaction of *rules*, *community* and *division of labour* (Engeström, 1999). In terms of the present research, *rules* referred to factors which were in place and considered whether these facilitated or constrained an EPs response to a CI and included elements such as time available and policy documents. The *community* factors focussed on the other people who were involved in the CI and considered their relationship to the EP. Finally the *division of labour* section is designed to

explore who undertakes which tasks and may be linked to the requirements set out in the *rules*.

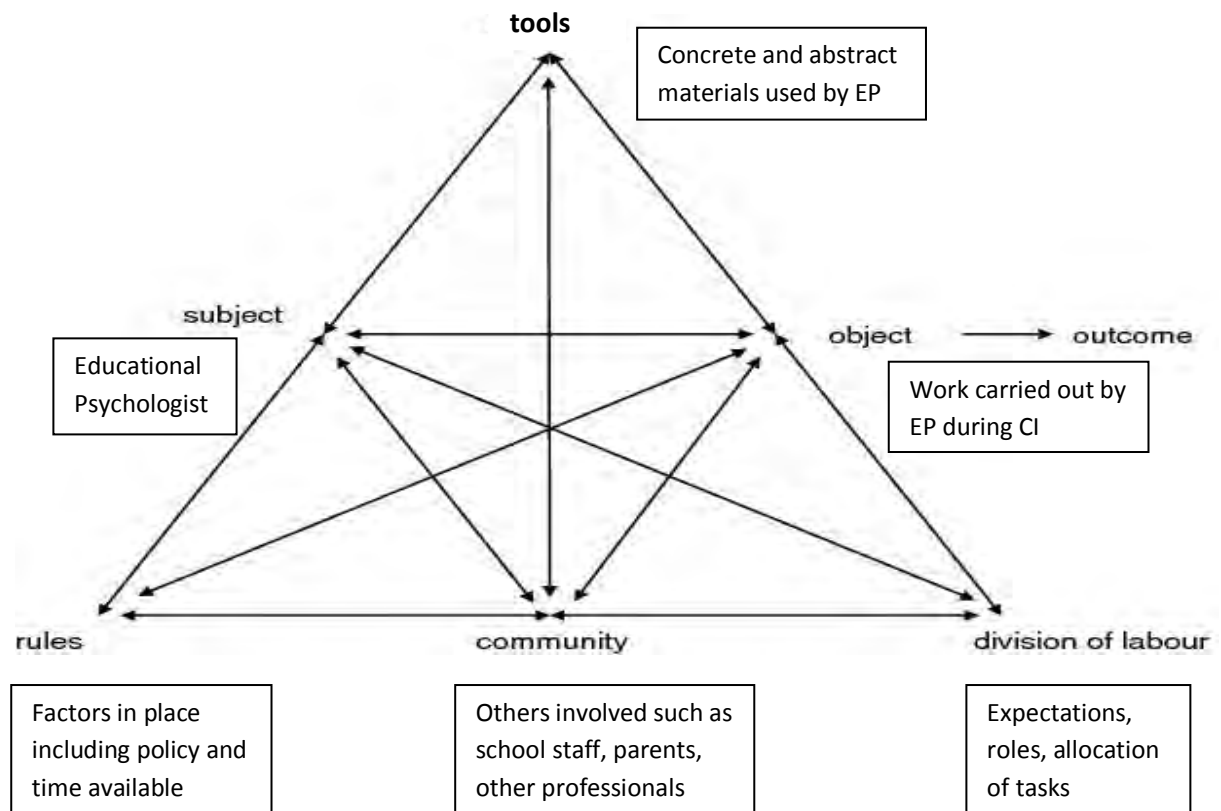


Figure 2: Second Generation Activity System (Engeström et al., 1999)

It is argued that by taking all elements of the interaction of the activity system into consideration it is possible to understand more fully the relationships between different elements of the system thus aiding understanding of the object under investigation (Leadbetter et al., 2007). Therefore as the research aims posed for the present study wish to investigate the interacting factors taking place during an EPs response to a CI, it would appear that AT is a particularly suitable methodology to employ for this investigation.

Method

Data Gathering

The decision to employ an AT design had important implications in terms of which research tools were used to gather data. Jonassen and Rohrer-Murphy (1999) highlight that data collection tools for AT research need to be able to gather information about the broad patterns of activity therefore necessitating a qualitative approach. It was determined to employ a semi-structured interview method for the present study using the elements of the second generation AT system alongside findings from the literature review to structure the interview schedule (see Appendix 3 for AT system with linked interview questions).

The decision to use a semi-structured interview method rather than other forms of qualitative data collection was also influenced by the constructivist epistemological stance taken as it was considered that each of the participants would have their own unique beliefs, opinions and ideas about the research question. Clark-Carter (2004) argues that employing a semi-structured interview method moves away from viewing data as being external to the individual and objective and moves towards a more subjective position which acknowledges the importance of human interaction as part of knowledge production.

It was considered most appropriate to use open-ended questions throughout the interviews. Robson (2002) highlights that the use of open-ended questions is beneficial as it enables the researcher to understand more deeply the participants'

views, which was an important factor given the epistemological position of this research.

Participants

Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique. Coolican (2004) suggests that this type of sampling enables the researcher to focus on participants who are most representative in terms of the issues involved and who are highly likely to have appropriate knowledge and experience. This type of sampling does not represent the wider population but instead is selective in order to satisfy a specific purpose (Robson, 2002).

In order to select participants for the study I consulted with the Principal Educational Psychologist to determine which EPs in the service had been involved in CIs in the past three years. This period of time was chosen as it represented the period since the EP service had developed a CI policy in response to a request from the LA. Both maingrade and senior EPs were sampled as the staff in those positions might have experienced differing roles and numbers of CIs. Once I had established which EPs would be suitable for the study I contacted them by email to ask whether they would be willing to participate. In total two maingrade and one senior EP agreed to take part in the study.

Procedure

Once participants had agreed to take part in the research I arranged to meet them at a time and location which was convenient for them. At the beginning of the interview I asked each participant if they were familiar with AT. Two of the EPs had not had any experience of AT beforehand and I spend time explaining the Activity System diagram to them. I also discussed ethical issues (see below) with the participants (see below) before the interview began I checked that they were still happy to continue. I took notes throughout the interview rather than recording as I felt that the participants in this study would be more used to, and therefore more comfortable with, this type of recording.

Ethical Issues

Birch et al., (2002) highlight that ethical issues in qualitative research are particularly important for researchers to consider as this type of research tends to focus on participants private lives and places accounts in the public arena. In line with guidance stipulated by the British Psychological Society (2010) there were a number of ethical issues which required consideration before the study could begin.

The first issue concerned respect for the privacy of participants. This specifically focussed upon the fact that the results would be fed back to the EP service. I was aware that the main grade EPs in particular may feel restricted if they felt their

comments might reflect negatively on the senior management team. I was therefore transparent with the EPs who agreed to participate and reiterated to them before the interview that the results would not only be written up for submission to the University of Birmingham but would also be used by the senior management team to identify areas for further professional development within the service. Further to this I only identified participants as being either a main grade or senior EP and did not specifically name the CI they had been involved in.

The second ethical issue focused on avoidance of harm to participants. I wished to ensure that participating in the study did not add additional stress to already busy professionals. This was addressed through reiterating to participants that participation was completely voluntary and through offering to carry out interviews at times and locations convenient to the interviewees. I also carried out the research interviews during the school Summer holidays when participants had more flexibility with their time.

Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data gathered Thematic Analysis (TA) was employed. TA has been described as a flexible tool which enables the researcher to provide a detailed account of the data gathered and provides a method for identifying, reporting and organising themes within data gathered. Thematic Analysis can be completed either inductively ('bottom up') where data are analysed without trying

to fit them in pre-determined categories or theories or deductively ('top down') where the data analysis is driven by the researcher's particular interest derived from theory (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In the present study AT was employed as it enabled me to investigate individual EPs actions within wider systems of activity. Furthermore the literature review which I had conducted highlighted specific areas to be considered in relation to the role of EPs responding to CIs resulting in specific research questions. Therefore a deductive process of TA was employed in order to provide a more detailed analysis of the data pertinent to these areas of interest. The present study used the six stage procedure (Braun and Clarke, 2006) (see Appendix 4 for further details). Each of the three research questions was considered through analysing the whole data set in relation to the individual question under consideration.

Findings

The information which was through the semi-structured interviews was summarised in terms of the AT schedule used to structure the interviews and is presented for each participant below.

SENIOR EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Subject:

ASEP

30 years+ / Masters

Responsibility for managing CIs in local team and overseeing EPs

Rules:

Facilitators

- Listening and observation skills
- Inner knowledge of stress
- Know about impact of previous bereavements
- Being a caring human being
- Freedom to walk around school – not constrained to one area
- Ability to spend time with staff
- Schools have realistic expectations – they know what to do – they just need reassurance

Constrainers

- If schools are told to expect 'counselling'
- Can be constrained if schools want something different
- Constrained if school do not want to follow good practice

Others Factors

- Should be focused on "supporting the supporters"

Tools and/or Artefacts:

What did you use?

- Solution focused skills
- Consultation skills
- Facilitation skills
- CI Policy

Community:

Who else worked with you?

- Mainly HTs in primary school
- Wider in secondary schools

What was their role / working relationship with you?

- "supporting the supporters"
- Providing advice that they are doing the right thing
- "people doing day to day job will do inspirational things when put under pressure – they may need support to implement this"
- to give children support

Division of Labour:

- Need to make sure everyone is involved who should be e.g. admin staff
- Working in partnership
- EPs support staff – making sure everyone is included
- Advise staff on pastoral visit to friends / family if required but do not do them
- EPs reinforce the pastoral values that are already present in the school
- EPs can support assemblies / parents meetings / sanctuaries but shouldn't lead them – this should be done by staff

Object (decision making from the EP point of view)

Describe your work when responding to a CI

How did you decide what to do?

- Respond quickly
- Policy to prioritise CIs – high priority for EPs
- Contact school EP and any others who are available
- Meet with HT and other people recommended
- Co-determining what steps need to be taken
- Set up sanctuary for pupils
- Advise school on informing parents

Who else was involved?

- HT/Pastoral Head/Chaplin

Outcomes:

What did you hope to achieve?

Short Term

- Recognising non-verbals – who's coping
- Solution focused
- How are colleagues supporting each other
- Information sharing with staff
- Senior EP modelling to EPs
- Helping EPs with info of what has worked in past/replicate to make sure they feel more confident
- Set up sanctuary with different types of engagement
- Helping school communicate with parents

Long Term

- More committed to immediate response
- Other senior officers in county agree
- Implicit assumption that EPs are coordinating response

MAIN GRADE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Subject:

Main Grade EP
10 years experience / MSc
Involved in 1 C.I.
No specific C.I training received

Rules:

Facilitators

- Senior EPs supporting throughout the CI both at the school and later over the phone
- Knowing Senior EPs (who had more experience of CIs) were available throughout

Constrainers

- Not being familiar with CI policy
- You don't think about CIs until they happen
- Not having specific training on bereavement

Others Factors

- EP service policy did not constrain work
- Felt like it was a vote of confidence from SMT to be asked to do CI but also did not want to turn it down for fear of what this would look like to SMT

Tools and/or Artefacts:

What did you use/

- Should have used CI policy
- Information from Barnardos on ages and responses to grief
- Personal collection of resources gathered over time

Community:

Who else worked with you?

- SMT at school
- School staff

What was their role / working relationship with you?

- SMT knew what they wanted – very directive of EPs – saw them as being able to offer something they couldn't
- EP fed back 1:1 work with pupils to teachers

How did this come about?

- Meeting between SMT and Senior EP

Other people who should have been involved?

- One member of SMT very difficult to involve – EP had to consider when would be the best time to involve them (staff worried about him being involved)

Division of Labour:

- The school was very directive regarding what they wanted
- EP felt uncomfortable with what school had requested (1:1 input for pupils picked by school)
- Felt it would be beneficial to have clearer criteria for what we offer as a result of CI
- Helped having a Senior EP there to negotiate work and to use their experience from previous CIs

Object (decision making from the EP point of view)

Describe your work when responding to a CI

How did you decide what to do?

- Led by school
- School wanted EPs to talk to 8/9 pupils (2 had witnessed the incident)
- Judgement call of Senior EP whether this was right
- EP not a trained counsellor – felt like the most sensitive situation even been involved with but least confident

Outcomes:

What did you hope to achieve?

Short Term

- Supporting staff in a constructive way
- Setting up a group for staff – giving practical ideas
- Assessing immediate needs – giving info. On vulnerability of pupils
- Assessing staff vulnerability
- Group supervision with staff to support emotionally
- Could feel staffs relief that there was someone else there
- Validating what the staff were doing

Long Term

- Still need to support staff
- Limited resources of EP service – support groups couldn't be held every week
- Supporting staff who needed help but didn't want SMT to know they needed extra help

MAIN GRADE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGIST

Subject:

Main Grade EP
1 year experience / Doctorate
Involved in 1 CI
Small amount of CI training at University

Rules:

Facilitators

- Advice from Senior
- Training received at university
- Knowledge of psychology
- Nothing structured or formal
- Knowing there were support systems above you

Constrainers

- Not having enough training
- Not knowing if what I was saying was the right thing

Others Factors

- Listening to the school – when they wanted me to leave

Tools and/or Artefacts:

- Used psychology / knowledge of child
- Advice from Senior who had received training
- Abstract – normalising/active listening/containing
- Skills of psychologist

Community:

Who else worked with you?

- Mainly with staff and pupils in Autism Base
- Headteacher
- Talking to TAs who were close with her

What was their role / working relationship with you?

- Staff were looking for support
- Wanted someone external to the school/situation to talk to and listen to

How did this come about?

- Meeting with HT

Other people who should have been involved?

- Possibly parents in the longer term
- May have been useful for on-site counsellor to give children support

Division of Labour:

- Felt like my job was to 'fit in' with what was required and response to CI
- Contributing on top of what school had already put in place
- Felt like a member of staff rather than a specialist
- Making sure everyone was doing ok – taking emotional temperature in school
- Not directing but advising
- Advising from knowledge of children
- Working on instinct e.g. an Autistic child who was worried her grandmother was going to die – suggested phoning home
- Taken from CI policy and experience before
- Worked with the most vulnerable children
- Took into account the level of CI

Object (decision making from the EP point of view)

Describe your work when responding to a CI

How did you decide what to do?

