SCHOOL REFUSAL AND REINTEGRATION

FROM SHORT STAY SCHOOL TO MAINSTREAM

BY

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Abstract

School attendance is a high profile issue at both national and local levels, and links have been made between poor attendance and low attainment, poor employment outcomes and antisocial behaviour (Reid 1999, 2002). This small scale research study focuses on a group of young people referred to as school refusers, who experience difficulties attending school associated with anxiety and emotion. This case study based research revolves around five young people who have been reintegrated into mainstream school following a period at a Short Stay School for key stage 3 and 4 pupils with mental health and medical needs. In addition to the young people, participants include their mothers, the learning mentor from the Short Stay School and a mentor from the receiving mainstream school. Findings underline the heterogeneous nature of cases and an experience of school refusal associated with intense emotions for the young people and their parents. Change associated with school and home factors are implicated in school refusal as are factors including social anxiety, bullying, the child/parent dynamic and characteristics of the young person. School refusal is found to be a long term matter requiring ongoing support even after reintegration.

Dedicated to my loving parents, Maisie and Austin Grandison

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SCHOOL REFUSAL AND REINTEGRATION: FROM SHORT STAY SCHOOL TO MAINSTREAM

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Focus of Research and Rationale

This research study will focus on the topic of school refusal. I choose this term in preference to other related terms like school phobia, truancy, and non-school attendance to refer to a group of pupils who experience difficulty attending school or maintaining attendance due to emotional distress. The matter of definition and terminology is contentious in this area of study. In part this arises because of issues of discourse relating to the ontological position one accepts, whether it be that of the medical profession or that of the child or the school. These matters will be discussed later when I examine the literature.

My interest in the topic of school refusal arises out of my work as an educational psychologist. Over many years in this professional role I have come across a relatively small number of young people, usually of secondary age who show reluctance and anxiety about going to school; some manage to contain this to some extent and maintain a level of attendance (often at great emotional cost to themselves and their families), others cease to attend school altogether. In many cases the parents of these young people appear to be positively disposed towards education and yet are unable to ensure their adolescent child attends school. Working with these children and their parents

poses challenges in terms of how best to engage to ensure that one does not become drawn into a system which is colluding with the school refusing behaviour. There are also challenges around how to work effectively with school staff and colleagues from other agencies; as non-attendance at school can be of interest to a number of different people in their professional roles. Supporting the child, parents and school staff to effect a timely and successful return to school also creates challenges and the research questions for this study arises out of this aspect of my work.

I work closely with staff of a short stay school (Pupil referral unit) for key stage 3 and 4 pupils with medical and mental health needs, the largest group of whom are young people with school refusing behaviour. One of the dilemmas for us (myself and short stay school staff) relates to the acknowledged need to create a place that is welcoming, safe and supportive for this client group many of whom have responded with distress to the demands of mainstream school and other factors in their lives, and yet at the same time to help prepare and challenge them to return to mainstream education in a timely way. While these two aspects of the role of the short stay school may not be mutually exclusive, they do create a certain tension for all involved.

My interest in the topic of school refusal has also been fuelled by discussions that have occurred and attempts made to work collaboratively with colleagues from different agencies most frequently between me, the head of the short stay school, and an interested child and adolescent psychiatrist. Our discussions often addressed the

complexities of individual cases where young people exhibited school refusal behaviour. There were some young people with whom all three of us were involved and our ongoing work with these individuals would focus on attempts to gain an understanding of their difficulties in attending school and on designing and agreeing intervention strategies and on the process of reintegration to mainstream school provision. This work led to the establishment of an informal interest group for professionals. To begin with the remit of the group was to provide support and professional consultation around individual cases but through this process we began to identify some of the challenges associated not only with the complex nature of the case work but also related to the requirement for multi-agency collaboration. This work eventually resulted in the three of us co-authoring a book on the topic of school refusal: *Thambirajah, Grandison and De-Hayes (2008) Understanding School Refusal: a handbook for professionals in education, health and social care ;* the contents of which will be referred to from time to time in this thesis.

At this juncture I will provide background information about the short stay school from which the young people who feature in the current research study will be making the transition to mainstream school settings. This background information is relevant because it provides the context which gave rise to the research and also informs about the functioning of the particular short stay school under investigation. During the period that I have been involved in planning and conducting this small scale research project legislation has been passed by government which has heralded a name change for alternative provision of the type which forms the focus of this work. As a result of the Apprenticeships, Skills Children and Learning Act 2009 Pupil Referral Units, often known

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as PRUs are now to be known as Short Stay Schools (SSS). I have taken the decision to use the new nomenclature of Short Stay School in this thesis.

The short stay school in question caters for pupils from key stages 3 and 4 who are considered to be vulnerable due to difficulties they experience relating to emotional, psychological or medical factors. While attending the short stay school they are usually dual registered at their mainstream school and at the short stay school. Following an Ofsted inspection in April 2002 the short stay was placed in special measures due to a combination of local authority failings, inadequate accommodation and curriculum shortcomings. A programme of phased improvement then followed and in February 2006 the short stay school was judged by Ofsted to be good with outstanding elements. The short stay school was inspected again in March 2008 and following further improvement was judged to be outstanding.

Since September 2006, and following the appointment of a new head teacher there has been a renewed emphasis by the short stay school management committee and leadership team on ensuring that pupils return to mainstream school as soon as they are able. In order to support this drive a six weekly review cycle has been established. This means that all young people admitted to the short stay school, their parents and staff from their school are aware at the outset that the placement is temporary and so a return to school remains a live issue. The six weekly review process involves meetings with the young person, his or her parents or carers, the head teacher of the short stay

school, the learning mentor and selected local authority personnel where progress and reintegration are considered. Often this does not result in an immediate return to school but plans to move in this direction are made.

This proactive emphasis on reintegration appears to be successful in that several young people have returned to their mainstream school or have left the short stay school to attend a new mainstream school.

The research areas arising from the above and which I aim to address through this study are:

A focus on the reintegration of pupils from the short stay school to mainstream and factors that support or hinder this

An examination of school refusal and reintegration from the perspective of those directly involved (young person, parent, mentors)

Following a review of the literature the second research area is amended to include a focus on anxiety and emotional factors and becomes:

An examination of school refusal and reintegration from the perspective of those directly involved with a focus on anxiety and emotional factors

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review will examine the knowledge base on what I am terming school refusal behaviour; it will begin with a discussion of terminology and issues of definition before moving into consideration of some of the key concepts that have arisen in this area over time and which continue to resonate in the literature and in practice. Then, mindful of the research areas under consideration which relate to the reintegration of pupils showing school refusal behaviour from a short stay school to mainstream school and the experience of this, the literature review will consider briefly relevant government policy in England and short stay school provision for this client group.

Terminology and Definition

Terminology and definition are problematic in the study of school refusal as a number of different terms appear in the literature implying slightly different emphases and conceptual understanding dependent on the perspectives of different authors. This section attempts to identify key terminology and to explore matters around definition.

Thambirajah, Grandison & De-Hayes (2008) use the term school non-attendance as a broad umbrella term to refer to all pupils who fail to attend school. It is intended to be a descriptive term which describes the child's behaviour without suggesting cause or attributing blame. Used in this way school non-attendance may be initiated by the child, parents or peers, it may be occasional or persistent, and may be sanctioned by the

parents or school. Sheppard (2007) uses the term 'non-attender/ non-attendance' in a more specific way, to refer to pupils who are absent from school with parental knowledge or consent thus differentiating between this group and those she refers to as truants, who she defines as being absent without parental knowledge. In this thesis I will use the term non-attendance/attender in the broad sense as suggested by Thambirajah et al (2008).

 Section 7 of the Education Act 1996, states that parents are responsible for ensuring that their children of compulsory school age receive an efficient full-time education suitable for their age, ability and aptitude either by regular attendance at school or, alternative provision or education otherwise. Failure to comply with this statutory duty can lead to prosecution. DCSF (2008) documents the legal measures available to local authorities and others to promote regular school attendance; these include parenting contracts, penalty notices, school attendance orders and education supervision orders.

In recent years the government has prioritised the importance of school attendance through a commitment to reduce levels of absence. Sheppard (2007) asserts that this focus is based on research evidence reporting associations between poor attendance, low attainment, poor employment outcomes and antisocial behaviour (Reid, 1999, 2002). The DCSF (2008) statement that regular attendance 'is crucial to young person's educational progress and life chances' would seem to support this view.   DCSF (2009) provides guidance and advice to schools and local authorities for managing pupil attendance which

in addition to legal measures suggests two broad types of intervention; those pertaining to strategic approaches and those which might be termed more individually focused. The strategic approaches are aimed at improving attendance across the school and the local authority and include strategies such as truancy sweeps, attendance helplines, termly reports on schools by the Education Welfare Service and managing internal truancy.   The individually focused strategies include interventions like working with parents to help them understand the importance of regular attendance, using data with pupils and parents to encourage regular attendance and supporting vulnerable pupils.

Thambirajah et al (2008) and West Sussex County Council (2004) agree that children and young people do not attend school for a wide range of reasons. They take the view that school non-attenders do not constitute a uniform group and when non-attendance is prolonged and persistent it can be difficult to discern the underlying reasons for it. A further confounding factor is that the various agencies that may be involved with children and young people with attendance difficulties have differing priorities and so tend to conceptualise non-attendance and classify young people who do not attend in different ways. For example schools and local authorities distinguish between authorised and non-authorised absence; the difference between the two being whether or not a representative of the school accepts the justification for absence and so gives approval for it. In connection with this the DCSF (2006) requires schools to be mindful that the accuracy of the school attendance register is of 'paramount importance' as it provides the foundation for analysing attendance data and it can be used as evidence when legal interventions are employed.   Schools also have attendance targets to meet. These

factors may encourage school staff to prioritise issues around attendance data and the coding and recording of absence above other matters.   Also, in a context where school league tables, individual pupil achievement targets, examination results and other school improvement measures are considered important pupil attendance is a key variable as it has the potential to impact on these outcomes. A contrasting consideration is that professionals working with children and young people, including school staff, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) workers and local authority staff are also charged with the task of promoting their mental health (DfES 2001). The guidance document 'Promoting Children's Mental Health within Early Years and School Settings' (2001) identifies a refusal or reluctance to attend school as a possible symptom of depression or emotional problems in children and young people. Consideration of these factors would suggest that professional priorities could result in particular ways of conceptualising the significance and meaning of non-attendance and might in turn influence intervention approaches. Berg (1996) came to a similar conclusion when commenting on investigations that have been carried out in relation to school non-attendance. He observes that most investigations have been undertaken on selected populations either those referred to mental health professionals (usually clinic based) or those brought to the attention of school attendance committees or dealt with through the court system and makes the point that the findings of such research is influenced by the way the non-attendance was defined in the first place. This view suggests that in conceptualising or intervening in relation to school refusal a consideration is the perspective or standpoint of the individuals or agencies who are viewing the non-attendance as a problem.

In adopting the Thamirajah et al (2008) definition of school non-attendance as being a broad term for describing all pupils who fail to attend school I am positioning school refusal as a sub-set of this. School refusal is the aspect of non-attendance that forms the focus of the research study discussed in this thesis. The diagram below illustrates the relationships between school non-attendance and different subsets of it:

School non-attendance

Authorised (eg. illness)   Unauthorised

Truancy   Parentally   School refusal
               condoned
               absence
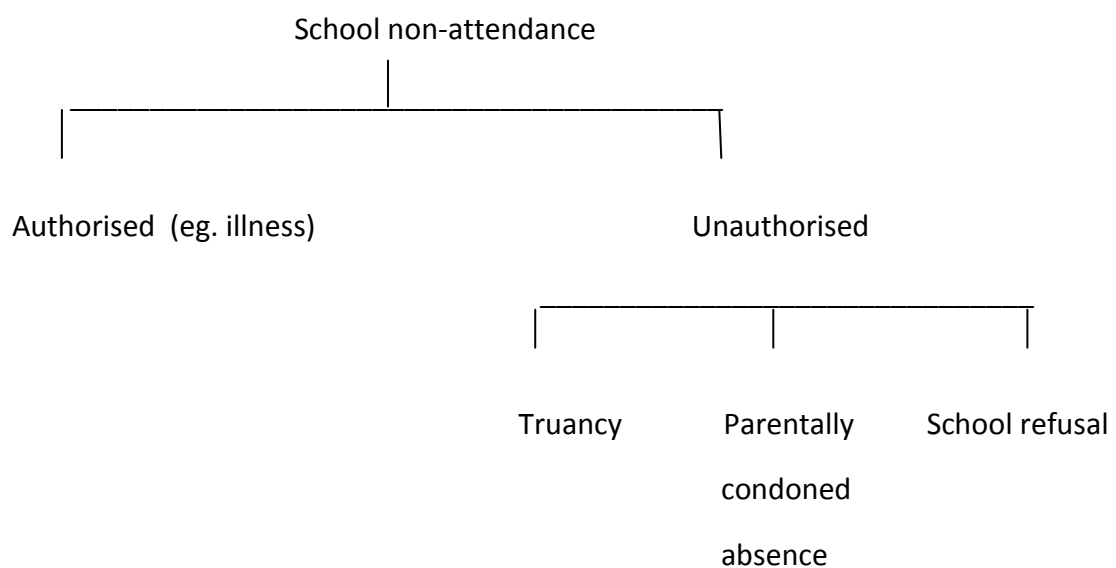
This diagram offers a useful way of categorising school non-attendance, and this is the focus of this thesis, however, in considering children and young people's behaviour around school attendance it is important to acknowledge that the majority of children and young people attend school regularly. Before going on to explore further the terminology associated with school refusal I will briefly consider matters relating to school attendance behaviour.

A humanistic psychology approach such as that offered by Maslow (1970) would suggest that people have a hierarchy of needs ranging from more basic needs which are required for survival and safety (e.g. food and shelter), to mid-level needs which are broadly social in nature and finally to higher level needs which are about self-actualisation and fulfilment. Maslow's (1970) theory would suggest that individuals require that each of their more basic needs be met before the next level of need can be addressed.

Considering this theory in relation to school attendance it could be assumed that for children to attend school regularly then their more basic needs must be met. School attendance does not constitute a basic physiological or safety need. It may be more appropriately seen as a social or cultural requirement positioned as a mid-level need, with the actual attendance mediated by carers or parents. Sheppard (2007) takes the view that parental attributions and expectations about school will mediate the child's experience of school. So although the child may experience some aspects of school life as negative the parental attitude somehow influences and mediates this. On this theme Sheppard (2007) investigated secondary age pupil perceptions of their parent's response to requests for time off school and found the behaviour of parents of high attending pupils and those of mid or low attending pupils were perceived to be different. The parents of high attenders were perceived to want to enter into discussion with the child, and school staff if necessary, to discover the reasons for the request and as being less likely to agree to the request. One would assume that this type of parental behaviour would result in fewer such requests being made.

Lyon and Cotler (2007) attempt to broaden the debate about school non-attendance by considering the engagement in education or lack of it of minority groups and suggest that community and contextual factors influence school attendance. They assert that in the African American community an influential factor regarding attitude to school and attendance for a young person is the percentage of their relatives who have completed high school. The West Sussex Educational Psychology Service (2004) suggests that school attendance is predicated on three assumptions:

that children will:

- feel comfortable about leaving home and attending school
- cope satisfactorily with the curriculum and learning challenges
- get on well enough with other children and teachers

These three factors combined with positive cultural and parental attributions and expectations about school would seem to be important for regular school attendance. In addition I would suggest that if school and local authority processes are such that the importance of good attendance is communicated to the children and parents, this too acts to support attendance.

School refusal is a topic which has been studied and written about for many years now with Broadwin (1932) being attributed as the first to describe it. He considered fear and anxiety as being key features of this persistent non-attendance. The term 'school phobia' is associated with the early descriptions of the phenomenon (Johnson 1957) and remains

in use today (Chitiyo & Wheeler 2006, Tyrell (2005); sometimes being used interchangeably with the term school refusal. For example Archer, Filmer-Sankey and Fletcher-Campbell (2003) examined definitions of school phobia and school refusal among local authority and school staff across England and found there to be no clear distinction between the two terms, although some respondents believed school phobia to be a sub-set of school refusal, while others suggested it might be refer to a different cohort of pupils. As a result Archer et al (2003) produce chapters in the report of their research titled: 'Factors that precipitate school refusal or school phobia' and 'Provision for school refusal or school phobia' thus suggesting the terms might be used synonymously.

 I will briefly consider the term 'phobia' as used in relation to school. According to The American Psychiatric Association (1993) phobia refers to *'a marked and persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable, cued by the presence or anticipation of a specific situation or object'.* It is a diagnostic medical term and when used in association with 'school' would seem to suggest an excessive fear of an aspect of school and its environment (Brandibas, Jeunier, Clanet & Fouraste, 2004). However, this is not how the term is used in most of the literature, where school phobia tends to be used to refer to anxieties related to child-parent attachment, in other words separation anxiety.   Elliott (1999) argues that historically this emphasis on family as opposed to school which resulted in the term 'separation anxiety' becoming more widely used in preference to 'school phobia'. In the second edition of Khan and Nursten's (1968) seminal book 'Unwillingly to School', school phobia is constructed as a type of psychodynamic

transference of conflicts or fears experienced by the child in relation to family relationship issues but which become focused on some aspect of school. This view encourages a distinction between the focus of the anxiety or fear and its cause which might suggest that although the child's behaviour might appear to reflect a reluctance to go to school or a fear of school the cause of this behaviour may not relate to school directly. These different terms, their emergence, their use and their waning in popularity offer insights into the history and development of theories about school refusal.

Kearney and Silverman (1996) use the term school refusal behaviour to describe what they see as a 'child-motivated' refusal to attend school and/or difficulties remaining in school for an entire day. This was meant to be an inclusive term which according to Kearney and Silverman (1996) included children and young people with and without anxiety-based difficulties. From this they developed a functional model for classifying school refusal. So the different categories of school refusal would be based upon the function the school refusal behaviour served for the child (that is negative reinforcement or positive reinforcement). Pelligrini (2007) contests the appropriateness of defining school refusal behaviour as being 'child-motivated' considering this to imply wilfulness. The inclusive use of the term school refusal to refer to anxiety and non-anxiety related behaviour is at variance with the influential distinctions drawn by Berg, Nichols and Prichard (1969) (see below) and adhered to by writers including Blagg and Yule (1983) and Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor (2000). Doobay (2008) explicitly distinguishes what she calls school refusal from truancy so discarding the inclusive use of the term.

Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969) identified features common to children they describe as school refusers and which distinguish them from truants:

1. severe difficulty in attending school, often resulting in prolonged absence

2. severe emotional upset, which may involve such symptoms as excessive fearfulness, temper tantrums, misery or complaints of feeling ill without obvious organic cause when faced with the prospect of going to school

3. during school hours, the child remains at home with the knowledge of the parents

4. absence of significant antisocial disorders such as juvenile delinquency, disruptiveness and sexual activity

Galloway (1983) believes truants are likely to attempt to conceal their absence from school from their parents, and engage in anti-social or delinquent activities often in the company of peers. Thambirajah et al (2008) assert that the first task for anyone faced with a child or young person who is reluctant to attend school is to try to discover to which category of school non-attendance he or she most closely aligns; or at a crude level to distinguish between school refusal and truancy. However, Lauchlan (2003) disputes the usefulness of this distinction on the grounds that some children may exhibit characteristics of both truancy and school refusal, and suggests there is a simplicity contained in the distinction which fails to account for the fact that children refuse to attend school for a whole range of reasons. Research evidence from Berg , Butler, Franklin, Hayes, Lucas & Sims (1993) and Bools, Foster, Brown & Berg (1990) would

indicate that Lauchlan (2003) is probably correct in his point in that real life situations are often more complex and nuanced than is acknowledged in the theoretical categories and distinctions suggested by Berg, Nichols and Pritchard (1969). Berg et al (1993) classified non-school attendance among a group of year 9 and 10 pupils in Bradford according to the Berg et al (1969) criteria and found that although many of the young people could be categorised in this way there were some whose school non-attendance could not be explained by the categories offered. As the criteria offered by Berg et al (1969) appear to be useful in some instances it may be appropriate not to view them as literal categories but rather as a tool for beginning to explore the nature of the non-attendance.

There is an issue, however about the values that may be attached to the different categories of school non-attendance referenced by Berg et al (1969). For example young people who are seen as excessively fearful and who remain at home with the knowledge of their parents may be viewed more sympathetically than those who display anti-social disorders and are disruptive. Lyon et al (2007) consider this to be an 'undesirable effect' of making a distinction between truancy and what they term anxiety-based school refusal. They paint a picture of school refusers conjuring up sympathy and truants being seen as deserving of reprimand.

I approach the topic of school refusal as an educational psychologist employed by a local authority education service; this leads me to a professional perspective about schooling and education that is generally favourable whilst at the same time I have an awareness of

many factors that can impact negatively on a child or young person's engagement with education. My experience and perspective on school refusal indicates the importance of emotional factors affecting the young person's school attendance.   Some authors from a similar professional background to me such as the West Sussex County Council Educational Psychology Service (2004) choose to foreground the emotional aspect of school refusal, by using the term 'emotionally based school refusal'.   Lauchlan (2003), also an educational psychologist writes about 'chronic non-attendance' and similarly, Pelligrini (2007) prefers 'extended school-non-attendance'. These contributions in relation to terminology derive from professionals seeking to employ accurate, descriptive terms for the behaviour in question without making assumptions about cause or value judgements about the worthiness of the young people.   Whilst I agree that it is important to define the group of young people that forms the focus of the research and as stated above changes in accepted terminology can map the development of theory about a condition or an issue, I question whether the development of increasingly complex and somewhat idiosyncratic terminology is helpful in clarifying matters.

I have chosen to the term 'school refusal behaviour' primarily because school refusal is a broadly accepted term in the field of non-school attendance (Lyon & Cotler 2007, Brandibas, Jeunier, Clanet & Fouraste 2004, Elliott 1999, Kearney & Silverman 1996) and 'behaviour' refers to the fact that it is identified by a set of behaviours that do not in themselves indicate causality. Doobay (2008) uses the term school refusal to refer to children who are reluctant or refuse to attend school, or have 'difficulty remaining in the classroom throughout the school day, in combination with emotional distress'.   My use

of the term accords with this.   Having made this statement, I do concede that the

heterogeneous nature of school refusal behaviour makes the task of defining and

classifying problematic as illustrated in the preceding discussion.

KEY CONCEPTS FROM THE LITERATURE ON SCHOOL REFUSAL

This section will consider some of the key concepts about school refusal that appear in the literature on the topic.

Separation Anxiety

One of the concepts which occurs in the earlier literature on school refusal and continues to be of interest is that of separation anxiety (Kahn & Nursten 1968, Atkinson, Quarrington & Cyr 1985, Doobay 2008). This idea places the cause of the school refusing behaviour firmly within the dynamic of the child/parent/carer relationship. Separation anxiety is considered to be one of the most common anxiety disorders in childhood. According to Doobay (2008) primary symptoms include an excessive worry about the possibility of harm to the child/young person, or parent or other primary attachment figure, fears about separation and somatic complaints. Kahn and Nursten (1968) take the view that the symptoms of school refusal, for example the emotional distress and panic when faced with going to school, are a displacement of within child and within family conflict onto school. So what looks like a fear of school or a reluctance to go to school actually reflects a fear of separation existing somewhere in the relationship between the child and carer/parent. Kahn and Nursten (1968) characterise young people who exhibit separation anxiety symptoms as experiencing an 'intense emotional climate' at home; while Gittelman-Klein & Burrows (1990) theorise that issues of dependence and independence may be underlying features of most cases of school refusal.

The notion of separation anxiety derives from attachment theory as proposed by Bowlby

(1969) and Ainsworth (1982) which signifies the early relationship between a child and its

carer(s) (usually mother) as pivotal in determining the quality and nature of relationships

the child goes on to form later in life. Consequently, the literature on separation anxiety

focuses on the nature of the parent/child (usually mother/child) relationship. Berg &

Mcquire (1971) suggest overprotection by mothers may characterise this relationship

leading to ongoing over-dependency on the part of the child and sometimes the parent.

According to attachment theory separation anxiety is considered to occur naturally at

around 12 months of age when the child experiences separation from his or her main

carer and forms part of the process of the development of psychological attachment.

Thambirajah et al (2008) believe that what they term 'normal' separation anxiety peaks

between one and three years of age and gradually declines, so that by the time the child

is attending nursery school or the reception class he or she learns to be away from the

main carer over an increasing length of time. By the time children start attending school

they are sufficiently secure in their internalisation of the main carer to be able to manage

their anxieties about the separation.   In this context, separation anxiety in relation to

school refusal might be considered to be a developmentally inappropriate and excessive

response; however this does not account for the possibility that traumatic life events may

affect children which may result in a form of separation anxiety that would not be

considered unusual under the circumstances.

Kearney and Silverman (1995) conducted a review of research relating to family relationships associated with children identified as demonstrating school refusal behaviour.   By this means they identified five family relationship subtypes which they refer to as: the enmeshed family; the conflictive family; the detached family; the isolated family and the healthy family. The characteristics of each of the subtypes are derived from research evidence:

1.   **The Enmeshed Family**

York and Kearney (1993) and Hersov (1960)

The enmeshed family is characterised by over-dependency between the parent and child as discussed above as being associated with separation anxiety

2. **The Conflictive Family**

Makihara, Nagaya & Nakajima (1985) and York & Kearney (1993)

The conflictive family is characterised by hostility which may act to help maintain the child's school non-attendance

3. **The Detached Family**

Weiss & Cain (1964) and Bernstein, Svingen & Garfinkel (1990)

The detached family subtype is considered to be one where family members lead relatively independent lives and so parents or carers may not be aware of the development of school refusal behaviour in their child

4. **The Isolated Family**

York & Kearney (1993)

The isolated family is one that has few involvements with individuals or agencies outside the family group

5. **The Healthy Family**

York & Kearney (1993) and Bernstein, Svingen & Garfinkel (1990)

The healthy family is suggested to be relationship orientated with high levels of cohesion and low levels of conflict

The over-dependent parent/child relationship associated with separation anxiety is accommodated under the 'enmeshed family' subtype, however, as Kearney and Silverman (1995) note it is possible for families to display behaviours compatible with more than one subtype; this may bring into question the usefulness of allocating families to subtypes at all. The real point may be that families of children who display school refusal behaviours often exhibit some dysfunctional characteristics but one wonders whether most families could be thus described.

Separation Anxiety Disorder (SAD) is a distinct diagnosis in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – fourth edition (DSM-IV) (1994) while reluctance to attend school is viewed as a symptom of SAD. Egger, Costello and Angold (2003) in their research aimed at examining the association between anxious school refusal and truancy and psychiatric disorders found that among their sample of 4500 children aged between 9 and 13 years displaying school refusal and truanting behaviour separation anxiety was remarkably low leading them to conclude that anxious school refusal behaviours are not synonymous with separation anxiety. This counters the idea that school refusal arises from separation anxiety. Pilkington and Piersel (1991) criticise separation anxiety theory arguing that it fails to consider external variables (outside of the parent/child relationship) that might be causing the anxiety.

Anxiety/Phobia

In addition to those with separation anxiety Egger et al (2003) identify two other types of anxious school refusers from the clinical literature; those with social phobia and those who are anxious or depressed. Social phobia is defined in the DSM-IV (1994) as 'a marked and persistent fear of social or performance situations in which embarrassment may occur'. However there is some debate in the literature as to whether all school refusers are anxious. Last, Francis, Hersen Kazdin & Strauss (1987) observe that anxiety is not systematically correlated with school refusal but Brandibas, Jeunier, Claret & Fouraste (2004) in reviewing Kearney and Silverman's functional model of school refusal conclude that anxiety is an essential component of school refusal. They attempt to differentiate between types of anxiety which may be associated with school refusal, namely trait or state anxiety. The former is considered to be a trait of the individual's personality and the latter is thought to be situational. In reviewing the literature on school refusal Elliott (1999) concludes that individuals prone to anxiety, depression and social difficulties may be more likely to develop school refusal behaviour than others. Indeed there is some evidence from clinical studies (Bernstein & Garfinkel, 1986, Bools et al 1990, Berg, Butler, Franklin, Lucas & Sims 1993, Egger et al 2003) of high levels of anxiety and depressive or mood disorders in young people who exhibit school refusal behaviour. Egger et al (2003) conclude that school refusal is strongly associated with psychiatric disorders, particularly anxiety and depression but the exact nature of the relationship is unclear.

As there is strong research evidence of a relationship between anxiety and school refusal it is appropriate to consider the nature of anxiety and how it is thought to operate in cases of school refusal behaviour.

West Sussex County Council Educational Psychology Service (2004) consider there to be two fundamental features of school refusal one is the presence of anxiety and the other is school non-attendance or poor attendance. This is depicted in the following diagram:

High / Good School Attendance

A	B

Low Anxiety ———————————————————————— High Anxiety

C	D

Low / Poor School Attendance
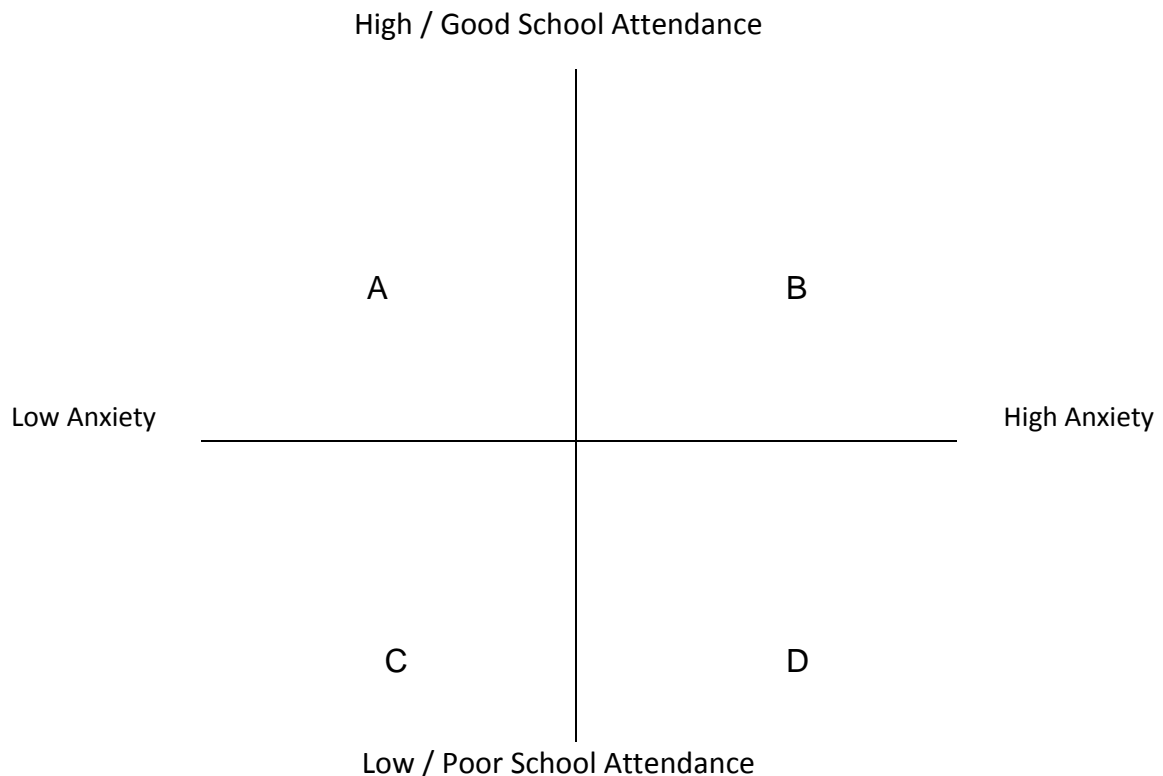
According to this diagram quadrant D would indicate school refusers, they are highly anxious and feel unable to attend school. Quadrant B refers to pupils who are highly anxious but who manage to maintain regular school attendance. This raises the question as to whether there might be a continuum of school refusal with some individuals being anxious and reluctant to attend but who maintain sufficient attendance that they continue to be viewed as good-enough attenders and do not become classified as school

refusers as such. Also, there may well be young people whose anxiety simply does not affect their attendance at school.