- Advice from Senior who asked if she felt she had the skills
- HT put in plans for whole school
- School was prepared as teacher had long-term illness
- Systems were put in place from children e.g. room/timetabling
- Main work in Autism base as these children knew teacher well and had more difficulty understanding
- Felt EP presence made teachers less anxious – reinforced that they were doing the right thing

Who else was involved?

- Discussed with HT but mainly focused on Autism base

Outcomes:

What did you hope to achieve?

Short Term

- Containing
- Having an external person 'on call'
- Only there for 4 hours
- "just felt like I should be there"

Long Term

- Being able to support long term
- Do we have the skills?
- Contains teachers anxiety in school
- Pass over contact details for longer term support
- Perhaps should have passed details to wider group of people so they felt able to contact me without going through SMT

A summary of the key findings relating to the initial research questions is presented below detailing the key themes which emerged through the use of TA (for further details see Appendix 5).

1) What is the role of EPs when responding to CIs in schools?	
<i>Working with Pupils</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole School work - Individual / Small Group Work
<i>Working with Staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing Reassurance - Longer Term Work
<i>Working with the Wider Community</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-Teaching Members of Staff - Aiding Schools to Liaise with Parents
2) What factors impact on EPs responding to CIs in an effective and ethical manner?	
<i>Facilitators</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Importance of CI Policy - Support from EP Colleagues - Use of Psychological Models and Knowledge
<i>Barriers</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perception of Lack of Training - School Perception of EP Role
3) How can EPs responses to CIs be improved?	
<i>Hindsight</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Function of EP Role - Impact on a Personal Level
<i>Future</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods to Improve Practice

Table 2: Key Findings

Discussion of Results

The findings from the interviews are expanded below and considered in terms of the key research questions and links to literature.

1) What is the role of EPs when responding to CIs in schools?

The results indicated that EPs worked with and alongside pupils, staff and the wider community after CIs had occurred.

Working with Pupils

The role of the EP working with pupils was discussed by all participants. The results indicated that this work occurred on two levels, namely gathering a whole-school picture of how pupils were responding after the CI and working directly with pupils on an individual or small group basis.

In terms of working with pupils on a whole-school basis one of the initial pieces of work discussed by the participants comprised of aiding senior managers in the school gather a realistic picture of how the CI had impacted on pupils;

"I went into different areas to gauge the emotional temperature" (Maingrade EP)

Depending on the needs of the school this work ranged from spending time in classrooms to being present in assemblies. The EPs suggested that this work was beneficial as it enabled senior managers to gauge if there were any pupils who may require additional support.

The Senior EP highlighted that EPs were in a good position to carry out this type of work due to their listening and observational skills. Furthermore a Maingrade EP suggested that knowledge about reactions to grief was important and this could be shared with members of staff who were working with the pupils;

“...some scripts around how grief is expressed are useful”

(Maingrade EP)

This type of work supports the findings of Posada (2006) who suggested that EPs were well placed to respond to CIs as they were able to understand and provide advice regarding what should be considered normal reactions in such circumstances. Furthermore the stance taken by the EPs to focus on emotional reactions and support schools in doing this would appear to in line with Hayes and Frederickson’s (2008) argument that this is more beneficial than concentrating on stress reactions.

The Senior EP did however emphasise the importance of acknowledging that EPs are outsiders who have been invited into a school setting at a very sensitive time. It was therefore suggested that it is important that their actions are explained to staff and pupils to ensure they feel comfortable with them;

“...reading the temperature in a school is important, we have the freedom to move around but we shouldn’t just be barging in” (Senior EP)

A further area discussed by the EPs regarding their work with pupils on a whole school basis concerned advising and aiding members of the school staff about practical resources and facilities. A number of examples were given such as setting up a safe space for pupils to access throughout the day and working with staff to organise information giving or remembrance assemblies;

“...systems were put in place for children including making a room available and changing timetabling” (Maingrade EP)

It was however highlighted by the Senior EP that whilst EPs had knowledge of effective strategies for supporting pupils on a whole school basis due to their experience of attending CIs ultimately decisions had to come from school staff as they knew their pupils and their needs;

“...they (schools) know what to do...they know what’s right for their community...they might need reassurance and to be able to check things out with the EP” (Senior EP)

This acknowledgement of the importance of working with the staff who understand the pupils in their school would appear to support the suggestion of Capewell (2001) who argued that it is crucial for those involved to understand the context and community in which the CI occurs. Furthermore it highlights the importance of investing time in training for senior managers in schools to respond to CIs which was suggested by MacNeil and Topping (2007) to be previously inadequate.

In addition to working with pupils on a whole school basis there was also discussion concerning direct work with either individuals or small groups of pupils. The findings suggest that when EPs were involved in this type of work it was primarily with some of the most vulnerable pupils;

"I worked in the Autism Base where pupils were finding it more difficult to understand" (Maingrade EP)

In terms of the work carried out by the EPs it was primarily described as active listening to the needs of the pupils. In some instances this led to offering staff a number of practical suggestions regarding how to support individual pupils. This type of work would appear to support the suggestion made by Foa (2001) who highlighted that EPs are well placed to support through active listening which is reassuring but does not push for an emotional response.

Finally all participants reported that working with pupils whether on a whole school level or on an individual basis, had occurred during the initial period after the CI and there was no discussion of long-term input with pupils. This would appear to support the findings of Rees and Seaton (2011) who suggested that EP responses to CIs primarily involved one to three days of direct support.

Whilst none of the participants in this study highlighted concerns regarding the longer term needs of pupils after CIs this would be an interesting area for further consideration. This could potentially take the form of joined up working between educational and clinical psychologists as suggested by Posada (2006) and further exploration of whether this occurs in other LAs as part of their CI policy would be beneficial.

Working with Staff

The second area concerning the role EPs play during CIs focused on work with staff. The Senior EP highlighted that this was a crucial area for EPs to be involved in suggesting that;

“...the focus has to be on supporting them (the staff), they know the children, you’re supporting the supporters”
(Senior EP)

In terms of work in school immediately after the CI, all participants reported that they had been approached by members of staff concerning how to share information with pupils and how to respond to pupil comments and answer questions about the CI. It was suggested by one Maingrade EP that the staff appeared to be seeking reassurance that what they were doing was appropriate;

*“(EP) presence appeared to make the CT less
anxious...reassuring them that they’re doing the right thing”*
(Maingrade EP)

These findings support the suggestion of Yates et al., (1989) that individuals involved in CIs are active rather than passive participants who require support. Furthermore as highlighted by Posada (2006) it would also appear that EPs are providing school staff with both emotional support and also aiding them to understand more fully how to deal with issues that arise as a result of a CI.

A further area which was discussed by one Maingrade EP concerned providing support over a longer period of time for staff members. This involved weekly supervision sessions with members of staff who requested either additional information to continue to support pupils or who indicated they required further emotional support.

The EP reported that this provision did appear to be beneficial for those involved and was well attended. Furthermore it was suggested that it was beneficial for an

outside agency to provide this support as staff members suggested that they did not want to be perceived as not coping by school senior managers;

*“you could feel the staffs’ relief...not just holding it together...
the staff didn’t want to be seen to be not coping by their
managers” (Maingrade EP)*

This area of work reflects the suggestion of Foa (2001) who argued that EPs are ideally placed to offer support through active listening. Furthermore it would also appear that through providing opportunities such as supervision, EPs can play a role in reducing staff anxiety and promoting a better sense of control as suggested by Myers (1989).

Working with the Wider Community

The final area explored when considering the role of the EP during CIs concerned working with the wider community. It was suggested that part of the EP role was to ensure that non-teaching members of staff were given the opportunity to ask for support if required;

“you need to make sure that all staff are involved” (Senior EP)

It was also reported that EPs were regularly involved in working with the school to support discussion of the CI with parents. The Senior EP highlighted that it was crucial for parents to be informed by the school as soon as possible usually through a letter sent home;

“it stops parents finding out other ways...it’s a professional way and a matter of giving facts” (Senior EP)

These findings concerning the importance of acknowledging and working with the wider school community as part of CI responses support the suggestion of Allen et al., (2002) who argued that CIs in schools require additional consideration due to the unique structure and community of these settings. Furthermore it would appear that EPs are able to offer support at a variety of levels to provide an integrated and coherent perspective of the situation as suggested by Cameron (2006).

2) What factors impact on EPs responding to CIs in an effective and ethical manner?

The second area which was addressed through this study focused on the factors which impact on EP responses to CIs. These results were divided into two areas namely facilitators and barriers.

Facilitators

All the participants in this study highlighted that one of the main facilitators of their work when responding to CIs was the policy which had been developed by the EP Service for the LA. It was suggested that having access to this document was crucial as CIs are primarily unexpected but require an immediate response;

“(you) need to have a framework about how we respond... structured guidance to feel more confident” (Maingrade EP)

“the service approach (policy) didn’t constrain my work.... nobody thinks about it (CIs) until they happen” (Maingrade EP)

The Senior EP suggested that the policy also had an additional purpose in that it enabled EPs to prioritise their response to CIs over other work as it was agreed by the LA;

“The policy prioritises the CI, it’s high priority work...it is recognised at the highest level” (Senior EP)

These findings support the suggestion of Posada (2006) who proposed that many LAs have been proactive in developing CI response plans. Furthermore it would appear that the EP Service has been a key participant in leading planning and development in this area as highlighted by Farrell et al., (2006). The results suggest that the policy acts as a tool which enables a more coherent approach to

responding to CIs involving both the school and the EP service, thus alleviating the difficulty highlighted by MacNeil and Topping (2007) of schools having limited resources to deal with these situations due to senior managers' lack of experience and training.

The second area which focused on facilitation concerned support from EP colleagues. All the participants highlighted the importance of this type of input which ranged from informal discussions to formal supervision;

"it was such an emotive topic...supervision from my Senior EP afterwards was crucial" (Maingrade EP)

"...part of the Senior EP role is to check on EPs to see how they are coping" (Senior EP)

In terms of formal supervision this finding would appear to suggest that in line with British Psychological Society (2002), guidance supervision is occurring and valued by EPs. Furthermore it would appear that supervision is being used as a tool for managing the self-care of EPs responding to CIs as suggested by Hayes and Frederickson (2008). The findings of the present study did not however ascertain the specific features of this type of supervision, for example if it contained debriefing elements as suggested by the British Psychological Society (2002) and it would therefore be beneficial to explore this further.

The results of the present study also suggest that EPs benefit from informal discussions with colleagues which support the international findings reported by Rees and Seaton (2011);

“support from other EPs was important...they normalised it”
(Maingrade EP)

It is unclear whether these informal discussions took place during the CI with EP colleagues who were working alongside each other or whether they occurred at a later time. It would be beneficial to explore this in more depth in order to ascertain the length of time support is required by EPs after responding to CIs.

The final facilitator discussed concerned the array of psychological knowledge that EPs could rely on. The participants highlighted a number of psychological models they employed including solution-focused approaches, consultation skills and problem-solving models;

“you use skills of a psychologist...use psychology...knowledge of children” (Maingrade EP)

This finding concerning the range of psychological models utilised supports the research of Rees and Seaton (2011) who suggested that EPs use tools which they employ in their everyday practice including cognitive behavioural therapy and

solution focused theory. Furthermore it would appear that EPs have a clear understanding of how they can contribute to CI responses through the use of these tools thus supporting Cameron's (2006) argument that EPs are well placed to offer support as they are able to apply psychology to provide an integrated and coherent perspective.

Barriers

The EPs who participated in this study also highlighted a number of barriers which they encountered when responding to CIs. The first of these was highlighted by the Maingrade EPs who perceived a lack of training focussing specifically on issues encountered during CIs had hindered their work. Whilst it was acknowledged that advice from Senior EPs was invaluable, it was suggested that uncertainty regarding how to respond to certain issues encountered was problematic;

"(A constraint) was not knowing if I was saying the right thing to the children" (Maingrade EP)

Although this was a very small sample these results do not appear to support the findings Rees and Seaton (2011) who suggested that there was a significant correlation between EP confidence in their ability to offer effective CI response and years qualified, as both Maingrade EPs reported similar feelings despite differing lengths of service (1 year and 10 years).

In terms of how to respond to training needs it was suggested that whole-service training would be beneficial. This could potentially feature EPs being led through scenarios based on real or possible events as suggested by Hayes and Frederickson (2008) who argue that such training can build competence.

A further barrier to EP work during CIs concerned schools' perception of the EP role. One Maingrade EP described being asked to carry out one-to-one work with a number of pupils who had been greatly affected by a CI in their school. It was suggested that the school may have had unrealistic expectations of what the EP service could or should provide;

"I'm not a trained counsellor, it felt like the most sensitive situations I've experienced and one I felt least confident with"
(Maingrade EP)

This difficulty in terms of a mismatch between school expectations and EP responses to CIs would appear to support the argument highlighted by MacNeil and Topping (2007) who suggested that there is a diverse range of models for CI intervention available, but a lack of understanding concerning the actual working practices and experiences of EPs. Whilst the EP service had developed a CI policy which focused on preparation and response I would recommend that it would be beneficial to consider the PPRR model (Hosie and Smith, 2007) and also include information regarding the longer term recovery and the role of different stakeholders in this process.

3) How can EPs responses to CIs be improved?

The final area focussed on eliciting EPs reflections on the impact of being involved with a CI and factors that would improve their ability to respond in the future.

Hindsight

It was reported by the participants that whilst responding to a CI was difficult, it was viewed as an important role for EPs to undertake. It was suggested that EPs were in a unique position of being able to share experiences from previous CIs whilst at the same time acknowledging the needs of individual schools which in turn helped the setting move forward;

"Having outside people come in shifted things forward"
(Maingrade EP)

"Schools have realistic expectations....they know it's going to be difficult, they know what's right for their community..."
(Senior EP)

These findings support the research reported by Rees and Seaton (2011) who suggested that EPs consider responding to CIs as a core feature of their work. Furthermore it would appear, that in addition to understanding that school communities have unique features as suggested by Capewell (2001), EPs also consider acknowledging and working with their communities as an essential factor in providing an effective response.