The experience of anxiety is not uncommon in everyday life, it is a part of human experience and tends to be short lived. In many instances anxiety is associated with stressful situations like job interviews or exams for example and in such situations often peaks soon after the anxiety provoking situation is introduced but diminishes rapidly after this. Thambirajah et al (2008) describe how in cases of severe anxiety, often associated with anxiety disorders, there is a rapid rise in anxiety levels in the first few minutes of exposure which results in extreme emotional distress and apprehension. These powerful and unpleasant feelings may lead to the individual indulging in avoidant behaviours which if successful lead to the removal of the anxiety provoking situation which means the anxiety then diminishes. This experience then means that future attempts at exposure may result in exaggerated and or prolonged anxiety responses which are the result of previous incomplete or partial exposure to the anxiety provoking situation. In relation to school refusal it is not difficult to see how a situation may develop whereby a young person experiences high levels of anxiety at the prospect of going to school, such that their behaviour (crying, complaining of feeling sick, being physically resistant to leaving the house) convinces their parents that they cannot possibly go to school on this occasion; once the young person realises that they will not be forced to go their feelings of anxiety and dread recede and they become calm. However, when faced with the prospect of going to school the following day a similar response occurs but because the

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parents may be more insistent this time the resistant behaviours and anxiety levels may become more extreme which in turn creates anxiety in the parent.

School Factors

Pilkington and Piersel (1991) highlight the limitations of the emphasis on within child and family factors as explanations for school refusal behaviour that has characterised much of the literature in this area, arguing that it fails to consider seriously external variables which may be contributory factors. Egger et al (2003) suggest there may be cases where fear of leaving home or going to school constitutes a reasonable response to difficult or threatening circumstances. In a similar vein writers including Blagg (1987) and King, Ollendick & Tonge (1995) believe school refusal behaviour is often associated with school factors like high staff and pupil absenteeism, low levels of achievement and authoritarian management styles. Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor (2000) postulate that schools with such characteristics are likely to be settings where bullying and inadequate monitoring of pupil behaviour may occur, thus emphasising the potential contribution of ethos and school organisational factors in the development and maintenance of school refusal behaviour.

Schools are complex social organisations and as such make innumerable demands on the children and young people who attend them. A cursory analysis of the demands of school life brings a new awareness of the various challenges and hurdles to be negotiated by young people on a daily basis. Figure 1.3 (below) is developed from Thamibrajah et al

(2008) and is an analysis of school experience as a hierarchy of interdependent levels of

organisational, instructional and social processes. A key feature to note is that these

levels are dynamic in that they interact with one
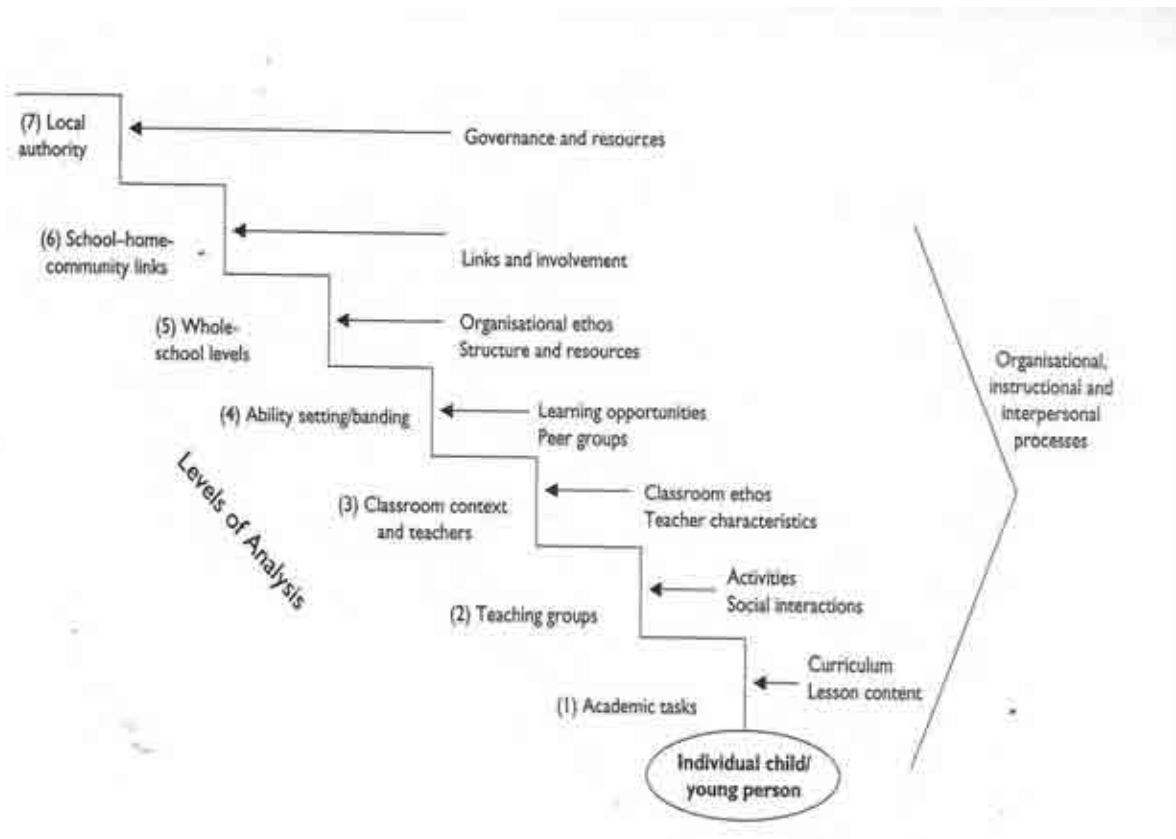
Figure 1.3 Multilevel description of school ecology developed from Thambirajah et al (2008). This is a multi-level description of school ecology that represents the various complex organisational, instructional and interpersonal processes negotiated by children and young people at school.

another and are negotiated between those involved, i.e. pupil and pupil, and pupil and

teachers throughout the day and week. The result is an experience of school that is in

many ways unique to the individual. This diagram provides an insight into the various

possibilities in terms of school related factors that might influence a young person's

experience of school and so act as risk or protective factors for the development of

school refusal behaviours or other difficulties. It is important to acknowledge that

schools are social organisations as well as instructional ones and it is the interplay of

individual child/young person characteristics and environmental factors that make the

emergence of school refusal behaviour more or less likely. These ideas are discussed by

Thambirajah et al (2008) who assert that school refusal behaviour occurs when stress

exceeds support, in other words when risk factors are stronger than resilience. However,

in promoting this perspective Thambirajah et al (2008) are mindful of the danger of

adopting a simplistic understanding of school refusal. The factors or elements that may

interact and result in school refusal behaviour are not independent of one another, they

are not static and also the direction of causality may be difficult to disentangle. For

example, it may be impossible to discern whether poor peer relationships in school lead

to the development of school refusal behaviour or whether school refusal behaviour

leads to a reduction in opportunities to develop and sustain peer relationships in school.

Malcolm, Wilson, Davidson & Kirk (2003) conducted case study based research drawing

information from 27 schools in 7 LEAs to investigate perceptions as to the causes of

school non-attendance (not restricted to school refusal). They sought to gain the views of

pupils, parents and teachers. They report that secondary aged pupils linked their

absences to school-related factors more often than to home related factors, identifying the following school related factors:

- boredom

- problems with lessons

- problems with teachers

- opportunism

- not wanting to get into trouble

- the complexity of secondary school

- fear of returning to school

- being bullied

- peer pressure

- social isolation

Malcolm et al 2003 p 31

Malcolm et al (2003) found that primary aged pupils tended to be less specific about school related reasons for missing school, complaining about general boredom and dislike of school. But where specific reasons were given by primary aged pupils bullying and the unsatisfactory way it was dealt with emerged as a vexed issue.

This would suggest that factors relating to the school curriculum, social environment and school effectiveness may impact on pupil attendance and probably on attempts at reintegration. In the same study parents identified issues like bullying and problems with

school work as possible underlying reasons for non-attendance. Local authority and

school staff expressed the view that both home and school factors were likely to be

influential in terms of the emergence of attendance difficulties. In the Malcolm et al

(2003) study local authority and school staff respondents cited reasons such as 'parents

putting a low value on education', 'children expected to act as carers', 'and domestic

violence' but also 'dislike of particular teachers, subjects or lessons, and 'bullying and

social exclusion' and 'primary-secondary transfer' as possible reasons for school

absenteeism.

Pellegrini (2007) sees these apparent differences of perspective between pupils, parents

and professionals as examples of different discourses, where discourses are defined as

being 'a system of statements which construct an object' (Parker, 1992). These different

discourses are not neutral and are used to promote a picture of 'reality'. Considered in

this light, discourses are likely to be important in terms of determining preferred

interventions and approaches.   In the field of school non-attendance in general and

school refusal in particular some discourses are more dominant and influential than

others, namely psychological and legal discourses. The legal discourses are powerful in

that they carry the power of the law and the psychological discourses carry the power

associated with medical knowledge. This may go some way to explaining why the

distinction between truant and school refuser remains dominant with one group being

dealt with through the legal processes and one through psychological ones and also it

offers insight into why much of the research into school refusal has focused on within

child and within family factors and interventions while school and more broadly social factors/interventions remain relatively under-researched.

Archer, Filmer-Sankey & Fletcher-Campbell (2003) focused specifically on school refusal in their local government association commissioned research into perceived causes and remedies for school refusal which involved surveying opinions of teachers and local education authority personnel. This is one of the few large scale research studies that seeks to consider the meaning of school refusal for education staff. The aims of the research were to:

- explore different perceptions of school refusal and school phobia and the effects these have on identification and assessment
- describe the range of profiles which represent pupils identified as school refusers or phobics
- to describe the approaches and action taken by LEAs and schools to support school refusal pupils and their families
- to identify training and staff development needs with respect to meeting the needs of school refusers and school phobics
- to identify preventative measures and good practice in this area

Archer et al (2003) did not define what they meant by the term 'school refusal' but instead asked for the definitions of school refusal and school phobia being used by the school or LEA. Both terms were presented to respondents and they responded as they saw fit. A danger with this approach is that the different respondents may hold very different conceptions of school refusal and school phobia and will naturally respond in accordance with these. A total of 60 LEA responses and 48 school responses were

received in this survey based research where they were asked to indicate from a list of

school related factors those most likely (in their opinion) to precipitate school refusal. It is

of interest to note the differences in response between LEA staff and school staff to

school related factors in the tables below:

Table 1: LEA & School Surveys – School Related Factors That Precipitate School Refusal

– taken from Archer et al (2003)

(there were 60 LEA and 48 school respondents in total)

Factors	Often		Sometimes		Never		No Response	
	LEA	Sch	LEA	Sch	LEA	Sch	LEA	Sch
Social anxiety	36	27	21	19	0	0	3	2
Change of school	18	5	37	3	0	3	5	7
Fear of failure in work or tests	13	7	38	25	2	7	7	9
Fear of specific places	10	8	38	20	2	9	10	11
Anxiety about journey to school	10	7	38	20	2	13	10	8
Reaction to specific incident or lesson	8	8	40	26	3	3	9	11
Fear of lesson time	7	7	39	26	3	6	11	9
Changes in pupil groupings	5	3	43	27	3	7	9	11
Fear or dislike of specific adult	5	7	40	24	5	8	10	9
Fear or dislike of specific subject	5	4	38	29	7	6	10	9

Over half of the LEA respondents indicated that they did not distinguish between school

refusers and school phobics as a group distinct from other groups of school non-

attenders. Also, no agreed definitions emerged from the school or LEA surveys in relation

to either school phobia or school refusal. This supports the assertion made by

Thambirajah et al (2008) that school refusal is under-recognised in part because of a lack

of awareness about it. They suggest that school staff like others in society often fail to

understand or acknowledge the impact of mental health problems (like school refusal) on

individuals.

In response to questions about possible causes of school refusal/school phobic behaviour

both school and LEA personnel felt social anxiety would often be a trigger. Interestingly,

while a third of LEA staff considered a change of school as a cause of school refusal school

staff were less inclined to note this as a factor. Archer et al (2003) comment that some

LEA staff expressed the view that other transition phases for example from key stage 3 to

4 might also precipitate school refusal. This survey data was then corroborated by

interview data through which participants again identified home and school factors as

likely contributors to the problem of school refusal. Some are reported as taking the view

that while home factors might be the underlying cause of school refusal school factors

were likely to trigger specific episodes of this behaviour.

Incidents of bullying was not one of the choices of school-related factors offered to

respondents as possible precipitators of school refusal or school phobia in this research

study, however it did emerge as a cause during the case study interview strand of the Archer et al (2003) research study. Interviews with headteachers, in-school support staff, education welfare officers and what the researchers refer to as outside professionals generated the following specific school factors which were seen to act as precipitators of school refusal:

- the size and layout of the school

- the structure of the school day

- conflicts with teachers

- transition periods

- fear of specific subjects

- academic pressures

- bullying or perceived bullying

- inappropriate provision

The factors identified by Archer et al (2003) and by Malcolm (2003) include both social interaction type issues as well as learning and instructional matters but also emotional adjustment to transition. Thambirajah et al (2008) identify bullying as being the most common school factor offered by young people and their parents as contributing to school refusal behaviour, but do not state the evidence for this assertion, however, this view is supported by Place et al (2000)in their study of non-clinic based school refusers who they describe as having 'a long history of being bullied within school'. Thambirajah

et al (2008) point out the potentially corrosive impact of bullying in the sense that it can damage the young person's self esteem which in turn can have wide reaching consequences and can influence areas like motivation and confidence.

It is difficult to compare the findings from the Malcolm et al (2003) research with those of Archer et al (2003) even though both seek to investigate causes of non-attendance and both are concerned with perceptions. Whilst the study by Malcolm et al (2003) was more open ended in that the population of non-attenders under consideration was less defined and a range of data collection methods were used with different informant types, Archer et al (2003) were interested specifically in school refusal and had a stated aim to increase knowledge and support for these pupils. A key contribution from Malcolm et al (2003) is the inclusion of pupil and parent perceptions of causes of non-attendance, as these perspectives appear to be somewhat neglected in relation to research into school refusal and other attendance related matters.

Stroobant & Jones (2006) offer an alternative and interesting perspective on the role of school factors in relation to school refusal. In their discourse based research they position school refusal as a form of resistance within what they describe as a 'complex story of resistance and compliance'. Stroobant & Jones (2006) contest dominant conceptions of school refusal which promote a psychological/therapeutic approach and instead suggest that a willingness to attend school might be constructed as abnormal or irrational behaviour describing schools as 'sometimes dehumanizing, hostile and

demanding institutions which compulsorily constrain and regulate children'. This

conception challenges the whole premise of schooling and is pertinent in a context in

which elective home education is becoming more acceptable as a viable option for an

increasingly broad range of families. In exploring possible reasons for what she conceives

of as the rapid growth in home education Arora (2003) identifies school refusal as being a

causal reason cited by some parents for their decision to elect to educate their

child/children at home. This raises the question of whether school refusal is ever a

problem for home educated children and young people and the answer to this relates to

one's conception of school refusal and underlying factors as in the discussion above. If

school refusal behaviour signals the existence of underlying psychological, social or

instructional/learning needs then one might assume that the removal of the expectation

for school attendance might result in the signs or symptoms being less obvious but would

not in itself remove the underlying difficulties.

In discussing the possible role of the school as an organisation in the development and

maintenance of school refusal behaviour Place, Hulsmeier, Davis & Taylor (2000) refer to

more recent developments in education policy and practice. They believe developments

like for example, the implementation of the National Curriculum and the emphasis on

targets and achievement and the drive to reduce school non-attendance have led to

changes in the educational landscape which impact on the experience of school, and

possibly the nature of school refusal itself and may have implications for ways of

intervening. In attempting to become more inclusive and effective organisations schools

are being encouraged through government policy to develop practices ostensibly aimed

at catering for 'vulnerable' pupils; these factors have potential in terms of raising levels of awareness about emotional and mental health needs and the importance of multi-model responses. Initiatives like Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS), Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL), the move towards personalisation and the participation of children and young people as consumers of education and other services are examples of such developments.

Introduction

The ultimate aim of intervening in cases of school refusal is to instigate a return to school and to re-establish regular school attendance (Fremont 2003). However, the focus of intervention can vary, perhaps not surprisingly depending on how the problem is conceptualised. Different theoretical perspectives lead to contrasting approaches and emphases, whether these relate to the child, the parent, the school or all three aspects. Place et al (2000) consider there to be two broad types of intervention approaches in use currently for school refusal: firstly, psychodynamic approaches which they describe as focusing on 'disturbances of thought, feelings and behaviour ' in the child and his or her family and secondly, behavioural approaches which focus on changing the learned behaviour of the child.

Place et al's (2000) description of 'psychodynamic' approaches is similar to accepted understandings of cognitive-behavioural approaches with its identification of cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements. Kahn, Nursten & Carroll (1996) describe the term psychodynamic as referring to 'forces in the mind' and so is about the balance of mental or cognitive processes. As a result of their research, Place at al (2000) argue that intervention needs to address three key areas in order to target the presenting needs of young people with school refusal behaviour. The three areas they identify are:

- work with family issues
- strengthening social skills

- strengthening coping skills

These recommendations indicate a strong emphasis on well-being in a broad sense, and highlight the importance of understanding the influences that impact on the young person who is displaying school refusal behaviour.   In this context the school experience is viewed as being 'a fundamental setting in which to establish, and develop interpersonal relationships, attitudes to authority and elements of the personality' (Place et al, 2000). Place et al (2000) believe improving the young person's ability to cope with stressful situations such as bullying in addition to developing their social skills plus work to address family issues are priority areas for intervention. However, this being the case it is surprising to note that whilst they position school as an important context for the young person to establish themselves, Place et al (2000) do not suggest intervening to improve or change the school context in any way.

Elliott (1999) considers there to be four main treatment approaches in use for young people with school refusal behaviour: behavioural, psychodynamic, cognitive and pharmacological. He comments that it is difficult to draw conclusions about the efficacy of any one of these approaches as the research studies reported in the literature tend to comprise single or multiple case studies. The precise meaning of the term psychodynamic in this context is not clear as Elliott makes reference to literature that focuses on the ways in which families usually parents might intervene in cases of school refusal to effect a return to school. He discusses how 'family therapy techniques' are widely advocated as a form of treatment but believes this tends to translate to forms of parent training. This suggests that the reference to 'psychodynamic' refers to a fairly

broad based type of intervention relating to family dynamics and the impact on the young person displaying school refusal behaviour as opposed to a particular school of psychodynamic psychology.

Fremont (2003) also suggests four treatment options which she refers to as: education and consultation, behaviour strategies, family interventions and pharmacotherapy. She identifies parental involvement and exposure to school as factors that have been shown to be effective in treatment improvement but she too comments on the lack of controlled studies to evaluate the effectiveness of particular approaches.

I intend to consider intervention approaches discussed in the literature on school refusal using a variation of the categories proposed by Elliott (1999) and Fremont (2003) because it seems to me that they omit to consider school based interventions. Interventions will be discussed according to the following headings: pharmacological interventions, behavioural, cognitive-behavioural approaches, family interventions, school-based and finally systemic approaches. I have chosen the term family interventions in preference over Elliott's (1999) term psychodynamic approaches as it allows a focus on a wider range of research and practice than is suggested by the term psychodynamic, which can be somewhat misleading. The inclusion of the category school-based approaches opens up exploration of the role school can play in intervention. I also add the category of systemic approaches, which is not specifically discussed by Elliott (1999) or Fremont (2003) but has

the potential to take intervention planning beyond analysis and interventions that focus on separating individual parts of the problem.

Pharmacological Intervention

Elliott (1999) reviews the literature on pharmacological treatments for school refusal and describes this as a controversial, under-researched area. This situation may be due to ethical considerations associated with medicating children and young people for anxiety based concerns; indeed the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (1997) state that it is would be unusual to recommend medication as the sole treatment for anxiety related conditions. This view is reinforced by Chitiyo & Wheeler (2006), some nine years later when they refer to a consensus that pharmacological treatment should only be used in conjunction with behavioural or psychotherapeutic interventions and then with the purpose of speeding up the child's return to school. Tyrell (2005) contends that in cases where there is coexisting anxiety and what she terms major depressive disorders then pharmacological treatment is frequently given to children displaying school refusal behaviour.

Last & Francis (1988) support the use of certain antidepressant drugs (imipramine) alongside behaviour therapy in the treatment of young people with school refusal behaviour who are experiencing panic attacks and severe anxiety. This perspective is supported by Fremont (2003) when she expresses the view that pharmacological treatment for school refusal should aim to help children and young people develop skills

which will support them in overcoming difficulties so preventing a reoccurrence of symptoms once the medication has been discontinued. Fremont (2003) is clear that selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors would be what she calls 'the first-line treatment' for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. There might also be a possibility of doctors prescribing Benzodiazepines on a short term basis only, for cases of 'severe school refusal', but Fremont (2003) and Tyrrell (2005) caution against extended use due to possible side effects including dependency. Others (Warrington, Padgham & Lader 1989) also warn of unpleasant side effects associated with this type of medication. Fremont (2003) reports there to be inconclusive evidence available about the effectiveness of pharmacological treatments for school refusal, with issues of sample sizes, differences in co-morbidity patterns, and differences in medication dosages among other matters being problematic.

Family-based Approaches

Theoretical perspectives of school refusal which highlight separation anxiety and other parent/child issues as major contributors would appear to lead to an emphasis on family-based interventions. In reviewing the literature in this area, Elliott (1999) comments that although family therapy techniques are widely advocated for school refusal they tend not to be the single, preferred approach to intervention, but are instead employed together with other approaches. Kearney and Beasley (1994) conducted a survey of the practices adopted by American psychologists when intervening with school refusal cases and found work with families was limited and where it did occur it tended to take the form of parent

training and contingency management. As Elliott argues, this may be a reflection of the professional group surveyed and there is a possibility that similar research involving for example psychiatrists as opposed to psychologists may have yielded different results. Lask (1996) advocates the use of family therapy, seeing its emphasis on systems theory as particularly helpful in assessment and intervention planning, but she concedes that there is a lack of hard research data to support its effectiveness.

Place et al (2000) believe a therapeutic focus on family issues may be necessary where parent/child relationships are enmeshed. They express the view that under these circumstances effective work with the young person may be possible only when the dependency needs of the parent have been recognised and addressed. As mentioned previously, Fremont (2003) identifies parental involvement as one of two factors as effective in improving outcomes and suggests that for younger children displaying school refusal behaviour, direct work with parents and school personnel might be sufficient. The intervention involves giving parents behaviour management strategies and support in reducing their own anxiety levels. Such an approach might incorporate cognitive behavioural interventions. Doobay (2008) picks up on these points suggesting that in some cases parents need to learn to stop reinforcing their child's school refusing behaviour, however unintentional this may be.   This might involve training in command giving and the use of clear instructions, as advocated by Heyne, King, & Tonge (2004) or by giving parents insight into how they may be contributing to their child's distorted self-image. This type of parental involvement aims to change an aspect of the child's context that may be in some way contributing to the school refusing behaviour.   Doobay (2008)

also suggests parents may have may play a useful role by supporting homework tasks that may form part of cognitive behavioural interventions.

Behavioural Approaches

Behavioural approaches including desensitisation (also known as counterconditioning) with relaxation training, flooding, modelling and emotive imagery have become popular as ways for intervening with young people exhibiting school refusal behaviour (Elliott 1999, Doobay, 2008, King & Ollendick, 1997). These techniques are primarily exposure-based and draw on the idea that the unwanted behaviour is learned and can be modified. King et al (1997) conducted an evaluation of research into the effectiveness of a range of behavioural techniques for intervening with children with phobias (so including a focus on anxiety). Their general conclusion was that there was evidence that these exposure based approaches were effective in treating children with phobias and children with internalising or externalising emotional and behavioural disorders. However a lack of controlled studies in relation to some approaches like flooding was noted as a weakness in assessing efficacy. It should be pointed out that this review did not focus specifically on school refusal.

A point to consider in this discussion on interventions is that some behavioural techniques may be more acceptable than others on ethical and humane grounds. Flooding, is a type of extinction and is based on classical conditioning and is perhaps the most troubling approach in this respect as it involves exposing the person to the feared

situation repeatedly or over a prolonged period in the absence of negative consequences. The person's anxiety response is expected to disappear with realisation that the feared situation does not result in catastrophic consequences, but for a person with a phobia or extreme anxiety a great deal of stress will be experienced in order to arrive at this realisation. In terms of school refusal exposure through flooding would mean a forced and immediate or at least rapid return to school. Elliott (1999) considers this approach to be controversial and possibly risky in that it may result in overwhelming stress not only for the young person but for the parents also, but as Doobay (2008) indicates it has been shown to be effective and indeed may be necessary when a quick return to school is warranted. Aside from the ethical concerns that some parents or professionals may raise in relation to flooding, there may be practical limitations on its use, in that it may be difficult to enforce a rapid return to school for a physically large fearful, school refusing adolescent as opposed to a small child.

Research conducted by Blagg and Yule (1984) is often cited as evidence of the effectiveness of behavioural techniques, such as flooding in relation to school refusal. They report on three treatment groups, one group received contingency contracting and forced return to school (flooding), another received home tuition with psychotherapy and the third group received inpatient care. A year later the first group demonstrated significant improved attendance with a success rate of 93.3% successfully returned to school. However, a weakness in this study relates to the non-randomised allocation to treatment groups, which throws into question the cause of the different outcomes which

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arguably may result from differences between the young people assigned to the treatment groups.

Desensitisation approaches involve graduated exposure to the feared situation, and in the case of school refusal could mean a return to selected, preferred lessons or to a base in a quiet part of the school before moving in a gradual way to exposure to the more anxiety provoking situations in school. According to King & Ollendick (1997) systematic desensitisation has three components:

a) relaxation

b) development of a fear producing hierarchy

c) systematic graduated pairing of items in the hierarchy with relaxation

This approach is based on the principles of classical conditioning and has the aim that the relaxed state inhibits the young person's anxiety to the feared situation. King & Ollendick (1997) comment that controlled and uncontrolled case studies employing these techniques attest to their potential usefulness in treating childhood phobias. This type of approach involves careful consultation with the child or young person in order to teach relaxation skills and to develop a hierarchy of feared situations, however, the socially complex and sometimes unpredictable nature of the school environment can be a threat to successful implementation of this approach. Also there is some evidence that younger children may have difficulty in learning and employing the relaxation techniques and also in imagining the feared situation with sufficient clarity and detail to support the process

(King & Ollendik 1997). In such cases parents can be taught to implement the programme at home where the fear symptoms in anticipation of school are likely to occur. Under these circumstances the effective involvement of parents is vital.

Cognitive Behavioural Approaches

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) issue guidelines on a range of mental health conditions including depression and anxiety, recommend cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) as the treatment of choice. Dooobay (2008) asserts that CBT is the only intervention for school refusal behaviour for which there is sufficient empirical evidence for it to be considered a first-line treatment approach, however her view is countered by more cautious writers like Chitiyo et al (2006) who believe that it is difficult to determine the most effective treatment for school refusal their reason being there have been few systematic and controlled empirical studies. Tyrell (2005) considers CBT approaches to constitute an appropriate mode of intervention because they work on the premise that the young person displaying school refusal behaviour perceives school attendance as harmful or threatening in some way and tries to stay away in order to avoid the anxiety provoking situation. CBT interventions include a behavioural and exposure based elements such as flooding, relaxation, systematic desensitisation as described above under the behavioural intervention section but in addition the young people are taught how to modify their negative thoughts and distorted beliefs.

King, Tonge, Heyne et al (1998) support the view that CBT is an effective intervention for school refusal. King et al (1998) used CBT approaches in conjunction with parent and teacher training in treating children with school refusal behaviour; their outcomes were compared to those of a control waiting list group. A significant improvement was reported for the treatment group with 88.23 per cent returning to normal school attendance compared to 29.41 per cent of the control group; with gains in a reduction of emotional symptoms still being evident some twelve weeks later.

Whilst CBT is increasingly being viewed as an effective form of intervention for school refusal behaviour (Doobay 2008, Pina, Aerr, Gonzales & Oritz 2009, Heyne et al 2004) there are questions relating to the effective components of the approach; in other words is it a case of cognitive methods enhancing behavioural approaches? CBT addresses the relationship between thoughts, feelings and behaviour and seeks to challenge faulty thinking and support the individual in monitoring statements about the self which have resulted in anxiety. A study by Last, Hanson and Franco (1998) raises questions as to the significant components of cognitive-behavioural interventions. They allocated randomly selected groups of young people displaying school refusal behaviour to two treatment groups, one receiving CBT, the other educational support therapy (EST)(educational presentations, supportive psychotherapy and daily diary recording). Contrary to researcher expectations results indicated no difference in outcomes between the two groups, with both groups showing improvements. Pina, Zerr, Gonzales & Oritz (2009) describe EST as a psychoeducational input with supportive counselling, and attribute this surprising finding to the possibility that this approach would have led to participants engaging in self-directed exposure to school.   In other words it may have provided

cognitive and supportive elements that gave the young people the confidence to try to attend.

Elliott (1999) identifies a need for large-scale controlled evaluations of interventions to determine whether there are specific elements of cognitive-behavioural approaches which are effective in treating children showing school refusal behaviour. This is partly addressed by Heyne et al (2004) who propose four essential components of CBT for intervening with children with school refusal behaviour: relaxation training, enhancement of social competence, cognitive therapy and exposure to the feared stimuli. These four components account for the three essential aspects of systematic desensitisation proposed by King & Ollendick (1997) as discussed in the previous section, which were relaxation, development of a fear producing hierarchy and systematic desensitisation. The additional elements offered by Heyne et al (2004) are cognitive therapy and the enhancement of social competence.

School-based Approaches

The increasing emphasis on possible functions of school refusal behaviour (Kearney & Silverman 1990, 1993; Kearney & Albano 2000, 2004; Kearney 2002) has led to a growing realisation that the school context may have an important role to play in the development, maintenance and treatment of this behaviour. Kearny and Silverman's (1990) functional model of school refusal identifies four main reasons for its development two of which implicate the school to some degree at least

- Avoidance of specific fearfulness or general over-anxiousness related to the school setting. This includes cases where one or more particular features of a school are feared

- Escape from aversive social situations. This concerns problems based on negative relationships with others (teachers and or peers), particularly where an element of evaluation is perceived to be present

- Attention-getting or separation anxious behaviour. This may be reflected by somatic complaints or tantrums where the child seeks to remain at home with the parent or important other

- Tangible reinforcement. Nonattendance is rewarded in that it offers opportunities for the child to engage in preferred activities such as watching television or associating with friends

Kearney & Silverman 1990   p344

Although the school setting is directly implicated in the description of the first two

functions above, the treatment suggested to address these entail within child strategies

(Kearney & Albano, 2004; Kearney & Silverman, 1990). For both functions a

psychoeducational approach is advocated aiming to reduce negative affectivity and to

restructure cognitive patterns. Place et al (2000) note that behavioural interventions are

often coupled with school-based modifications like time-table alterations (short or long

term), and keeping teacher questioning on return to school to a minimum. However, the

importance of school based approaches has tended to be underplayed in the literature.

Lauchlan (2003) sees this as a consequence of the fact that much of the published

research into school refusal has been conducted by American researchers with medical backgrounds, usually psychiatrists.

Archer et al (2003) report that local education authority and school respondents expressed the view that school-based strategies would be effective in addressing the needs of pupils showing school refusal behaviour. The schools included in the survey indicated that they actually used the following strategies:

- Early action on non-attendance

- Support from an adult

- Behaviour and anti-bullying policies

- Creation of a less threatening environment or safe place in school

- Extra support in literacy or numeracy

- Change of class or tutor group

- Alternative curricular or extracurricular provision

- Support from other pupils

Archer et al 2003 p17

While the schools reported their employment of these strategies the research study did not consider details of application or effectiveness so it is not possible to draw

conclusions about the frequency of use of these school based strategies, how they are applied, with whom or their effectiveness.

Blagg (1987) discussed what he believed to be key areas related to the school context which need to be considered in relation to cases of school refusal, these include: academic-related concerns, peer-related concerns, teacher-related concerns and whole school related concerns. These may be useful and relevant areas to examine with a view to intervention planning but Blagg did not discuss specific ways of intervening to address these areas. Doobay (2008) recognises potential for school staff to play a role in reintegrating pupils with school refusal behaviour, perhaps through reinforcing desired behaviour, mentoring targeted pupils and creating positive experiences for them in school. Pellegrini (2007) advocates the use of preventative systemic interventions such as providing staff training on school refusal and early identification strategies, but there is little research evidence available about such strategies and it would be difficult to assess the effectiveness of preventative interventions in treating school refusal that did not actually develop.

Systemic Approaches

Thamirajah et al (2008) advocate a joint systems approach to tackling school refusal. They define a system as an entity that maintains its existence through the mutual interaction of its parts. Consideration of context is central to this way of thinking about a problem situation. Every individual is embedded in multiple contexts and so the task of

understanding individuals and their problems involves understanding them within, not separate from their contexts (systems). With regard to school refusal behaviour there are at least two overlapping social systems that are in dynamic interaction with each other: the school and the family. According to Dowling and Osborne (1994) the aim of addressing problems in the dual context of the family and the school are:

1. to facilitate communication between school, staff and family members

2. to clarify differences in perception of the problem focusing on how it occurred rather than why

3. to negotiate commonly agreed goals

4. to explore specific steps towards change

A key feature of adopting such a systemic perspective is that the problem is perceived as occurring between people rather than inside one individual. This approach moves away from decontextualised conceptions of school refusal as either being a problem of anxiety within the young person, or as a problem existing within the family. The behaviour of one component of the system or systems is seen as affecting and being affected by the other parts of the system. Consequently, it does not make sense to locate 'the problem' in one person and to view the problem as a result of or as the direct effect of the one cause. The emphasis is on the pattern of interactions that may be acting to maintain the problematic behaviour rather than a search for a cause. Intervening according to a systemic approach should open up the possibility of targeting areas that have the potential to bring change. The systemic approach as discussed here offers a way of thinking about school refusal behaviour and intervention planning; it is not tied to a particular intervention strategy as such. A wide range of interventions as discussed in

earlier sections might emerge from this way of thinking; the point is that they will aim to target key aspects of the system considered important in bringing about change.   In fact, some of the intervention approaches discussed under the section on CBT might be considered to be systemic in nature, for example King et al (1998) employed CBT techniques in conjunction with parent and teacher training as ways of intervening which indicates an appreciation of the overlapping systems involved in maintaining school refusal behaviour.

NATIONAL POLICY CONTEXT IN ENGLAND

Introduction

This section will look briefly at some key government policy drivers which influence the way children showing school refusal behaviour are catered for at school and local authority levels in the English context. This is followed by consideration of two important issues for this research study, these are Short Stay Schools (SSS) formerly known as pupil referral units (PRUs) for children with 'medical needs' and the pressure for reintegration into mainstream schooling.

Place et al (2000) contend that the educational landscape has changed over recent years and suggests this offers new possibilities for addressing the needs of children displaying school refusal behaviour. Place et al writing in 2000 refer to the establishment of PRUs some of which aim to cater specifically for the children who display school refusal behaviour as having potential to create change for this client group; how far this optimism has been born out is debatable. The Every Child Matters: Change for Children Agenda (DfES 2003) through which the government identifies five key outcomes to be addressed for all children represents a shift and refocusing of services for children. The five key outcomes are:

- Being healthy
- Staying safe

- Enjoying and achieving

- Making a positive contribution

- Achieving economic well-being

This agenda requires agencies involved with children and young people including schools to engage with the needs of their young clients in a broader and more integrated way than previously acknowledged. The Children Act 2004 provides the legal framework for the change programme which places a duty on local authorities and 'their partners' to work cooperatively to improve children's well-being. It may be that Every Child Matters offers an opportunity to begin thinking about school refusal behaviour in a different and more holistic way. The notion of vulnerability and the five key outcomes move beyond medical, within child and family perspectives or indeed school perspectives and instead encourage a community based, multi-agency approach to the subject.

DCSF (2010) Guidance on School Behaviour and Attendance Partnerships requires all secondary schools to participate in behaviour and attendance partnerships in order to cooperate to promote good behaviour and discipline and to reduce persistent attendance. In this endeavour secondary schools must engage with all partners including Short Stay Schools, and Short Stay Schools are in turn required to participate. Potentially, this is a positive development in relation to promoting the needs of children with school refusal behaviour in part because of the focus on reducing persistent absence but also because of the notion of partnerships operating across settings. DCSF (2010) stipulates

that behaviour partnerships will focus on early intervention, staff training and clear protocols for managed moves and hard to place pupils all of which have relevance to the needs of young people with school refusal behaviour. How far these initiatives will be promoted by the new coalition government has yet to be seen. The drive to reduce school non-attendance (DSCF 1999, 2010) is in harmony with the Every Child Matters agenda and continues to exert influence on local authorities and schools, both of which are required to set targets and to publish data on their performance in this area. These two strong national drivers championing the importance of education and child well-being, combined, have the potential to create a renewed focus on the needs of children and young people displaying school refusal behaviour.

Short Stay Schools/Pupil Referral Unit Provision for School Refusal

Section 19 of the 1996 Education Act stipulates that local authorities have a duty to provide suitable education '*at school or otherwise than at school'* for children of compulsory school age who may be at risk of not receiving such an education. Short Stay Schools, previously known as PRUs, are a form of alternative educational provision which can provide full or part time placements. Although many short stay schools cater for children and young people who are at risk of permanent exclusion from school there are some that cater for pupils who have medical or mental health needs which may prevent them attending school; this can include children displaying school refusal behaviour. According to the DfES guidance document 'Access to Education for Children and Young People with Medical Needs' (2002) short stay schools should have clear admissions

criteria and should provide each pupil with targets for their reintegration to mainstream

or special school. In other words short stay schools are not intended to provide

permanent educational provision and reintegration of pupils into mainstream education

where possible is seen to be a goal for pupils attending short stay schools. Archer et al

(2003) report that three quarters of the LEAs included in their survey (from a total of 60)

offered alternative provision to some young people with school refusal behaviour and for

over half of this number the alternative provision took the form of Short Stay Schools.

Archer at al (2003) describe how one Short Stay School included in their survey functions;

through a brief case study we learn that it caters for up to six young people at any time,

all of whom must have a psychiatric diagnosis. This Short Stay School is jointly funded by

the Education and Health Services and is staffed by personnel from these two

professional backgrounds. This multi-agency collaboration and the insistence on a

psychiatric diagnosis reflect aspects of the earlier discussion in relation to the nature of

school refusal, stakeholder agencies, discourse and arguably the privileging of the

medical perspective.

Reintegration and Inclusion

According to the DfES guidance document 'Access to Education for Children and Young

People with Medical Needs' (2002) children and young people displaying school refusal

behaviour associated with depression, mental illness, anxiety or separation anxiety are

considered to have a medical need and so are covered by the guidance. The guidance

relates to pupils with a range of needs which result in them being unable to attend

school. It indicates that this broad heterogeneous population may receive educational input in a variety of settings including hospital schools, home teaching and pupil referral units; it also discusses the importance of planning for reintegration into mainstream school wherever possible. The idea that reintegration is important for pupils who are receiving alternative educational provision appears to be a consistent message in guidance publications and policy documentation (DfES 2002, DCSF 2009, OFSTED 2007).

The DCSF (2008) White Paper 'Back on Track' sets out a strategy for strengthening and modernising the alternative educational provision sector. It assesses there to be little reliable data available as to the achievement of pupils who access alternative provision and seeks not only to make local authorities more accountable for outcomes for individual pupils, but also for the planning and commissioning of such provision. Alternative provision is positioned as providing a service to mainstream schools, possibly as part of an early intervention but also to individual young people. Notions of personalisation are also central to the 'Back on Track' vision which combines a focus on standards with the Every Child Matters agenda. Whilst there is still a view that Short Stay Schools or PRUs (the term used in 'Back on Track') offer short term educational provision 'Back on Track' emphasises the importance of collaboration with other providers including schools, the voluntary sector services and special schools, suggesting a type of team around the child and family focused approach. There is a perspective given of the children and young people who access Short Stay Schools and alternative provision as being vulnerable but also entitled to a good education and support. Arguably the policy imperative of academic and social inclusion and a climate that has led to national

legislation including the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) and The

Children Act (2004) means that the functioning and effectiveness of Short Stay School

and other alternative provision has become a focus. The significance of this becomes

apparent when one considers the findings of the OFSTED (2006) report 'Inclusion: does it

matter where pupils are taught?' which investigated outcomes for pupils with learning

difficulties and disabilities educated in different settings. The conclusion of this report is

that it is the quality of provision rather than the type that determines outcome, although

Short Stay Schools were found to be the least successful settings overall.

The DCSF publication 'Managing Behaviour and Attendance: Responsibility for educating

pupils out of school and reintegrating them into school (DCSF, 2009) includes a section

describing good practice for arranging reintegration of pupils into mainstream school for

pupils receiving alternative educational provision. Topics covered include early planning;

the use of reintegration panels or officers; parental involvement; individual reintegration

plans and their content. The dominant idea is that alternative provision is a temporary

measure and that plans should be made for a return to school or transition to post 16

provision.

One cannot leave this discussion on reintegration without considering the term itself.

Interestingly, in the field of special educational needs the term reintegration has been

eclipsed by that of inclusion, with reintegration being considered somewhat old

fashioned. Lindsey (2007) summarises the conceptual difference between the two terms as follows:

'integration' may be seen as a child adapting to a host setting (typically a school) while 'inclusion' may refer to the host adapting in order to meet the needs of actual (and potential) pupils.

<div align="right">Lindsey 2007 p3</div>

This distinction leads one to question the use of the term 'reintegration' because it would appear to be unethical and intolerant to expect a young person with emotional and mental health needs (often associated with school refusal behaviour) simply to adapt to the school institution without measures being put in place to cater for him or her. However, the literature emanating from the DCSF (recently re-branded the DfE) on children with medical needs and behavioural and attendance needs, and research in to the return of children and young people from specialist provision into mainstream schools refer to reintegration rather than inclusion (Gibb et al 2007, Tootill & Spalding 2000, GHK Consulting 2004). It is difficult to explain the apparent preference for the term reintegration as opposed to inclusion in these contexts. One might suggest this reflects a different, perhaps more tolerant approach to young people who are considered to have special educational needs as opposed to behavioural or attendance difficulties and so the term 'inclusion' is used in those situations. Another explanation may be that inclusion refers to the initial and deliberate decision made to educate a child or young person in a mainstream setting while reintegration refers to a process of reintroduction to mainstream following a period in specialist provision.

I will continue to use the term reintegration to refer to the process of transition from the short stay school to mainstream schools as this is the term widely used in the literature on short stay schools/PRUs, but the research will focus on helpful and unhelpful factors relating to reintegration whether these are considered to derive from the school, the PRU, the child or some other source. In other words the use of the term reintegration does not assume limitations of adaptation which relate solely to the child or young person.

The subject of reintegration of pupils displaying school refusal behaviour from short stay schools into mainstream school settings appears to have attracted little research interest to date, although there is a small body of research focusing on reintegration or inclusion of other groups of pupils with identified needs, such as Gibb et al (2007) James (1997) and Gibb et al (2007). GHK Consulting (2004) conducted DfES commissioned research into the practices surrounding the reintegration of different pupil groups into mainstream school settings. The groups examined included permanently excluded pupils; pupils with persistent unauthorised absences (these are described as including 'school phobics'); pupils not attending school due to medical needs (including mental health needs)or caring responsibilities and pupils with mobility issues (including Gypsy or Traveller children). Interestingly, the children who form the focus of the current study could fall into two of the categories drawn up by GHK Consulting, namely their persistent unauthorised absentees and pupils not attending due to medical needs. Through their

use of terminology GHK Consulting (2004) choose to place pupils labelled 'school phobics' with those considered to be truants; again, this is interesting especially following the earlier discussion about the complexities and contested nature of terminology used to study school non-attendance.

In explaining their use of the term 'reintegration' GHK Consulting (2004) acknowledge that reintegration into mainstream school may not be practicable or desirable for some pupils and that for many professionals it may be viewed as an aspect of wider approaches to the pupil and not as a discrete activity. They define reintegration as: 'efforts made by LEAs, schools and other partner agencies to return pupils who are absent, excluded or otherwise missing from school-based mainstream education provision'. I intend to employ the term reintegration in a similar way, to refer to the process and efforts made by all (including local authority staff, short stay school staff, mainstream staff, parents and the pupil themselves) to support the pupil in making the transition from the short stay school to mainstream.

LITERATURE REVIEW: IMPACT ON RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This review of the literature pertaining to school refusal and reintegration leaves one

with a view of school refusal as a set of behaviours or symptoms which do not indicate

the existence of a specific, singular and identifiable syndrome or problem. To use Elliott's

(1999) words school refusal is 'not a unitary syndrome'. School refusal behaviours

indicate underlying social and emotional difficulties which might alternatively be

described as mental health needs. There is evidence of a link between school refusal

behaviour and anxiety. The literature suggests a constellation of possible contributory

and maintaining factors that exist in cases of school refusal, and these relate to individual

child characteristics, and in addition to environmental elements including family

functioning and school systems. Whilst research and interventions have tended to focus

on individual child characteristics and family dynamics there is an acknowledgement that

a more systemic approach is worth pursuing and that the school environment is

implicated if not as a cause of school refusal behaviour but as playing a role in

maintaining or possibly as having potential in helping to alleviate this behaviour. There is

no evidence of a single cause of school refusal behaviour, but the notion of resilience

including risk and protective factors may be useful in conceptualising school refusal

systemically.

The research areas identified in the introduction were:

What factors support or act as barriers to reintegrating pupils displaying school refusal
behaviour from a Short Stay School to a mainstream school

What are the experiences and conceptions of school refusal of those directly involved in the reintegration process?

Following this review of the literature, I remain interested in these areas which both have a focus on reintegration. This is pertinent to me in my roles as educational psychologist working with the Short Stay School and as management committee member working to ensure the Short Stay School delivers an effective service in enabling young people to return to mainstream education where possible. In addition I am interested in the emotional aspect of school refusal behaviour. The literature indicates a link between anxiety and school refusal; it would be of interest to find out about the nature of anxiety in the cases studies and other aspects of the emotional climate if this emerges from the data. So the second research question is modified to:

What are the experiences and conceptions of school refusal of those involved in the reintegration process with a focus on anxiety and other emotional factors?

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The aim of the research study is to examine the process of reintegration of pupils from the Short Stay School into mainstream school and to get a sense of this experience from the perspectives of different key individuals (the young person, the mentor from the Short Stay School, a representative from the receiving mainstream school, and a parent of the young person). There is a focus on illuminating themes important to the participants and which emerge from the data relating to their particular experience of and understanding of school refusal.

In considering how one might set about meeting the above research aims one encounters some of the important philosophical issues surrounding research. Usher (1996) contends that a failure to consider philosophical assumptions relating to research can lead to a mechanistic, technological approach which is limited and leaves unacknowledged some of the assumptions underlying the research. He goes to great pains to point out that research takes place in social contexts and is highly sceptical of research where the validity of knowledge comes from being devoid of context and hence somehow objective. This leads to consideration of ideas around epistemology and ontology which respectively refer to an understanding of what constitutes knowledge and assumptions about the nature of the world and reality. Specifically, Usher (1996) sees epistemology as the criteria one applies in making decisions about 'knowledge' and 'non-knowledge'. In discussing ontology Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) make reference to the

'nominalist-realist debate' which questions whether reality is social in nature and dependent on the 'knower' or alternatively objective, independent, existing in the external world. Ones answer to these questions whether stated explicitly or not directly influences the way research is approached.

A view that reality is objective and exists in the external world leads to a search for laws and generalities; while a view that reality is social and subjective in nature encourages a search for meaning and illumination. Cohen et al (2007) assert that the purposes of research should determine the methodology and design. Consequently, researcher purposes and epistemological and ontological assumptions can be seen to be unavoidably interrelated.

As indicated the current research aims to examine the process of reintegration from the short stay school to mainstream from the differing perspectives of those involved in the process and to look at factors that support or hinder this process. These aims and the language used to describe them suggest the need for a methodology that can explore the lived experience and produce illumination. A different set of aims perhaps around identifying factors that occur in reintegration or discovering how long young people with school refusal behaviours spend at short stay schools before attempts at reintegration are made would require alternative methodologies ones that can produce description possibly through survey methods. However as part of the aim in the current research is to gain insight into the experience of key participants not only of the reintegration

process but also their understanding of school refusal then an interpretive

phenomenological methodology is appropriate.

Interpretive Phenomenology

Maggs-Rapport (2000) takes the view that interpretive phenomenology focuses on the

study of human consciousness concentrating on 'the world that the study participants

subjectively experience'. He identifies three stages to this which are: fore-

understandings (the researcher's initial understandings about the phenomenon being

studied), interrogation (exploration and analysis of data) and reflection (discovery of

ideas, commonalities and shared ideas). According to Usher (1996)

hermeneutic/interpretive epistemology assumes meaningfulness to human action that

has to be interpreted and understood within a social context. This interest in meaning

and interpretation requires the researcher to go beyond the observable and this involves

using what Usher (1996 p18) refers to as 'interpretive schemes or frameworks'. In other

words there is 'a double hermeneutic' in that the researcher like the participants

themselves engages in interpreting and sense-making.

Maggs-Rapport (2000) draws attention to differences of opinion held by researchers

regarding whether it is ever possible for researchers to put aside pre-conceived ideas

about the phenomena they are studying and goes on to suggest that it is the existence of

pre-understanding and preconceptions that lead to new knowledge. This view is

supported by Polit and Hungler (1991) who in referring to phenomenological research described the subjective judgement of the researcher as valuable to the process.

This notion of the researcher using his or her pre-understandings and subjective interpretive frameworks is not to be confused with the concept of 'epoches' as used by Husserl, the German philosopher who is attributed with being the originator of the phenomenological movement in the twentieth century (Groenewald 2004, Wertz 2005). A key principle of Husserl's phenomenology is that scientific knowledge begins with 'a fresh and unambiguous description of its subject matter' (Wertz 2005). This involves 'epoches of the natural sciences' which means the researcher deliberately sets aside scientific knowledge, explanations or theories about the subject matter as a way of attempting to gain access to 'the things themselves' (Wertz 2005). Wimpenny and Gass (2000) describe this process as 'phenomenological reduction or bracketing' which they see as a type of suspension of belief so that the world as it is experienced by the participants can be revealed in its true form. Paley (1997) acknowledges that one of the difficulties for the would be phenomenologist is to grasp an understanding of the notion of 'bracketing' and he suggests it relates to adopting a somewhat detached position. However, other writers such as Walters (1995) take the view that the role of the phenomenologist is to get close to the world of the participants.

Groenewald (2004) declares the aim of phenomenology as being to 'return to the concrete' as it is the science of pure phenomena. Setting aside scientific knowledge and

explanations, or bracketing would appear to be quite different from attempting to be somehow objective through setting aside one's interpretive framework as a positivist researcher might do. Further as Wertz (2005) states it does not imply an intrinsic lack of regard for scientific knowledge rather with phenomenology there is an attempt to gain fresh access to the phenomenon under investigation.

Usher (1996) makes reference to the 'hermeneutic circle of interpretation' which acknowledges that the building of knowledge is circular and iterative as opposed to being linear and cumulative as suggested by positivist approaches. He argues that the interpretation of a part of something is dependent or somehow derives from the way the whole is interpreted and vice versa. This way of thinking foregrounds not only the relationship between the researcher and the phenomenon but also between the aspects of the phenomenon and the whole. This is pertinent to the current research which comprises case studies within a larger case study focusing on contributory factors to the reintegration of children from a Short Stay School to mainstream.   Each of the smaller case studies centres on the case of an individual young person and his or her reintegration and involves interviews with key individuals. Taken together all of this information might contribute to conceptualisations of school refusal behaviour and factors that support or hinder reintegration. However there can be no assumption that these understandings are complete and provide a definitive understanding of the functioning of the Short Stay School, of mainstream schools or reintegration or of school refusal behaviour; rather what one aims for is more modest in that it is an interpretation of the interpretations of the participants.

The discussion above indicates that the researcher engaged in interpretive

phenomenology as in other forms of qualitative research plays a central and active role in

the process, and although there is some debate as to how 'close' he or she should be to

the participants, key researcher skills lie in active listening and communicating interest in

the story participants have to tell. The relationship between the researcher and

participant is interactive. Wimpenny and Gass (2000) suggest the progression of the

interview, for interview is considered to be the main method of data collection in

phenomenological research (Kvale 1996), is influenced by the quality of the interaction

between the researcher and participant.

Research Design

The research aims for the current study and the discussion of methodology above suggest

appropriate options for approaching the research design to be action research or case

study. Indeed some of the principles of action research are compatible with the stated

research aims for the current study, i.e. to gain a sense of the experience of reintegration

from short stay school to mainstream school of young people with school refusal

behaviour from the perspectives of key people; and to explore their understanding of

school refusal and reintegration.   This methodology would involve the hermeneutic

activities of reflecting, understanding and interpreting practice with the ultimate if

unstated aim of improving practice, but there are reasons why action research design is

not appropriate in this instance. Cohen et al (2007) describe action research as a form of

'systematic self-reflective inquiry' conducted by practitioners in order to improve and understand situations in which they work; and similarly, Robson (2002) sees 'improvement' and 'involvement' as central elements. Although I am the educational psychologist providing consultation to staff at the short stay school, I am not usually actively involved throughout the process of reintegration so it is questionable as to whether I could legitimately undertake action research in this area as my role is not that of practitioner. An action research approach in relation to my role would involve to some degree at least a focus on the consultation process between educational psychologist and staff at the short stay school with a possible view to considering impact. This would be an interesting piece of research to undertake but does not coincide with the stated purpose of the current research. Another option might be to act as an external consultant and work collaboratively with staff at the short stay school to conduct action research into their practices regarding reintegration, however, the research was not developed and agreed on this premise and members of staff have not committed to active involvement of this nature. Action research also has an interventionist aspect to it which is not wholly compatible with the current research aims.

Case Study Approach

A case study design is suited to the current research study for several reasons, which will be presented below. Robson (2002) defines case study as:

 '..a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources' p52

thereby making the point that case study is an approach rather than a specific method. In fact a range of research methods are compatible with case study design. According to Robson (2002) this definition highlights key aspects of case study including the fact that it is empirical in the sense that it relies on the collection of evidence, also it focuses on a particular case in its real life context. The current research questions relate to the process of reintegration from Short Stay School to mainstream for individual young people who display school refusal behaviour. It seeks to discern factors which support or hinder reintegration and to examine the experience of reintegration from the perspectives of those involved. A case study approach offers a suitable vehicle for this seeking to address these issues in a real life context.

In his discussion of general research design issues Robson (2002) rehearses aspects of the debate within the research community about the usefulness and effectiveness of the case study approach, this includes questions about single cases and what can be learnt from them; the reduction of case study to an exploratory precursor to proper (e.g. experimental research); and the suggestion that the skills required to conduct and report case study research are artistic literary ones rather than actual research skills.

In response to these points Robson (2002) cites Valsiner (1986) among others who validate the status of individual cases by claiming that throughout history they have been the key strategy for the advancement of knowledge. Robson (2002) also argues for case study to be viewed as a legitimate research strategy in its own right and not as a flawed

experimental design. Yin (1998) strongly rejects what he refers to as 'the traditional notion that the case study is the exploratory phase of other methods' indicating that it is a design that can be adapted to address explanatory, descriptive or exploratory research questions. In response to the contention that case study research requires artistic or literary skills (Nisbet and Watt 1980), Robson (2002) agrees that such skills are necessary in order for the researcher to provide the reader with a rich picture of the case, he also comments that well developed literary skills also have the potential to enhance the reporting of other types of research. This debate is essentially about what constitutes research or science with a suggestion or assertion that research be defined in a very limited sense; it is reminiscent of the positivist debate or at least there would seem to be a tension between privileging a certain type of research compatible with positivist/empiricist epistemology and being open to hermeneutic/interpretive epistemologies.

A case study approach is suited to the task of addressing the current research questions for several reasons. Importantly, it facilitates analysis and interpretation of complex social processes, which is compatible not only with one of the research questions (perspectives on the reintegration processes from one context to another) but also with the methodological issues discussed above. Hitchcock and Hughes (2005) usefully identify the hallmarks of a case study as being:

- it is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case

- it provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case

- it blends a description of events with the analysis of them

- it focuses on individual actors or groups of actors, and seeks to understand their perceptions of events

- it highlights specific events that are relevant to the case

- the researcher is integrally involved in the case

- an attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report

Two of the points above relate to richness of description as being an important aspect of case study research. Yin (1998) counsels against trying to 'describe everything' in such research. He makes the point that all description is in fact selective and suggests that a focus on the purpose of 'the descriptive effort' and full but realistic range of topics that might be considered to comprise a complete description is what is needed. So, there is a balance to be struck between rich description and focus.   The exact nature of this balance will depend on the stated research aims.

Yin (1998) positions the research design phase as being the most important in case study research and conceptualises it as the logical sequence that connects the research aims or questions, the data and the research conclusions. As part of this process the researcher adopting a case study design needs to decide on the unit of analysis, in other words what constitutes the 'case' in his or her research. The act of deciding upon the unit of analysis helps to limit the boundaries of the research study. The selection criteria for cases are their particular type or focus, in other words the fact that they are examples of the

problem or situation of interest.   Consequently what is to be defined as a unit of analysis

depends on the formulation of the research questions. In this case the research

questions centre on the reintegration of young people from Short Stay School provision

to mainstream, and the conceptions of school refusal held by those people directly

involved in the reintegration process; and the experience of reintegration of the people

directly involved. So the units of analysis need to be directly compatible with these

areas. In the current study a case is defined as 'the reintegration process of an individual

young person' but a further unit of analysis is the process of reintegration in itself; a

common factor here is the Short Stay School which is involved in the reintegration of

each of the young people into their mainstream schools. Consequently this research

design involves multiple cases (the five individual cases) with an embedded element

which comprises the combined cases with their focus on reintegration and the notion of

school refusal. The focus on single cases however, indicates a need to engage with the

individuality or 'singularity' of the cases in terms of analysis while, in addition the

combined Carlalement of the current design facilitates opportunities for exploration and

elaboration of themes.

The decision to carry out multiple case studies relates to Yin's (1998) notion of analytical

generalisation and Titscher et al's (2000) concept of theoretical generalisation which in

this instance refers to an attempt to use the data to build towards theory; it is not about

generalisation in a statistical sense. In other words findings and or patterns that emerge

from the data may suggest an emerging theory which may in turn lead to the need for

further case studies. In a similar vein Nisbet and Watt (1984) conceive of the case study

approach as a specific instance which can help illuminate a more general principle.

Stenhouse (1985) takes the view that the relationship between one case and a collection

of cases or a particular population is a matter of judgement, proposing that case study

research can perform an important role in the 'systematization of experience within

which interpretations are critically handled'. This may suggest a function for case study

research as providing a reference point for critical discussion and the development of

practice. This function is compatible with the purposes of the current research study

which comprises five case studies.

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

While issues of sampling are relevant to case study research they are not the same as those relating to survey or experimental research designs. According to Robson (2002) the notion of sampling relates to that of population as it refers to a selection from the population being studied. As it is usually not possible to study an entire population one has to make a decision about which aspects of a population or which individuals will be studied. In experimental or survey research decisions about sampling relate to questions of generalisability.

Flyvberg (2004) argues convincingly that it is possible to generalise from case study research findings for example by using the falsification test which means that if the researcher is able to find just one case that does not concur with the proposition under investigation then the proposition becomes invalid. He asserts that where the aim of research is to obtain the greatest amount of information about an issue or phenomenon that representative or random sampling is unlikely to be the most appropriate strategy. The sampling strategy must be compatible with the research questions being addressed.

Flyvberg (2004) considers there to be two types of selection of samples: Random selection and Information-oriented selection. He places sampling in relation to case study approaches in the category of information-oriented sampling in that 'cases are

selected on the basis of expectations about their information content'.   Decisions taken

about these matters help to set the parameters for the fieldwork and also need to relate

to the research questions.

As discussed above the selection criteria for case study research is that the case(s) must

be of the type or situation being investigated. Purposive sampling is used in the current

study as the short stay school is the only Short Stay School in the local authority

designated to cater for children with medical needs including school refusal behaviour, so

the cases would be drawn from this establishment. In selecting individual young people

to form the focus of the reintegration case studies I was guided by the knowledge of the

head teacher and the learning mentor at the short stay school, the main criterion being

that the young people had already reintegrated into mainstream school or were in the

process of doing so.   The other criterion was that the original reason for them being

admitted to the Short Stay School was considered to be school refusal. The selection of

the five individual cases can be considered to be examples of opportunistic sampling.

Research participants for each case study were limited to the young person, one or both

of his /her parents (whoever consented to participate), a representative from the

receiving school (learning mentor) and the learning mentor from the Short Stay School.

Although one parent was interviewed for each young person, the request was for the

parents of the young people to consent to being interviewed. The family background of

the five cases were: one single parent, one where the young person lived with his mother

but had contact with his father, one where the young person lived with her mother and step father, and two where the young people lived with both parents. The fact that five mothers and no fathers were interviewed introduces questions about bias but also this outcome may be of interest in the sense that it may reflect a parenting pattern or tendency in cases of school refusal. Indeed in their research into the association between school refusal and truancy and psychiatric disorders, Egger et al (2003) report that a vulnerability associated with school refusal was living in a single-parent home; and Thambirajah et al (2008) discuss under-involvement of the father as being a factor associated with school refusal. An alternative and perhaps more mundane explanation relates to cultural norms in terms of parental contact or involvement with their child's education officials and availability during the working day. These roles may more readily fall to mothers. This research study did not examine the significance of the development that mothers were the only parents to be interviewed as an aspect of family dynamics.

Although participants were limited to four for each case further potential participants existed. For example the young person's peers at the receiving school and the Short Stay School may have some interesting insights to share, also perhaps education welfare officers, other staff at the Short Stay School or in the school and CAMHS workers may have contributed usefully. However, time and resource limitations (one practitioner researcher with additional commitments and limited time) constrained the boundaries of the research and meant these potential participants were not consulted. The use of additional data gathering methods might have been employed to gather the perspectives

of this wider network of participants; for example the use of questionnaires. This was not

undertaken as part of the current research.

Data Collection Methods

The research questions in the current research revolve around the perceptions and

understandings of people involved in the reintegration process. The research aims to

examine the factors that support or hinder the process of reintegration and to explore

the perceptions and experiences of participants of school refusal with a focus on anxiety

and emotional aspects. Possibilities for data gathering methods might include

observation, the use of diaries, questionnaires or interviews. Two of these methods were

ruled out because as the young people were in the position of having already been

reintegrated or were in the process of being reintegrated then it would not really be

feasible to observe the reintegration process and diaries would be retrospective.

Additionally, the use of diaries would necessitate exploration of the literacy levels of

participants. Questionnaires or interviews were the most obvious option in terms of best

fit to the research questions. Although the literature pertaining to school refusal is

extensive and although it is possible to identify a number of questions that could be

posed in a questionnaire deriving from the literature, the research questions suggest an

exploratory aspect to the investigation. There is also a focus on the experience of

individuals around the phenomena of school refusal and reintegration this means it was

important to try to allow participants the freedom to express their views without being

unduly constrained by the researcher's frame of reference or established theories.