In addition to the reflections focusing on their involvement with schools, the findings also suggest that EPs had considered the impact of responding to CIs on a personal level;

"I thought about EPs own experiences of bereavement...it taps into personal experiences, we need to look after EPs"

(Maingrade EP)

This reflection on the possible personal impact resulting from offering support during CIs highlights the importance of formal supervision as recommended by the British Psychological Society (2002). It would however be beneficial to explore whether this area requires to be discussed in greater detail with EPs before they are asked to respond to CIs. This may be particularly relevant within this LA as EPs are expected to respond if the CI occurs within one of their allocated schools and may not feel comfortable in refusing to do so when a school is in crisis despite the personal impact it may have.

Future

The final area focused on EPs reflections on the factors which could improve their response to CIs in the future. This primarily focused on a practical level as it was suggested by all the participants that having a bank of resources would be beneficial due to the sudden and unexpected nature of CIs;

“accessible resources for EPs would be good, even if it’s stuff we know about” (Maingrade EP)

Further to this, the results also highlighted that that having opportunities to share and discuss experiences with colleagues would be beneficial;

“there are resource issues...sharing strategies that people have found helpful” (Senior EP)

Overall it would appear that EPs are suggesting that whilst they may have the knowledge and skills to respond to CIs the very sudden nature of such events constrains opportunities for planning and therefore having resources readily available would be valuable. It would now be beneficial to explore this further on a whole-service level through sharing strategies that EPs have found useful and collating them. Furthermore it may also be useful to consider whether additional training focussing on leading EPs through scenarios based on possible CIs as suggested by Hayes and Frederickson (2006) would enable EPs to feel more prepared to respond in the future.

Conclusion

This PPR has highlighted that EPs report that responding to CIs in schools is a core function of their work. The results indicate that EPs have a clear idea of their

role and acknowledge that there are both facilitators and barriers to carrying out this type of work. Whilst the present study only represents a small sample of EP opinions within one LA it has highlighted areas which require further investigation and indicated a number of training needs.

The decision to employ Activity Theory within this study appears to have been appropriate as it ensured that the focus remained around the activity which occurs when EP respond to CIs. The process of focussing on the second generation Activity System (Engeström, 1999) ensured that a wide range of areas were covered within the research interviews which in turn allowed a greater understanding of the roles EPs had played during CIs and their reflections on their impact and effectiveness.

In terms of the findings it would appear that EPs have a clear focus that their work during CIs involves a wide range of people including staff, pupils and the wider school community. This report did not find that multi-agency working was a particular feature to CI responses and it may therefore be beneficial to explore why this did not occur.

The EPs who participated in this study were positive regarding a wide range of factors which facilitated their work, however it was acknowledged that there were a number of barriers, particularly the expectations of school staff. Further exploration focussing on establishing why this was an issue may enable a more joined-up response in the future.

It was also highlighted that the sudden and unexpected nature of CIs resulted in EPs experiencing feelings of uncertainty regarding their levels of competence. Through high levels of supervision these feelings were generally resolved, however additional training may be beneficial in order to support EPs further.

Overall it would appear that there are a number of factors which could be shared with EPs as examples of good practice when responding to CIs. It would be beneficial to consider how EPs in other LAs respond to CIs in order to broaden understanding within this area. Further exploration could also investigate the opinions and experiences of school staff and pupils who have received support from the EP service both during and after CIs in order to create a fuller picture and develop practice.

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Appendix 1

Reflection on Response to Critical Incidents

Today I had to attend a critical incident at a small village primary school which involved the sudden death of a member of the teaching staff. I attended it with my Senior EP and spent the morning with the pupils and the school's staff. The majority of my work this morning involved working with the teaching staff. It involved a great deal of reassurance that they were 'doing the right thing' in terms of what they were saying to the pupils. If I'm honest I felt slightly out of my depth even with the support of the Senior EP.

As the morning progressed I felt it was important for me to take time with other members of staff who were not class committed such as the Receptionist who had to field a number of phone calls asking for information during the day. Spending time with her felt very important and beneficial and something I would bear in mind for the future. I also spent time with the student teacher in the class. I felt she was concerned that she had to take on a great deal of responsibility for the class. This was obviously a very difficult experience for her and I was aware that she required support as she was going to be leaving the school in a couple of weeks.

I also worked with the pupils in the class affected. I felt that I was prepared for some reactions I encountered such as the real, genuine upset displayed by a number of pupils. I wasn't however ready for some other reactions such as the 'competition' between some of the boys regarding not having cried yet.

At the end of the morning I asked the HT if she wished me to stay in the school. She decided that she wanted to get the school back to normal and asked all outside adults to leave. In this instance I felt comfortable that the HT was able to cope and continue to manage. It did however make me consider what I would have done if I did not feel the HT was in a position to manage without outside support.

When I returned to the office I was struck by just how exhausted I was. The support of my senior colleagues was crucial at this time. I felt a real need to describe what I had experienced. It was through this conversation that I realised how little I felt I had contributed. Through discussion it became apparent that this was a common feeling but that the experience of other colleagues demonstrated that the EP response at this time is appreciated by school staff in these circumstances. Upon reflection I didn't feel prepared for this experience however working alongside a senior EP was crucial in order to build my knowledge and experience in such cases.

It would appear that the school staff did want the reassurance of having an outside agency in the school at this time. It felt as if the EP service was a good 'fit' for this role as we are familiar faces but are able to be slightly removed from the event. The need for supervision from my senior colleagues was crucial as it was overall a very draining and highly emotional experience but also one which has highlighted a further role played by EPs.

Appendix 2

Overview of Critical Incident Policy

The LA policy defines a CI as:

“An event or sequence of events affecting pupils and/or teachers that creates significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and coping strategies, and which is likely to have serious emotional and organisational consequences”

The policy gives information to schools regarding how to prepare for a CI focussing on:

- Why be prepared?
- Appointing a CI Management Team
- Assigning Roles and Responsibilities
- Identifying suitable resources
- Preparing contact information
- Information required for all staff

The policy categories CIs into three levels:

- LEVEL 1
Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent
Event not sudden or traumatic
School able to cope, support strategies in place
Low impact/awareness for the majority of pupils/staff
Advice needed for staff about coping with bereavement and loss, normal grieving process
- LEVEL 2
Accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/parent near, or enroute to or from school
Event is sudden and traumatic
Significant numbers of distressed pupil and staff
School needs support to manage the situation
- LEVEL 3
Large-scale disaster affecting the school and/or the local community
National as well as local impact
School needs full support

Appendix 3

Critical Incident Activity Theory Interview Schedule

Subject:

What is your current role?

What is your experience /
qualifications?

How many critical incidents have you
been involved in?

Rules:

What facilitated your work?

What constrained your work?

Are there any other factors with
impact on your work?

- in the short/long term

Tool and/or Artefacts

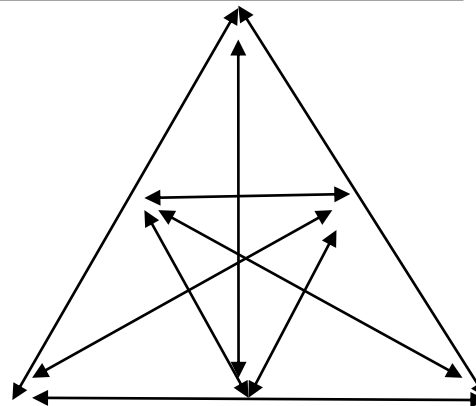
What tools did you use both during
and after (concrete and abstract)?

Why do you use these?

Why do you work in this way?

What theories/frameworks do you
use?

What concrete and abstract tools?



Community:

Who else did you work with?

What was their role and 'working
relationship' with you?

How did this come about?

Are there other people who should have
been involved?

Object:

Describe your work when
responding to a critical incident

How did you decide what to do?

Outcomes:

What did you hope to achieve?

- in the short term
- in the long term

What was the impact?

How was it measured?

How does this happen?

With hindsight would you have
changed anything you do/ do
anything differently in the future?

Division of Labour:

How was the work divided up?

How did this come about?

Appendix 4

SIX STAGES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS

PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS
1. Familiarising with the Data	Read and re-read data noting down initial ideas
2. Generating Initial Codes	Code interesting feature throughout data and collate data for each code
3. Searching for Themes	Collate codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing Themes	Check themes work in terms of coded extracts and entire data set
5. Defining and Naming Themes	On-going analysis to refine each theme and generation of names for each theme
6. Producing the Report	Selection of compelling extracts relating back to research questions and literature review

(Adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Appendix 5

Key Research Findings to Research Questions

1) What role do EPs play when responding to CIs in schools?	
<i>Working with Pupils</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Whole School <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Aiding Senior Managers</i> <i>Gathering whole school picture (gauging emotional temperature)</i> <i>Spending time around the school</i> <i>Identifying pupils who may require additional support</i> <i>Employing listening and observational skills</i> <i>Using and sharing knowledge concerning grief reactions</i> <i>Ensuring pupils are comfortable with and understand role of EP</i> - Individual/Small Group Work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Active listening to needs of pupils</i> <i>Not pushing for emotional response</i> <i>Providing practical strategies</i>
<i>Working with Staff</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Providing Reassurance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Supporting the supporters</i> <i>Giving information regarding how to share information with pupils</i> <i>Supporting in responding to pupils comments and questions</i> <i>Reassuring staff that what they are doing is right</i> - Longer Term Support 158 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Providing supervision sessions</i>

	<p><i>Supporting staff working with pupils in the longer term</i></p> <p><i>Providing additional emotional support to staff who requested it</i></p> <p><i>Benefits of being an outside agency when providing support</i></p>
Working with the Wider Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-Teaching Members of Staff <p><i>Being aware of the needs of non-teaching members of staff</i></p> <p><i>Giving all members of staff the opportunity to ask for support if required</i></p> - Aiding Schools to Liaise with Parents <p><i>Supporting the schools in informing parents</i></p> <p><i>Highlighting the need to inform parents in a professional manner and within a suitable time frame</i></p>
2) What factors impact on EPs responding to CIs in an effective and ethical manner?	
Facilitators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitators <p><i>Importance of CI policy</i></p> <p><i>Policy development led by EP Service</i></p> <p><i>CI policy a key starting point for both school and EPs and gives a common framework</i></p> <p><i>CI policy crucial due to unexpected nature of CIs</i></p> <p><i>EPs are able to prioritise CI work due to LA expectations</i></p> - Support from EP Colleagues

	<p><i>Formal Supervision from Senior EPs crucial in order to manage emotive topic</i></p> <p><i>Senior EP role to ensure EPs are coping</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal Support from Colleagues <p><i>Importance in normalising the experience</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use of Psychological Models and Knowledge <p><i>Wide range of psychological models and theories employed</i></p> <p><i>Clear understanding of how to use psychology during CI responses</i></p>
Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Perceived Lack of Training <p><i>Concern regarding how to respond to certain questions</i></p> <p><i>Advice from Senior EPs invaluable</i></p> <p><i>Need for whole service training</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Schools Perception of EP Role <p><i>Difficulties if schools have unrealistic expectations of what EP Service can provide</i></p>
3) What factors could improve EP response to CI?	
Hindsight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Core Function of the EP Role <p><i>Appreciate the benefits to schools of involving outside agencies</i></p> <p><i>Need for outside agencies to understand school systems</i></p> <p><i>Benefits of providing support which has knowledge of previous CIs</i></p> <p><i>Outside support able to move the situation forward</i></p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on a Personal Level <i>Need to ensure appropriate self care for EPs which good levels of supervision and informal colleague support</i>
<i>Future</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Methods to Improve Practice <i>Developing a bank of resources which are easily accessible</i> <i>Need resources which EPs can refer to due to the unexpected nature of CIs</i> <i>Need opportunities to share strategies with colleagues</i>

CHAPTER FIVE: PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORT 4

A Report Focussing on the Use of Appreciative Inquiry as a Method of Organisational Change to Develop Peer Supervision within an Educational Psychology Service

Abstract

Organisational change is generally motivated by gaps between an organisations goals and its current level of functioning. Such changes can be difficult for those involved and can lead to high levels of uncertainty and stress. In recent years there has been a growing interest in the field of positive organisational change which, it has been argued, can result in more effective and agreeable outcomes for employers and employees. One method which is directed towards this positive stance and is becoming increasingly prevalent is Appreciative Inquiry (AI). AI differs from other methods of organisational change in that it is not concerned with problem solving approaches and systematic criticism, but rather focuses on revealing best practice and using imagination and innovation to approach change. The following Professional Practice Report (PPR) details an eighteen month project in which an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) conducted an AI. The PPR is divided into two parts, the first of which contextualises the project by exploring in-depth the theoretical background and development of AI and considering the research focussing on its effectiveness. The second part details a peer supervision pilot project which was a direct result of the AI. A mixed methods approach was adopted

using questionnaires and a focus group in order to evaluate the effectiveness of, and requirement for, peer supervision within the EPS. The results of this pilot project indicate that peer supervision was considered to be distinct from other methods of supervision. A numbers of factors are highlighted in terms of the resources which were required to make peer supervision effective and suggestions are proposed regarding how this form of supervision could be made available to all members of the EPS.

Introduction

Organisational change is generally motivated by gaps between an organisation's goals and its current levels of functioning (Avey et al., 2008). It is a process that is necessary in today's world but can result in significant changes in strategic direction, structure and staffing levels (Armenakis and Bedaian, 1999). Such changes can be difficult for those involved to cope with and can lead to high levels of uncertainty and stress (Bordia et al., 2004).

Cameron (2008) argues that humans react more strongly to negative than positive stimuli and therefore negative events can overshadow positive change. Insights from positive psychology have suggested that employees' with positive psychological resources (such as hope, optimism and efficacy) may exhibit attitudes and behaviours that can result in more effective and agreeable experiences of organisational change. Findings such as these have led to greater interest in the development of the field of positive organisational change (Avey et al., 2008).