Questionnaires were not considered appropriate to meet these requirements as they would necessitate researcher generated questions and also although they would open up the possibility of wider coverage (involving more participants) they would be likely to result in reduced depth of content. Consequently, interviews were considered to be the data collection method most suited to the research questions and methodology of this research study.

Powney and Watts (1987) identify two types of interview question: informant and respondent. Respondent interview questions are identified in advance of the interview, and tend to be structured and might give the impressions of a spoken questionnaire; while informant interview questions are more open ended and are designed to encourage the interviewee to 'open up'. Robson (2002) observes that regarding interviewing, a distinction is commonly made based on the degree of structure involved. This distinction comprises what he terms 'the fully structured interview' which would feature predetermined, set questions; 'the semi-structured interview' which is where the interviewer decides upon the type and range of questions to be asked but has the freedom to modify this, as appropriate during the course of the interview and thirdly the 'unstructured interview' where the interviewer allows the interviewee to direct the conversation, having simply decided upon the general area of interest in advance.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection in the current study for several reasons. Firstly, as the research aim was to gain the

perspectives of a range of participants about reintegration of pupils displaying school

refusal behaviour into mainstream schools and to explore their understanding of and

experience of school refusal, it was felt that interviews would be conducive to eliciting

this type of data.   Also, as discussed earlier interpretive phenomenological approaches

seek to gain a rich picture or understanding of the world as it is experienced by the

participants then semi-structured or unstructured interview approaches provide possible

vehicles for achieving this. A semi-structured as opposed to unstructured interview

approach was used because there were particular areas I wanted to investigate and this

would be more likely to be accomplished if I introduced a certain level of structure to the

process by identifying the type of questions I would pursue whilst allowing for

modification and for the participant to direct the conversation to some extent.   This

permits the researcher to explore ideas elicited from the participants in order to gain a

fuller understanding of their experiences. This is important in interpretive

phenomenological approaches as the role of the researcher/interviewer is one of active

engagement, involving reflection and interpretation. Kvale (1996) describes how the

phenomenological researcher seeks to explore, illuminate and gently probe the

participants expressed views. Additionally, the social nature of the semi-structured

interview process provides the possibility of observing non-verbal responses which may

as Robson (2002) points out 'help in understanding the verbal response' especially when

exploring sensitive topics.

There are certain weaknesses associated with interview- based data collection methods,

which include the ideas that they can be time consuming in terms of analysis, also there

can be questions about interviewer bias and inconsistency. However, Ripley (2004)

questions this notion of bias when applied to the interview process. He takes the view

that when interviews are conducted particularly within a qualitative research context

both parties, researcher and participant are actively engaged in a process of co-

construction and so interviewers cannot be perceived of as tainting knowledge 'if that

knowledge is not conceived as existing in some pure form apart from the circumstances

of its production'. This argument derives from a contructionist view of knowledge and

addresses concerns about bias in the interview process in this context. Ripley (2004) is

critical of the notion that researchers using interviews for data collection purposes should

in some way aim for neutrality.   It would seem that one's understanding of the purpose

and nature of interviewing is closely related to issues of methodology and the role of the

researcher. As discussed above the researcher engaged in interpretive phenomenological

research plays an active and central role but there is a need for balance, sensitivity and

the ability to reflect with awareness on one's contribution to the process. Having

considered these matters in the present study the advantages of collecting data by

means of semi-structured interview as described above are seen to outweigh potential

disadvantages. Issues of reliability and validity are discussed further below.

Twenty interviews were conducted centred around five case studies. This means that

five young people aged between 12 and 16 years at the time were interviewed, and in

relation to each, one parent, the learning mentor from the Short Stay School, and a

member of staff from the receiving mainstream school were interviewed. The initial

intention was to have six case studies however, one young person who had been

identified as suitable became unavailable because he left the area and so I decided to proceed with five. The five young people on whom the case studies were based were identified by the learning mentor and Head Teacher at the Short Stay School on the basis that they were either in the process of being reintegrated into a mainstream school or it was perceived that this had already taken place and that they had been admitted to the short stay school because they were exhibiting school refusal behaviour. Each Interview lasted between 10 and 25 minutes, with the difference in duration based on how talkative the participant proved to be. As mentioned above, I sought to interview the young person's parents as part of the research study but in all five cases it was mothers who agreed to be interviewed and this was accepted. This raises issues about bias in that the perceptions of mothers as a group may be different from those of fathers; however, this study did not examine this. The member of staff from the receiving mainstream school who participated in the study was identified on the basis that they were the person in the school who was most involved in the reintegration of the young person. The learning mentor and the Head Teacher from the Short Stay School provided names of individuals (all learning mentors) from the schools with whom they felt they had liaised most closely about reintegrating the young people and I then consulted with senior managers in the receiving schools to see whether they would similarly identify this person as the most appropriate participant. In all cases they concurred with the views of the staff from the Short Stay School. I realise there may be a lack of reliability about this way of identifying the most appropriate member of the school staff to interview as there may have been a number of staff who worked with the young person to support their return to school.

I conducted all interviews over a three month period from November 2008 to January 2009. In the case of parents four of the interviews were conducted in their homes at a time convenient to them, and one took place at a place of work. Arguably the difference in the location of the interviews may have affected the interview process and the in turn the data produced. All of the parents appeared relaxed in their surroundings and the parent who was interviewed in her work context was the manager of the business and the interview took place at the end of the working day in a room away from other people.

In the case of the learning mentors working in the Short Stay School interviews were conducted in that setting. In relation to the young people three interviews took place in their homes, one at his mother's place of work and one at school. The reason for the different location of interviews was convenience to the young person. The interview that took place at school was in the learning mentor's room with no one else present. The young person spoke at length in this interview. There is a possibility that location for interviews may have affected the way the young people responded; I tried to take this into account by explaining the boundaries around confidentiality which were consistent regardless of location. Discussion about some of the ethical issues involved in interviewing young people occurs in the section titled Ethical Considerations below. Interviews with the receiving school learning mentors took place in the school setting.

With the agreement of participants all interviews were audio recorded. Handwritten notes (memos), recording researcher impressions, reflections and summarising key themes and other relevant information as perceived at that time were made by the researcher within three hours of each interview. This is consistent with a view expressed by Miles and Huberman (1984) which promotes the use of 'memoing' as an important data source in qualitative research.

An interview schedule was devised and consisted of six main question areas: which covered, the events/reasons that led to the young person being at the Short Stay School and understanding of school refusal; how the decision to return to mainstream school was arrived at; participant reactions to the idea of returning to mainstream school and perceptions of the reactions of others(e.g. young person, parent, school); the process of planning and executing the return; perceptions of barriers and facilitators to reintegration; reflections/advice participants might give to someone else in a similar position.

The interview schedule was piloted with the Head Teacher at the Short Stay School and a young person for whom the reintegration process was planned but had not yet commenced. The decision to pilot with the Head Teacher was taken because the only learning mentor in the SSS would be taking part in the research study and the Head Teacher was only other individual with extensive knowledge of the reintegration process. The piloting process resulted in a simplification of some of the terminology used to

ensure 'education' jargon was avoided. Also a decision was taken to amend/omit

questions referring to 'successful reintegration' because of difficulties in defining this in

clear terms made this question unhelpful. A copy of the resulting interview schedule can

be located in appendix 2.

Ethical Considerations

The research study under discussion can be described as practitioner research as the

researcher (myself) occupies a professional role related to the area under investigation. I

work as an educational psychologist providing consultation to the Short Stay School and

this involves attending multi-agency review and strategic meetings. I am also a member

of the management committee for the Short Stay School, this involves participating in

decision making about the processes and functioning of the centre. These roles allow me

opportunities to gain information about the Short Stay School other than by means of the

interviews described above and also mean I relate to staff and students at the Short Stay

School in ways other than as researcher.

 Arguably there are advantages to this situation (easier access to participants, acceptance

and legitimacy) there are also potential drawbacks in relation to role confusion or conflict

and the impact of pre-existing knowledge and ideas. Efforts were made to separate the

researcher role from these other roles to ensure clear boundaries, for example I

scheduled interview sessions with the SSS mentor at separate times from other meetings

we might both be involved in rather than extending my time at the SSS to encompass

both researcher and educational psychologist or management committee member roles. Despite these efforts it is likely that experience and knowledge from these other roles will have impacted on the research to some degree and certainly did contribute to the selection of research topic at the outset. Also, one can question how far staff at the Short Stay School and the young people who attend will have been aware of the different roles being occupied at any given time by the researcher and there is a possibility that the nature and history of existing relationships may have influenced the research processes.

The research study is based around five case studies, each of which centres on a young person. Pseudonyms are used to refer to them: Noreen, Neil, Geoff, Simon and Carla.

Each of these young people might be described as being vulnerable not only because of their young age but also because of the emotional and mental health needs which may be associated with school refusal behaviour. Lewis (2002) identifies issues such as access, consent, confidentiality and recognition which may be relevant with any research participant but around which there is increased sensitivity when working with vulnerable, young participants. As discussed my professional role enabled easy access to gate keepers for the young people who attend the Short Stay School, namely their teachers. The head teacher and learning mentor from the Short Stay School identified young people who met the criteria for the study in that they had either reintegrated into mainstream or were in the process of doing so. The next step was to seek informed consent from the parent or carer of the young people in question and of the young people themselves. Parents were contacted by means of letter (appendix 4), sent out via

the Short Say School; this was followed up a few days later by a telephone call from the researcher. The young people were given a letter at the Short Stay School or in school (appendix 5) which was discussed with them by the learning mentor in school or at the Short Stay School.

Informed consent was discussed at the beginning of each individual interview with the option to withdraw explicitly stated. So the young people were informed that although their parent/carer had agreed to their own participation and that of the young person in the research this was dependent upon gaining the expressed and informed consent or assent to use Lewis' (2000) term, of the young person themselves. This is a delicate issue because although the young people were given the option to withdraw the researcher is aware of the potential for uneven social power relationships to (adult to young person, researcher to researched, professional to service user) to influence matters. There is the danger that these matters may to some extent compromise the notion of informed consent in the sense that vulnerable, young participants may feel less inclined to exercise the option to refuse to participate. Homan (2001) raises this question making the point that the act of giving informed consent requires information, understanding and knowledge of one's possible role in the research activity and one's right to withdraw. This notion of informed consent is dependent on the young person's cognitive levels and confidence and assertiveness skills. Further, in addition to the usual concerns about boundaries of confidentiality in relation to child participants (whether information arises that needs to be shared with a third party for safeguarding purposes)and anonymity in the way research is reported there may be particular sensitivities surrounding the

circumstances of the young people who are the focus for this research. As stated all five

of the young people who participated in the research study have displayed school refusal

behaviours which led to them being provided with provision as a Short Stay School; these

factors may be associated mental health needs and other vulnerabilities.   In this context

one has to be aware that the research may take place at times when the young person is

experiencing difficulties which may increase emotional fragility or the actual experience

of participating may exacerbate or create additional concerns for the young person.

 All five of the young people approached agreed to participate in the research study. The

reasons they gave for this varied from curiosity (Carla), seeing participation as an

opportunity to tell her story (Noreen), because their mother thought it was a good idea

(Simon and Neil) and simply because he was asked (Geoff). None of the young people

attempted to interrogate my motives for undertaking this research and accepted

explanations given.

Certain ethical and practical considerations arise when attempting to elicit the views of

children and young people through interview. As an educational psychologist I meet

some of these issues on a day to day basis in my work. These include matters around

building rapport and putting the young person at ease, this is a particular concern in

school contexts where there are clear and often explicit expectations about how young

people and adults should relate. Young people are positioned in a deferential position to

adults in school and this will inevitably influence the views they are prepared to express

in this context. Although only one interview with a young person took place in school, all

of the young people were aware that I work in schools, (some had seen me in that context) and that I had spoken to or would be speaking to staff at their schools. I tried to address these issues by introducing myself using my first and second name, which staff in most schools would not do. I also described my role as an educational psychologist as working with children and young people to try to help them to deal with school and other matters more effectively. I also, enquired about their day and the activities they had been involved in and shared similar information about myself. I attempted to communicate interest and acceptance of whatever they might say while trying to avoid appearing to patronise. This together with explicitly seeking their consent again and stating their ability to opt out of the research study at any time was intended to redress the power imbalance and also to gain trust such that the young people might be prepared to express their views in an open way.

Lewis (2002) discusses interview technique for researchers seeking to obtain children's views. She identifies four important areas for consideration in this endeavour: initiating the dialogue, sustaining the dialogue, phrasing of comments by the interviewer and use of context. In considering the first of these, initiating the dialogue, Lewis (2002) weighs the benefits or otherwise of questions and statements. Edwards and Mercer (1987) suggest that the use of questions by researchers might contribute to maintaining the adult/child power imbalance and may be reminiscent of teacher interactions. However, the use of general open-ended questions has been found to be effective in situations where accuracy of recall in children is a focus (Dent, 1986 and Ceci and Bruck 1993). Considerations relating to sustaining dialogue relate to question type and the use of

pause. These issues are relevant in the current research study as five young people who

might be considered vulnerable are interviewed. The same interview schedule is used for

the young people and adults alike, however, the interviewer style, the exact nature of the

introduction and rapport building and the use of pause varied slightly between interviews

as I interacted with the participants. Open-ended questions tend to be used in the

interview schedule and I aimed for an informal conversational style.

I made efforts to ensure that the young people were not harmed as a result of

participating in the research by alerting the pastoral support networks in the settings in

which the young people were placed (mainstream school or Short Stay School) about

possible reactions and the need for support. Also young people were debriefed after

their interviews regarding their feelings and responses following the interview process.

In addressing these ethical issues the researcher observed the British Psychological

Society's (BPS) Code of Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines(2006) and the

Professional Practice Guidelines from the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of

the BPS (2002).

In addition to the ethical issues that arise when working with young people as research

participants this research also included parents as participants and again ethical

considerations were addressed. As described above consent was sought from parents for

their participation and that of their child in the research process. This process was

conducted under the umbrella of the Short Stay School with letters being sent out from

that institution. In part this was intended to help reassure parents that the request was emanating from a trustworthy source with the approval of the head teacher of the Short Stay School. Arguably, parents as adults are in a stronger position than children or young people to weigh the advantages and disadvantages of taking part in research however, issues of relative power, legitimacy and information remain. In order to address this matter I attempted to give clear and honest explanations of the intended research, the processes involved and its use and dissemination. Some parents viewed their participation in the study as a way of contributing to understanding and improving practice around school refusal, others appeared to welcome the opportunity to tell the story of what for them was an important and emotional experience.

Data Analysis

As noted by Bailey (2008) and Shin, Kim & Chung (2009) whilst the processes of transcribing and analysing data from qualitative research are key in the production of information, illustrating diverse perspectives and multi-faceted interpretation there is often a lack of specificity about methods of analysis in the reporting of research. This may well be an unavoidable feature of qualitative research due to the cyclical/iterative nature of data analysis and the requirement for interpretation but nevertheless issues of data analysis require careful consideration. Tesch (1990) identifies twenty-six types of qualitative analysis which can in turn be grouped under four broad headings.   These headings appear below, and in each case refer to a particular focus for analysis:

1. the characteristics of language

2. the discovery of regularities

3. the comprehension of the meaning of text or action

4. reflection

The first heading refers to approaches to analysis that would tend to be relatively highly structured and addressing linguistic features of text whilst the subsequent headings are increasingly less structured and formal. In his discussion of approaches to the analysis of qualitative data Robson (2002) chooses to consider approaches seeking to discover regularities and presents what he terms 'a quasi-experimental' approach leaning towards advocating the kinds of processes often associated with quantitative research data analysis. Yin (1998) gives careful consideration to case study research and promotes an approach to data analysis that seeks to use empirical methods to establish 'facts' of a case taking the view that with a case study there may be many more 'variables of interest than data points'. He observes formal data analysis procedures for case study research to be underdeveloped but directs the reader to two broad starting points which constitute either:

- following the theoretical propositions that led to the case study in the first place

 or

- developing a descriptive framework for organising the case study

In seeking to develop a descriptive framework (the second of the two starting points suggested by Yin (1998)one engages in a process of identifying themes or ideas linked to the research aims which also seem to account for the body of data constituting the case

while avoiding redundancy. These themes or ideas are identified through a process of what Yin (1998) refers to as 'playing with the data' which might include 'categorising, summarising, condensing or recombining'.   Yin (1998) makes the point that in arriving at a description of a phenomenon one is unavoidably working with an implicit theory as to what that phenomenon is. The idea of the analysis of qualitative research being iterative or cyclical has been discussed previously in the discussion on Interpretive Phenomenology, but is relevant here also when considering how the researcher arrives at a descriptive framework. Bromley (1996) makes the point that analysis of qualitative research should not be left to the end of the process but rather should be seen as a continuing concern, the implication being that some level of analysis is ongoing throughout the data gathering process and beyond.   There is also a likelihood that this iterative process will in turn encourage the emergence of what might be termed an evolving research design. Yin (1998) seems to view the approach to case study analysis of developing a descriptive framework as inferior to that of following a theoretical proposition.   One criticism put forward relates to the open ended nature of the process. There is no agreed way of deciding which aspects of the data to foreground in developing a descriptive framework or indeed any guidance as to how to set about this which could result in a lack of rigour, with aspects of the data being ignored in preference for others based on researcher bias.

It is the very fact that qualitative research requires an element of interpretation, meaning analysis cannot be adequately described within a simple formula that leads to uncertainties about data analysis but also highlight the active role of the researcher.

Both Robson (2002) and Yin (1998) see the skills and abilities of the researcher/ analyst as being of central importance in the process of analysis. They highlight skills of interpretation, the ability to process information in a meaningful way, clear thinking and the ability to handle evidence derived from diverse sources as being of central importance to effective data analysis. Yin (1994) calls for high quality analysis and offers four principles upon which this might be based:

1. show that you examined and entertained all the relevant evidence

2. include the major rival interpretations and use your evidence to address these rivals

3. focus on the most significant research questions that initially led to your case study to show that your analysis did not merely follow the path of least resistance

4. compare your analytic procedures and findings to as much prior research as possible to show that you have tried to build on research rather than reinvent it

In the present research study I attempt to use these principles to underpin the analysis and discussion, the approach to analysis is one of developing a descriptive framework. The significant research questions that led to the case study are:

What factors support or act as barriers to reintegrating pupils displaying school refusal behaviours from a Short Stay School to a mainstream school

and

What are the experiences and conceptions of school refusal of those involved in the reintegration process with a focus on anxiety and other emotional factors

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The approach to data analysis adopted by the researcher links to methodological interests. Semi-structured interviews comprised the data collection method for the present study, these were audio recorded and then transcribed. This generated data comprising a series of 20 texts which leads to questions about text and how it can be analysed.

Titscher et al (2000) engage in discussion on what constitutes a text and seem to arrive at the conclusion that a text is 'a communicative event' where text internal (linguistic) and text external (extra-linguistic context) elements are relevant. In other words contextual factors create expectation and impact on the production and understanding of texts. It is important here to explore some of the ideas around text definition and formation as it is relevant to the type of data collected and to decisions about the process of analysis.

De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) distinguish seven criteria applicable in defining text , these are: cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality. These are explained briefly below:

Cohesion – refers to surface linguistic aspects of text, such as grammatical elements

Coherence – refers to meaning of texts where some ideas will be expressed implicitly while others may be implied. On this point Titscher at al (2000) comment that texts in themselves often create little sense but can only really be understood in connection with

knowledge of the world and of the text. In other words the meaning of texts is interpreted or co-constructed through one's previous experience

Intentionality – refers to the motivations of the individuals who produce the text, what they were trying to achieve through the text

Acceptability – a person who hears a text needs to receive it as such for it to be a text. This refers to the communicative process in that acceptability relates to the extent to which recipients of text find that it conforms to expectations of what is useful or relevant

Informativity – refers to the particular balance of new information and expected information in a text

Situationality –this relates to contextual factors that might influence text production. In other words aspects of context will make certain types of text more or less likely or appropriate

Intertextuality – refers to the existence of different genres of text for example, narrative texts or instructive texts such as student text books; but also to the idea that a text will relate to preceding texts and so form a coherent whole

As Titscher et at (2000) conclude the implication of the above is that in analysing text there are decisions to be made about which elements will form the primary foci, whether these should be text internal-factors around cohesion and coherence and or text-external factors which are more context and discourse related. The present study attempts to adopt an interpretive phenomenological approach in order to gain an understanding of participants' experience of the reintegration process from a short stay school to

mainstream pertaining to particular cases and their experiences and conceptions of school refusal. This type of endeavour requires attention to text-external factors where interpretation will encompass the researcher experience of and understanding of the participants' purposes both implied and stated and an appreciation of their understanding of the needs of young people in short stay school provision within a wider educational context and other such factors. The researcher interpretation will be informed by perceptions gained during the interviews and recorded in the form of memos or notes soon after the interviews but will also develop through careful exploration of transcriptions and audio recordings of interviews.

Each interview was audio recorded and transcribed. The researcher then worked closely with the text reading and re-reading with the aim of gaining insights into the participants' experience and perspectives and beginning to identify emerging themes.   The texts were annotated and coded. Through this process themes and then super ordinate themes were identified and the researcher made reference to the handwritten notes (memos) made after each interview to further inform this part of the analysis. The superordinate themes accounted for and were relevant to the themes emerging from the five case studies. In accordance with Conroy's (2003) suggestion the researcher re-listened to the audio recordings and précised the contents to re-immerse herself in the participant's world and as a means of enabling the interpretive process. According to Conroy (2003) through these endeavours 'what was disclosed as primary and meaningful within the narrative becomes more apparent'.

The themes identified from the five case studies were then considered in relation to the research questions by focusing on the following areas.

1. The nature of school refusal

    -references to school refusal

    -references to anxiety in school refusal

    -references to emotional factors in school refusal

2. Facilitators of reintegration

3. Barriers to reintegration

This process of combining the data from the five case studies assists in identifying key features of the process and experience of reintegrating young people with school refusal behaviours into mainstream following a period in a short stay school. However, as discussed above one of the strengths and requirements of the case study approach is the need to focus on the singular, in other words on each case study. Consequently summary data analyses for the five individual case studies will be presented, highlighting variation between cases with the aim of ensuring that the heterogeneity is not lost. This will be followed by the combined analysis with interpretations and discussion of these.

CHAPTER 5: DATA PRESENTATION

Introduction

Data will be presented in the following way:

1. summary overviews and analyses of the five individual case studies including excerpts from the interviews accompanied by researcher interpretation where appropriate;

2. a combined analysis of the case studies in accordance with the identified research questions:

- The nature of school refusal with a focus on anxiety and emotion

- Facilitators and barriers to reintegration

Five Individual Case Studies

From the analysis of the five case studies which centred on individual young people four super ordinate themes were identified, these were:

- The nature of school refusal

- Emotional responses, contributory factors or climate associated with School Refusal

- Parent/young person dynamic

- The process of reintegration

These themes emerged from the data but not always separately. The relationship between them was often complex and intertwined. For example, participants discussed emotions relating to their experience of school refusal, these related to feelings when dealing with school refusal or emotions which they believed may in some way have

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contributed to the development of school refusal; or emotions experienced or exhibited during different phases of the reintegration process. So while emotions emerged as a super ordinate theme emotions also referred to other super ordinate themes, namely the process of reintegration or the nature of school refusal. The five case studies are presented below in tables 2i to 2v. Each case is organised according to the four super ordinate themes and brief narrative exerts from the interviews with interpretations where appropriate are presented and grouped according these themes. By obtaining parallel accounts of each young person's Noreennd reintegration it is possible to get a sense of the experience of participants involved in the case.

Noreen (Table 2i) Nature of SR		Parent / Home / Child Dynamic	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• bullied no one intervening effectively	• student and parent perceptions but take an objective view – perception is key	• bereavement and illness in household	• in home student outlook and attendance
• medical labels: depression	• this seemed to give credence to non-attendance	• attitude of parents, family, history of poor attendance	• parenting style and family culture impact
• medics involved	• response of medical staff can make a big difference – need to see bigger picture	• manipulates her mother and situations	
• she just didn't want to come into school…I had to leave school to go and collect	• ongoing nature of SR and individual level of support needed		
• student has a stubborn streak			
Emotions		**Nature of Reintegration**	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• student was petrified during early stages of reintegration and this could have threatened process	• I supported her in managing her emotion	• one on one mentoring	• Intensive personalised work required
• mum was anxious need reassuring	• I had to support mum manage her emotions	• lots of home visits - built relationship with mum	• invested time and effort with parents
• feared walking through school	• support in practical ways	• liaised with English Teacher	• internal liaison and communication in school
• frightened of reading aloud in class – pupil anxiety		• I was quite firm with her. Mum was supporting me	• ongoing blips, even though reintegration going well
		• lots of hours, lots of time spent on them	• investing time
		• liaison between SSS and School	
		• parent approach not showing reservations to student	

Neil (Table 2ii) Nature of SR		Parent / Home / Child Dynamic	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• depends on which member of staff you spoke to …. he was just a naughty boy who'd do what he chose • obstinate from point of view of SSS, they'd done a lot of work with him and referred him to CAMHS so….. • social difficulties… trouble making friends • lot of CAMHS working • hand washing / anxious • they'd been working with him in depth and understood some of his …. Root causes and why • scared to go into science….the chemicals • I don't really knew…he didn't feel right, he didn't like crowds…change….. overwhelming • he played on the teachers • OCD	• SR can be misinterpreted by staff as naughty • with insight and taking time to know, able to get a clearer perspective • requires specialist CAMHS input • need to take time to know YP • specific fear – unreasonable • hard to define, many strands that led to him feeling overwhelmed • manipulative YP • Mental Health label	• he knew what strings to pull with his mum	• YP manipulating mum

Emotions		Nature of Reintegration	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• mum's apprehension re integration • I was thinking he's happy as he is, just leave him	• mum handled this well didn't communicate it to students • some resistance felt by mum to	• so I liaised straight with SSS and we did it between ourselves • mum sceptical at first – didn't communicate • he started…a few days at a time	• liaison with SSS role as link between school and SSS • SSS take lead – they knew • gradual

Neil continued Emotions		Nature of Reintegration	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• he's not worrying any more. I always knew when he was stressed constantly washing hands	• awareness of signs and liaising and SSS	• they always wanted him there on time, that's why he always had to see S	• school rules re punctuality role of mentor as intermediary
		• any problem he could see her during the day	• open door
• agitated where as now he's not	• he got angry with teacher	• I think it should have been done sooner, even though it was successful	
• my husband had a right go… Yeah it was tough. I challenged him….at one point I was so stressed	• stress on parent of dealing with negative, inflexible professionals	• always leave it open,…but for support if its required	• offer and ongoing support / open door from SSS
		• at the time…I was think he's happy as he is just leave him	• some resistance from parent
		• Mrs V on his case…detention she refused to come to meetings	• negative, obstructive approach by senior staff
		• she doesn't understand cos' she's an old school teacher…he'd be sarcastic	• staff with traditional or inflexible attitude can disrupt
		• S was great…she talked to him and she talked to me …and I always said…just call a meeting	• communication and collaboration between mentor and staff
		• they was like that at SSS	• parent and SSS
		• S will say…you can either stay with me or I'll take you to the lesson…	• involving YP, giving them options
		• S'd sometimes like pop in	
		• he only did a short time where it was a couple of days…you're doing a week	• mentor ongoing involvement, check on him
		• he needed support, he needed pushing	• this was what was needed individual approach
		• reintegration was smooth…phases when he wasn't going…	• sometime a firm approach (individual)
		• non teaching member of staff who is there for support. Just for the pupil	• phases, set backs
			• emotional and practical availability

Geoff (Table 2iii) Nature of SR		Parent / Home / Child Dynamic	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• a lot of worries and fears • she's a lovely lady by she's very sharp….he's so sensitive • locked in a room at previous school…that triggered off a fear • didn't overcome his anxieties…it hadn't been dealt with • easy option…just sent him home…developed into a routine • difficulties to deal with supply staff…in his experience supply staff never managed a lesson properly there was also upheaval or disturbance • because he was beaten up and bullied severely in primary school • he went into panic mode • he wanted contact, like separation anxiety • he's not being naughty • he's frightened of walking home	• anxiety linked to specific incident in school • incidents/fears not being addressed exacerbated problem • avoidant approach encouraged by school • YP felt unsafe in classes where Teacher not in control or potential for this • history affecting here and now • ongoing concern despite reintegration going well	• she'd be more concerned worried and apprehension than YP • if mum hung around her fears and anxieties…could show and reflect on YP • all pupils that we work with know which buttons to press for their parents…know their parents weaknesses	
Emotions		**Nature of Reintegration**	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• worries and fears, anxiety • she'd be more concerned, worried and apprehensive • nervous about reintegration – stressed • I think they're slightly nervous • he feels safe • that's when I think we'll hit a massive problem…that's my biggest worry	• YP • mum's emotions, working with mum's emotions • YP • family • YP what makes a difference • parent worrying about next stage	• correct measures put into place to make him feel comfortable in dealing with things…YP was ready • incidents along ….whereby she'd be more concerned and worried and apprehensive than YP • he also needed somebody to walk him to lessons he didn't… request for anybody to stay in lessons with him	• emotionally comfortable as preparation YP readiness/motivation • parent anxiety • listen to YP, individual needs levels / types of support

Geoff continued Emotions		Nature of Reintegration	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• until we got the place at SSS I was being rang 3 or 4 times a day • mainstream school was a contributing factor to the problem	• pressure on parent by school staff • school role in exacerbating SR	• meet him in the car park..mum would hand him over..leave him with me • but I think it was that mum needed to understand and trust us..before she could let go • and we didn't go back to the centre…I would rather find an area in school where I could • important for him…to know he was not going to be pushed or forced into doing something not happy with • a couple of blips • I always wanted to go back to comp • I wanted lots of support from my family and SSS…like if I got a problem I can feel like I can tell them • all of SEN, They just walked me to my lesson, been nice to me, supportive • just like put my head down really, and just think I gotta do it • he did a couple of visits as a visitor as a friend of the school sort of visit…wonder round…a bit like a child taking them to nursery • YP has to feel safe • he was with his friends which he hadn't got when he first started…SSS gave him confidence to talk to people • mentor from SSS was very firm with him • he's not doing PE still at the moment	• had to consider and balance mum's fears with YP's and develop strategy to deal with both • approximation - prevent avoidance • control – YP has a voice • YP motivation • YP new of support • how school helped – basic level of emotional and practical support • YP approach that helped • very gradual start • importance of sound network role of SSS re confidence • ongoing / gradual approach

Simon (Table 2iv) Nature of SR		Parent / Home / Child Dynamic	
Interviews • it was like a breakdown, I suppose • believe that he went, he had to go to hospital • Mr B said…he'd never come across a pupil, he was absolutely petrified • it's about how comfortable they feel at school if they feel at ease • perhaps some of the Year 7s…they don't register that there's someone there and it all builds up • he'd started High School in 'B' where I used to live he found it incredibly difficult moving there because of the stress we were going through • I was stressed from at home and it affected my school	**Interpretation** • extreme, intensive, emotional overload • extreme reaction • school mentor perception of SR • parental separation and new school, moving home proved too much upheaval	**Interviews** • me and his dad…went through a separation and he didn't take it brilliantly • he could only relate to me at the time, he didn't want to know anybody else • I was part of the problem in his head, …and it took outside people to help him	**Interpretation** • a form of regression
Emotions		**Nature of Reintegration**	
Interviews • petrified • stress we were going through • emotional crisis • he was frightened, he'd gone inwards - it was as if he'd had a complete breakdown • emotion was the biggest problem, the biggest fear for YP…going back there…in a lesson and getting upset who would he turn to	**Interpretation** • the family was under stress • in S's case SR was about his emotional response and reintegration needed to address this	**Interviews** • mentor from SSS came in and went through everything…he came in on a restricted time table • a couple of sessions where he'd had a look around the school, no lessons • we were all in touch with mum. The 3 of us worked together and really there were no hiccups • there were a couple of time when I didn't push it. There was a lot of talking to him and listening • you've got to make it clear there's always somebody to talk to	**Interpretation** • we took lead from SSS • gradual return • school mentor role in reintegration – need for judgement

Simon continued	Emotions		Nature of Reintegration	
Interviews	**Interpretation**		**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
			• and with his form tutor…he'd approach his form tutor	• YP was willing to take opportunities to talk with staff
			• mentor from SSS – very professional, it was all planned	• mentor from SSS approach instilled confidence in the process for mentor and YP
			• couple of blips – we did expect it	
			• we talked to K about how…if they said well where have you been	• forward planning to help remove fears
			• was apparent that K (and S) had a good sound relationship…he'd got every confidence in K	• quality of relationship between K and YP
			• he went there for like an afternoon and then a day and they increased it…then worked with the school and me to keep him there	• getting YP into school on a gradual basis was the start but SSS had to work with parent and school on supporting attendance
			• they did let all the teacher know what had happened	• systemic approach in school
			• we knew it was only a temporary situation it was just to boost him so that was the ultimate goal	
			• he actually wanted to get back himself	
			• she (mentor) was really good and said we'll try this and we'll try that	• YP motivation (mum)
			• every time we spoke he was there, and he understood	• SSS staff worked with us and were attentive and flexible
			• she asked when I wanted to go and I said when I feel more confident to try – no they did push it a bit	• involvement of YP
				• YP felt involved had some control over process but aware of mentor agenda

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Carla (Table 2v) Nature of SR		Parent / Home / Child Dynamic	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• excluding herself from lessons	• suggestion of wilful behaviour	• I think sometimes she did things to upset mum because…she voiced mum doesn't care about me	
• wasn't talking to any staff on what her issues or what her concerns were – staff here felt they couldn't understand her	• staff felt unable to relate to YP effectively		
• silent approach, wouldn't speak		• thought it was just what YP thought and used as an excuse	• YP manipulates her mother and the situation
• YP's barriers was..depending on who she hooked up with	• silence seen as a deliberate strategy / choice		
• YPwould definitely hook up with other people and if they were truants she would too	• absence of social anxiety suggests difficulty quality to YP's refusal to attend		
• at times she'd tell her mum she wanted to find another school…I don't want to find her another school	• uncertainty from Chelsea about what she wanted		
• the reasons we were given were bullying and finding it difficult to make friends and socialise	• these reasons were offered but not evident so there are doubts		
• stubbornness			
• problems getting her to talk			
• it was chosen behaviour			
• not talk to anybody…her way of getting of things			
• don't like school			
• she was refusing to go in her lessons at school	• a suggestion of manipulation		
Emotions		**Nature of Reintegration**	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**
• didn't see any anxiety	• these viewed as counter indicators of SR	• a lot of time was spent on YP in terms of taking her to lessons. Not sitting with her, but…walking…escorting	• mentors invested time in YP according to her stated needs
• no signs of fear	• her behaviour confuses me, she is always changing		
• my heads all over the place with her cos she's here, there and everywhere		• a lot of time she didn't get through the door to get in class	

Carla (continued)	Emotions		Nature of Reintegration	
Interviews	**Interpretation**	**Interviews**	**Interpretation**	
		• …even rang mentor from SSS…came back and speak to her because she…she'd come into lessons • when K came in she wouldn't speak • sometimes she would, sometimes she wouldn't • mum was ok…she just said that yes she does want her back at school…she was on board and happy • few members of staff from the initial meeting weren't too happy but I think that was purely for selfish reasons • she was cooperative but there were times where she didn't…it was simply because she didn't want to • with YP, its just you have to tell her that this has to be done…she reacts better to strict orders • knew I had to go back because even when started at SSS for 6 weeks	• we tried everything we could think of YP did not help herself • YP controlled the situation • Cooperation from parent • At times negative attitudes emerged from school staff regarding reintegration, they were thinking more about themselves • YP would pick and choose when to be cooperative • YP has to be approached in a certain way to be effective • SSS was always a temporary placement a return to school was inevitable	

Overviews of Individual Case Studies

Overviews of the five individual case studies are presented below which can be considered in combination with the case tables 2i to 2v above with the aim of providing a holistic view of each case. Following this section the combined data from the five case studies will be presented. The case study design permits a focus on the individual and unique aspects of each case while the embedded case study element allows for a focus on themes that emerge from the combined data. As stated by Elliott (1999) it is widely accepted that school refusal behaviour is not a unitary syndrome but is instead 'heterogeneous and multicausal' this means there is likely to be noticeable variation between cases; it is important that this variation between cases is not muted in the pursuit of shared themes.

NOREEN

Noreen is 16 years old and is in year 11 according to the English school system. Noreen lives in a household with her mother and stepfather. Her father died when she was 18 months old. She is the younger of two children although her older brother has set up home elsewhere and now has his own family. The family are of White British ethnicity. Both Noreen's mother and stepfather have longstanding health problems (mental and physical) which mean they are unable to work. The family live in an economically deprived area of the English West Midlands Town in which the study is set. During the primary phase of her education Noreen's attendance was not highlighted at problematic

although her mother reports that Noreen has never liked school and has always shown some reluctance to attend. Noreen presents as articulate and reflective.

In their separate interviews Noreen and her mother present bullying and mental health/emotional factors as being key contributors to the development of school refusal behaviour in her case. An experience of quite severe physical and verbal bullying is presented with the view that school staff were ineffectual in intervening to stop this. Noreen and her mother are critical of staff from the mainstream school and the short stay school in terms of what they perceived to be a lack of understanding and acceptance of the barriers to attendance that were experienced. This parent used terms like 'depression' and 'school phobia' and 'stress' to describe Noreen's difficulties and expressed the view that the extent of her daughter's mental health needs was not appreciated. This view was broadly supported by Noreen herself.   Noreen and her mother questioned the necessity and the assumed benefits of a return to mainstream school. Her mother in particular felt the process was forced and rushed:

- o *I tell you the truth it was too quick, miles too quick. I'll tell you something, I mean, don't get me wrong, they did, they were lovely at the [short stay school] but I don't think [name of mentor at short stay school] could get rid of them quick enough. And I'm sorry to have to say that*

Similarly, when discussing the process and decision making about reintegration Noreen commented:

- o *I thought I was ready but now when I look back, maybe I should have stayed a bit longer. And then, my mum didn't want me to come back, nor did my stepdad. My mum didn't think I was ready*

These views challenge the rationale behind Short Stay Schools and the accepted view that mainstream education should be the ultimate goal for most young people.

Perceptions about the family context and the influence of parental attitude on the young person were presented by the mentors in Noreen's case as significant. The family context was presented by all parties as being one in which ill health and bereavement were key features:

- o *[Young person name] dad died when she was about 2, which I don't think the family's ever come to terms with because that's mentioned an awful lot during home visits….mum's husband and the mum has got health issues as well. Nobody seems to be very well in the house*

- o *There's been a lot of deaths in the family. … It was her dad, them she lost two granddads in one week. And she lost her nan, so it's really, it ain't been, it's been a rocky ride*

The mentors from both settings also expressed the view or suspicion that other children within the family had experienced difficulties in maintaining school attendance. In this case study all parties, particularly the adults perceive family circumstances as impacting on the young person but the mentors see the young person as oscillating between acting as a support to the parents and being someone who is supported, sometimes in a way that was viewed as inappropriate for her age.

A feature of this case is the investment of time made by the mentor in the mainstream school in developing a positive working relationship with Noreen's mother.

- o *We had to win [young person name] mum around and we had to work with [young person name] mum on a bit of letting go of [young person] and letting her be a bit independent*

- o *With her health problems they wouldn't come into school, so I did a lot of home visits, a lot off my own bat as well*

In Noreen's case study family context is presented as a key feature contributing to the development and maintenance of school refusal behaviour and in leading to the mentor adopting an approach incorporating an emphasis of parent focused work as a means of supporting reintegration. This emphasis on working with the parent may also derive from the fact that Noreen's mother was doubtful about the need to move towards reintegration at all and was critical of the pace at which this was enacted. The dynamic between the parent and the young person is also perceived to be important with changing dependencies being a feature. The perceptions of Noreen and her mother about the role of bullying as an aspect of the school experience are also salient. The ongoing nature of reintegration is a feature of this case.

NEIL

Neil is 15 years old and is in year 11 according to the English school system. He resides with his parents; his mother is White British and is from the West Midlands and his father is Polish. Neil is the eldest of three children. The family live in a small semi-detached house in an economically deprived area in the English West Midlands town in which the study takes place. Neil's mother has a history of mental health difficulties (depression), she does not work outside the home. His father is an unskilled worker. Difficulties regarding attendance appear to have begun following Neil's transfer to the secondary phase of his education. Neil presents as alert and small for his age.

In Neil's case study participants offer a range of perceptions about the nature of the his school refusal behaviour; the mentor from the short stay school refers to anxiety and fear, while the mentor from the mainstream school describes how staff tended to perceive Neil as 'naughty' and wilful and his mother cites secondary transition as being a factor. This presents a complex picture.

All adult participants perceive there to have been negative attitudes exhibited by at least one influential member of staff in the mainstream school which made reintegration more difficult than it might otherwise have been. Neil's mother refers to what she sees as unnecessary barriers being put in place:

- *It was as if her'd got a personal vendetta against him*

- *Her was always giving him detention. 'Cos she knew the situation, she knew that he couldn't go in on his own and 'cos I has to take me daughter in to Junior school*

he was always late but he would always be there before 9 o' clock. So he'd always be there before the lessons, but her just, her always give him detention

The mentor from the mainstream school considered it important for school staff not to jump to conclusions about the factors impacting on a young person's attendance difficulties and described how she had paid close attention to the information and advice being offered by the mentor from the short stay school who she perceived to have invested time in getting to know the young person. This mentor viewed the small environment offered by the short stay school as being conducive to staff getting to know and understand the young person.

- *Nobody had a real understanding of [young person] I don't think, and why he acted the way he did*

- *But mainly I used the information the [short stay school] gave me. Because obviously they'd been working with him in depth and understood some of his, you know, got to understand some of the root causes of why he behaved the way he did and that it wasn't just his behaviour they were looking at. It was the reasons why. And they'd obviously worked very intensively and in a very small environment compared to the big school where you only ever see the behaviour*

Neil was perceived by all parties to experience mental health difficulties that had required involvement from specialists working for CAMHS. Terms including 'stress', 'Obsessive compulsive Disorder' (OCD) and 'anxiety' were used to describe this young person.

Neil's mother described how his school refusal behaviour and the attitude of some staff from the mainstream school and attendance workers impacted detrimentally on her own emotional state. She spoke of having to assert herself:

- *But I said to him, but I'm trying my hardest*

- *I challenged him, I did. I said well do it, I'm not bothered. You know, so send me, I don't care. At one point I was so stressed out … I said send me to prison, I said I could do with a rest. I actually challenged it*

The mentors from both settings perceived the young person in this case as stubborn and manipulative, particularly in relation to his mother, who in turn expressed some ambivalence about her relationship with Neil. She reflected that there had been longstanding difficulties on her part in relating to Neil.

Features of this Neil's case identified by all participants relate to the ongoing nature of reintegration in relation to this young person's school refusal and the importance of collaboration between the parent and the mentors. The mentor from the school commented on how this parent was careful not to communicate to her doubts about the likely success of reintegration efforts to Neil. From the parent's perspective the whole experience of reintegration was additionally demanding and due to a lack of understanding and negativity of an influential member of staff at the mainstream school and to an attendance officer.

GEOFF

Geoff is 12 years old and is in year 8 at school. In his family he is the younger of two boys, they live with both their parents. Geoff's father is employed in a white collar job in a neighbouring city and his mother works part time as a teaching assistant in a secondary school. The family live in a middle income area of the Midlands town in which the study is set. Geoff experienced social difficulties with his peers at junior school and there were complaints that he was the victim of bullying. He presents as friendly and gentle natured.

Geoff was reintegrated to a mainstream school other than the one he had attended previously, consequently the mentor from the mainstream school who participated in the research study first knew of him when discussions about a return to mainstream school were initiated by staff from the Short Stay School. The parent and the mentor from the short stay school expressed a view that the school refusal behaviour in this case developed as a result of a combination of some of Geoff's personal characteristics which included a general level of anxiousness and difficult and anxiety provoking situations that had occurred following his transition to secondary school. The mentor considers these were not handled well and remained unresolved:

His problems started when he was locked in a room at a previous school, and that triggered off a fear in him. And things just went downhill. He was then managed moved I think it was to another school but he didn't overcome his anxieties and fears. It hadn't been dealt with, it hadn't been looked at and it continued in that school as well so when

he came to us he was genuinely scared and worried about being locked in a room and

being not being able to go and see mum

All of the adults in this case, including the parent express the view that the Geoff's

mother's own anxieties and need to protect, sometimes inappropriately impacted on the

his emotional state and had to be managed in order to support the reintegration process.

- *I think you become an over protective parent when this happens. And you've got this fear of is he ok? I still ring him every night about half three, 'cos I work till four…. Just hello, have you had a nice day. But just to sort of acknowledge good boy, you've been, you've done it, another day over.*

  Parent Geoff

- *Simply because if mum hung around her fears and anxieties and her anxiousness would show and reflect on [young person]*

  SSS Mentor Geoff

Geoff's mother seemed to have had a traumatic experience associated with his school

refusal behaviour which impacted on family life and on emotions

- *Then I had to take time off work, obviously because [young person] was only in part time education. My husband is the main breadwinner, so I had to have three months off. I found it very hard going back to work afterwards. … And you walk round with your phone in your pocket all the time for the first few weeks waiting for the phone call*

Geoff's mother described how she relied heavily on the mentor from the short stay

school to support her emotionally and practically through the ups and downs of

reintegration:

- *They were my lifeline. In my opinion [young person] would be a recluse at home now. We would have had to have got permission to educate him at home*

References to fear and anxiety are strong threads running through the interviews of all participants in Geoff's case study, and although a view of his mother as being over protective and anxious emerges, there is also a sense that this response is not altogether unreasonable given the reports of the young person's early experiences of bullying and the implementation of ill-judged interventions by school staff.

SIMON

Simon is 14 years old and is in year 9 of the English school system. He is the eldest of three children, he has two sisters. All three children live with their mother since their parents separated two and a half years ago. Simon's mother manages her own small business. The family live in a middle income area of the West Midlands town in which the study takes place, they are of White British Ethnicity. Simon presented as somewhat shy in the interview situation and tended to give short responses. Simon's attendance at primary school was excellent; difficulties arose during year 7 following his transfer to secondary school.

All participants in Simon's case study expressed the view that his school refusal behaviour arose as a result of what turned out to be overwhelming, stressful life events featuring change. According to the mentor from the mainstream school, the parent and the Simon, prior to this 'crisis' he had had a fairly uneventful experience of school life. The parent makes reference to what she terms 'an emotional crisis' which occurred when Simon was in year 7, (so following transition to secondary school), at a time when the parents' relationship had broken down and a decision had been taken for the father to move out of the family home and Simon and his mother moved house to be closer to the maternal grandparents. This combination of events suggests that he was experiencing a number of changes in his life, some of which were for him undesirable. Simon himself attributes the stress experienced to the family matters:

- o *I was stressed from at home and it affected my school*

This case supports the view discussed earlier and attributed to Kahn and Nursten (1968) that school refusal does not necessarily implicate a fear or difficulty directly related to school; it may in some circumstances reflect a displacement of child/family conflict. The situation described in Simon's case study is reminiscent of the descriptions of separation anxiety, such as that offered by Doobay (2008) who highlighted the emphasise the existence of excessive worry and fear of that harm to the child or parent . The behaviours attributed to the young person in Simon by the adults include displays of extreme fear and anxiety including panic attacks. The mentor from the Short Stay School appears to have conceived of the case in this way:

- o *Because mum and dad had split up and he is seeing less of dad I think he was thinking that I need to be with my mum, and am I going to lose my mum, sort of thing*

Participants in Simon's case study report that the fearful and panicky behaviour was exhibited at school and there is an element of criticism expressed by the mentor from the Short Stay School as to how this dealt with:

- o *He'd just get anxious and scared and panicked, have panic attacks. They'd just send him home. They'd phone home and send him home. And I think that just developed into a pattern or routine and the first sign, ok he's got to go*

Simon was admitted to hospital for a few days as a direct result of concerns about the behaviours he was exhibiting, and it was in this context that he was seen by a child psychiatrist and referred to the Short Stay School. The parent in this case was highly appreciative of the timely intervention from CAMHS and in fact the three adult participants made positive comments about how this case had been handled by all of those involved and the quality of collaboration. Simon's mother presented herself as a

strong, independent character, who manages her own business. She does not perceive

herself and is not perceived by either the two mentors as being anxious or over

protective of her son:

- o *But I'm quite a strong person though, in that respect anyway, so it doesn't phase me in that way. .. But I just sort of went with the flow, you know, they've dealt with these problems so many more times than I would have, so I felt trusting their judgement was the best way for me, and working together*

The particulars of this case suggest that the separation anxiety type difficulties which

arose were not based on parental anxiety or at least not the mother's.

CARLA

Carla is 15 years old and is in year 11 according to the English school system. She is an only child and lives with her mother who is a single parent. The family are of White British ethnicity. Carla's mother does not work outside the home. Carla and her mother live in an economically deprived area of the West Midlands town in which the study takes place. Carla takes an interest in her appearance and wears make up which makes her look more mature than her years.

Participants in Carla's case expressed a lack of knowledge and some confusion as to the factors underlying her school refusal behaviour. A picture is presented by the two mentors and Carla's mother of a girl who is somehow wilful, for example she is described as 'excluding herself from lessons', which suggests a deliberate act. Other such references include:

- *[Carla] and just used this silent approach, wouldn't speak*

  School Mentor Geoff

- *She was refusing to go in her lessons at school… weren't just refusing to go in her lessons was refusing to go to school altogether*

  Parent Geoff

- *The problem was just stubbornness and just doing things her way … she would go into these relapses and phases where she chose not to talk to anybody or communicate and thought that was her way of getting out of things*

  SSS Mentor Geoff

Carla's explanation of her school refusal behaviour is not at odds with the views expressed by other participants:

- o *I don't know, I just don't like school*

- o *I just woke up and … thought I don't like it, so I never went*

It is my perception that the two mentors in Carla's case demonstrate a level of frustration towards her probably as a result of their feeling of impotence in influencing her and in feeling that they have an understanding of her needs.

- o *She'd actually gone through all of us mentors and we hadn't for, made any progress with her anywhere. She'd been to one counselling appointment, never went again. … So she was very, she was difficult really in the sense that you weren't sure what's going on with her*

  School Mentor case

Unlike perceptions of the young people in the other four cases, Carla was not perceived by the mentors as displaying signs of anxiety. The mentor from the mainstream school described how Carla would associate with members of the peer group and would occasionally leave school with other young people:

- o *[young person] would definitely hook up with other people and if they were truanting then she would go off and truant*

The word 'truant' is used with reference to her, which is striking as most writers in the area of school refusal attempt to make a distinction between school refusal and truancy. The use of this terminology suggests in clear terms the idea that Carla is perceived by the two mentors as displaying signs of truancy as opposed to school refusal.   Yet, Carla spent

time in the Short Stay School for pupils with medical needs including mental health difficulties. The mentor from the mainstream school gives an indication as to how this came about when she comments:

- o *So the referral to the short stay school was a bit like, I wonder what's gonna happen and I wonder if this is the right place. We wonder if CAMHS is gonna be able to work with her*

The implication from this is that the referral to the Short Stay School occurred not because Carla was seen as meeting the admission criteria as such but primarily because the school staff were unsure as to how to deal with her.

However, despite this doubt about the nature of Carla's school non-attendance her mother perceived that she (Carla) benefited from the involvement of staff from the short stay school, but felt that they withdrew their support too early in the reintegration process.

- o *[short stay school] really helped. We had two or three meetings after with the [short stay school] and [name of mainstream school] and then that was it. And then [short stay school] said, oh that's it she's settled back into school, her won't need us anymore. But then like two months down the line her just suddenly went, I don't know. Suddenly went back to where we started*

Included in this narrative quote is also an implied criticism or at least a question about the timing of withdrawal of involvement by staff from the short stay school. The suggestion is that this happened prematurely and may have affected the success of the reintegration. Carla's case is viewed by all participants as having been less successful in terms of the actual reintegration. It seems the initial phased transition from the short stay school to mainstream school was made but that the ongoing reintegration process or

maintenance of it has met with substantial difficulty.   At the time when the interviews were conducted Carla was going through a phase of sporadic and deteriorating attendance at school.

Carla stands out as different from the other cases for a number of reasons; firstly her case draws attention to the debate about definitions and conceptualisations of school refusal and truancy. The use of specific terminology and the definitions presented in the literature can lead one to assume a clarity that does not always match real life situations. Further, as discussed earlier school refusal is not a medical diagnosis, and as Elliott (1999) states, the term is used to describe behaviour that signals underlying social and or emotional difficulties that require investigation. While this may be the case one can appreciate that this leaves ample room for confusion. Some definitions highlight the existence of anxiety related behaviour and emotional upset coupled with a reluctance to attend school as being important in distinguishing school refusal from other forms of school non-attendance (Berg, Nichols, & Pritchard 1969). As Carla is not widely perceived to have displayed these emotional indicators this leads to questions as to whether she can be categorised as exhibiting school refusal behaviour. However, one needs to be cautious in drawing conclusions about emotional state in that this can be difficult to discern. Carla's mother comments on the difficulties experienced by her daughter in communicating with new people:

- o *When she first started at [short stay school] it took her about a month before she settled in there, 'cos her don't get on with people her don't know. See her won't just talk to somebody, if you just talk to her she won't just talk to you till her knows you like*

The behaviour described here could be interpreted as a type of social anxiety which might fit with conceptualisations of school refusal behaviour. This case is also interesting in that in addition to being the one which for most participants raises questions about definition, and underlying reasons for school non attendance, it is also the one where reintegration is perceived as being least successful in terms of maintaining regular attendance at a mainstream school.

Combined Case Studies

The next stage of analysis involved pooling the data from the five individual case studies.

This data was analysed according to the research questions which were:

1. What are the experiences and conceptions of school refusal of those involved in the reintegration process with a focus on anxiety and other emotional factors – Table 3 presented on page 126

2. What factors support or act as barriers to reintegrating pupils displaying school refusal behaviour from Short Stay School to a mainstream school – Table 4 presented on pages 153-154

The researcher has attempted to remain faithful to the data by including direct quotes from interviews together with interpretations where appropriate. Table 3 illustrates prominent themes relating to the nature of school refusal which emerged from the interview data and key ideas within these.

Emotional Components

- school refusal behaviour associated with intense emotional pain
- young person displays social anxiety
- young person feels emotionally over whelmed
- school refusal involves fear which sometimes appears irrational or disproportionate

Miscellaneous

- a perceived history of inadequate or lack of intervention to support young person
- school refusal behaviour has to be management over the long term rather than cured
- school refusal behaviour is often associated with medical labels / diagnosis

Attitudes of Professionals

- school staff can feel disempowered and out of their depth
- school refusal behaviour is open to interpretation and misinterpretation by school staff
- one needs insight , specialist knowledge and in depth work to understand the nature of school refusal

TABLE 3

The Nature of School Refusal

Young Person Factors

- young person is described by adults as obstinate / stubborn
- young person is described by adults as manipulative
- young person is perceived as wilful
- young person is described by parent as sensitive

Parent/Young Person Relationship

- parent anxiety
- parent/young person relationship as contributing to school refusal behaviour
- school refusal behaviour impacting on the parent/young person relationship

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Triggers and Contributing

- triggers can be specific traumatic events in the young person's life
- relate to how emotionally comfortable the young person is (at school)
- school context and teacher factors contribute to feelings of safety
- stress associated with change of can contribute to school refusal
- bullying or fear of bullying is often cited by young people and their parents as contributing factors

Analysis of experiences and conceptions of school refusal with a focus on anxiety and emotional factors: the nature of school refusal

Table 3 above illustrates the category 'the nature of school refusal' which is drawn from the pooled data from all interviews. The category 'the nature of school refusal' consists of the following themes:

- Attitudes of professionals

- Triggers/contributory factors

- Parent/young person relationship

- Young person factors

- Emotional components

- Miscellaneous

These themes derive from the interviews and researcher interpretation of perceptions expressed by several participants often on several occasions during interviews.

Attitudes of Professionals

'Attitudes of Professionals' consist of three main ideas or sub-themes:

- ○ School staff can feel disempowered and out of their depth

- ○ School refusal is open to interpretation and misinterpretation by school staff

- ○ One needs insight, specialist knowledge and in depth work to understand school refusal

Interview narrative	Interpretation
1.We wanted her to get some intense counselling support because she wasn't talking to any staff on what her issues …were and what was going on for her and staff felt they couldn't understand her, we couldn't, there was no pattern to her behaviour **(school mentor, Carla)**	School staff felt out of their depth and wanted support from those with specialist knowledge/skills
2.The staff here thought he was just a naughty boy, who'd do what he chose, he'd walk out of lesson….And then obviously from the short stay school's (SSS) point of view they could see the state he was in when he got to the SSS and how much progress he'd made **(school mentor, Neil)**	School refusal behaviour can be misinterpreted by school staff but those with specialist knowledge and experience have a different perspective
3.Even to the point where the attendance lady would make remarks that he'd walked off, that he couldn't be bothered … Nobody has a real understanding **(school mentor, Neil)**	The lack of understanding and empathy meant behaviour was misinterpreted; this was a problem in supporting young person
4.Because obviously they'd (short stay school staff) been working with him in depth and understood some of his…some of the root causes of why he behaved the way he did and that it wasn't just his behaviour they were looking at **(school mentor, Neil)**	A focus on behaviour alone is likely to lead to poor understanding of the young person's concerns
5.they'd (teachers) removed all the students ... and Mr B said that in all the years that he's taught he's never come across a pupil – he(pupil) was absolutely petrified **(school mentor, Simon)**	Pupil's school refusal behaviour is seen as extreme and beyond the experience and knowledge of school staff

The comments above were all made by learning mentors in receiving schools who worked

directly with staff from the SSS in supporting the young person but also with colleagues in

school. These comments give a flavour of the difficult position these workers may find

themselves in when supporting the reintegration of pupils displaying school refusal behaviour whilst being aware of different ways staff in school might interpret the behaviour displayed by the young person. In addition these quotes from the interviews indicate that the participants are at times acutely aware of their own limitations in terms of knowledge and formal therapeutic skills, (narrative quotes 1, 4 & 5 where participants went on to express personal limitations or a need for more specialised involvement with the young person). There may also be a subtle hint at the relative power differences between learning mentors in schools and teaching staff which can create additional sensitivities for learning mentors when supporting young people who exhibit school refusal behaviour. The learning mentors tended to be sensitive to the circumstances surrounding the young person often because of information provided by staff from the SSS and used this information to help them make sense of the behaviour exhibited by the young person during reintegration. In Neil the school mentor talks about staff in school holding a view of the young person as being naughty based on their experience of him before he went to the SSS and received input from CAMHS. Her perception was that this view of him remained or was reawakened at the prospect of reintegration.

Triggers/Contributory Factors

The theme of Triggers/Contributory Factors consists of five main ideas, which are:

- ○ Triggers can be specific traumatic events in the young person's life (see Simon, narrative quotes 6,7,8)

- ○ Relate to how emotionally comfortable the young person is at school (narrative quotes 8,9,10)

- Contextual and teacher factors contribute to feelings of safety (narrative quote 12)

- Stress associated with change can be linked to school refusal behaviour (Simon, Neil)

- Bullying or fear of bullying is cited by two of the young people interviewed and by 3 parents as contributing to school refusal (cases Noreen, Neil &Geoff).

These ideas are illustrated with reference to the words of the participants and researcher interpretations.

Interview Narrative	Interpretation
6. My mum and dad split up and I got a bit stressed. Cos I was stressed from home and it affected my school **(young person, Simon)**	A difficult home situation and the young person's emotions in relation to this contributed to school refusal behaviour
7.His problems in school and I can say this now because of how he was, were personal, were home related rather than any issues he had at school **(SSS mentor, Simon)**	School refusal behaviour related primarily to anxiety existing around the home circumstances
8. Well he started the high school at where we were living and it was just too much all these new things at once he just couldn't cope **(parent, Simon)**	Stress and insecurities associated with change, sometimes at year 6/7 transition led to young people feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope
9. It was that big thing, I think. It was like a change for him from going from junior school like into this big school. There was loads of kids bigger than him, older than him. I think it's overwhelming **(Parent, Neil)**	Change related to year 6-7 transfer, together with fear of being bullied by older, bigger children overwhelmed the young person
10. It's really just how comfortable they feel at school, if they feel at ease **(school**	Feeling emotionally comfortable and safe in school this is a protective factor against

mentor, Simon)	school refusal
11.Cos sometimes it's like when I walk to school, ... like before when I started not coming to school, where I created like a barrier where I couldn't go past that point and I had to turn back and go home **(young person, Noreen)**	A cycle of negative thoughts and anxiety were affecting the young person's behaviour such that she found it difficult to go past a particular point on her journey to school and would turn round and go home
12. He found it difficult to deal with supply staff conducting the lesson. Simply because his experience was supply staff they'd never managed a lesson properly there was always upheaval or disturbances in a lesson with supply staff **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	for him supply staff represented change from the norm and the likelihood that the class context and lesson would somehow become unsafe and threatening

Interview narrative quotes 6 and 7 make the point that traumatic or difficult factors that appear to be entirely home related can affect the young person's ability to function effectively in school and can trigger school refusal behaviour. This relates to the earlier discussion that occurred in the literature review about terminology. Khan and Nursten (1968) conceptualised what they termed school phobia as a type of psychodynamic issue and drew a distinction between the focus of the anxiety, that is the site where anxiety is displayed and the cause of the anxiety. This relates to Elliott's (1999) argument that school refusal signals a set of behaviours that require investigation but do not indicate a specific cause. In other words, as in Simon's case a young person might display school refusal behaviour when the cause of the anxiety is not directly school related. The narrative quotes 8 to 12 refer to school related factors that are experienced as stressful or as being potentially stressful by the young person. Experiences of change seem to be associated with stress; there were several references in the interviews to the transition from primary school to secondary school as in quotes 8 and 9. However, other types of

change associated with school were also identified as stressful or as being potentially stressful, as in quote 12 which refers to a change of teacher and how this creates change in the classroom context. The idea of young people feeling emotionally safe as illustrated in narrative quote 10 was a recurring theme and indeed underlies the points raised in all of the quotes in this section (6-12). So school factors and stressors associated with school are implicated as possible risk or contributory factors for school refusal behaviour. The question as to how far school can be viewed as contributing to the emergence or maintenance of school refusal behaviour was discussed earlier in the literature review section. Schools are complex social and instructional organisations which young people are required to navigate and some find this more difficult than others. It is possible that the interplay of individual child/young person factors with school factors may contribute to school refusal in some way.

In the present study bullying or fear of bullying is also identified as a possible factor that might trigger or contribute to school refusal behaviour developing. Bullying or problems with peers is mentioned by school mentors and SSS mentors as having been cited as possible causes of school refusal behaviour in 7 out of the 10 interviews with these participants, and is referred to as contributing to school refusal by two young people (Noreen and Geoff) and three parents. The following narrative quotes illustrate some of these points:

Interview Narratives	Interpretation

13. He got pushed over by older kids, it happens. He went down very quickly. Within days he was refusing to go to school for fear of being beaten up and hurt. Because he was beaten up and bullied so severely at primary school **(parent, Geoff)**	Past experiences of bullying meant that he was sensitive and fearful of any behaviours that might have been unintentional, this led to him refusing school
14. We didn't have any written evidence or any such evidence that indicated, yes he was bullied **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	We're not clear whether bullying occurred there was no real evidence of it
15. She said she was bullied. She felt she was very badly bullied here at [name of school] and she felt at the time no one was doing anything **(school mentor, Noreen)**	The young person perceived herself to have been the victim of bullying (we we're not so sure) and she felt no one in school was intervening to help her
16. They used to call me names and really got on my nerves. Wind me up. In the end I didn't want to come to school **(young person, Noreen)**	Verbal bullying led to me not wanting to come to school
17. Yeah she was pulled off her chair by her hair. She'd be spat at, verbally abused and all this at [name of school] **(parent, Noreen)**	Physical and verbal bullying took place in school
18. The reason we were given were bullying and finding it difficult to make friends and socialise **(SSS mentor, Carla)**	When the young person came to the SSS we were told she had experienced bullying and had problems making and maintaining friendships

Narratative quotes 13, 16 and 17 demonstrate direct attribution of bullying as the cause of the school refusal behaviour.