One method of organisational change which is based upon this positive stance and is becoming increasingly popular and prevalent is Appreciative Inquiry (AI) (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). It differs from other methods in that it is not concerned with problem solving approaches and systematic criticism but rather focuses on revealing best practice and using imagination and innovation to approach change (Michael, 2005).

The following Professional Practice Report (PPR) details an 18 month project in which my employing Educational Psychology Service (EPS) conducted an AI in order to address the need for organisational change in terms of communication within the team. As a result of the AI process one group within the EPS highlighted the need for greater communication between colleagues and therefore piloted formalised peer supervision.

The PPR is divided into two parts, the first of which contextualises the project by exploring the theoretical background of AI and considering the research focussing on its effectiveness. The second part of this PPR will detail the peer supervision pilot project which was a direct result of the AI. This will begin with a critical literature review focussing on supervision including its theoretical background and research findings regarding its effectiveness. This will be followed by an exploration of the methods used to evaluate the pilot project. The results of the project will then be reported including recommendations about how peer supervision could be utilised within the EPS.

Part 1: The Appreciative Inquiry

Introduction to Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is the study and exploration of what makes human systems work most effectively though focussing on when they are functioning at their best (Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2005). Organisations are viewed as socially constructed and open to constant and on-going change (Bushe and Kassam, 2005). AI recognises the power of the whole and brings the entire system into dialogue (Neville, 2008). Grant and Humphries (2006) highlight that AI can be applied as a method of organisational change on a variety of levels from localised inquiries focussing on small groups such as individual schools to wider community based projects.

Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987) summarise comparisons between more common problem solving models and AI thus:

Traditional Problem Solving Models	Appreciative Inquiry
Identification of Problem	Appreciating the best of “what is”
Analysis of Causes	Envisioning “what might be”
Analysis of Possible Solutions	Dialoguing “what should be”
Action Planning (Treatment)	Innovating “what will be”
<i>Basic Assumption:</i> An organisation is a problem to be solved	<i>Basic Assumption:</i> An organisation is a mystery to be embraced

Table 1: Comparison of Problem Solving and Appreciative Inquiry (adapted from Cooperrider and Srivasta (1987))

Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry has purposely avoided creating any specific methods for conducting this type of work and instead follows a set of principles upon which the AI paradigm rests namely:

- the constructionist principle;
- the simultaneity principle;
- the poetic principle;
- the anticipatory principle; and
- the positive principle (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2001) (for further details see Appendix 1).

Appreciative Inquiries can vary in size and can involve anywhere between thirty and thousands of people. They typically take about two months of planning, three or four days of activities and then several months of implementation and follow-up activities (Ludema and Fry, 2008). The initial phase involves the Affirmation Topic Choice and is of central importance as it defines the topics for subsequent work. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) argue that the choice of topic to focus on for an AI is crucial as it needs to highlight what an organisation will become as human systems grow in the direction of what they study.

After completing the Affirmative Topic Choice phase an organisation will have between three and five compelling and inspirational topics to serve as the focus for an in-depth AI. Once the topic choice has been decided upon this is followed by the 4-D cycle (Cooperrider and Whitney, 2001) which moves away from starting at the level of the key problem and instead focuses on four elements namely *discovery*, *dream*, *design* and *destiny*.

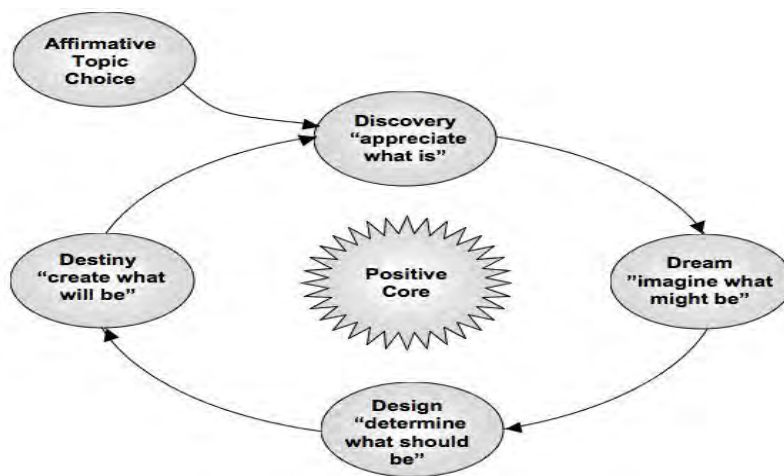


Figure1: 4-D Appreciative Inquiry Cycle

- *Discovery* (learning about what the best moments and memories in the history of the organisation of its people);
- *Dream* (this builds on these exceptional moments to envisaged what life could be like in the future);
- *Design* (the organisational future is envisioned by the group); and
- *Destiny* (agreeing on each person's role in achieving the future vision) (Michael, 2005) (see Appendix 2 for further details).

Evaluation of Appreciative Inquiry as a Method of Organisational Change

One area of difficulty which has been highlighted in critiquing and evaluating AI is its focus on the positive. Rogers and Fraser (2003) have questioned whether focussing entirely on the positive ultimately leads to the distortion of results. This has however been addressed through the argument that AI works on the premise that whatever is being looked at becomes magnified and that a focus on problems is unlikely to result in their reduction. It is not the claim of AI that it replaces problem-focused models rather that systematic investigation of good practice can increase its prominence.

Further to this, whilst AI has undoubtedly been growing in popularity and there is literature focussing on theory and practice it has been suggested that there has been less evidence of critical reflection and evaluation (Doveston and Keenaghan, 2006). This was further supported by Egan and Lancaster (2005) who contrasted AI with Action Research and concluded that whilst AI has many strengths it does suffer in comparison to other methods due to limited interpretative and empirical evidence focussing on its effectiveness.

Given these criticisms of AI it would appear timely to add to the field of research focussing on AI as a method for organisation change. The following section of this PPR therefore details an AI which was conducted in my employing EPS from November 2010 until December 2011. This PPR focuses on one element of the AI namely a group which was developed to focus on the topic of 'Optimistic and Affirming Feelings in Supervision' and resulted in a project to implement peer

supervision into the EPS (see Appendix 3 for further details of how this group was developed as part of the AI process).

It is intended that this exploration will give further insight into the application of AI and will contribute to literature focussing on its effectiveness. It will begin with a critical literature review focussing on supervision including its theoretical background and research findings regarding its effectiveness. This will be followed by an exploration of the methods used to evaluate the pilot project. The results of the project will then be reported including recommendations about how peer supervision could be utilised within the EPS.

Part 2: The Peer Supervision Pilot Project

Critical Literature Review of Supervision

Supervision is a tool which is used across many professions including those in the education, caring and developmental sectors (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006). Within the field of psychology it is common in many areas such as educational, clinical health and counselling. Supervision usually involves one-to-one sessions with a supervisor from the same or different professional background however it can also take peer and group formats (Butterworth et al., 1996).

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) argue that in recent years there has been a growing interest in the value and exact nature of supervision. This has partly been due to changes in the social and political context which has seen increasing demands made on shrinking resources. This has created a complex situation in that providing supervision is more difficult due to lack of resources but at the same time there increased prominence of accountability of professionals. Alongside this issue there has been the additional challenge of professionals increasingly being supervised by more than one manager (and often managers from different professional backgrounds). These changes have led to greater attention being given to the role and function of supervision in order to develop and support good practice (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010).

In order to explore the research background focussing on supervision an extensive literature search was conducted. A search was conducted using the keywords *supervision*, *peer* and *group* in November 2011. A range of educational and psychological databases were used (namely ASSIA: Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts; British Education Index; Educational Research Abstracts Online; ERIC: Educational Resources Information Centre; PsycARTICLES and SwetsWise). A total of fifty-nine articles published between 2002 and 2012 were identified.

Definitions of Supervision

There have been many attempts to try to define exactly what supervision is, however this has been particularly difficult due to the term having different meanings across professions, countries and traditions. One of the most commonly used definitions within the helping professions is that proposed by Scaife (2001) who suggests that supervision is:

“...what happens when people who work in the helping professions make a formal arrangement to think with one another or others about their work with a view to providing the best possible service to the clients and enhancing their own personal and professional development” (Scaife, 2001, p. 4)

This definition would appear to highlight the broad range of practice within supervision and demonstrate that many different elements can be incorporated within this function. I find this definition particularly relevant in that it does not only

focus on the traditional supervisor/supervisee relationship but suggests that it can be a two-way process of development.

Kavanagh et al., (2002) continue this view of supervision as a two way process by describing it as a “working alliance” (p. 247) between professionals. They suggest however that as well as providing a supportive function in meeting clients and practitioners needs, supervision has a wider purpose in ensuring that organisational goals are fulfilled. This additional element has also been further supported by the Children’s Workforce Development Council (CWDC) (2007) who suggest that supervision should also act as an accountable process. This focus on goal fulfilment and accountability has however been criticised as it has been suggested that such a stance can ultimately impact on the supportive function of supervision (Steel, 2001).

Functions of Supervision

In addition to the range of definitions offered for supervision there are also a number of models used which highlight the differing functions of supervision within various professions (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010). Kavanagh et al (2002), suggest that there are three main functions namely:

- the clinical/client-centred function;
- the organisational/administrative or agency-centred function; and
- the personal support function (see Appendix 4 for further details).

In terms of the model proposed by Kavanagh et al (2002) there would appear to be no difference in the importance assigned to each of the three elements of supervision. This is different to other models such as Hawkins and Shohet (2006) which argue that whilst supervision has various elements (namely educative, supportive and managerial) it is important to emphasise the supportive function. It is argued that the supportive function is crucial as it provides a space for professionals to acknowledge, accept and reflect upon emotions associated with their work which may not be available otherwise.

Types of Supervision

Over the past thirty years there has been growing interest in the different types of supervision which are used in various professional groups (Ladany et al., 1999). These include individual supervision (one-to-one sessions with a colleague who is usually senior in either status or length of service), group supervision (sessions involving several participants) and peer supervision (sessions between colleagues with similar levels of experience) (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006).

The vast majority of professionals who receive supervision encounter it in its individual form (Ladany et al., 1999). Models of individual supervision can emphasise a theoretical position and may be based on methods of a particular paradigm, for example solution-focused (Rita, 1998), humanistic (Farrington, 1995) or psychodynamic (Rodenhauser, 1995). This type of supervision does not however mean that the supervisory relationship has to be exclusively between one supervisor

and one supervisee. The Mentor-Protégé Model (Nolinske, 1995) for example uses multiple supervisors to provide specific one-to-one input regarding the various elements of an individuals' work.

Kavanagh et al., (2002) suggest that whilst individual supervision is undoubtedly the most commonly used it does have disadvantages including being costly in terms of time and the complexities of establishing sound supervisor/supervisee relationships. Whilst at present there is a paucity of research focussing on alternative methods, there is beginning to be increasing interest in exploring their effectiveness in comparison to individual models.

Group Supervision

Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggest that group supervision has advantages as it can provide a supportive atmosphere of peers, provide a wider range of experience and challenge over-influence and dependency on one supervisor. It is acknowledged that this form of supervision is often employed when there is a shortage of people who can supervise or limited time. This however is not ideal and group supervision should ideally come about as a positive choice.

Research focussing on group supervision in a number of professional fields is beginning to build a picture of the potential facilitators and barriers to this type of practice. Tisdall and O'Donoghue (2003) studied the development of group

supervision amongst eighteen practitioners working in the community probation service. The group supervision sessions were established in the midst of considerable change within the service which had resulted in a low trust culture and were designed to encourage the sharing of experiences and opinions and as a forum to discuss and challenge work in a supportive manner during the difficult time.

The results of the study indicated that all staff reported contributing to the sessions and felt they had helped with their casework. It was suggested that the sessions had enabled the participants to become more aware of their work role and were able to learn about new practice methods. Furthermore it was highlighted that the group sessions had enabled those involved to express themselves more freely with regard to organisational issues that would be possible in individual supervision sessions. The participants did however report that whilst attendance at the sessions was viewed as important, this was sometimes difficult due to the nature of the job which entailed court appearances and crisis management which could not be avoided.

Walsh et al (2003) investigated the experiences of six nurses who developed a group model of supervision due to being unsatisfied with the individual supervision they had been receiving. The group carried out monthly group supervision sessions over a six month period and evaluated its effectiveness in areas such as ability to meet personal objectives and supervision functions.

The results indicated that the group was very anxious to establish a supportive environment and develop the model in a collaborative way. There was also an indication of a sense of ownership over this form of supervision as there was a near one hundred percent attendance rate (although the authors do not state what the attendance rate was for previous individual supervision).

There was however concern that the effort made by participants to be supportive resulted in them not challenging each other which in turn may have led to their ability to reflect upon and critique practice being compromised. Whilst this study was informative it is important to bear in mind that it was as a result of practitioners being unsatisfied with the individual research which is of consequence given Hawkin and Shohet's (2006) position that group supervision should come from a positive place. It would therefore be beneficial to explore group supervision when it is used alongside quality individual supervision.

Peer Supervision

In addition to group supervision there is beginning to be growing interest in the use of peer supervision. This method of supervision is characterised by the participation of peer colleagues and can be implemented on either a one-to-one or group basis (Hyrkas et al., 2005). Peer supervision differs from other forms in that it is generally organised, directed and led by peers who contribute equally rather than having a more senior facilitator (Thomasgard and Collins, 2003).

In contrast to educational or medical models of supervision which emphasise learning or remediation of deficits respectively (Fenichel, 1992), peer supervision offers a more relationship-based, reflective approach (Thomasgard et al., 2004). It has been suggested that this type of supervision is beneficial in that it can decrease staff turnover, increase collaboration between colleagues, strengthen skill bases and can be an alternative to expensive in-service training (Thomasgard and Collins, 2003). Furthermore, Cleary and Freeman (2006) highlight that peer supervision can be beneficial in that it is able to be implemented for all levels of professionals and therefore can be used by managers as well as more junior colleagues. However, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) do suggest that this method often results from professionals not being able to receive quality individual supervision due to their manager having either lack of time or ability to supervise them.