The school mentors and SSS mentors also made reference to bullying but tended to inject a note of scepticism about the fact or extent of bullying as in quotes 14, 15 and to a lesser extent 18. There is a suggestion from the mentors that the young people and their parents report bullying to have occurred and or believe bullying to be the cause of school

refusal behaviour but that this is viewed as a simplistic explanation or is open to interpretation. This difference in perspective can be compared to the findings from the Malcolm et al (2003) research into school non-attendance as opposed to specifically school refusal, where they found that pupils and parents tended to be more inclined to link school non-attendance to school factors than those relating to home, while school staff and other education professionals believed a combination of home and school factors were influential. There was a reluctance on the part of the SSS and school mentors make a direct link between the school refusal behaviour and experiences of bullying. However, the current small scale study in line with the findings from Malcolm et al (2003) and Archer (2003) suggests that bullying or the fear of bullying is an aspect of the school context that is perceived by many as being linked to school non-attendance and school refusal in some way.

Parent/Young Person Relationship

The theme Parent/Young Person Relationship comprises three main ideas:

- o Parental anxiety

- o Parent/young person relationship as contributing to school refusal behaviour

- o School refusal behaviour impacting on the parent/young person relationship

These ideas are exemplified with reference to the interviews:

Interviews	Interpretation
19. There were incidents along the period of time whereby she'd be more concerned and worried and apprehensive than [name of young person] was **(SSS mentor, Geoff)**	Mother's anxiety about her child in school more prominent than the child's
20. Simply because if mum hung around her fears and anxieties and her anxiousness would show and reflect on [name of young person] **(SSS mentor, Geoff)**	Mentor felt the need to remove mother to prevent her anxieties affecting the young person
21. I think mum has a lot of anxieties that was passed on to [name] as well **(school mentor, Noreen)**	Mother's anxiety 'caught' by the young person
22. [young person's name] mum was very worried all the time and even kind of go to the extreme and say [young person's name] is ill, she's got depression **(school mentor, Noreen)**	Mother's worry led her to exaggerate or to see the young person's school refusal in extreme terms

Items 19 to 22 are quotes from mentors who viewed parental anxiety as having the potential to exacerbate the young person's anxiety and help entrench the school refusal behaviour. These quotes raise questions about the relationship between parental anxiety and school refusal. Are the mothers referred to anxious because their child is refusing school or is there a tendency towards anxiety that is somehow transmitted to the young person? Commentators including Doobay (2008), Kahn and Nursten (1968) and Brandibas et al (2004) consider anxiety to be a key component of school refusal. However, as discussed in the literature review there is debate as to where the anxiety lies. The notion of separation anxiety would locate the anxiety as being part of the dynamic of the child/parent relationship. The data from the current study would suggest

that in at least two of the five cases (Noreen and Geoff) this may be the case in that

anxious behaviour is attributed to the parents and is considered to impact on the

functioning of the young person. This does not indicate that this separation anxiety type

dynamic caused the school refusal behaviour to develop but that it may be helping to

maintain the behaviour. However Geoff's mother directly attributes the parenting

behaviour of her husband and herself as contributing to the difficulties her child

experiences with school attendance. In response to a question about what advice would

you give to a parent of a child displaying school refusal behaviour she replied:

'distance themselves from the child. As hard as it is as a mother, your natural response is to nurture that child and love that child – distance yourself from that child. So the child becomes more independent'

Narrative 23 is a very honest reflection from a mother about her child and parallels ideas

associated with theories of school refusal that centre on separation anxiety. It suggests a

conflicted parent/child relationship.   Items 24 and 26 indicate that the experience of

dealing with a child displaying school refusal behaviour impacts on parents and siblings so

disrupting family dynamics by increasing levels of anxiety and stress which itself might

feed into the school refusal behaviour, thus creating a cycle.   This is reminiscent of the

conflicted family relationship subtype identified by Kearney et al (1995) in their review of

research into family relationships associated with children exhibiting school refusal

behaviour.

Interview	Interpretation
23. From the day he was born he was a problem, so I always knew **(parent, Neil)**	Mother expressing negative feelings towards her child which were experienced from birth and led her to anticipate

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	difficulty
24. The fear factor, my husband must have text me three or four times a day. Have you heard if he's ok? I think you become an over protective parent when this happens **(parent, Geoff)**	School refusal behaviour affected parents making them over protective and anxious
25. We used to tread on egg shells with him and like his older brother would look for a fight with him, play fight. We'd go no, no, don't upset him **(parent, Geoff)**	School refusal disrupted family dynamics and led to the young person being viewed as delicate
26. I ain't sure 'cos me heads all over the place with her, 'cos she's here, there and everywhere **(parent, Carla)**	Young person's school refusal behaviour creates stress and confusion for the parent

Young Person Factors

The theme 'Young Person Factors' relates to adult perceptions of the personality and behavioural characteristics of the individual young people who exhibit school refusal behaviours. Many of the observations of adult participants tended to suggest the existence of intrinsic characteristics which contributed to complex and entrenched situation regarding school refusal.

Interviews	Interpretation
27. the problem was of just stubbornness and just doing things her way **(SSS mentor, Carla)**	The main problem was one of stubbornness, she wanted to do things her way
28. and it's like she's got a very stubborn streak **(school mentor, Noreen)**	
29. So she knows how to play the game does [young person's name]. You have to keep drumming it into her that she's not ill, that she's fine, that she's bit anxious	She is manipulative in a way, she knows what to do and say to get the reaction she wants. You have to persist with a clear

(school mentor, Noreen)	normalising message
30. but when she saw that the slightest stomach ache or the slightest sniff wasn't going to warrant going home she kind of stopped doing it. Again, I think it was a pattern she was able to manipulate mum **(school mentor, Noreen)**	She had got into a pattern of complaining about the slightest thing because she could manipulate mum into keeping her off school; but this stopped when she learned this wasn't going to work
31. He knew what strings to pull with mum and how to get what he wanted to a degree **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	He was adept at manipulating his mother
32. She's a lovely Irish lady, but she's very sharp. And obviously with [young person's named] you need, he's so sensitive, he can't cope with her being sharp. But that's what he's like **(parent, Geoff)**	Although she's a nice lady her manner is too sharp for [young person] because he is so sensitive
33. She never spoke though. She won't tell nobody, she won't tell you anything. She don't talk to nobody about nothing. Perhaps I should say it's nothing to do with me, it's her problem, not mine **(parent, Carla)**	She wouldn't talk. And her ability to maintain this made me feel bad and inadequate, but perhaps I shouldn't let it
34. [young person name] excluded herself from lessons and just used this silent approach, wouldn't speak **(school mentor, Carla)**	She used the silent approach and she wouldn't go to lessons – she was powerful

Narrative quotes 27-34 suggest there may be a wilful aspect to the young people's school refusal behaviour, an idea on which there is debate in the literature (Pellegrini, 2007, Lauchlan 2003) and yet would seem to form part of the perception of most of the adult participants in this study. For some participants (mentors) there would appear to be an implied link between the young person's characteristics of stubbornness and manipulative behaviour with possible deficiencies in the parent to child relationship.

Narrative quote 32 indicates a view that certain teacher personality characteristics may interact negatively with the young person's characteristic (sensitivity). Ideas relating to sensitivity and over-protectiveness both of which are referred to by Geoff's mother suggest a parent/child relationship that is to use the Kearney et al (1995) term 'enmeshed' with features that might result in separation anxiety. Quotes 33 and 34 give an idea of the emotional impact of what is perceived as the young person's stubbornness on two of the adults and an insight into how the behaviour of the young person can act to alienate adults who are meant to be supporting them.

Emotional Components

A further theme around the notion of school refusal that emerges from the data is termed 'emotional components'. This area relates directly to the research question which seeks to examine perceptions of school refusal with a focus on emotional factors. The theme of emotional components which emerges from the data refers to the emotional impact of the school refusal behaviour as discussed by participants and the emotional experience of the young people and others which may contribute to or be associated with school refusal. In conducting these interviews and in listening to the recordings one is struck by the frequent reference to emotions and the way emotions are dealt with or not dealt with. Key ideas included in this theme of emotional components were:

- School refusal behaviour is associated with intense emotional pain

- Young person displays social anxiety

- Young person feels emotionally overwhelmed

o   School refusal involves fear which sometimes appears irrational or

disproportionate

Quotes 35 and 36 below are from Noreen and Simon describing their emotional state

before they were referred to the SSS. The intensity of emotional suffering described in

35 (Noreen) contrasts sharply with the more understated comment in 36 (Simon);

however the perceptions of the adults around each of these young people perceived

them to be emotionally overwhelmed at the time of referral to the SSS. This idea that

school refusal behaviour is associated with powerful or extreme displays of emotionality

has been commented upon in the literature and according to Berg et al (1969) is one of

four identifying features 'severe emotional upset , which may involve such symptoms as

excessive fearfulness, temper tantrums, misery or complaints of feeling ill without

obvious organic cause when faced with the prospect of going to school' (p123). The

different style of communicating the emotional experience may be reflective of factors

like gender for example or current perceived emotional proximity to the event. Simon, a

male, presented a view of school refusal as an episode in his life related to specific

circumstances that were no longer current whereas Noreen perceived herself to be

engaged in an ongoing struggle to manage her school refusal related emotions and

behaviour.

Interview	Interpretation
35. Down, kind of stressed. I used to, before we didn't have these ties we had like normal ones that you do yourself and I tried to hurt myself. Cos I was that stressed and upset **(young person, Noreen)** 36. my mum and dad split up and I got a bit	My mood was low and I felt stressed to the extent that I tried to strangle myself with my tie

| stressed **(young person, Simon)** | |

According to the literature review anxiety is strongly associated with school refusal (Egger et al 2003 and Brandibas et al 2004). Perceptions around parental anxiety as they emerge from the data have been discussed above however emotions around social anxiety were also identified by a number of participants as features of school refusal as will be seen below,

Interview	Interpretation
37. I think it's because like, he was ok when there was no crowds. It's like half past eight everybody's going in and I think this was the big thing with him**(parent, Neil)**	He couldn't cope with going into school with everyone else, I think it was something to do with being in a crowd that created problems for him
38. his blazer was worn out on the left arm or the right arm where he'd lean on the wall and walk up the corridor no eye contact trying to get to the next lesson **(parent, Geoff)**	He tried to make himself disappear into the wall when he walked down the corridor he so wanted to avoid social contact
39. I don't see me having food he says like that 'cos they say I'm fat and if they think I'm eating something fattening they'll say I'm fat even more **(parent, Geoff)**	He says he can't be seen eating anything much in school because they already call him fat and it would only make things worse
40. It got worse as she got older and she had to mix with more people of her own age and older **(parent, Noreen)**	As she got older her problems in relating to others became more evident
41. that child goes out of the house at ten to eight so she will not meet anybody on the way to school **(parent, Noreen)**	She goes to great lengths like leaving home too early in the mornings just to avoid meeting other young people on the way to school
42. from the first day I saw her in the corridor she was physically a wreck, so nervous, couldn't look up, couldn't give anyone eye contact **(school mentor, Noreen)**	I noticed how physically terrified and avoidant she was just walking down the corridor

Narrative quotes relating to social anxiety derive from three case studies, those of Noreen, Neil and Geoff. An element of social anxiety was referred to in Simon, but was not a prominent feature to emerge from that case. Specific comment by the school and the SSS mentor was made to a lack of apparent social anxiety in Carla. A feature of the narrative quotes above (38-42) is the lengths the young people would go to in order to try to avoid the attention of others, particularly peers. The data from the present study suggests a view of school refusal behaviour which in four of the five cases has social anxiety as a component and as an issue that continues to be relevant during the reintegration process. Brandibas et al (2004) suggested that social anxiety might be viewed as one of several risk factors for school refusal behaviour.

The data from four of the cases indicate the young people considered themselves and were perceived as experiencing intense and even overwhelming emotions associated with school refusal behaviour and sometimes the level of emotion was viewed as irrational or unreasonable

Interview	Interpretation
43. It was an emotional crisis they called it. He got admitted into hospital. He was frightened like, he'd gone inwards. Frightened of silly things like radiators, anything. It was horrible; it was like he'd had a complete breakdown.**(parent, Simon)**	He experienced an emotional crisis which resulted in hospital admission. His behaviour was irrational in that he became fearful of everyday things. It was like a breakdown.
44. 'cos he'd be constantly washing his hands. Oh you know, and you could tell. He was like agitated **(parent, Neil)**	When he was constantly washing his hands you knew he was really agitated
45. he was very anxious and very	

frightened. He was constantly washing his hands and his impression was that anything he came in contact with any slight pain he had was going to result in death or something detrimental to him **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	He had irrational fears that he would be contaminated and that this could be serious; he was constantly washing his hands and it seemed like an attempt to protect himself
46. He's very much what if I get hurt, what if I ...he can't cope with supply staff. If he's got a supply teacher he leaves the room. Cannot cope.**(parent, Geoff)**	He worries and anticipates things going wrong and believes he won't be able to cope if this happens. The thought of having a supply teacher worries him such that he walks out.

These narrative quotes indicate a perception (by parents and mentors) of the emotions and behaviours exhibited by four of the five the young people as being at times extreme and irrational; this is reminiscent the American Psychiatric Association (1993) definition of phobia as being 'a marked and persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable, cued by the presence or anticipation of a specific situation or event'. It also coincides with constructions of school refusal behaviour as a reluctance or refusal to attend school, or difficulty remaining in class throughout the school day in combination with emotional distress as discussed by Elliott (1999) and Doobay 2008.

However, although much of the emphasis in the interviews was on the emotions of the young person there was also evidence of intense emotional upset or pain experienced by parents as in the following quote:

 *But I have to sort of, I have to work myself up and think god, her's gotta get up next morning. Hers gotta get to school. But it come to a point where it got that bad for me it was making me ill. (***Parent, Noreen)**

This was one of several comments made by parents in all five cases describing the ongoing stress they experienced in relation to their role in trying to encourage their child to attend school, supporting them emotionally and in dealing with school and attendance staff.

Miscellaneous

The data also reveals what appear to be important and recurring ideas but which do not fall into convenient themes. These have been grouped in a miscellaneous category; the key ideas being:

- A perceived history of inadequate or lack of intervention to support the young person

- School refusal behaviour has to be managed over the long term rather than cured

- School refusal behaviour is often associated with medical/psychiatric labels/diagnoses

A History of Inadequate Intervention and Support

The perception of a history of inadequate or lack of intervention to support the young person was expressed at different times from participants from all of the groups (young people Noreen and Neil), (parents of Noreen, Neil and Geoff), (school mentors for Noreen and Neil) and (SSS mentor for Simon, Geoff and Neil) but not across all cases. Carla was the exception with no one suggesting there had been a history of inadequate or lack of intervention to support the young person, but this was the one case where there

was the greatest level of perceived dissatisfaction with the outcome of the reintegration on the part of the adults involved. Comments about inadequate interventions made by the SSS mentor related to what was viewed as a simplistic and poor response on the part of staff at the original school setting where the school refusal behaviour was being displayed. Perhaps such a view is not surprising given that these young people have progressed through the system to a point where they have been allocated alternative educational provision; however the specific points raised suggest school staff in question failed to engage with or perhaps lacked confidence or skill in working with young people in relation to emotion needs.

Interview	Interpretation
44. It hadn't been dealt with, it hadn't been looked at and it continued in that school as well so when he came to us he was genuinely scared and worried of being locked in a room and not being able to go and see his mum **(SSS mentor, Geoff)**	Because his previous negative experiences and feelings about these hadn't been dealt with this developed into a real fear by the time he came to us
45. at the first sign of a problem straight away the phone call was made to mum and she' come and take him home instead of dealing with it and thinking how can we get over this **(SSS mentor, Geoff)**	School would send for his mum and she would take him home. There was no attempt to try to support him in a more active way or deal with the emotions
46. and when he did have those problems school didn't deal with them. Yeah where he'd just get anxious and scared and panicked. They'd just send him home. …. And I think that just developed into a pattern or routine and the first sign, ok he's got to go rather than spending time and trying to find out and deal with it **(SSS mentor, Simon)**	At the first sign of him getting anxious or panicky the school response was to be panicked too and to want to get rid of the problem – send him home rather than trying to get to the bottom of his concerns
47. but without criticising the school and	I don't want to openly criticise the school because I know they are busy but [young person] wasn't supported as well as they

knowing that yes, they are busy, I don't think [young person] had the support fully before **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	might have been
48. like my form tutor, when I used to not come in he would basically say oh she's not turned up again**(young person, Noreen)**	I felt dismissed and that my problems were not taken seriously by my form tutor

Narrative quote 48 is made by a young person and she expressed a feeling that her form

tutor made light of her difficulties rather than taking her emotional needs seriously.

School Refusal Behaviour as an ongoing issue

The idea that school refusal behaviour is ongoing even following apparent successful

reintegration and consequently requires ongoing intervention is exemplified in the

following narrative quotes:

Interview	Interpretation
49. But then last week or the week before, mum phoned again, this only happens now and again with [young person name] she'll just one day refuse to come in and I went to the house and there was a bit of a shouting match…**(school mentor, cas A)**	It still happens that occasionally the young person will refuse to come in, and her mum phones up and I go round and try to deal with it
50. Some days I don't wanna come …. Cos I still feel uncomfortable about coming to school. But I've gotta try and get over it. But it's hard, very hard**(young person, Noreen)**	Some days I still don't want to go to school, I am still not comfortable with school, but I have to try, even though it's hard
51. Every day, still face it today, now. It don't go away. I have to try and be so nicey, nicey and think. That ain't me I'd rather just be down to earth and say come on its time to go to school**(parent, Noreen)**	The difficulties don't go away and I have to try to be calm and persuasive when I try to get her to go to school. That's not my natural way I just want say to come on its time to go to school.
52. He has had a few hiccups along the way, even after the support was taken off. There's been days or times when his attendance has dropped or its kind of erratic **(SSS mentor, Neil)**	Even after we phased out the support there have been a few hiccups along the way, times when his attendance has dropped or been erratic so we have to keep an eye on things
53. It's just we've only had one, a couple of blips really **(young person, Geoff)**	There have been a couple of set backs
54. He's fine. He seems fine. I mean he's not doing PE still at the moment. That was quite a stumbling block for him but the arrangement is he comes to our office and he sits there for PE, and he does that. He	He's doing quite well but going into PE lessons remains a stumbling block for him so we don't push it. The arrangement is that he will come to our office rather than

seems to be coping well**(school mentor, Geoff)**	go to PE. This is working well and he's coping
55. I mean obviously never give up on a child, I'd always say that. But the fact she came in from 3 to 4 after school is brilliant, it's not encouraging with her at home all day or whatever she's doing but just the fact not to lose her altogether **(school mentor, Carla)**	It's important to be persistent and never give up on a child; and it's brilliant that she will come in after school 3-4pm, because it means we're not losing her completely but it is also worrying that she is at home all day and not properly in school
56.And then [SSS] said, oh that's it, she's settled back into school … But then like two months down the line her just suddenly went, I don't know, suddenly went back to where we started from with her **(parent, Carla)**	Everything seemed to be going well, staff from the short stay school withdrew because to them it had been a success, but two months later she suddenly faltered and now we're back where we started with her attendance

Some of the young people included in this study have been reintegrated for 18 months (Noreen, Neil and Simon) and yet continue to struggle with emotions and behaviours associated with school refusal (Noreen andNeil). As indicated in quote 50 it can be a case of trying to manage the emotional discomfort of school which would appear to be an ongoing endeavour. This point relates to the notion of successful reintegration and how one might judge this, a question posed directly during interviews. The participants found this a difficult question to respond to,(see the quotes below) with several simply stating that they did not know how one might judge successful reintegration.   An obvious assumption might be that successful reintegration would mean a return to mainstream school on a full time basis but of those participants who felt able to respond only one mentioned attendance level as a success criterion. Several Examples of the responses from those who did answer are given below:

- o *Whether they're happy or not. Whether they show like happiness. Their body language would be really like comfortable* **(young person, Noreen)**

- *If the child is happy. If the child is happy and can show you that yeah, great, I'm having fun here **(parent, Noreen)***

- *Speak to the teachers, see how if , like they've spoke to the teacher about their problems and stuff… if they spoke to the head of house it would be a sign, it would if they'd progressed **(young person, Simon)***

- *It's just really how comfortable they feel at school if they feel at ease. Do they realise they've got support in school so it doesn't build up**(school mentor, Simon)***

- *[young person] getting up in the morning going out of the house and walking to school with his mates and coming back at three o' clock**(parent, Geoff)***

- *Completing your objectives and aims. Like for example if you have a target like do four lessons in form, you do that you've completed your aim**(young person, Geoff)***

- *I suppose whether the child's back in school. Whether they're back in school and the level of attendance**(school mentor, Geoff)***

Most of these responses suggest social and emotional indicators as relevant in judging successful reintegration; with only two referring in an overt way to attendance and participation in lessons as being likely indicators. The responses promoting social and emotional factors were given by mentors and parents and young people alike and so do not appear to reflect a specific standpoint perspective.

This finding might suggest an experience of school refusal behaviour as being primarily about emotional well being and social anxiety rather than school attendance as such or

that a positive outcome for reintegration should be judged primarily on such factors.

This connects with Elliott's view (1999) of school refusal as a sign or symptom indexing an

array of possible diagnoses or social/school problems. There is also an emerging idea

based on these case studies that school refusal usually involves an ongoing or extended

emotional struggle accompanied by overt distress (Carla is the exception) and that

reintegration too needs to be conceived of as an extended process. In the five cases

examined in the present study the process of reintegration seems to follow a pattern of

phased and supported reintegration leading to a period of fairly stable attendance which

is punctuated by setbacks and challenges.

Medical/Psychiatric diagnoses and terms

On several occasions references to medical/psychiatric diagnoses or terms were made to

describe the young people and the behaviours they displayed emerged from the data. It

is not always clear whether these were formal diagnoses made by qualified medical

professionals or descriptive terms possibly used to help clarify or possibly on some

occasions used as a communication device to add weight to the level of concern or

severity of the behaviour.

Interview	Interpretation
57. She wouldn't come in for the day and mum would ring up and really distressed and upset saying she's ill, something's wrong, she's got depression**(school mentor, Noreen)**	When young person was absent her mum would ring in saying she was really ill, depressed. She would exaggerate or overstate the situation
58. and I ran off home and she came into school and told them and they told my	My mum told staff in school about how

mum that I could have school phobia**(young person, Noreen)**	hard it is to get me to go to school and they told us it could be school phobia
59. We found was that [young person name] wanted was he wanted contact with me, it was like separation anxiety. And they said, I agreed … no way in a million years was I going to step foot in that reception area**(parent, Geoff)**	We (SSS staff and I) felt that separation anxiety was the root of the problem and I agreed to be more distant from school
60. It's like he used to have OCD, he hasn't got it anymore**(parent, Neil)**	
61. It was an emotional crisis they called it. …it was like he'd had a complete breakdown**(parent, Simon)**	They (child psychiatrist and others) described [young person's] condition as being like a mental breakdown which was the result of an emotional crisis

The data indicates that medical/psychiatric terms were used in different ways in relation to young people presenting school refusal behaviour. This may reflect the fact that Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services professionals were involved in all five cases but despite this it is not clear whether the young people had received formal diagnoses of the conditions mentioned for example 'depression' as in quote 57, or school phobia as in quote 58. There may also be a sense in which the use of medical labels like depression and OCD (obsessive compulsive disorder) says something about the currency of psychiatric language. This may be relevant with reference to quote 57 where the school mentor is talking about the reasons the mother of the young person in Noreen would give for her being absent from school. The suggestion is that stating the young person is absent because they have depression is more powerful than saying she is absent because she is feeling low or does not want to go to school. Also, terms like depression, school phobia and OCD are in common everyday use.

Reintegration - Facilitators and Barriers

One of the research questions was:

What factors support or act as barriers to reintegrating pupils displaying school refusal behaviour from a short stay school to a mainstream school?

Previous research (Gibb et al, 2007, James, 1997, Tootill & Spalding 2000) has investigated the reintegration of other groups of students, (young people diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and those labelled with emotional behavioural difficulties) coming from specialist residential and day schools into mainstream provision. In the absence of research evidence relating specifically to the reintegration of young people displaying school refusal behaviour into mainstream it is appropriate to compare the findings from those studies with the present research findings. The current study identified more factors that act as facilitators to reintegration than barriers (13 and 8 respectively). A summary of these findings can be found in table 4 below.

TABLE 4

Reintegration

Facilitators	Frequency	Barriers	Frequency
Personalised approach to reintegration	13	Parents' doubts or anxiety about success of reintegration communicated to young person	6
Phased reintegration	11	Anticipation of bullying and of inadequate response to it	4
Collaboration between Parents and mentors (SSS And school	8	Negative unhelpful or blocking approach by school staff	3
Positive attitude of young Person to reintegration	7		
Young person helped to understand and cope with his/her emotions	6	Young person's perceptions of poor discipline and behaviour management skills of individual teachers	2
System of support in school clearly communicated to young person	5	Inflexible approach to reintegration by school ie must go to all lessons	2
An identified key worker to support young person in school (non teaching)	5	Young person's resistance to reintegration	2
		Poor communication with young person	1

Collaboration and trust between mentors from SSS and school	5
School (mentors) committed to providing on-going support for young person	5
A clear focus on return to mainstream school communicated to young person and parents from beginning of placement at SSS	5
Mentor from SSS maintains relationship with young person beyond initial stages of reintegration	4
Young person trusts mentor from SSS	4
Parent and young person effectively involved in planning reintegration	3

Facilitators

The five Facilitating factors mentioned most frequently are:

1. Personalised approach to reintegration

2. Phased reintegration

3. Collaboration between parents, school and SSS

4. Positive attitude of the young person to reintegration

5. Young person helped to understand and cope with his/her emotions

Personalised Approach

In the current study 'personalised approach to reintegration' referred to features like

taking into account any specific anxieties a young person might have, for example one

young person (Geoff) felt unsafe when supply staff or cover teachers took a lesson, so

alternative arrangements were made for him on such occasions. Other young people

expressed their needs about the type and level of support they needed so for some there

was an emphasis on having someone to walk with them to and from lessons (Geoff), for

others it was important that support was available in some identified lessons in addition

to having someone to walk them to lessons (cases A, B, & E). As these examples indicate

there was variation in the type and degree of support put in place, for example

participants in Simon made reference to discussions about what the young person would

say about his absence on his reintegration, careful selection of which lessons he would be

reintegrated into first, the use of a card which would excuse him from lessons if he became overwhelmed and named members of staff he could contact in this eventuality. This personalisation of reintegration planning and support relied on the effective engagement of the young person in particular and collaboration between parents and mentors from the SSS and the school. Perhaps unsurprisingly, these (effective engagement of the young person and collaboration between parents and mentors) too were factors identified as being facilitative to the reintegration process and was referred to in relation to all cases although not always positively, for example in Carla the parent and both mentors perceived a lack of engagement from the young person.

The findings from the current study in relation to reintegration can be usefully compared to those of Gibb et al (2007) who investigated the inclusion of key stage two pupils who had statements of special educational needs mainly involving autism spectrum disorder. They reported their top facilitating factors identified by respondents comprising staff from both settings as 'specialist knowledge held by the inclusion team' and the 'inclusive culture of the receiving school' followed by 'classroom teaching strategies'. Targeted support which would be comparable with the 'personalised approach to reintegration' factor in the current study was also identified by Gibb et al (2007) as a facilitating factor. It is possible that the involvement of parent and young person participants in the current study (unlike Gibb et al) will have helped to promote 'personalised approach to reintegration' factor above others so explaining the positioning of this factor at number one. An alternative explanation may relate to the very nature of school refusal behaviour which could lead to the requirement for a highly personalised approach.

Phased Reintegration

Phased reintegration is self explanatory although the extent of the phasing into full time attendance at school seemed to vary between cases. The parent in Neil indicates that there was a short period of part time attendance before the full time attendance was expected. This parent viewed this positively in that she was keen for her son to return to full time attendance at a mainstream school as he had spent over two years at the short stay school and she felt a more prolonged phasing in period would have been counterproductive.

- *I think in the end it got to the stage where it was either all or nothing. It was either shove him straight in see how he copes or it was nothing at all. I think it was like that 'cos he only did a short time where it was a couple of days, and then all of a sudden it was like you're doing a full week*

  Parent Neil

The school mentor in Simon indicates that the phased return to full time attendance in mainstream lasted for around four weeks.

- And he came in on a restricted timetable. Had a couple of sessions where he just had a look round the school, no lessons or anything, just gradual for a period I'd say about three or four weeks.

  School mentor Simon

In Noreen there is a suggestion from the parent that the involvement of the short stay school in phased process of reintegration was short, and perhaps too short:

- *I knew it was gonna have to happen but I just found it was really quick. It all went quick*

  Young person Noreen

- *I think it was within two weeks, bang her's back in. Oh yeah, I thought it was too quick. I tell you the truth I think it was too quick by miles. I'll tell you something, I mean don't get me wrong, they did, they were lovely at [SSS] but I don't think [name of SSS mentor] could get rid of them quick enough*

  Parent Noreen

The parent in Simon speaks positively about the phased reintegration:

- *And like I say gradually, slowly, slowly, he felt he could cope with it better rather than that's it you go back to school. Cos he started with two days and then it got to three days and eventually, but then he'd still have the odd afternoon at [SSS]*

  Parent Simon

The young person in Simon also refers to this:

- Yeah we had meetings on my attendance on the days I went to [SSS]. So you know when I went to school for three days and to SSS for two. My head teacher they tried to pick the best days when I could go to [SSS], in my best subjects

Tootill & Spalding (2000) retrospectively investigated the reintegration of pupils statemented as having special educational needs in relation to emotional and behavioural difficulties from a special school into mainstream schools. Four indicators of successful reintegration were identified: *1) an explicit understanding stated on admission to the special school that reintegration was expected as soon as possible; 2) the forging of links between the special school and mainstream schools; 3) developing opportunities for patterns of flexible attendance in mainstream schools and 4) enabling pupils to access teaching in secondary schools to supplement the special school curriculum.* Indicators 1 and 3 are similar to factors identified in the current study:

- A clear focus on return to mainstream school communicated to young person and parents from beginning of placement at PRU

- Phased reintegration.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a theme that emerges from all case studies. All of the adult participants

in the case studies make reference to this in some way:

- o *We were all in touch with mum; the three of us [mum, SSS mentor and school mentor]worked together and really there were no hiccups*

    School mentor Simon

The SSS mentor in referring to Neil discusses the importance of collaboration between

herself and the school mentor:

- o *Her help and support was crucial. It really did help and the fact [young person] has a lot of support whereby a member of staff, whether that be myself or the teachers that were available who sat in lessons with him.*

In cases A and C comments by the school and SSS mentors indicate that they made

deliberate attempts to win the trust of the parent in order enhance collaboration. These

were cases where the parent was viewed by the mentors as contributing to the

establishment and maintenance of school refusal behaviour:

- o *We had to win [young person's] mum round and we had to work with [young person's] mum on a bit of letting go of [young person] and letting her be a bit independent.*

    School mentor Noreen

James (1997) researched the reintegration of children with emotional and behavioural

difficulties from residential school into mainstream and identified key factors in this

process.   These included the child's needs in returning to their home environment and

the needs of parents/carers, and how the young person might be helped to develop a

peer group. In the present study facilitative factor 3 refers to collaboration between staff

from both settings (mainstream school and short stay school) and parents as being

important in promoting reintegration however this factor needs to be looked at more

closely to determine the nature of this collaboration. The term collaboration may suggest

a working together on an ostensibly equal basis but the nature of the relationship

between the mentors and the parents described by participants in the current study does

not always reflect this equality. In some cases, the mentors from both mainstream and

the Short Stay School referred to the need to build a relationship of trust with the parent

and to engage in parent focused work with the aim of supporting the reintegration of the

young person. In two cases A and C there was a view from the mentors that parents

were somehow part of the problem sometimes because of their own emotional needs

and that their (the parents) impact or perceptions needed to be changed or disguised in

some way for the benefit of the young person. This apparent need in some cases for

parent focused work would seem to be similar to the factor identified by James (1997)

relating to the importance of identifying parent/carer needs as an aspect of the process

of reintegration.

Participants in the Gibb et al (2007) research perceived factors relating to specialist skills

of staff from the special school and collaboration with parents as being important in

successful reintegration.   This focus on collaboration and parent focused work as an

aspect of reintegration was also identified as important by James (1997) as discussed

above and is also a finding in the present study.

Positive Attitude of the Young Person

In cases C, D the school and SSS mentors felt that the positive attitude of the young person towards returning to mainstream school helped to facilitate the process. With reference to Neil a neutral response to the idea of reintegration was also seen as being relatively helpful:

- o *[young person] didn't push but he didn't retaliate or deny that he needed to get back. He was half on board sort of thing. Yes, he had his worries and fears because he had been off for so long but I think he knew within himself that his confidence had grown*

  SSS Mentor Neil

- o *His own attitude, I think really, yeah, I'll give it a go.*

  School Mentor Geoff

Gibb et al (2007) identified two child factors as being key to reintegration, these related to social competence and the child's ability to engage with a mainstream curriculum. Two young person facilitative factors are identified in the current study as being helpful to reintegration these relate to the young person's trust of the mentor and the young person's positive attitude to reintegration. The ability to cope with the curriculum in a mainstream setting is not identified as a facilitative factor in the current study presumably this difference between the Gibb et al (2007) study and the current one is a function of the differing identified needs of the children/young people who form the focus of the investigations.

Young Person Helped to Understand, Cope with his/her Emotions

Representatives from all participant groups made reference to intervention focused on

supporting the young person emotionally as facilitating reintegration

- *Yeah, still talk to them about their fears and about ... I mean what I used a lot was reflection and reminding them about situations where they had been which were similar*

  SSS Mentor Neil

- *You have to keep drumming it into her that she's not ill, that she's fine, that she's a bit anxious*

  School Mentor Noreen

- *Emotion was the biggest problem. The biggest fear [young person] had of going back there was being in a lesson and getting upset, who would he turn to. So the school set up a few people he could turn to*

  Parent Simon

- *At [SSS] they've just all been really nice to me. Like if I got a problem I can feel like I can tell them*

  Young Person Neil

Barriers

In the current study there was relatively little agreement between participants on factors

which act as barriers to reintegration with the most frequently mentioned barrier

occurring in 6 out of 20 interviews. In addition to the two most frequently mentioned

barriers to reintegration which are presented below there were five other barriers

mentioned but they typically occurred in only one or two interviews and pertained to one

or two cases. As a consequence it is important not to view the list of facilitators and

barriers as equivalent. It may be that the barriers to reintegration are closely related to the circumstances surrounding the cases and so are unlikely to occur across cases.

Gibb et al (2007) conducted research into pathways to inclusion for a group of children with special educational needs (mostly autism spectrum) from a special school to mainstream; they too found there to be fewer points of agreement between their participants (special school and mainstream school staff) regarding barriers to inclusion. The barriers identified by Gibb et al (2007) comprised three child factors: child's lack of social competence, child's social disengagement and child's low academic achievement. This contrasts with findings from the current study where although participants made reference to characteristics about the young people relating to their experiences of social anxiety and their stubbornness, these characteristics were not specifically identified as barriers to reintegration. These characteristics tended to be discussed as possible contributors to the development of school refusal behaviour. Two of the Gibb et al (2007) barriers appear to relate closely to three factors perceived as barriers in the present study 'parents doubts or anxiety about successful reintegration', 'Negative, unhelpful or blocking approach and 'inflexible approach to reintegration'. Gibb et al (2007) use the terms 'parental anxiety' and 'inflexible staff attitudes' to refer to their barriers. For Gibb et al (2007)inflexible staff attitudes referred to difficulties experienced by the reintegration staff in changing staff perceptions in mainstream about progress, and an unwillingness to adapts their expectations and teaching style to meet the needs of the children and to difficulties in developing a collaborative relationship with staff. In the current study examples of inflexible approach to reintegration occurred in Neil:

- *Cos she knew the situation, she knew that he couldn't go in on his own and 'cos I had to take me daughter into junior school he was always late but he would always be there before 9 o'clock. So he'd always be there before lessons but her just, her always give him detention. Oh you're late and her always on his case, constantly*

  Parent Neil

- *I even had the attendance officer on me as well. Yeah [attendance officer] he constantly was on my back. We had a meeting we attended the once and he blamed me for it all and he said it's your fault, you're the parent at the end of the day*

  Parent Neil

The barrier negative, unhelpful or blocking approach by staff occurred in Neil where the parent is referring to the head of year:

- *She wouldn't come to the meetings. She wouldn't come. She refused to come to the meetings. She was busy*

This type of staff behaviour was also perceived as occurring by the school mentor in Carla:

- *And the same few members of staff from the initial meeting weren't too happy, but I think that was purely for selfish reasons so that they wouldn't have to deal with her ... cos she was so difficult*

As stated these barriers to reintegration were referred to in one or two interviews representing one or two cases, but the two most frequently occurring barriers to reintegration identified in the current study are:

1. Parents' doubts or anxiety about success of reintegration

2. Anticipation of bullying

Parent's doubts or anxiety about the likely success of reintegration

The barrier to reintegration mentioned most frequently was 'parent's doubts or anxiety about the likely success of reintegration' and it resonates with the discussion above about the importance of a specific focus on engaging parental collaboration. However, this was not referred to across all of the cases and was mentioned on six occasions. References to the negative impact of parent doubts were made by SSS mentor and school mentors:

- *Mum didn't help. Mum always looked at things in the negative light. And any, the slightest thing mum would be on the phone saying she was not going to go, she can't go, she can't deal with this*

  SSS Mentor Noreen

- *[young person's] mum was worried all the time and even kind of go to the extreme and say [young person] is ill, she's got depression ... in front of [young person] so when you're trying to talk to [young person] she would then say she was ill or she was worried*

  School Mentor Noreen

- *So we needed to make sure that straight away mum was out of the picture.*

  SSS Mentor Geoff

- *She would always be apprehensive, always say I don't know if this is right for him, I don't know if he can do it. But she was kind of careful what she said in front of [young person]*

  School Mentor Neil

Anticipation of bullying

As discussed above bullying or anticipation of bullying was cited as contributing to school

refusal behaviour and as acting as a barrier to reintegration by participants in cases, A

and C:

- *Thinking about would they bully me and I had to like try and get it out of my head*

  Young person Noreen

- *Because with [young person]she'd relate everything to the experience that she'd had and yes being the same school I could understand that, but to convince her that things are different*

  SSS Mentor Noreen

- *We still have to pick him up from school because he's frightened of walking home for fear he's going to get bullied. ... He's just got this massive fear of crowds, massive fear of being beaten up.*

  Parent Geoff

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION

The discussion will focus on two broad areas: perceptions of the nature of school refusal and the reintegration of pupils displaying school refusal behaviour.

Perceptions of the Nature of School Refusal

The research design used has led to analysis and discussion of the five individual cases and of this data combined. The rationale for this design was that the pooling of the data in an embedded case study would permit the discovery of emerging themes across cases but due to the very nature of the group of young people under investigation it was also considered important to try to uncover some of the singular aspects of each case. A major problem associated with school refusal lies in its conceptualisation in that there are considered to be a range of factors that might contribute to development and maintenance of school refusal behaviour in children and young people. These possible contributory factors include separation anxiety; and other forms of anxiety particularly social anxiety, parenting styles and family dynamics, school factors including bullying and transition. This complexity means it is difficult for commentators to arrive at a clear and agreed definition. Elliott's (1999) conceptualisation of school refusal as a sign indicating an array of possible social and school problems although broad is helpful and reflects the range of issues pertaining to the five cases examined in the current research.

This small scale research study involved only five cases centred on five young people, and yet the variation was evident. This variation lies in the personal characteristics of the

young people and their home circumstances, including the nature of the relationship they enjoy with their parents and the emotional climate at home which in part is influenced by individual parent characteristics. The parent in Simon is perceived by the two mentors and presents herself quite differently from the parent in Geoff with the latter being perceived as anxious and overprotective and the former as independent and emotionally secure. The parent in Noreen is critical and questioning of the need for her child to return to mainstream and defines her child's needs with medical labels. The idea that attitude and parenting style has implications for the emotional climate in the home and the relationship between the young person and the parent illustrates the individual nature of cases and when factors like young person characteristics, social, historical and school factors are taken into account this point about heterogeneity is emphasised further. Consequently, a perspective on school refusal behaviour that considers the ecological systems relating to the young person would seem to have potential in terms of accounting for complexity and heterogeneity. An ecological model of school refusal behaviour might begin to tease out the contextual circumstances and within child characteristics that interact to affect outcomes like attendance. Thambirajah et al (2008) discuss an ecological-transactional model of school refusal which encompasses notions of risk and resilience factors existing at each level of the ecological system (ontogenic – individual child/young person; microsystem - family or school; exosystem - neighbourhood, local authority; and macrosystem – government).   This model offers a way of analysing the factors contributing to the development and maintenance of school refusal behaviour in individual cases and may support reintegration planning.

Perceptions expressed by the two mentors in Carla raise the question of terminology and the distinction between school refusal and truancy. Lauchlan (2003) contends that the distinction between school refusal and truancy is simplistic and can be unhelpful in that it fails to consider the range of possible and complex reasons why children may not attend school. The young person in Carla perplexed the two mentors in that she did not communicate openly with them, she did not display overt anxiety, social or otherwise or emotional upset which is often associated with school refusal (Berg et al 1969, Brandibas et al 2004) but spoke of not liking school and of deciding not to go. However, this young person tended to be at home when she was not attending which is one of the identifying features of school refusal offered by Berg et al (1969) and continues to have currency. This Geoffhallenges the traditional criteria for identifying school refusal and illustrates Lauchlan's (2004) point about the usefulness and purpose of drawing sharp distinctions between school refusal and truancy.

In four of the five case studies (A-D) the young people had experienced and some (cases A, B & C) continued to experience strong emotions and anxiety related to school attendance and in particular to social interactions/contact with peers. Perceptions expressed in Simon suggest the emergence of anxiety and emotional pain displayed by the young person related to significant changes in his home circumstances in that his parents separated at a time when he was making the transition from primary to secondary school. The view given is of crisis which is now past. Again, this gives a view of school refusal behaviour as varied and individual. Four of the five cases confirm the view

of school refusal as being associated with anxiety (Brandibas et al 2004) and with severe emotional upset (Berg et at 1969).

As discussed earlier, emotional upset was not restricted to the young people in the case studies, parents too seemed to experience powerful emotions in relation to their children's school refusal behaviour. In all cases parents referred to the emotional challenges they experienced but in cases A, B and C this was accentuated with parents feeling their own health and family life was being affected. The mentors in cases A and C referred to making explicit efforts to build relationships with these parents to help support and manage their (the parents) emotions and responses in order to support the reintegration of the young person. It is possible that the very nature of the relationship existing between the young person and the parent can be a factor that contributes to the development of school refusal behaviour as is suggested by notions of separation anxiety, however it is also important to acknowledge as this research highlights the potential negative emotional impact of school refusal on the emotional well-being of the parent and on family life. At times this may affect the ability of parents to meet the challenges of the reintegration process in a robust and effective way.

The literature review highlighted a current discussion about the possible role of the school in the development or maintenance of school refusal behaviour as traditionally the focus has tended to be on within child or family based matters. Of the five case studies it appears that two of them, cases A and D were seen by the participants as being

linked to factors outside of school, namely in Simon the separation of the young person's parents and the ensuing upheaval, and in Noreen a family history of bereavement, and ill health. Geoff was perceived as being linked to parenting style (over protective) but also to school factors including an inappropriate response to the young person's display of anxiety and past experiences of school based bullying. In three cases A,B, and C experiences of bullying at school and fear of bullying emerged as factors that contributed to both the emergence of school refusal behaviour and to its maintenance. With regard to bullying the mentors tended to be sceptical about the extent of it perceiving the young people and their parents as worrying about the possibility of bullying while the parents and young people in cases A and C were very clear that serious episodes of bullying had occurred.

The young people in four of the case studies either directly expressed anxiety about social interaction with peers or were perceived by other participants as being socially anxious. This resulted in avoidant behaviour in cases A and C in particular. This finding might be considered alongside that of Malcolm et al (2003) who researched the views of young people, parents, school staff and local authority staff into perceptions about the causes of school non-attendance; bullying was identified by all as a possible causal or contributory factor. This would suggest that schools have an important contribution to make in supporting the attendance and well being of vulnerable pupils by focusing on the social context, peer relationships and anti-bullying strategies. If the very nature of young people who are likely to be at risk of school refusal is to be somewhat anxious, then the

implementation of strategies that engender confidence in the school's ability and willingness to deal with bullying incidents is required.

In four of the five case studies, school refusal behaviour including anxiety and an inclination to avoid school remained ongoing after an apparent 'successful' reintegration. This has implications for the way reintegration is viewed, staffing and the support mechanisms put in place. GHK Consulting (2004) undertook DfES sponsored research to investigate practices in the reintegration of a range of pupils into mainstream school settings. Two of their pupil groups appear to relate to the young people we are describing as displaying school refusal behaviour – there were 'pupils with persistent absences' and 'pupils not attending due to medical needs'. According to GHK Consulting (2004) essential components for reintegrating these pupils were: identification of unauthorised absences, follow-up and diagnosis procedures which include identification of underlying issues, flexibility in the curriculum and timetabling (associated with a phased reintegration). They take the view that this flexibility should be time-limited and ideally would not extend beyond a half term, however they do concede that on some occasions there may be a need to instigate more lengthy and intensive responses to the underlying issues causing the absence. Perceptions of participants in the current study is that while the phased reintegration occurred within a fairly short time frame (cases B,C & D) some level of ongoing flexibility (Geoff, does not go to lessons where supply teachers are working and does not participate in PE), and or support to deal with setbacks (cases A, B, C and E) was necessary. The picture of reintegration for pupils displaying school

refusal behaviour in the present study is of an ongoing process often requiring

monitoring, adjustment and intervention at punctuation points over an extended period.

Reintegration

The participants were asked about the process of reintegration and then specifically

asked about factors that facilitated this process or acted as barriers to it. In response to

the more general questions about process participants referred to the phased nature of

reintegration as discussed above with some considering the time frame of a few weeks

to have been about right while others like the young person and parent in Noreen

considering it to be too short and rather rushed. The finding that involvement of parents

and carers is facilitative of effective reintegration appears to be fairly consistent between

research studies which focus on reintegration or inclusion like Gibb et al (2007), GHK

Consulting (2004) and James (1997) almost irrespective of the identified needs of the

pupils/young people being investigated. However, there may be some ways in which

issues specific to the pupil group under investigation influence the process of

reintegration so necessitating a particular emphasis. For example, in accordance with her

specified pupil group of youngsters returning from specialist residential provision James

(1997) identified factors relating to the children returning to their home environment and

the needs of parents and carers, and how the children might be helped to develop a peer

group.

In the present study a perception emerged from mentors but also from some parents themselves (Cases C and D) that they (parents) were sometimes 'part of the problem' because of their own emotional needs or their relationship with the young person. This led to mentors identifying a need to conduct parent focused work as part of the reintegration process. This is similar to the factor identified by James (1997) where the identification of parent/carer needs is identified as an important aspect of reintegration.

The current study also identifies personalisation and collaboration as being important facilitative factors in reintegration. The collaboration can be seen as involving all parties with parents and mentors from both settings (school and Short Stay School) being key to the process. Whilst a positive attitude towards reintegration from the young person is desired there were two cases where this was not really evident, cases A and B where reintegration appears to have occurred fairly successfully. The young person in Neil was perceived by the Short stay school mentor as adopting a rather neutral position to reintegration, while the young person in Noreen expressed ambivalence. The importance of adopting a personalised approach is highlighted in the current study and has implications for staffing and staff attitude but it also requires a level of flexibility in expectations and organisational culture that could prove challenging for schools.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUDING REMARKS

This small scale, case study based research identifies key themes related to the reintegration of young people who exhibit school refusal behaviour from short stay school into mainstream school provision. The aim of the research study was to investigate factors that act as facilitators or barriers to the reintegration of these young people and to explore perceptions about the nature and experience of school refusal. Predictably, School refusal emerges as a complex and somewhat elusive concept mainly because of the range of possible factors occurring at each level of the ecological system that might contribute to its development and maintenance, (individual, family, school, etc) but also because of the involvement of emotional, social and behavioural elements. Due to the complexities mentioned above, school staff can feel disempowered and ill equipped to deal with what may appear to them to be mental health problems. Coupled with this there may be a tendency in some situations to misinterpret school refusal behaviour or dismiss the possibility of it in preference for more simple within child or family explanations for the behaviour. This can lead to punitive responses. Conversely to view school refusal behaviour as primarily the domain of specialist CAMHS professionals can lead to education staff and parents feeling they have little or nothing of value to offer in terms of support or intervention. The findings from this study would refute such a view.

The findings from this research study do not refute the existence of within child or family factors as contributing to school refusal behaviour. There is a view emerging from the adult participants that the young people at times display stubborn, manipulative

behaviour and are prone to being sensitive. Parental anxiety is perceived by many of the

adult participants as contributing to the landscape of school refusal, possibly by

transmitting fear to the young person. This has the potential to affect the emergence of

school refusal behaviour in the first place but also the process of reintegration.

The fact that the dynamic between parent and child is raised as a contributory or

maintaining factor in relation to school refusal in two cases is powerful especially as on

one occasion the parents themselves refer to this. Also this finding would seem to concur

with the notion of separation anxiety.   However, the parents in this study do not all

present themselves nor are all perceived by others to be anxious, deficient or as

contributing to an unhealthy parent/child dynamic.

With reference to school based factors that might contribute to school refusal two

themes occur, one relates to bullying and the other to the emotional climate or to use

the words of one participant how emotionally comfortable the young person feels at

school. These points might be summarised as pertaining to feelings of safety in the

school environment. There were differences between the way the mentors compared to

parents and young people tended to refer to bullying in the case studies.   The mentors

tended to inject a sense of doubt about bullying, describing it as unproven, as being a

perceived cause of the school refusal behaviour given by young people and parents . This

was in contrast to the young people and parents who spoke of bullying as fact and as

having a traumatic impact on them. Further, anticipation of bullying and an inadequate

response to it is indentified as a barrier to reintegration by parents and young people. It is probably of little relevance now whether the level of bullying reported by parents and young people is accurate or whether there is evidence of this, the fact that it is perceived as a cause of school refusal behaviour and as a barrier to reintegration means it needs to be taken seriously by school staff and others. Feeling safe or comfortable in the school environment as described by participants seems to refer to emotional comfort in addition to physical safety. Efforts to address this were made during the reintegration process in most cases, through allocating key workers in school to the young people and ensuring they (the young people) knew how and where to access support and in some cases that it was always available.

A further finding relates to the intensity of emotions associated with school refusal behaviour. This is well documented in the literature on school refusal which tends to make reference to anxiety and even 'severe emotional upset' involving 'symptoms of excessive fearfulness, temper tantrums, misery or complaints of feeling ill' (Berg, Nichols & Pritchard, 1969). However, the current study emphasises the emotional impact of school refusal behaviour on parents. In some cases this may be due partly to the over involved relationship existing between parent and young person, but participants referred to the stress and worry experienced by parents as a result of the roller coaster experience of dealing with the young person and school and attendance professionals. Understandably, it was mainly parents who made this point but in some instances mentors from both settings were aware of the emotional impact and the need for emotional support experienced by some parents.

According to participants in the current study reintegration of young people displaying school refusal behaviour was experienced as an ongoing endeavour with setbacks along the way. This meant that although in some cases the young person had been back at mainstream school for over a year and no longer had contact with the short stay school they continued to receive fairly frequent involvement from a key worker (the mentor) and for some there were still occasions when they struggled to go to school.

Personalisation is one of the factors perceived by participants in the present study as being facilitative of reintegration. This would seem to relate to the earlier finding that the emotional safety of the young person is a type of protective factor with personalisation being seen as a way of developing emotional safety. Other facilitative factors include 'phased reintegration' and collaboration between staff from the short stay school, the mainstream school and parents. These types of factors have been reported by research into the reintegration of other pupil groups as being facilitative (James 1997, and GHK 2004). Efforts by mentors to help the young person explore and understand his or her emotions was also considered to support reintegration; this highlights the idea that school refusal behaviour has a mental health dimension that needs to be addressed although this work is probably not the sole domain of CAMHS specialists as parents and mentors and maybe peers have potentially useful roles to play. The role of peers in supporting reintegration into mainstream was not explored in this research study but is worthy of investigation.

There was relatively little agreement between participants as to barriers to reintegration, however some of those identified in the present study are similar to those reported by , Gibb et al (2007) and refer to parental doubts or anxiety and inflexible and negative attitudes of staff in the mainstream school. These two factors are related in that one can see how negative attitudes of staff would impact on parental anxiety and confidence levels. In fact there may possibly be a cyclical relationship in that parental anxiety is communicated to the young person and in turn impacts on them in terms of anxiety and fear. This would suggest that part of the role for the key worker which in this study would be the school mentor might involve acting as a champion for the young person with colleagues in school as well as sharing the management of the reintegration process on a day to day basis. The findings also indicate the importance of supporting parents at an emotional level.

Limitations and Future Directions

One of the limitations of this research study is that although young people who formed the focus of the case studies were participants their voice was somehow muted in the analysis. The interviews with the young people were typically shorter in duration than those with the adult participants with the exception of the young person in Noreen who was open and very communicative. The somewhat muted voice of the young people may in part reflect the nature of the young people themselves in that at least four of the five adult is likely to be construed as an anxiety provoking social situation. The fifth young

person Carla was described by the adults involved as someone who would use silence as a way of dealing with demands, so again there are questions about the appropriateness of the interview method of data collection. In retrospect I could have used a focus group method which might have meant the young people would feel less exposed and anxious or perhaps to have met them on several occasions or over an extended period with the aim of developing a level of familiarity might help them to be at ease. Lewis (1992) assesses the advantages of group interview approaches and identifies four main benefits. The first is consensus beliefs, which involves comparing the beliefs expressed by individuals in individual interview contexts with those expressed by the same people in group contexts. The idea is that context can affect the views expressed, which would have been interesting to explore with the five young people in the current study.   The second benefit of group interviews discussed by Lewis (1992) is what she refers to as breadth and depth responses, which is the potential for group members to challenge each other, or for them to build on comments expressed by someone else or for individuals to risk offering tentative views in a supportive context. The converse would also be possible, though that the group context might be experienced as threatening by some. Other advantages discussed by Lewis (1992) are verification and enhanced reliability and validity. Group interviews would have been an alternative or an additional way of eliciting the views of this group of vulnerable young people which could have enhanced the strength of their voice in this study.

It is my experience that young people often experience a social awkwardness in communicating with adults which was not really addressed here, however the use of a

co-researcher closer in age to the young people might have been helpful and would be worth considering for any future work of this type. Future research might usefully focus exclusively on eliciting the perspectives of young people who display school refusal behaviour, and explore their experience of school refusal, Short Stay School provision and the reintegration process.

Another limitation of the study relates to its small scale. Five cases do not provide a large enough cohort to enable us to draw conclusions that can be generalised to the population of young people who exhibit school refusal behaviour as a whole. However, that was not the aim of the research. The purpose of the research was to elicit the perspective of those involved in the reintegration of young people with school refusal behaviour from a short stay school into mainstream in order to examine their experience and conceptions of school refusal and identify features of reintegration. This meant attempting to gain a rich picture which in turn implies a focus on detail; this limited the number of cases that could be included. Further case study research of this type might be useful in terms of contributing to the body of knowledge on school refusal given the heterogeneous nature of cases.

Four participant groups, parents, young people, short stay school and school mentors were included in this research study in an attempt to gain a rounded view of the phenomena under investigation. However, there were other potential participants who were not included because of the scope of the study. In particular these include peers in

the short stay school and peers in the receiving school. This is a potentially useful group as such participants might assist in the exploration of social anxiety and it is possible that salient school factors or individual young person social factors have not emerged in this study. Other possible participants could have been drawn from teachers in the mainstream school as no teaching staff were involved.

The five parent participants were all mothers; this creates the potential for bias. This was not intentional and it is possible that the fact that no fathers participated simply reflects something about the availability and willingness of mothers to engage with their children's education rather than anything specific to cases of school refusal. Future research might usefully explore the perceptions and role of fathers whose children display school refusal behaviour.

As discussed above future research might usefully build on several areas identified in this study including the role of peers in supporting reintegration; the perception of fathers in relation to having a child who is displaying school refusal behaviour and the reintegration process; an in depth study into the perceptions of young people who display school refusal behaviour employing data collection methods including observation in the school context, and individual and group interviews. The present study required participants to recall their experiences of reintegration future research could take a longitudinal approach whereby the participants would be interviewed at different points in the reintegration process. This has certain attractions in that it has the potential to explore

the tentative finding in the current study that school refusal behaviour and reintegration need to be considered as ongoing. Which means a research design that allowed for examination of perceptions and experiences over time would be appropriate.

One of the major limitations of this research study relates to its qualitative nature in that there is a risk of bias. Firstly, there is the potential bias of the researcher who is involved in interpreting the data, and then there is the inherent difficulty of asking participants to recall and tell the story of their experiences of school refusal and reintegration. For some (the mentors) this reflects on how well they have done their jobs and for parents and young people this refers to personal and possibly emotionally sensitive material. I attempted to reduce bias by the way I approached the interviews in that I attempted to be informal, low key and accepting with the hope that participants would not feel the need to exaggerate or put on a show.

I began this research study as a novice researcher with a professional interest in school refusal and a wish to contribute to the knowledge base in this field. The experience of researching the literature, designing and conducting this small scale research study has been demanding at every level and stage. The relationship between and interpretation of philosophical issues, research design and methods and then fieldwork alongside my professional work has been a great challenge and I am aware that I have not always made the correct decisions. I feel that although the research study does make a small contribution to knowledge about the reintegration of young people with school refusal

from a Short Stay School into mainstream school I would do things quite differently were I to begin this work again.

In retrospect I spent a lot of energy and time reviewing the literature which was of course necessary, but in future I would probably re-proportion my time and effort giving more attention to research design and methods and in trying to anticipate the practical problems that would arise in fieldwork. For example after conducting the first couple of interviews I might have reflected on the depth and quality of information gained from the young person in comparison with that elicited from another participant and this could have resulted in a modification of the research design, for example to include the idea of group interviews. The qualitative approach I used is compatible with this type of iterative approach and yet I did have the confidence to think in this way. I saw the research design and methods almost as a recipe to be followed with the real work due to take place at the analysis stage. However, the analysis would have been aided by a more flexible and engaged approach during the fieldwork phases. This point also refers to my response to that fact that all parent participants were mothers. I could have taken active steps to address this occurrence, and would attempt to do so in future or at least to explore this with the mothers themselves.

As a management committee member for the Short Stay School I feel this research has given me a clearer idea of reintegration and the role played by staff in the Short Stay School; indeed an insight into the role of the Short Stay School itself. The Short Stay

School is intended to provide temporary provision for young people with school refusal behaviour and to support their return to mainstream. The role of staff at the Short Stay School in creating a personalised programme including a phased reintegration and setting up support networks in mainstream for the young people who are reintegrating is important and is time consuming. In addition there is a therapeutic aspect to the role of mentor at the Short Stay School which includes helping the young person to develop an awareness of their anxieties about school and other aspects of their life and in helping them to come to terms with the idea of reintegration. This knowledge may be helpful in the context of the management committee as it has the potential to feed into discussion and decisions about priorities for funding and staffing if the Short Stay School is to be successful in providing an effective service for the local authority.

The finding about school refusal being an ongoing issue that is not cured as such but is experienced as a matter that is likely to recur and require support or management possibly throughout the young person's school career is new and adds to the knowledge base on school refusal. I see this as helpful in my role as educational psychologist and is worth sharing with colleagues with a view to developing appropriate approaches for working with children, their families and schools.

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Transcripts - Noreen

Young Person

Noreen: Young Person

[reasons]

Bullying. Just bullying. Here.

[tell me a bit about that]

They used to call me names and really got on my nerves. Wind me up. In the end I didn't want to come to school. And I got told I had school phobia.

[who told you that?]

My doctor

1:06

and the school said to my mum it sounds like and it looks like that she's got it as well. And then they said they'd get in contact with [SSS].

1:18

[what happened, how were you feeling?]

Down. Kind of stressed. I used to before we don't have these ties we had like erm normal ones that you have to do yourself and I tried to hurt myself. Cos I was that stressed out and upset.

1:54

And one day I didn't want to go to school and then my mum brought me into school cos she'd had enough of me going, of sending me to school and me coming back. I, she brought me in the car and I ran off home and she came into school and told them and they told my mum that I could have school phobia

2:24

and my mum went to the doctors and the doctor said I had it.

[had you stopped coming to school]

Yes, over a year I think, between 6, like 12 months. I don't, I still don't go out now. [only come to school?]

Yeah and go shopping with my mum. And if I go shopping with my mum I still moan like, get really paranoid

2:59

So one of them things.

[how long at SSSI?]

A year.

[how did you find SSS?]

Comfortable

[straight away?]

Yeah

3:17

Bit nervous cos with it being a new place to go but they made me feel welcome. I made friends straight away.

[still in touch with any of those friends?]

Yeah

3:42

[judge success of return]

4:12

About a 3. Because I didn't feel I was ready to come back and I still suffer with coming to school. Some days I don't wanna go, come, and me and my mum we had a problem a few weeks back where I didn't wanna come and it started a big massive row and it ended up that I had to live with my nan for a short period of time

4:41

Cos I still feel really uncomfortable about coming to school. But I've gotta try and get over it. But it's hard, very hard. Still find it difficult.

5:17

[what's you attendance like now?]

Yeah I had a week off last week I was really poorly. I came back this Monday but my attendance I think its about 75.

[how do you know?]

Yeah we checking

5:47

[been back a year now]

[what to look for to

[judge how successful reintegration has been]

Whether they're happy or not. Whether they show like happiness

6:42

or you can tell that they're happy. They'd be like really like smiling. Theire body language would be really like comfortable. Basically. Mainly their body language.

[chose to come back to same school]

Cos I had friends here, I didn't want to go to a different school

7:33

and have to go through the process again of making new friends. Like maybe it might not have worked out but I wanted to come back to face everything.

[your decision?]

Yeah. I didn't want to change schools even though I've been bullied here. I still wanted to stay at the same school

8:17

[whose idea for a return to school]

[SSS mentor] and Mrs D at [SSS]thought I was ready to come back, and we used to have meetings every so often with the school and my family and [SSS]and it came up in the meeting that they thought I was ready to be back in school

8:39

and that's when they started to bring me in and like for a few hours and then it increased to like more hours and eventually I did a full day.

8:52

and then it started with like weeks and they increased it every time.

[it was SSS mentor and Mrs D who took the lead]

Yeah but they asked me about it and I did think I was ready to come back. Slightly but it, I still wasn't comfortable about coming back

9:32

I knew it was gonna have to happen but I just found it was really quick. It all went quick

[may be need slower process]

Yeah. Maybe like started, like instead of when I. We started about July time and then by September I was full time. But I would have preferred that it was like a fifty timetable where I did so many hours of the day at [SSS]and so many hours at FF [mainstream school]and then went from there. But I was full time.

10:21

[mixed feelings, any one else views]

My mum. My mum didn't want me to come back.