In terms of research focussing on peer supervision there have been relatively few academic studies conducted. Benshoff (1993) reported that seventy-seven out of eighty-one counselling interns suggested that peer supervision was helpful in developing their counselling skills and their understanding. Furthermore, research focussing on doctors working in general practice has suggested that having access to peer supervision enabled them to acknowledge, discuss and solve both professional and personal problems which in turn helped to reduce stress and improve morale (Bush, 2000; Wilson, 2000).

Thomasgard and Collins (2003) investigated the use of peer supervision in a group of health and mental health care providers. The participants purposely focussed on moving away from within-child factors in their casework and instead used a number of frameworks to inform their thinking including ecological theories of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and biobehavioural models of illness (Wood, 2001). They followed a set agenda during each session involving a brief summary of the case, specific questions which the presenter wished to elicit feedback for, case presentation and summary.

The results of the study which was evaluated over four years indicated that participants reported high levels of satisfaction in terms of peer supervision being able to meet their educational needs and impact on their practice. There were however some difficulties noted including organisation of sessions which was difficult due to limited availability of some participants particularly those who worked part-time. This study did highlight the benefit of peer supervision between different professional groups and how this can aid in terms of information sharing. It would now be beneficial to explore whether there were similar findings across one professional group.

Effectiveness of Supervision

Kavanagh et al (2002) argue that whilst supervision is generally viewed as popular amongst staff, its impact on service quality and job satisfaction can still be perceived as patchy and inconsistent both within and across services and professions.

Schroffel (1999) cited in Spence et al (2001) investigated levels of supervision amongst mental health professional and found that thirty-three percent received no formal supervision. Furthermore of the sixty-five percent who did report receiving supervision this was typically very brief and/or infrequent. These findings are of consequence given that many professions have guidelines stipulating the expectation of on-going supervision (Dunmuir and Leadbetter, 2010).

Research focussing on the provision of quality supervision would appear to suggest that the reasons behind the perceived view of supervision ineffectiveness can be viewed both on personal and also more practical levels. In terms of personal levels, Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggest that whilst increasing recognition for greater training and support for those who carry out a supervisory role has been beneficial, the relationship between supervisor and supervisee is complex and requires on-going consideration.

Scaife (2001) highlights that supervisory relationships are a sub-set of relationships with colleagues which can generate emotions which require to be acknowledged. This is particularly true in supervisory training relationships where there can be a formal or evaluatory function. Landany et al (1996), cited in Scaife (2001), suggest that the most common reason for nondisclosure of issues in the supervision process was a perceived poor alliance between the supervisor and supervisee from the perspective of the supervisee. This would appear to be of significant consequence

particularly if the safety of clients is put at risk or if ethical guidelines are not followed due to this lack of disclosure.

Murphy and Wright (2005) highlight that a further issue in developing supervisory relationships is the need to acknowledge the role of power. It is argued that power differences are inherent in supervisory relationships and can be attributed to a number of factors including experience, expertise and training (Hicks and Cornille, 1999). Whilst it is suggested that power can be abused by supervisors in a number of forms such as over-focusing on supervisee mistakes or assigning excessive caseloads it is also argued that supervisees can abuse power through methods such as unfair evaluations or withholding information (Ladany, 2004). This finding would appear to further highlight the importance of creating an environment where disclosure is possible when establishing sound supervisory relationships.

Murphy and Wright (2005) suggest that power dynamics in supervisory relationships can be improved through encouraging supervisors to view their role as mentor rather than expert. It is argued if supervisors minimise the power differences in the relationship the supervisee will be able to gain a sense of his or her power (Nelson, 1997). Whilst this research focussed on one-to-one supervision given the changes in relation to how supervision is offered (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006) it may now be beneficial to explore the role of power in other forms of supervision including peer and group and also when the supervisor and supervisee are from differing professional backgrounds.

Kavanagh et al., (2006) highlight that in addition to personal factors there are also practical issues which may require attention in order to develop sound supervisory relationships. These issues are given in the table below alongside some solutions which have been suggested by other researchers:

Supervision Issue (adapted from Kavanagh et al., 2006)	Possible Solution
Competing high-priority work	Provision of supervision contracts stipulating form and frequency of supervision and what is expected from supervisor and supervisee (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2011)
Lack of appropriately trained or available supervisors (particularly for senior staff)	Use of alternative supervision methods which do not require a senior facilitator (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006)
Limited availability for staff across different sites and services	Use of multi-media links or travel support for extended sessions (Kavanagh, 2002)
Lack of structure in supervision sessions	Setting of supervision contracts and record keeping guidelines (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2010)
Lack of confidence to provide effective supervision	Greater focus on in-service training and ensuring that supervisors have access to quality supervision (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006)

Table 2: Supervision Issues and Possible Solutions

Overall, it would appear that there are a number of personal and practical factors which can be considered in order to develop and maintain effective supervision across a range of professions. However Kavanagh et al (2006) highlight that given the unique dynamics associated with every field it is crucial to consider all elements of supervision from one's own professional standpoint.

The Role of Supervision in Educational Psychology

All EPs at whatever stage in their career should engage in professional supervision (Dunsmuir and Leadbetter, 2011). Indeed the British Psychological Society (BPS) states that:

“Supervision should be an entitlement for all educational psychologists working with clients” (BPS, 2002)

Further to this, since EPs became regulated by the Health Professions Council (HPC) in 2009 there has been an additional need for supervision issues to be addressed as registrant practitioners are expected to be able to understand models of supervision and how they contribute to their practice (HPC, 2009).

A recent review of supervision conducted by Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2011) has highlighted a number of factors which are significant to the EP profession. These include recognition that supervision happens in differing forms (individual, group and peer) and frequencies (depending on the stage of career). The report also highlighted that EPs may regularly take on differing roles as both supervisees and also supervisors (and in some cases supervisors of different professions).

Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2010) suggest that EPs supervision may take a number of forms including line management supervision which could be provided by other professionals to professional supervision which would usually be provided by a more senior EP. There is also the role of specialist supervision which may be required to

discuss work using a particular approach and which can only be provided by someone with knowledge in this area. Throughout all these differing types of supervision it is acknowledged that principles of good practice including respect, confidentiality and professionalism should be followed.

In terms of research focussing on EPs experiences of supervision, this is at the present time limited. The results which are available would appear to suggest that supervision is more of a priority in the early stages of an EP's career (Nolan, 1999). There has been concern noted in the lack of consistency of supervision both across and within services including the amount and types of supervision which are available to all EPs regardless of the stage in their career (Webster et al 2000).

At the present time there is limited research focussing on experiences of supervision throughout an EPs career and at different levels of seniority within EP services. There would also appear to be no research focussing on EPs accessing different types of supervision such as group and peer methods which given the suggestion that this is to become more common (Hawkins and Shohet, 2006) is of consequence. Furthermore, a great deal of the research focussing on group and peer methods has been a result of situations where professionals have felt unsupported by the individual supervision they were receiving and it would be beneficial to investigate whether having other forms alongside quality individual supervision is necessary and effective.

Therefore after completing this review of literature and reporting back to the AI group the following research question was decided upon followed by three sub-questions:

RESEARCH QUESTION	
Is access to peer supervision necessary and feasible within our EPS in addition to the supervision already received?	
SUB-QUESTIONS	
1	Is peer supervision distinct from other forms of supervision?
2	What factors are required to make peer supervision successful?
3	What is required in order for peer supervision to be available to all EPs within the service?

Table 3: Research Question and Sub-Questions

Methodology

The present research employed a mixed methods approach to gather data. Mixed methods research has been described as the third major research paradigm alongside quantitative and qualitative research (Johnson et al., 2007). Bryman (1992) suggests that mixed methods research is beneficial as it can provide a more complete picture of the phenomena under investigation than would be possible using one method alone.

Epistemological Position

In terms of the epistemological position the present research takes a critical realist stance. Robson (2002) suggests that critical realism provides a position which combines elements of the post-positivist approaches within the empirical tradition and other forms of relativism found in constructionist approaches. This approach seeks to use methodology and methods associated with both quantitative and qualitative research and advocates the benefits of mixed-methods studies. Within the critical realist approach Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocate a pragmatic position which argues that rather than aligning oneself to a limited number of approaches researchers should instead consider the ways that offer the best opportunities for answering the research question under consideration.

Howe (1998) has criticised mixed methods research by proposing the incompatibility thesis which suggests that quantitative and qualitative paradigms and their associated methods should not be mixed. Robson (2002) however challenges this standpoint by arguing that it is crucial for researchers to use whatever philosophical and methodological approach works best for the problem under investigation. Furthermore Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2002) suggest that the goal of mixed methods research is not to replace other approaches but to draw from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both.

Participants

In total there were six participants who took part in the peer supervision pilot research. At the beginning of the pilot the participants chose their own peer supervision partners. Details of the participants and who they were partnered with are given below:

Participant Number	Position	Length of Service	
1	Maingrade	7 years	}
2	Newly Qualified	3 years	
3	Maingrade	12 years	}
4	Maingrade	4 years	
5	Newly Qualified	3 years	}
6	Trainee	2 years	

Table 4: Participant Information

Method

In terms of this research the two methods used were a questionnaire which was administered at the beginning of the study before the peer supervision sessions commenced and a focus group which occurred after the sessions had been taking place for six months. The questionnaire was designed to gather information concerning the structural aspects of peer supervision and the position of the participants at the beginning of the study whereas the focus group dealt with the

processes of supervision once it had occurred. The mixed methods approach enabled both researcher and participant perspectives to be gathered as the questionnaire focussed on my own understanding of peer supervision from the theoretical side whereas the focus group enabled the views and actual experiences of those who had taken part to be acknowledged.

Questionnaire

Questionnaires have been described as a favoured tool for data collection in research with non-experimental designs (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2004). In the present research the decision to use a questionnaire as method of data collection was primarily based upon the timeframe of the research which meant that the initial data needed to be gathered before the peer supervision groups could begin. As it is the nature of AI to carry the momentum forward the participants did not want to have to wait to begin their peer supervision sessions and therefore questionnaires allowed pre-data collection to occur quickly.

Questionnaire Design

Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003) suggest that using a combination of questions can enable a broader range of data to be collected when employing questionnaires. In terms of the types of questions included in the questionnaire for the present study a combination of closed, multiple-choice and open questions was deemed appropriate (see Appendix 5 for questionnaire).

In terms of gathering descriptive data around whether participants had been involved in peer supervision previously, closed questions were employed. Clark-Carter (2004) highlights that including closed questions has the benefit of increasing the likelihood of the questionnaire being completed particularly in self-administration cases. When further information was required, for example, regarding the reasons for taking part in the peer supervision AI group or a multiple choice option was offered. It has been suggested that this type of questioning is popular as they enable the researcher to hold some control (Ray, 2000) but that careful construction is required in order to offer responses which cover all or most responses possible (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003). The initial multiple choice questions were derived from the literature review but there was also an 'other' section to enable participants to add additional details.

Finally, the questionnaire for this study also employed the use of open questions. Open questions are designed to offer participants the opportunity to answer in a non constrained manner (Clark-Carter, 2004). The decision to employ open questions was derived from the literature review which highlighted the paucity of research focussing on peer supervision. Therefore I was interested in gaining the opinions of the participants on this subject without constraints.

Questionnaire Procedure

It was decided that questionnaires would be administered through the internal post system with an email sent beforehand to pre-warn participants. It was felt that as the participants were engaged in this process through AI they would have the desire to

complete the questionnaires. It total six questionnaires were sent to member of the peer supervision AI group and five of them were returned.

Focus Group

Focus groups have become increasingly popular due to being a highly efficient method for data. They have been highlighted as advantageous over other methods as participants are empowered to make their own contributions whilst having their thoughts stimulated by the other participants (Robinson, 1999).

Robinson (1999) highlights a number of disadvantages associated with focus groups which were considered when deciding to employ this method and are explored below:

Disadvantage	Decision in present research
The number of questions covered is limited	All participants agreed to a 90 minute focus group which it was felt would be a suitable length to cover all the questions required
Facilitating the group takes expertise	The facilitator of the focus group had experience of facilitating focus groups
Less articulate participants may not share their views or extreme views may be predominate	The participants were all known to each other for many years and were used to engaging active listening as part of their professional role
Confidentiality can be a problem between participants	All participants had extensive knowledge of issues relating to confidentiality and research ethics
The results cannot be generalised and cannot be regarded as representative of the wider population	This was never the issue in this research which was primarily designed to evaluate peer supervision within this EPS

Table 5: Answers to Focus Group Disadvantages

In terms of this research the decision to employ a focus group method at the end of the six month pilot period was deemed appropriate due to a number of factors. Firstly, given the critical realist perspective it has been argued that focus groups have considerable power to raise consciousness and empower participants (Johnson, 1996). Furthermore, given the time frame of the research it was not felt that individual interviews would be appropriate or possible. A questionnaire could have been administered again but it was considered that this would not give the rich data of the participants experiences that was required.

Focus Group Procedure

In terms of the present study all participants who had taken part in the initial pilot were invited to take part ($n = 6$). The time and place was agreed by the participants in order to make sure that it was suitable for all. On the day of the focus group one member was not able to participant due to illness however it was decided to proceed due the difficulties of reorganising. The focus group took place in a room at one of the EP offices and was recorded and later transcribed as this allowed me to concentrate fully on the discussion. It was explained to the participants that they would not be named in the final write-up of the research results. The focus group was designed to be a semi-structured discussion following a schedule which contained the main areas of interest (see Appendix 6 for further details).

Data Analysis

The data from the focus group was analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA). TA has been described as a flexible tool which enables the researcher to provide a detailed account of the data gathered and provides a method for identifying, reporting and organising themes within data gathered (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

When employing TA to analyse, data themes can be identified in either an inductive or deductive manner. This study utilised an inductive approach in order to enable the data to drive the formulation of themes. The data that was collected was therefore coded without trying to fit it into any specific coding frame and without influence from the researchers' theoretical background. Whilst it was acknowledged that previous engagement with literature may have had the potential to influence the interpretation of the data it was believed that for this study TA would provide a flexible tool which would ultimately enable a detailed account of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The present study followed the six stage procedure for TA namely:

PHASE	DESCRIPTION OF THE PROCESS
1. Familiarising with the Data	Read and re-read data noting down initial ideas
2. Generating Initial Codes	Code interesting feature throughout data and collate data for each code
3. Searching for Themes	Collate codes into potential themes
4. Reviewing Themes	Check themes work in terms of coded extracts and entire data set
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Ongoing analysis to refine each theme and generation of names for each theme
6. Producing the Report	Selection of compelling extracts relating back to research questions and literature review

Table 6: Six Stages of Thematic Analysis (adapted from Braun and Clarke, 2006)

Ethical Issues

Birch et al., (2002) highlight that ethical issues in qualitative research are particularly important for researchers to consider as this type of research tends to focus on participants private lives and places accounts in the public arena. In line with guidance stipulated by the British Psychological Society (2010) there were a number of ethical issues which required consideration before the study could begin.

The first issue concerned respect for the privacy of participants. This specifically focussed upon the fact that the results would be fed back to the EP service. I was aware that the EPs may feel restricted if they felt their comments might reflect negatively on the senior management team. I was therefore transparent with the EPs who agreed to participate and reiterated to them before completing the questionnaire and participating in the focus group that the results would not only be written up for submission to the University of Birmingham but would also be used by the senior management team to identify areas for further professional development within the service. Further to this, whilst the senior management knew the members of the AI group I did not assign names to comments made in the questionnaires or focus group.

The second ethical issue focused on avoidance of harm to participants. I wished to ensure that participating in the study did not add additional stress to already busy professionals. Furthermore, I wanted to ensure that participant did not feel compelled to take part in the research because they were a member of the AI group. I

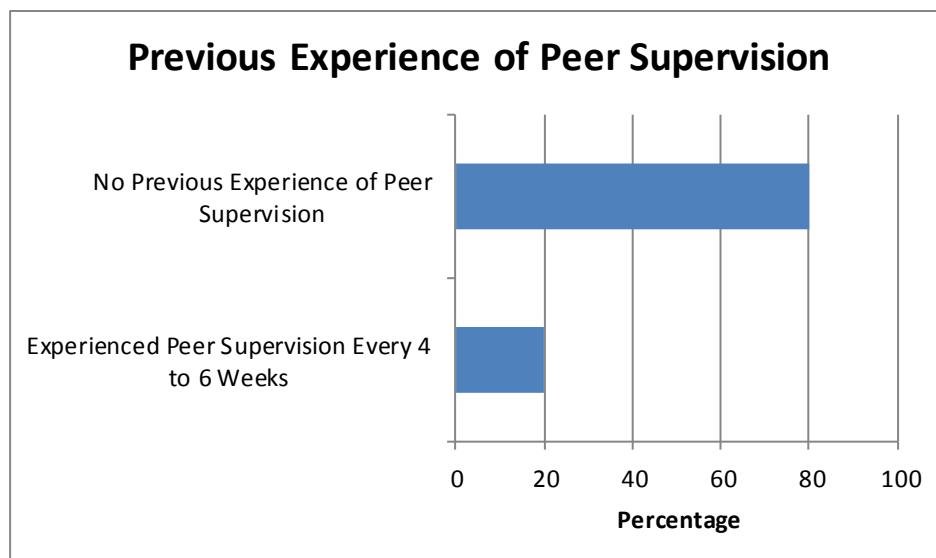
addressed these issues through reiterating to participants that participation was completely voluntary. The questionnaires were left with EPs to be completed at a time that was convenient to them and the focus group was organised to be conducted at a time and location that was mutually agreed by all the participants.

Results

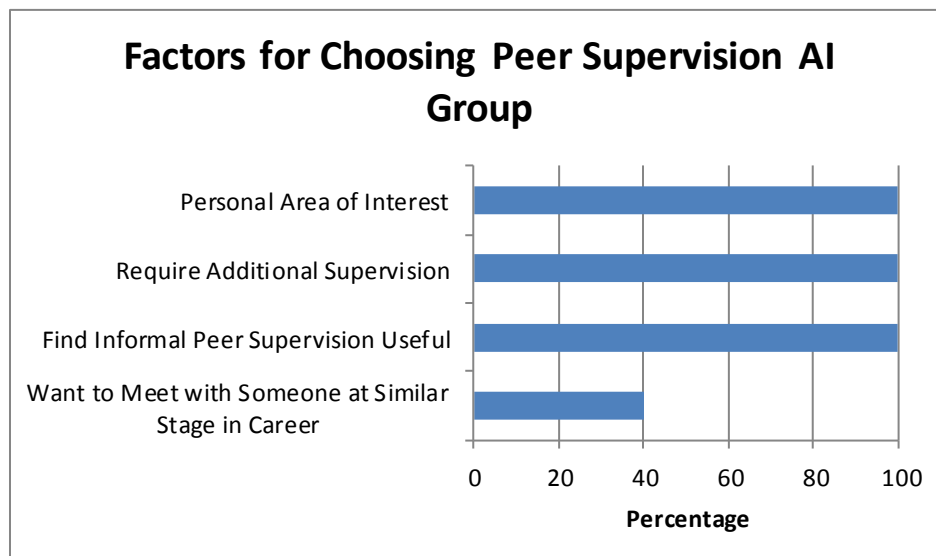
Questionnaire Findings

The findings from each section of the questionnaire are presented below:

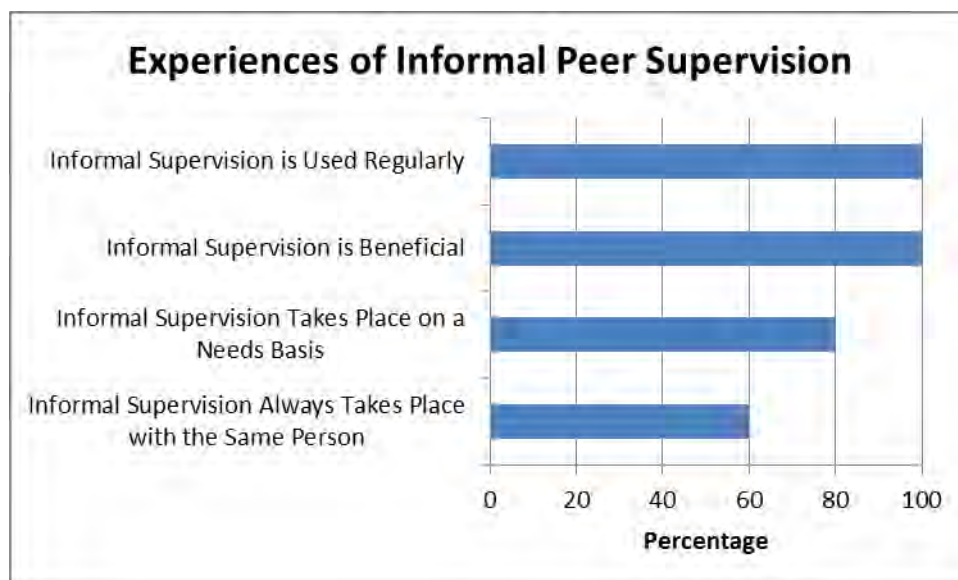
Question 1: Have you ever taken part in formal peer supervision?



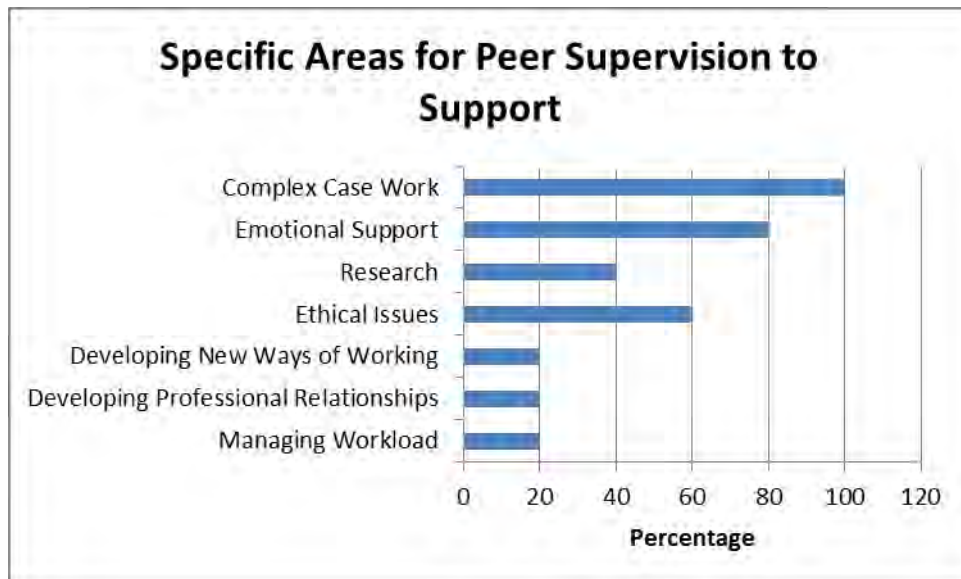
Question 2: What factors led to your decision to choose the peer supervision Appreciative Inquiry group?



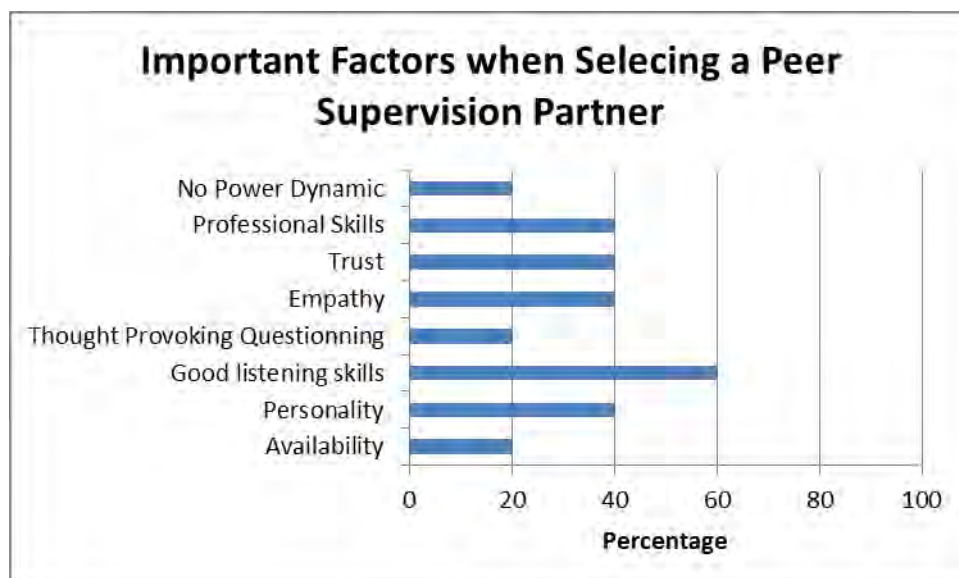
Question 3: Do you regularly take part in informal peer supervision?



Question 4: Are there any specific areas you hope the peer supervision sessions will be able to support?



Question 5: What are the factors which are important when selecting a peer supervision partner?



Discussion of Questionnaire Findings

The questionnaire results indicate that prior to participating in the peer supervision pilot project the majority of the EPs had not taken part in the form of formal peer supervision. This would support the suggestion of Ladany et al (1999) who highlighted that for the vast majority of professionals supervision is provided using an individual format.

All of the participants reported that peer supervision was a personal area of interest which had led to the decision to join this AI group. This is an important finding as it suggests that the participants in this pilot project were highly motivated to take part in this form of supervision and therefore findings from this pilot may not be generalisable across the whole EP service.

A further suggestion made by all the EPs was that they had chosen to participate in the peer supervision group due to feeling that they required additional supervision. This is interesting given that unlike other studies which have suggested that group and peer supervision is necessary due to lack of individual supervision (Tisdall and O'Donoghue, 2003; Walsh et al., 2003), the participants in this research did receive regular, quality individual supervision. This may suggest that whilst participants have access to supervision which focusses on learning and remediation as suggested by Fenichel (1992) they still require an approach which offers a more relationship-based, reflective approach (Thomasgard et al., 2004).

The questionnaire findings also highlighted that all of the participants already took part in informal peer supervision and wished for this to be on a more formal basis. This need for a more formal approach to peer supervision may have been partly due to the suggestion made by one of the participants that the present office accommodation did not facilitate peer supervision.

This finding would support the suggestion of Hawkins and Shohet (2006) that there has been increased interest in the nature of supervision due to changes in social and political contexts and the demands made on resources. It would therefore appear important that if peer supervision was to be implemented on a more formal basis careful consideration would have to be given to practical issues in order to develop sound supervisory relationships as suggested by Kavanagh et al., (2006).

In terms of the specific areas that participants hoped peer supervision would be able to support, the majority suggested that they wanted emotional support. This finding is perhaps not surprising given the focus in peer supervision on relationship-based approaches (Thomasgard et al., 2004). All the participants did however also report that they wanted peer supervision to support them with complex case work which would suggest a more educative function. It would therefore appear that the participants view peer supervision as being able to provide an array of functions as suggested by Kavanagh et al., (2002) rather than primarily focus on one area.

Finally the questionnaire findings highlighted that the participants considered a wide range of factors as important when selecting a peer supervision partner. One of these focuses on the requirement for no power dynamic (the person not being a manager, tutor or supervisor previously). This finding supports the suggestion of Murphy and Wright (2005) who highlight the importance of acknowledging and reducing power dynamics in supervisory relationships. It is interesting to note however that when asked, only 40 percent of the participants suggested they wanted a peer supervision partner at the same stage in their career as themselves. It would therefore appear that what is considered as a power dynamic in individual supervision may not be so in others forms.

Overall, the findings from the questionnaire indicated a positive start to the peer supervision pilot project. The participants were clear as to why peer supervision was necessary in addition to other form of supervision they received. Furthermore there would appear to be a sound vision regarding what is wanted from this form of supervision and what was required to make it successful and beneficial.

Focus Group Findings

A summary of the key findings relating to the initial research questions are presented below detailing the key themes which emerged (these are expanded further in the discussion section below).

1) Is peer supervision distinct from other forms of supervision?	
<i>Nurturing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Informal and personal - Normalising - Reassuring - Stress reduction
<i>Distinct Features</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less casework focussed - Greater availability - More than an informal chat
2) What factors are required to make peer supervision successful?	
<i>Organisation</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practical (sessions/flexibility) - Personal (partner selection)
<i>Commitment</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Level - Competing priorities
<i>Availability to All</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Part-time EPs - Senior EPs
3) What is required in order for peer supervision to be available to all EPs within the service?	
<i>Additional Form of Supervision</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Missing element - Control and autonomy
<i>Increasing Knowledge</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Function and Research of Supervision
<i>Service Culture</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advantages of good supervision culture - Need for senior management agreement

Table 7: Key Findings

Discussion of Focus Group Findings

The findings from the focus group are expanded below and are considered in terms of links to literature.

1) Is peer supervision distinct from other forms of supervision?

Nurturing

The first theme indicated that peer supervision was considered to be more nurturing than other forms encountered by the participants;

Evidence to support *Nurturing* theme:

- It was suggested that peer supervision was more personal and informal and therefore created an atmosphere where EPs could present a more vulnerable side of themselves than they would do in other forms of supervision;

“...the peer aspect means that it’s not straight into formal, structured situation....it’s informal, I feel I can make mistakes in it”

“I bring a bit more of myself to peer supervision...I bring how I felt and I want that explored and reflected upon which isn’t always available in other supervision”

- The participants also highlighted that peer supervision provided an opportunity for reassurance and normalising situations rather than being primarily solution focussed. It was suggested that this form of supervision enabled participants to be more reflective and receive more emotional support;

“I come away feeling reassured rather than being given solutions. Group supervision is great if you’re stuck on a case but from peer supervision I want a pat on the back”

“In peer supervision you go away from it and you feel like a lot has been normalised. Someone will say “oh that happened to me last week” or “don’t worry that happens to me all the time””

Box 1: Evidence to Support Nurturing Theme

Evidence to support *Nurturing* theme (cont.):

- The reassuring and normalising aspect of peer supervision was also reflected upon in terms of being able to compare what was happening between teams of EPs within the service which the participants described as reassuring;

“Having contact with people from beyond your office is really valuable to get a different perspective. There can be certain kinds of myths that emerge from different offices and it’s good to get that deflected”

“I think in this job it’s difficult to get a ball park of where everyone else is. I always compare myself and think the worse. Talking to each other it’s quite reassuring to know what people are doing”

- The participants also discussed that the personal and nurturing nature of peer supervision had acted as a method of stress reduction in their day-to-day jobs as they had someone they could contact even outside their allotted peer supervision sessions:

“I feel a little bit lighter afterwards. I feel my emotional baggage has been lifted”

“We take on a lot of other people’s stress and worry and we don’t always have an outlet for it. Peer supervision can provide that outlet”

Box 2: Evidence to Support Nurturing Theme (cont.)

This focus on the ability of peer supervision to provide the space to reflect and be reassured would appear to support the argument of Thomasgard et al. (2004) who suggested that peer supervision offers a more relationship-based approach which is in contrast to other formats which emphasis learning or remediation (Fenichel, 1992). The results from this focus group suggest that the participants experienced peer supervision as an opportunity to normalise and reflect on what they had experienced in their day-to-day work rather than building new skills bases as highlighted by Thomasgard and Collins (2003). This finding would therefore not to support the suggestion of Kavanagh et al., (2006) that all forms of supervision

provide the same level of functions as it would appear that peer supervision focuses more on developing personal support.

The findings focussing on peer supervision contributing towards stress reduction support the research of Bush (2000) who argued that peer supervision amongst doctors enabled them to acknowledge and discuss both professional and personal problems which in turn was reported to reduce stress. Whilst the present research highlights that EPs found discussing work related problems beneficial in reducing stress there is no indication about whether peer supervision was also used to discuss personal problems. It may therefore be beneficial to explore this further in the future when the peer supervision pairs are more established and have potentially developed a stronger relationship.

Distinct Features

The second sub-theme to emerge when considering whether peer supervision was different to other forms of supervision focussed on the distinct features of peer supervision.

Evidence to support *Distinct Features* theme:

- The participants initially considered how peer supervision was less about meeting the needs in casework;

“It feels different to Senior supervision because it’s less goal driven, it evolves a bit more. I don’t feel I need to come with an agenda”

“After normal supervision you can feel like you have more to do, you have a list of actions”

- The different level of availability of peer supervision was also considered by the participants to be a distinct feature;

“Peer supervision can be a telephone conversation about an issue that you don’t really need to talk to a Senior about....it’s more about access”

Peer supervision can also be incidental, that moment, I can call up (peer supervision partner) when I really, really need to talk to somebody”

- The participants were also eager to stress that whilst peer supervision was more relaxed and informal than other forms of supervision it was considered to be more than just talking to a colleague;

“A lot of incidental supervision that happens in the office is about the work context rather than the actual work. Peer supervision is more than “I can’t get a desk” or “someone’s stolen the milk””

“Peer supervision is more formal than asking someone a question when you’re sat at your desk”

Box 3: Evidence to Support Distinct Feature Theme

The focus on peer supervision being more readily available is interesting for this group of participants as they were all receiving supervision in other formats. Hawkins and Shohet (2006) suggest that most individuals who choose to participate in peer supervision are generally not receiving quality supervision in other formats. It would

therefore appear that having a form of supervision which was easier to access when required was considered as valuable.

The participants did report that peer supervision offered the opportunity to consider issues which may not be deemed important enough to discuss with a Senior EP. This result may have been partially influenced by the limited resources available at this time and the number of EPs who required to be supervised by one senior colleague as suggested by Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2011). It would however be beneficial to explore this further from viewpoint of Senior EPs as there were none represented in this focus group.

The need to highlight the difference between peer supervision and more incidental forms may be due in part to the participants being invested in the present research as part of the AI process and therefore wanting to stress the benefits and distinctiveness of peer supervision. It is also possible that as the participants did not employ any formal method for organising and recording peer supervision unlike previous studies (Thomasgard and Collins, 2003) there was less concrete evidence of this type of supervision being more than an extension of informal office discussions. It would therefore be useful to encourage the use of methods to record the areas covered in peer supervision to ascertain the whether there were any differences in more detail.

2) What factors are required to make peer supervision successful?

Organisation

The first theme to emerge highlighted the need to consider organisational issues on both practical and personal levels.

Evidence to support *Organisation* theme:

- In terms of practical considerations a range of factors were discussed including the number of sessions required and where these should occur;

“I think every half term is a minimum...at certain times you might need it more”

“The fact that we lived near each other has been really beneficial. Holiday times work well, when you know you haven’t got something in your diary in 45 minutes”

- The focus on organisation also highlighted the importance of flexibility when organising peer supervision;

“We didn’t want it to feel like another job that had to be done. We didn’t want it to feel like a burden”

- A further area of organisation which was discussed focussed on more personal factors in terms of choosing a suitable peer supervision partner;

“You have to be able to say what you want out of it. If you want a partner to challenge or push you to increase your knowledge base you would need someone different from if you want it to be nurturing”

“I think it varies depending on what you want out of it..I think I would have thought I wanted someone at the same stage in their career but actually it’s been really nice to get a different viewpoint”.

Box 4: Evidence to Support Organisation Theme

The findings from the current research suggest that the need to establish how to organise peer supervision sessions was considered important by the participants. It would appear that peer supervision often took place during quieter times such as the end of the day or during school holidays. This finding would support the suggestion of Kavanagh et al., (2006) who argued that competing high priority work is often a problem when organising this type of supervision. However, it may also have been due to the fact that for this group, peer supervision took a more nurturing and reflective format which therefore may have required a different environment.

Dunsmuir and Leadbetter (2011) suggest that establishing contracts can help to organise and prioritise supervision sessions. However this level of formality may not be suitable for this group as they also reported benefitting from the flexibility that peer supervision sessions gave which other formats did not. This finding may also have been partly influenced by the fact that this group of EPs were receiving other forms of quality supervision.

In terms of partner selection, it would appear that this is as important in peer supervision as with other formats (Scaife 2001). Whilst these participants did not discuss issues of power as highlighted by Murphy and Wicks (2005) this may need to be considered particularly if partners were not at the same stage of their careers. Whilst the participants in this focus group primarily chose partners who would be able to provide a nurturing role it was acknowledged others may want different support including educative as suggested by Hawkins and Shohet (2006). These

issues regarding partner selection would therefore have to be addressed before peer supervision to be offered to other colleagues.

Commitment

The second sub-theme which explored the issue of the factors which made peer supervision successful focussed on the commitment;

Evidence to support *Commitment* theme:

- One participant reflected on the fact that before starting the peer supervision pilot she was concerned that people may not be committed but this did not appear to be the case;

“I wondered when I got to the day of peer supervision whether it would get cancelled but it didn’t which shows that people really value it”

- There was also discussion concerning how committed participants could be to peer supervision given other high priority work they may have;

“Because of our job we need to be able to have the flexibility to be able to say “this isn’t going to work for me at this moment””

Box 5: Evidence to Support Commitment Theme

This finding focussing on the high level of commitment shown by the participants would appear to extend the research of Walsh et al. (2003) who suggested that group supervision provided ownership shown in the one hundred percent attendance rate. It is highly likely given that this pilot project was a result of an AI that the participants were highly committed and did have a sense of ownership. This is an

area that would therefore have to be closely monitored if peer supervision was offered to other EPs who were not involved in the original AI group.

The discussion regarding how committed EPs could be to peer supervision given other high priority work would appear to support and extend the findings of Tisdall and O'Donoghue (2003) who suggested that supervision was difficult to organise for some professional groups due to demands of the job which had to be met. In terms of EPs these demands could include attendance at child protection conferences or deadlines for statutory work. It may therefore be advantageous for EPs to consider what work can and can not be cancelled and provide a formal structure to ensure that other work does not regularly replace peer supervision sessions.

Availability to All

The sub-theme which explored the factors required to make peer supervision successful focussed on ensuring that this type of supervision was available to all EPs.

Evidence to support *Availability for All* theme:

- This theme was initially considered in terms of part-time workers:

“An issue has been that my partner was part-time which reduces flexibility”

“Part-time colleagues may need it more because there’s less chance for them to meet incidentally”

- The group also discussed the importance of providing the opportunity for peer supervision to senior members of the team. Whilst the focus group did not contain Senior EPs it was suggested that:

“It may be more difficult for seniors to access but that’s where the element of choice comes in”

“One of the constraints of senior supervision is that one person is responsible for supervision for a whole team which must be exhausting”

Box 6: Evidence to Support Availability for All Theme

This finding concerning part-time workers supports the results of Thomasgard and Collins (2003) who suggested that it was difficult to organise sessions when part-time workers were involved. In the present research many of the participants discussed using alternative methods to face-to-face contact (such as telephone conversations) to be able to carry out peer supervision and it may be beneficial to explore the suggestion of Kavanagh (2002) of using of multi-media to facilitate supervision for part-time employees.

The focus group also considered the difficulties of offering peer supervision to Senior EPs. Given the findings of Nolan (1999) that more supervision is available to EPs at the beginning of their careers the need to be able to provide the opportunity for

Senior EPs to participate in peer supervision would appear to be important (particularly given BPS and HPC requirements). As suggested by Cleary and Freeman (2006) peer supervision is valuable at all levels in a profession and it would therefore be beneficial to explore including senior EPs in this project. Careful consideration would however have to be given to issues of power as suggested by Murphy and Wright (2005) if Senior EPs were to be paired with more junior colleagues.

3) What is required in order for peer supervision to be available to all EPs within the service?

Additional Form of Supervision

In order for peer supervision to be made available to all EPs within the service the focus group considered that it important to highlight that this form of supervision should be viewed as additional to, rather than replacing other forms of supervision.

Evidence to support *Additional Form of Supervision* theme:

- The focus group suggested that this additional form of supervision was required in order to provide a nurturing element which may not be possible in other supervision formats:

“There are functions of supervision which are missing – the nurtury stuff which explains why pairs have gone for a nurturing approach”

“We’ve all picked outside the office to meet. Somewhere more nurturing”

- In addition it was also considered that peer supervision had been beneficial as it provided a form of supervision which was less structured and which the participants felt they had more control over:

“One of its main advantages is that it is informal and organic and you find a way to develop it yourself. That’s what makes it empowering”

“It would be a shame to have a list of instructions – that would take away the uniqueness of it”

Box 7: Evidence to Support Additional Form of Supervision Theme

These findings would appear to support the research of Tisdall and O’Donoghue (2003) who suggested that having access to supervision with a supportive function is important. It is possible that due to the changes which were occurring within the EPS during the time of the pilot project this need for a nurturing approach which also provided a level of autonomy and control was heightened and it would be beneficial to explore this need longitudinally.

Increasing Knowledge

A second requirement which was highlighted as necessary in order for peer supervision to be made available to all EPs focussed the need to increase EP knowledge regarding the different functions of supervision and research in this area.

Evidence to support *Increasing Knowledge* theme:

- The focus group considered that it would be beneficial to highlight more of the theory behind supervision in order to understand why peer supervision was necessary and beneficial:

“It would be interesting to find out what people know (about supervision).

Doctorate students have more input on it than people who did the Masters”

“Everyone needs to know, Everyone is either receiving supervision or giving it”

This is an interesting finding and one which has not been explored in previous research. Kavanagh et al., (2006) do highlight that lack of knowledge can reduce supervisors confidence to provide effective supervision and result in ineffective supervision and therefore this would appear to be an important area for future investigation.

Service Culture

The final area discussed considered the importance of peer supervision becoming accepted as part of service culture and how this could be achieved.

Evidence to support Service Culture theme:

- The participants highlighted that in terms of developing peer supervision there was already a service culture where supervision was highly valued which would be beneficial:

“We have to go with what the culture already is within the EP team and this goes in our favour as a group and organisation we are open to learn and be supportive and share”

- There was also consideration from the participants that in order for peer supervision to be successful it would have to be supported by senior management within the EPS. Furthermore it was suggested that senior managers would have to agree for additional procedures to be put in place:

“A lot of it’s being told it’s ok to drive half an hour for your supervision”

“It has to be very clear in your mind your structure about supervisors. Being very explicit that in the service you will have a senior supervisor and a peer supervisor.”

Box 9: Evidence to Support Service Culture Theme

These results highlight that need for peer supervision to become part of the culture of the EPS alongside other forms of supervision which already take place. The focus on involving senior management to ensure that peer supervision is valued throughout the service is important particularly given the suggestion that there can be a lack of consistency within services regarding the amount and types of supervision available (Webster et al., 2000). It is important to acknowledge that the EPs who took part in this project were interested in peer supervision and highly motivated as part of the AI process. Therefore, in terms of engaging the whole service it would now be beneficial for the results of this research to be reported to the

EPS and consideration given to whether this is a method of supervision which other EPs wish to engage in and become part of service culture.

Conclusion

The results of the pilot study would suggest that peer supervision is both necessary and feasible within the EPS. In terms of the distinct elements that this form of supervision provides it would appear that the EPs felt they benefitted from a format which was less case driven and was more readily available. Furthermore, peer supervision provided a more nurturing environment which would appear particularly relevant and necessary during a time of considerable organisational change. The results indicate that peer supervision is wanted and beneficial regardless of other forms which may already be provided.

This pilot study has also been able to highlight some of the factors which appear to make peer supervision successful including practical and personal issues. It is important to bear in mind that in this study the EPs were all highly motivated to attend and participant in the sessions due to being part of the AI group. If peer supervision was to be offered to other EPs within the service it may be beneficial for some form of contract to be agreed to ensure that all who take part have similar, positive experiences.

In terms of factors which would be necessary to make peer supervision available to all in the EPS it would appear that the fact that this service already had a good supervision culture was beneficial as all the participants had had positive experiences of this form of support. It was however suggested that it would be important for senior management in the service to support this additional form of supervision. Therefore in light of the findings of this pilot project and taking into account the current literature and research within this area I make the following recommendations:

PEER SUPERVISION PILOT PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS	
1	Peer supervision should be viewed as an additional form of supervision and should take place alongside quality individual, and where possible, group supervision.
2	Peer supervision should be made available to all EPs who wish to participate. Careful consideration will have to be given to including part-time workers who may require to use alternative means of contact such as telephone conversations or multi-media contact through devices such as Skype. Senior EPs should also have access to peer supervision but consideration must be given to power dynamics if paired with a more junior colleague.
3	EPs should be able to select their own peer supervision partners. This process should involve considering what an individual wants from peer supervision and ensuring that their partner wishes the same.
4	Peer supervision should be able to take place away from the office setting if it is felt this would provide a more nurturing environment.
5	It would be beneficial for EPs to have some form of recording of their peer supervision sessions in order for them to be considered more than informal discussions.
6	The use of a supervision contract would be beneficial as it would allow EPs to establish exactly what they want from their sessions. This could however be regularly reviewed and if necessary changed in order to reflect the organic and flexible nature of peer supervision.
7	Further support could be given to EPs who are considering participating in peer supervision through the delivery of a presentation focussing on the functions of supervision and current literature and research within this area.
8	It would be beneficial for an EP to take responsibility for monitoring this new form of supervision in order to ensure that any problems or issues that are encountered can be dealt with effectively.

Table 8: Peer Supervision Pilot Project Recommendations

Overall this pilot peer supervision project was successful in highlighting an area for potential development and growth within the EPS. The use of AI provided a sound starting point and enabled those taking part to have a sense of control and autonomy during a period of considerable organisational change. The positive stance of AI was reflected throughout the pilot project with those participating being highly motivated.

It could be argued that this positive stance may have an impact in terms of the how successful peer supervision would be with participants who were not engaged in the topic through AI. However, this pilot has been able to demonstrate that peer supervision is possible within the EPS for those who wish to take part. This project has also been beneficial as it has contributed to the field of empirical research focussing on the use of AI thus increasing knowledge within this area and providing additional support to the benefits of using this model during periods of organisation change.

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Appendix 1

Summary of the Five Principles of Appreciative Inquiry

Principle	Definition
The Constructionist Principle	<i>Words Create Worlds</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reality, as we know it, is a subjective vs. objective state• It is socially created, through language and conversations
The Simultaneity Principle	<i>Inquiry Creates Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Inquiry is intervention</i>• <i>The moment we ask a question, we begin to create a change</i>
The Poetic Principle	<i>We Can Choose What We Study</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organisations, like open books, are endless sources of study and learning• What we choose to study makes a difference. It describes – even creates – the world as we know it
The Anticipatory Principle	<i>Image Inspires Action</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Human systems move in the direction of their images of the future• The more positive and hopeful the image of the future, the more positive the present-day action
The Positive Principle	<i>Positive Questions Lead to Positive Change</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Momentum for large-scale change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding• This momentum is best generated through positive questions that amplify the positive core

(Adapted from Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003)

Appendix 2

Stages of the 4-D Cycle

Stage	Description
<p>Discovery</p> <p><i>An extensive, cooperative search to understand the “best of what is” and “what has been”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves data collection and narrative exploration • Begins by revealing the positive, successful experiences of the individual and collective • Interview questions based on affirmative topic selection are used to explore and enliven stories • The more reflective the organisation the more effective the outcome • The intent is for interviewers and interviewees to share their experiences and history with the organisation, as well as their values and wishes for the future • The frame of reference begins to shift from problem solving to possibility evolving
<p>Dreaming</p> <p><i>An energising exploration of “what might be”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This phase begins the process of what could be • The focus is to think about possibilities beyond the realm of present day thinking • The interviews have built a cache of successful stories and if these are grounded into the organisation’s psyche they will become the foundation for building the future • The process involve groups of 8-12 people with the aim to build common ground based on the successful stories and visions of the organisations future • The group prepares an expressive enactment of the group dream through role play, poetry, songs etc • The group then shares their dream with the rest of the groups
<p>Design</p> <p><i>A set of Provocative Propositions which are statements describing the ideal organisation or “what should be”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The design phase begins to build from the best of ‘what is’ (present) towards a speculative or intuitive ‘what might be’ (future) • Provocative propositions are developed as bold statements of the organisation of the future as if it has already happened • This phase seeks to create the social architecture to materialise the desired, ideal organisation
<p>Destiny</p> <p><i>A series of inspired actions that support on going learning and innovation or “what will be”</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This focuses specifically on personal and organisational commitments and paths forward • Often activities are launched in large group forums and continue as small group initiative • The result of destiny is generally an extensive array of changes throughout the organisation

(Adapted from Stevenson, 2011 and Whitney and Trosten-Bloom, 2003)

Appendix 3

Stages of an Appreciative Inquiry within an Educational Psychology Service

There were a number of important factors which led to the EPS considering that an AI would be appropriate to aid organisational change at this time;

Factors	Details
Funding Cuts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Due to Local Authority (LA) funding cuts all members of the EPS were currently at risk of redundancy• This caused a considerable strain amongst the team and it was considered by Senior EPs that it was important to offer something which could provide a positive approach to facing change at this time• <i>AI was considered appropriate as it would offer a method of organisational change which the EPs could manage and control themselves. This was important given the number of changes which were occurring out of their control.</i>
LA Policy Changes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The LA had introduced a new policy 'hot desking' and working from home which had ultimately resulted in EPs not coming together as a team as regularly• It was considered that any method of organisational change would have to involve an approach which would encourage the whole EPS to be involved whilst at the same time negotiating these new working practices• <i>AI was considered to be appropriate as it favours an inclusive approach but can be flexible.</i>
Introduction of Traded Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The EPS had recently begun trading services to schools which had resulted in a significant change in the relationship between EPs and their schools• This had been viewed by many within the EPS as stressful and in some cases highly controversial• <i>It was considered that an AI would offer EPs a positive strategy for exploring how this changing position would impact on the service and how they communicated with schools at this time.</i>

Table 1: Reasons for Implementing an AI within the EPS

Process of AI within the EPS

Initially an AI steering group was formed to pinpoint topics which would be the focus of the AI. Whitney and Trosten-Bloom (2003) suggest that it is beneficial to engage a cross-level, cross-functional group from all areas of the team (a small microcosm) to ensure a wide variety of voices is heard which can bring out the richness of dialogue and possibility. The group therefore consisted of the principal EP, one Senior EP, two maingrade EPs and two trainee EPs.

The topic choice which was decided upon by the steering group focussed on Communication for Change. This was divided into five topic areas to be used at the Discovery stage namely:

- Empowering consultations/conversations;
- Written communication as a catalyst for innovation and change;
- Informal communication (e.g. incidental talk, an email or phone call) with integrity;
- Optimistic and affirming feelings in supervision; and
- Changing perspectives in training or projects.

This PPR follows the work of one of the groups who chose to focus on the topic of 'Optimistic and Affirming Feelings in Supervision'.

The AI was introduced to the EPs over two service meetings (at monthly intervals). During these meetings the theory behind AI was explained and the 4-D model introduced step by step. The tables below indicate the work completed by the group focussing on the topic of 'Optimistic and Affirming Feeling in Supervision'.

FIRST MEETING	
Stage of the 4-D Cycle	What occurred in the AI Group
Discovery	<i>In pairs the EPs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> used questions to prompt real stories of the best ever times
Dream	<i>In small groups the EPs</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> were asked to imagine stories/themes happening more often and more consistently in service. were asked to decide on one aspect from the 5 given by the steering group and create the vision for it i.e. what would it look like in practice presented ideas to the whole group using a range of methods including pictures, flip chart, drama

Table 2: Stages of the AI in the EPS during First Meeting

SECOND MEETING	
Stage of 4-D Cycle	What occurred in the AI Group
Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EPs created 'Provocative Propositions' which are statements that bridge the best of "what is" with speculation of "what might be". These statements are provocative as they challenge common assumptions or routines and help to suggest real possibilities for the organisation and its people (Cooperrider, 2001) • The group focussing on 'Optimistic and Affirming Feeling in Supervision' created the following Provocative Proposition: "Making supervision even better than it is now, with more formalised peer supervision. EPs of similar levels of experience would provide supervision for each other, which could be across areas to encourage inter-office communication. This would be less daunting than group supervision can sometimes feel and would be free of power differentials. It would support us with our more challenging work"
Destiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EPs in the 'Optimistic and Affirming Feeling in Supervision' group created the following short-term targets and key actions for implementation to ensure that provocative propositions become a reality; <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) to carry out further investigation into the theory and research of supervision with a particular focus on peer supervision 2) to form pairs and meet for regular peer supervision sessions over a pilot period of 6 months 3) to evaluate this process to ascertain whether it is valuable to be rolled out to the rest of the service 4) to report back to the service the findings of the process to the EPS.

Table 3: Stages of the AI in the EPS during Second Meeting

Appendix 4

Elements of Supervision

Clinical / Client-Centred components of supervision involve:

- Transmission of knowledge, skills and attitudes;
- Focuses on areas such as assessment, diagnosis, therapy, prevention and evaluation of outcome;
- Aims to enhance the supervisee's ability to conceptualize clinical material and select and apply best interventions;
- Focus on increasing technical proficiency
- Aims to enhance problem-solving skills, creativity, emotional awareness and self-efficacy;
- Assists supervisee to identify their own training needs, professional strengths and limitations;
- Emphasise professional standards and adherence to ethical code of conduct

Organisational / Administrative components of supervision involve:

- Transmission of knowledge relating to goals, expectations, systems, policies, philosophies and culture of the organisation;
- Aims to enhance skills, attitudes and practices that facilitate the efficient and effective conduct of the administrative function of the organisation;
- Assigning tasks, planning work, budgeting and coordination;
- May link to performance evaluation of supervisee.

Personal Support components of supervision involve:

- Aims to optimise motivation, morale and commitment and to minimise work-related stress, burn-out and mental health problems of the supervisee;
- Includes career planning and developing conflict resolution strategies
- Identifying and handling problematic emotions relating to clients and peers, and clarifying job roles and responsibilities in order to reduce role ambiguity.

(Adapted from Spence et al., 2001)

Appendix 5

Peer Supervision Appreciative Inquiry Evaluation

1. What factors led to your decision to choose the Peer Supervision Appreciative Inquiry group? (please tick all that apply)

Peer supervision in a personal area of interest ☐

I have had previous experience of formal peer supervision ☐

I felt that I required additional supervision ☐

I find informal peer supervision useful and wanted to participate on a more formal basis ☐

I wanted to opportunity to meet with someone who is at a similar stage in their career ☐

Other _____

2. Have you ever taken part in formal peer supervision sessions?

No ☐

Yes ☐ *(if yes please answer the following questions)*

How often did these sessions take place?

Were the sessions always with the same person?

Did you find the sessions beneficial?

3. Do you regularly take part in informal peer supervision?

No ☐

Yes ☐ (if yes please answer the following questions)

How often do these sessions take place?

Are these sessions always with the same person?

Did you find the sessions beneficial?

4. Are there any specific areas you hope the peer supervision sessions will be able to support?

Complex casework ☐

Ethical Issues ☐

Research ☐

Emotional Support ☐

Other

5. Please list any factors that you consider important when selecting a partner for peer supervision?

1)

2)

3)

Appendix 6

APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY PEER SUPERVISION FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1) What made you choose the AI peer supervision group?
- 2) What criteria was used for choosing a peer supervision partner? Would you change this in the future?
- 3) How has peer supervision differed from other forms of supervision you have received?
- 4) What has been the main focus of your peer supervision sessions?
 - Increasing knowledge
 - Skill development
 - Emotional support
 - An aid for reflection
 - Providing alternative strategies
 - Complex casework
 - Ethical issues
- 5) How often do you feel you require peer supervision to make it a useful tool for your professional development?
- 6) Have you completed any reading concerning peer supervision. If so did this aid you taking part in peer supervision sessions?
- 7) Would you recommend peer supervision to other colleagues?
- 8) If this was to be rolled out to the service are there any changes you would make?