10:41

[you more confident than your mum]

A bit. I'd like, I thought I was ready but now when I look back, maybe I should have stayed a bit longer. And then, but my mum didn't want me to come back, nor did my step dad.

11:03

[why]

My mum didn't think I was ready either

My mum thought I should have stayed there.

[for good?]

Yeah

11:17

My mum wanted me to stay there but [SSS]l said I couldn't stay there

[know why?]

11:24

When I first went there, there was another lady running it and she let the children stay like, she didn't do the rules like that to go. And then When Mrs D started to run it, it all changed. Everybody had a set period of time that they had to be reintegrated back in but some of the children there they couldn't go back because of maybe health reasons

12:00

Because of, that's not what [SSS] about, you have to eventually go back to school.

[any difference if you'd known that in the beginning?]

I don't know

12:25

[special arrangements to help?]

12:47

Yeah. I had support when I did lessons I had support in the lessons either from [SSS mentor]or [school mentor]or one of the teachers that used to bring me to FF [mainstream school].

[sort of support?]

Sit with me in the lessons and then when they thought I was comfortable, sometimes they'd kind of like go and talk to school mentor for a while and then come back to the lesson, see how I was getting on

13:25

[just having her there was supportive?]

Yeah

13:44

[anything else extra?]

13:48

We had like we met up with [school mentor] before, got to know [school mentor]. Then that's when we started going in. They wanted us to meet [school mentor] before we was reintegrated

14:05

meet the mentors

[helpful?]

Yeah and we went like round school, walked round school and went in saw teachers and basically went to like the nurse, introduced me to the nurse and got into like seeing everybody

[saw teachers when not teaching}

14:38

I think I went once or twice into a lesson and spoke to the teacher

[barriers]

15:03

Yeah. Getting over the fact that if I did come back, thinking about would they bully me and I had to like try and get it out of my head and just concentrate, not think about it too much

15:27

but that's the way it is

Still sometimes I still think that way but I just try my best like when I walk to school sometimes I feel like down and I don't want to come and I just like say to myself I can do it, I can do it

16:00

then try and help myself as far as I can. Cos sometimes it like when I walk to school, a few weeks back I was going through like before when I started not coming to school, where I created like a barrier where I couldn't go past that point and I had to turn back and go home

16:27

and then [school mentor] got me back into the school routine and mainly I felt it was alright, but I feel that when I come back to school, [school mentor] was my main support cos I don't see [SSS mentor]no more

16:59

[SSS mentor], I don't feel they've kept in contact with me.

[how long kept in contact?]

17:13

We had like a meeting a few weeks into me coming back in full time and see how I was getting on. But I haven't seen em. I think it was maybe two weeks ago I went to a children in need thing they were having to see them.

[you would have liked more contact with them?]

17:47

Yeah. Cos they said to me when I left, you'll never, we'll always see how you are and check up on you, But I feel that they haven't kept in contact

[checking and you don't know?]

18:09

Don't know

If I knew maybe.

[you'd want to know?]

Yeah

Me and N speak about it like and that and I'll say to N I don't feel they kept in contact like they said they would and he says I feel the same. He feels the same that they haven't kept in contact the way they said they would

19:25

[anything else helpful]

Teachers being really nice with me. And having my friends round me and knowing that they want me to come to school so we can speak and have a chat

[new friends?]

Old friends. When I left, I left quite abruptly. They bnever seen me again until I came back and we just started talking again and we're friends.

20:07

[teacher nice even before?]

Yeah

20:18

About the same but I think they understand me more now than they did before. Like my form tutor when I used to not come in he would basically say oh she's not turned up again. But now he's more understanding. He asks me nearly everyday how I am. He's more understanding about what's happened. So it's better cos I thought I would have had to change forms cos I didn't really get on with him

21:12

at first but now its changed, he knows my problems. He understands them more.

[advice]

21:54

Think it over. Make sure it's the thing that they want, not what other people want. Make sure they're actually ready to go back instead of doing things that you think are expected of you cos when I,with my experience I used to do things, like put on a brave face about coming to school when I was brought back

23:31

and I suffer with stress and I have to see a psychiatrist but its if you need to think iot over. You need to know that its the right thing for you. and make sure that the feelings and what you feel is right and you don't feel isn't right. Basically just think it over.

NOREEN – Parent

16 yrs yr 11

[reasons]

Very depressed. Found it very hard to even walk out of the door to go to school. It was like somebody having a fit, sweating, feeling sick, she always made up that she had illnesses. Initially at one point we were giving her stuff to help her thinking she was ill and we could have really harmed her.

00:54

Because she was in such a state she didn't know what to do with herself. And it basically it was put down as school phobia.

[how old then?]

1:07

Well she was only there for about just under 12 months, it might not have been that long. So she would have been about 14, 15, 14.

1:24

But they reckon when I look back at it I've always had problems with N going to school. She's always, always missed school, since she was a small child, even at juniors.

1:40

So it hasn't just been now, it has been before as well. It got worse as she got older and she had to mix with more people of her own age and older.

[bullying?]

yeah

1:56

A lot. Yeah she was pulled off her chair by her hair. She'd be spat at, verbally abused and all this was at FF [mainstream school]. So it was a bit of a nuisance.

2:26

[bullying not the only cause?]

No there's a lot of things that caused it. I mean saying, there's been a lot of deaths in the family. N's, N will tell you that she remembers her dad but it'll probably be what she's hear because I lost my husband when Nwas one and a half. She weren't even 2, so I'd got 3 children without a father sort of thing.

So it was very hard and I mean after that it was just continuous.

3:09

It was her dad, then she lost 2 grand dads in one week. And she lost her nan, so its really, it ain't been, its been a rocky ride. You know what I mean, for all my children really.

3:21

Yeah. There could have been yeah. But basically she can't cope with people being nasty, you know saying things to her. She just can't cope.

[how long at SSS?]

3:38

Roughly about12 months, it might not have been 12 months, it might not have even been 12 months. It might have only been about 6 or 7 months, I can't really remember.

3:50

[how long back at FF school]

This will be her second, I think this is her second term. Cos they pulled her back in half way through year 10. I think it was, yeah I'm sure it was. Yeah year 10, she went back in year 10. And she started yeah, she did yeah she started back in year 10 that's when they wanted to put her back in.

4:26

Cos she was at the SSS in year 9.

Might not have been a year I don't think.

[so this is her second year back]

Well, well initially no because year 11 they come, it follows straight after so its only been 12 months it ain't a proper 2 years. Cos year 11 is funny how it falls you know what I mean. Cos if you think of it when they break up this September N would be going back to year 11 but they bring it forward don't they. For some unknown reason, I do not know why.

5:09

I don't know why.

[how rate success]

5:33

In total, now in full half and half. I would have said about two and a half/three. I can't really go any higher because it's been hell

5:45

It's been shear hell for me every day. Not wanting to go to school. It still happens every single, my daughter gets up and it's the same thing every day. That child goes out of the house at ten to eight so she will not meet anybody on the way to school.

6:03

its horrendous what she does. And I mean, you know its terrible. I mean it got to a point once where the school even reported me to the social services. Yeah I was reported to child services because what happened was it got to a point where she would not go to school again.

6:24

And she was really making herself poorly. I pushed her out the door I says look you're going to school and I've really had enough. And it got to a point and we were pushing each other and I tapped her. I really you know, I got her and I …..You know how frustrated you can get.

6:38

Well when the school phoned and they said where's N, I said N ain't here I said I've kicked her out and hers gone to her auntie's. What I said to her was get out me sight before I blooming strangle you. And her run straight to her auntie's.

6:54

So I went to her auntie's and the school had said well what happened. I said we had a bit of a scuffle. The next thing I was got Social services phoning me. They wanted N to press charges

7:10

They asked N if her wanted to press charges and Natalie said no. My mommy daint hurt me it was my fault. Yeah. It was terrible, it was horrendous, they don't understand, they don't realise how much she still suffers today. And they think its gone hunky dory. If you speak to them.

7:31

Oh how's N? Oh she's done fantastic she comes to school every day. Yeah she goes to school every day. My daughter can have free meals but her won't go and fetch any food out of the canteen. It's terrible, it's a living nightmare.

7:49

It is for me but they to think everything's hunky dory but it ain't.

[how judge success?]

8:25

If the child's happy. If the child is happy and can show you that yeah, great I'm having fun here. Cos I think every child that goes to school should be able to come home and say you know what I've done today it's been absolute…. I don't get none of that. Theres' no enthusiasm. I feel that you should know that a child's enjoying themselves and you know she enjoys her childcare, she loves it

8:52

[how idea come up about reintegration]

You know what, for the life of me I do not know. I do not know. But do you mean the integration back into ..[yeah] It was just all of a sudden we had meetings every so often to say how N was getting on

9:24

Yeah I always went to them and then they just said well we think its time that we're gonna integrate and I went pardon. And I weren't, I was bang against it.

9:39

And her said no, no her said her'll be fine. Everything'll be fine. Course she'd only be going one day to Frank F. Everything was alright cos she weren't meeting all the people was she. And yeah it did look good and everything, you know what I mean.

9:56

But it was just dropped on us basically, that em

[didn't you know that when she went to SSS?]

I knew that went to SSS she would be integrated back into school but I was told as well when the, it was an old headmistress that was there that people like N usually stayed there till they left school

10:17

So I was under the impression that Natalie was going to be there till she left school.

10:22

So.

[idea came from SSS and quite insistent]

10:43

I said I don't think her's ready I really don't

[What about N's feelings?]

10:46

She told them.

[she felt the same as you?]

Yeah

[planning of reintegration]

What it was it was planned that she would go back, I think it was a couple of days a week if I can recall it now. A couple of days a week. They did arrange for a taxi to come and take her every… and that was great because she hadn't gotta walk there

11:15

She'd got not fear, so that was fine and er then it got when extra days were being put on. I mean most of it would be done over a period of so long, I can't remember the time, but I think it was within two weeks, bang her's back in.

11:30

[so very quick]

Oh yeah, I thought it was too quick. I tell you the truth I think it was too quick, miles too quick.

11:42

I'll tell you something I mean don't get me wrong, they did, they were lovely at the SSS Centre but I don't think SSS mentor could get rid of them quick enough. SSS mentor couldn't get rid of them quick enough

11:53

And I'm sorry to have to say that

[why do you think they wanted to get rid of them so quickly]

I don't know, because I know that the new headmistress that they've got there, I know her from when my children were with her at her other school and she was there, and she's a lovely woman. And she believed that a child should have a proper education and be able to take every exam and that's what this was, I was told why they was going to integrate her back in.

12:18

And, but I just think it was too quick.

[special arrangements put in place?]

12:34

She'd got this mentor which is S she's very good, she's very good is S. She's been very good with me and with N. She's the only one I work with there, she's the only one I talk to

12:50

I don't talk to Sharon because she ridicules N, she's another mentor at FF [mainstream school]. I don't like her. I've never met her and I don't think I'd want to

12:58

From what N says, how she speaks to N, its not … you know. And but as I say the thing they put in place was that she would have this taxi to help her get to school the first few weeks and what have you

13:16

And then she'd have S [school mentor] to go to if she needs to but sometimes I still feel if N needs a time out that she should be able to go to a you know certain place or a certain person and get that time out that she needs

13:37

[did she have that?]

I think she could at first, but not now, they don't let her now.

[you still thinbk she needs it?]

Yeah, I do sometimes cos her gets a little bit, you know where her needs to sit and calm herself down sort of thing. Cos her makes herself poorly, her worries and it's a shame. I do feel sorry for her.

14:02

Her exhausts herself. I don't know if you noticed when you looked at N how dark her eyes am and I mean…. Her looks like a 40 year old how dark her eyes am.

[barriers]

14:27

Yeah , I was the nasty one, I'd got to send her hadn't I? So it was me you know what I mean. So basically, apart from that it was just the fact that her'd gotta go to school she didn't want to go there but I'd got to send her, so.

14:42

[that was the problem you faced?]

Everyday. Still face it today now. It don't go away, don't go away. I have to try and be so nicey, nicey and think. That ain't me I'd rather just be down to earth and say come on darling its time to go to school

14:56

But I have to sort of, I have to work myself up and think God hers gotta get up the next morning, hers gotta get to school

Yeah, every day, its torture for me. They think it's easy but it aint

15:14

[anything that helped]

15:38

Yep. D'you know I can't really because her ain't an happy child. Well her ain't a hundred percent happy. When hers at home hers fantastic, but when her knows hers gotta go to school its an horrible thing to have to say but hers not a horrible child

16:00

Not hers not horrible no I shouldn't really put it like that. It's a case of her attitude and it aint nice because she's such a lovely girl. Like Jeckyl and Hyde. Cos I had to phone her psychiatrist back to get help again, I have.

16:26

No at the present moment in time, because he wanted to speak to the school and I don't know what this school must say to them because he doesn't want to see her no more. He reckons she's fine. I don't know what they say to them but you know.

16:41

But it come to a point where it got that bad for me it was making me ill I had to get back in touch with the psychiatrist.

You know I don't think it, I can't blame it on the SSS they have done as much as what they could do and they was very, very good. They were and I will never take that away from them.

17:07

[N was happy there]

Oh God she was the most happiest child you could ever meet and even while she was there, they said to me and assured me she weren;t falling behind. She never fell behind. So I always thought even if she stayed there, I mean she came back to FF [mainstream school]sat down and did exams and did not work towards then and still passed

17:34

So I mean basically I had thought and I had asked before if she could have a shorter timetable, do you know what I mean, to take the pressure off her. No

17:48

FF [mainstream school] won't let her. No

18:05

[advice]

18:23

I would give that, the advice I would give to that parent is if they feel that their child is not ready in their self that they are to say look I don't think this is gonna work please can we have extra time to see if we can, you know but do'you know give it that bit more time. Don't push them.

18:51

Just give them time. Please give the child chance and listen to what the child is saying to you. Listen to the child because the mom can sit there and say lah-di-da and they can say oh yes we're taking it all in Mrs H but the only person that knows is the child and they must listen to the child

Noreen: SSS Mentor

[reasons at SSS]

Although we didn't have any evidence it was a case of bullying not having any friends, being bullied, teachers and staff not understanding or helping her. And a lot of issues at home worrying about her mum worrying about step dad and their health and how things were. She had to be there to look after them.

[were they ill?]

50

They were, but I don't think there was a need to worry to the extent that N did.

No at the beginning it was mainly bullying not being able to settle, not having any friends and being picked on

1:14

The main issue was bullying when she first came to us.

[had she stopped going to lessons]

She'd stopped going into school, she had been at home and stopped completely

[how long at SSS]

1.36

Nwas with us …. A year and a half, well July 2006 to Sept 2007, so almost a year and a half

[back at school 18 months]

She has, yes

[returned to her same school?]

Yes

About 3

2:23

Yeah, N's return initially when she had the support and knew somebody was in lesson with her was fine but pulling back became, sometimes became an issue for her. Her parents didn't help, mum didn't help. Mum always looked at things in the negative light. And any, the slightest thing mum would be on the phone saying she was not going to go, she can't go, she can't deal with this.

3.20

She didn't stop going but there were periods when her attendance wasn't as good as it should have been or could have been. And I think she, the slightest thing she would use as an excuse not to go.

3.50

[idea return]

Again, it was from SSS

[her response to idea]

I think at first she was just horrified, she couldn't do it, that she would be bullied again, that things would just be the same.

She couldn't see that changes would be made and that things would be done differently. Like in its case when I said that we would find a member of staff who would be able to help and support her while she was there and I wouldn't be able to do it.

[mum's attitude]

She was still negative, she wasn't overly keen on it taking place and I simply thing because it had been easier for mum when N was here because her attendance did improve when she was with

us. To start with, yes she did use any excuse I've got stomach ache, I've got head ache I don't feel well to try and get home

5.07

But when she saw that the slightest stomach ache or the slightest sniff wasn't going to warrant going home she kind of stopped doing it. Again I think it was a pattern she was able to manipulate mum and say well I need to come home I'm not well

5.25

[school's views]

Again I have to say that the school were fine they were supportive. I mean I could see that they were thinking this may not work or it's not going to be easy but they didn't show any negativity they didn't show that we're not prepared to do this level of support

[they – who?]

Not the mentor, no. Mainly head of year and erm Mrs ….. not sure what her position is…

[plan and prepare N]

6.39

Yeah, again it was a lot of mentoring sessions, a lot of talking to and convincing that she isn't on her own to do this, that there is going to be support and that support will continue for as long as she needs it.

Yeah and I think when she saw that I'm going in and things are

7.07

not as bad, she started realising that and believing that she could do it.

[anything in place – bullying/friends]

Because the bullying had never been confirmed, or there wasn't any evidence we didn't feel that that was the reason why she had stopped going to school

7.48

It was gradual, yes and supported in class, yes. Sometimes they were just taken for a lesson with myself in the room or another member of staff who was available then coming back. It is gradual and it does usually start with a visit during lesson times so that the school isn't so busy and then maybe a lesson a day or a lesson every other day gradually build up to a couple of lessons, mornings then involving the learning mentor or the point of contact at school

8.27

She would sit in those lessons as well to start with

[anything helped?]

Again, the support from the school in terms of the mentor there, very helpful, very supportive

8.46

[any barriers]

9.00

I think, just trying to make her realise with change and strategies put into place things can be successful. Because with N he'd related everything to the experience that she'd had and yes being the same school I could understand that, but to convince her that things are different and the support is there in place for you and will not just go away simply because you've started back. There will still be support.

9.39

[reintegration gone smoothly – still involved?]

I haven't been involved for a while now, if there has been any attendance issues, and there has been school have dealt with it.

9.59

I've been kept informed about it, because I do still there are still a couple of pupils we've still got from FF [mainstream school]we're looking at reintegrating and I've taken for visits and I will keep in touch with the mentors as well. So they have dealt with it.

Noreen: School Mentor

[how long N been back at FF]

The same as [other pupil], they were reintegrated back as a pair if you like, so when they came in for their timetables it was quite often done at the same time. That was to help with transport as well, practical things as well as everything else. But each of them if always had a support in class with them so there would be two workers from the SSS. We had to be very conscious we didn't talk about them as a pair, so although we do they were was very individual and the intervention was very individual as well.

[1:0]

She said she was bullied. She felt she was very badly bullied erm here at FF [mainstream school], and she felt at that time no one was doing anything and I think mum kept her off then cos she's been bullied and I think the EWO got involved and a referral was done to the SSS.

[1:26]

Yeah.

[how Nand mum felt about plan to return]

N was absolutely petrified, I mean every time I saw her for the first couple of weeks she was near tears. She would walk in the corridor with her head down everything about body language saying she didn't want to be there

[2:00]

Quite often you know I had to take control of her emotions bless. You could see she was petrified and she didn't think for one minute she would be successful at reintegrating. It was very slow again, a lot of perseverance, a lot of home visits to the home to liase with mum to reassure mum.

I think mum has a lot of anxieties that was passed on to N as well. I know the SSS had often had a few issues with mum that you know ….want to keep N off, she'd have a bad period or she'd have a bad back or… She was supported when she was off, mum

[2:49]

N real dad died when she was about 2, which, I don't think the family's ever come to terms with because that's mentioned an awful lot during home visits and N brings in photos in of her real dad. But mum's husband, the mum has got health issues as well. Nobody seems to be very well in the house healthwise.

3:16

So anything N ever complained about its like oh we'll keep her off, look after her, protect her kind of thing. And I thing I'm right in saying that N's brother didn't finish school either, he claimed he was bullied and just left school and I don't think that was followed up in the way it would be now. He's about 23 now I think. So it wasn't unusual for them not to go to school if you know what I mean.

[3:52]

[what helped to support N]

Yeah, one to one, we had one to one mentoring a lot with them at least two time, twice a week, two or three times a week. SSS mentor would work with them as well at theSSS. I would visit the SSS as well as them coming here. Somebody from the SSS or I would go in class with them so again it was very intense to the point where I would have to meet them at reception and walk them to my room. They wouldn't just come down, wouldn't dare walk through the school and if the bell went that was it, you wouldn't get them out the room until the corridors were clear. So very intense work in a lot of time spent on them.

[4:45]

[anything different for N than other pupil]

Yeah, other pupil's mum was very different to N's mum. Other pupil's mum was very good in terms of walking him to school and having meetings at the school and she would always be apprehensive, always say I don't know if this is right for him, I don't know if he can do it. But she was very kind of careful what she said in front of him

5:13

Say come on [other pupil name]you know you've got to do this, you haven't got a choice, kind of thing. Whereas N's mum would be very worried all the time and even kind of go to the extreme and say N's ill, she's got depression this isn't right for her, she can't do this. In front of N so when you're trying to talk to N she would then say she was ill or she was worried or she was scared so it was a lot tougher battle I think with N's mum and family and that's why we did a lot of home visits there. Just trying to build up a relationship with mum and recently we're really pleased cos N's mum kind of turned a corner.

6:02

I don't know what it is that's clicked in her, I'm not sure but she's ever so supportive now. About 6 months ago N refused to come into school and it was at the time when they were reading out in English and she was petrified of doing that. And again we liaised with the English teacher and they were aware ofhow worried she was and said the rest of the class are just as worried and N then got to the point of where she wouldn't come in for the day and mum would ring up and really distressed and upset saying she's ill, something's wrong, she's got depression, you have to remember that

6:45

And then it was like no if there was a problem in school we wouldn't force her to come in she's fine we'll support in English. And then the EWO visited them and kind of said look if you think your daughter's ill, if you're keeping her off cos you think she's ill you've got to do something about it. So mum was like alright then I'll take her to the doctors so went to the doctors, explained to the doctor she was anxious worried, depressed, feeling down. So the doctor immediately said oh CAMHS, you need to get her into CAMHS.

7:19

CAMHS were excellent in contacting us at school and saying what's the bigger picture, so we were able to tell them and then the work he did then was very much on her being in school rather than her going back to the SSS. You know he understood it was just a blip getting through it. But without that liaison I think it would have been a very different story with N. To the point now she's buying a dress for the prom, she's organising who she's going with so she's fitting into school life very, very well. But last week we had an incident with her where she just didn't want to come into school and mum was very good and rang us and we said come in together and there she was standing outside with her and she just got in the car. Again I had to leave school to go and collect her bring her back. But then last week or the week before, mum phoned again, this only happens now and again with N she'll just one day refuse to come in and I went to the house and there was a bit of a shouting match and she wouldn't come and blah blah blah

8:31

So I just said right, I'm going to sit in the car, I'll give you five minutes, if you're not in then I'm going without you, I've got other things I've got to do in school, I've spent too long on this. You know, I was quite firm with her, her mum was supporting me with it, saying you know what will happen, the EWO will get involved, you're missing out on your education whereas previously it would be look how ill she is, she's not dressed and its 12 o clock. So with mum's support on that home visit it was fantastic I got in the car and turned the engine on and five minutes later her sisters like she's getting dressed, she's coming.

9:05

And when we got into school she actually said to me I don't know why I did that. I don't know why I did that it was stupid of me to do that. She said I ain't doing that again, it's embarrassing

9:16

and it's like she's got a very stubborn streak as well N has

9:20

But there was an incident where mum did try to get her into school once and it did end up in like a bit of a barny and N came into school and said that mum had dragged her down the stairs and various things. And we did contact initial response. Again it was a difficult one because you could understand mums frustration because she just point blank refused to get off the chair, refused to do anything so, but apparently intitial response which they don't usually do when we want them to went round give mum a real firm telling off

9:58

saying if you ever physically touch you daughter again we'll take, we'll press charges, we won't wait for your daughter to complain. So that day when I went round N was sitting there and I got in the car said I'm going in a minute, one of the things N said to me was I was really using the fact social services had been to my mum, my mum knows very well she can't drag me out the house, or put my school uniform on me or anything else. She said I used that against her, I feel really guilty, I don't know why I did that.

10:31

So she knows how to play the game does N. You have to keep drumming it into her that she's not ill, that she's fine that she's a bit anxious, some days are better than others and she's you know, she does deal with it and cope with it.

[rate her reintegration]

10:54

I'd rate hers, probably even better than other pupil's even though I know…. I just didn't think we'd get her in. From the first day I saw her in the corridor she was physically a wreck, so nervous, couldn't look up, couldn't give anyone eye contact, could barely walk through the gates without tears in her eyes. And with her mum saying we can't do this to her. I would say about an 8.

11:24

I know we have blips but again she's doing fantastic and she's got Cs in all her GCSEs, she's done really well. She takes work home. She came in for 2 days in the holidays to catch up on childcare work. She did work experience, which other pupil didn't do work experience. He's very laid back other pupil is.

11:50

Advice

Lots of hours, lots of time spent on them. I think the fact that seeing them every lunchtime was good and every breaktime. I think just that in the day, how's it going?

[relationship with Ns mum also helped]

We had to win N's mum around and we had to kind of work with Natalie's mum on a bit of letting go of N and letting her be a bit independent.

[discuss with SSSl]

With other pupil's mum, she had got a very good relationship with SSS so it was a joint thing but with N's mum I kind of, with her health problems they wouldn't come into school like Neil's mum so I did a lot of home visits, a lot off my own bat as well. Other pupil's mum, if she had any concerns initially she would phone the SSS N's mum would phone the school so it seemed

13:23

Neil: Parent

15 yrs

Tell you the truth, I don't really know. It was a case of he was refusing to go to school. He didn't feel right, he didn't like the crowds. It was that big thing, I think it was like a change for him from going from junior school like into this big school. There was loads of kids bigger than him, older than him. I think it's overwhelming. And er, I think that was the biggest issue more than anything.

We couldn't find… when we went to see like the counsellors and that, they couldn't pinpoint anything. And we just brought it down to that.

Well, he started the FF in the September of his year 7 and then he stopped in the January and then he started at the SSS in the following July. So it was July he was in year 7. And then he finished when he was in year ten.

[……]

 And started gradually going back in.

Its about, well over a year. [full time]. No he started a week, no a few days at a time he started and they put him in straight in for a week. And then after that he was full time. Cos I used to take him. I had to drop him off of a morning. Fine coming home it was just the fact of going. Which was always a big thing as well for FF because they always wanted him in there on time. That's why he always had to see S [school mantor]. And for about six months he was under S. He had to go and see her first thing.

B1   03:03

And if he had any problems he could see her during the day.

Really successful.

Er because of all the problems he'd had. You know he like, 'cos he really liked it at SSS. But there wasn't a lot more they could do for him. 'Cos they told it was such a shame that he was staying there. 'Cos he was, he's clever and they said like I mean he was in higher classes there and they said they didn't want to keep him back. And said it was in his best interest to go back. And I think in the end it was for the best. He didn't want to go back but it was for the best. I'm glad he has 'cos he's changed a lot since he's gone back.

Yeah, I think he would.

I think it should have been done sooner, I really do. Even though it was successful, I think he should have gone sooner. Because I think he has missed a lot. I think it should be done.. I don't think they should be kept at the SSS so long.

I don't think they should be there more than twelve months. Cos really I think SSS is only a short time to be there, that's what it's for isn't it really. And I think he was there a long time you know. I mean I wouldn't have wanted him to have stayed there completely until he finished school. I'd have had really big problems 'cos of him wanting to go into sixth form and that, I don't think he'd have managed that.

Well at the time, looking back at the time, I was thinking to myself he's happy as he is, just leave him where he is. But what now that I know that he's gone back I'm thinking well I wished that they'd done it sooner. 'Cos he was ready, I really do think he was ready. But he was like, he played on it, I know he played on the teachers.

Well, he gets on well at school, he has certificates come through saying how well he's doing and he don't seem to have any problems. It's like he used to have OCD he hasn't got that anymore. So I know he doesn't worry about things like that, 'cos he used to be always washing his hands and I always knew when he was stressed and then when that used to happen at SSS I used get in touch with [SSS mentor] and say is he having any problems, is this happening 'cos he'd be constantly washing his hands. Aw you know, and you could tell. He was like agitated whereas now he's not. He like, takes everything in his stride.

That's it he gets certificates and they tell him how well he's doing. And they'd always let me know if he was late, they'd phone me and, but I haven't had anything like that. Even I can't believe it.

Well it wasn't up to me. Well it was, I was asked. It was, we had a meeting at Frank F and there was Mrs D from the SSS and SSS mentor and school mentor and we all discussed it and said would you and they wouldn't have take him in, they wouldn't have sent him in if I said I had a problem. And I said well try it, see how he gets on. And like I say, I was taking him thought and but, there was always a problem with that 'cos there was always Mrs V on his case

Her was always giving hinm detention. 'Cos she knew the situation, she knew that he couldn't go in on his own and 'cos I had to take me daughter into Junior school he was always late but he woud always be there before 9 o clock. So he'd always be there before the lessons but her just, her always give him detention. Oh your're late oh you late and her always on his Geoffonstantly.

She wouldn't come to the meetings. She wouldn't come. She refused to come to the meetings. She was busy.

She wouldn't come. She was busy, she had something to do. She never. It come to a head actually, when she gave him detention for nothing. Because, S (school mentor) had made an agreement with him that something about if he came into school at a certain time, they tried to get him into school for quarter to nine or something like that, you know he wouldn't get detention. And all of a sudden for no reason Mrs Ve gave him detention and he was there for two hours. Two hours and of course I tried to phone the school and they said we don't know where he is, he'd left and me husband had a right go with her on the phone and hers never give him deten… her's never even spoke to him since. Really had a right go with her on the phone and he said we wasn't advised that he had detention why have you give him detention for nothing? Oh this or..I said what d'you mean. It was as if her'd got personal vendetta against him and I always brought this up in the meetings 'cos I do dislike the woman. And I told them at SSS, I said if you have any dealings with her just be careful 'cos she's really.. She doesn't understand 'cos she's an old school teacher you know. She was there when I was there and like you go to school or you don't go to school, ther's like no in between. And sh'e like that and for her to be in the meetings to do with SSS it like not on because she really doesn't want to know. Her'd be sarcastic and say well you've got no chance of doing this, 'cos we had a meeting before at the SSS and Mrs V did come, the once and she said to N what do you want to do when you're older. And he said oh I might want to go into the police force, this was then, and oh you've got no chance you don't want to be around people. What chance have you got? And I thought well, you don't say that to people and she doesn't understand you know. She's not one of the people to be involved in anything like that. Cos she doesn't understand at all.

No, because everybody else understood. I mean S [school mentor] was great, You know, her understood and her talked to him and she talked to me. And I always said if ever there's any problems just call a meeting. And they was like that at SSS , SSS mentor was any problems her said just ring, 'cos her was still there like if ever there's a problem so they was always in the

background, so that was a good thing really. You know you can ask for advice and they'd get involved and they'd like talk to S about stuff if ever there was a problem. That's it there was always communication, which I found better then. But when there was the teacher involved it was like no..

I could get over it if people understood but I even had the attendance officer on me as well. Yeah, R he constantly was on my back.. We had a meeting, we attended the once and he blamed me for it all and he said it's your fault, you're the parent at the end of the day. You'll be the one that'll be cautioned. And even we had an argument over that. But I said to him, but I'm trying me hardest, but you're not trying hard enough. ~And like you're thinking well, your son's in school, he's attending, he's there all day what's the problem. Oh, he's got to be here on time. And I said …he was a problem as well, the attendance officer was. And he turned round, oh I'll send you a letter. He did send me a letter, actually and he said and he come out and saw me and I said well what can I do. And he said, well you're a parent it's your respons.. that's all he kept throwing in me face. You don't understand. And he said there's lots of children that have got brothers and sisters at other schools but they manage to here on time.   And he just didn't want to know, so that was a problem.

Yeah it was tough. I challenged him, I did. I said well do it, I'm not bothered. You know so send me, I don't care. At one point I was so stressed out, and S laughed, I said send me to prison, I said I could do with a rest. I actually challenged it. He said oh you wouldn't like that. I said oh wouldn't I? He just the constant arguments, that you couldn't get over. And it was like it don't matter how much you argued or tried to explain it was like they… oh well this is the law and that's it. That was difficult.

15:31

I don't think he has naything to do with her at FF its another woman and she knows N. Cos she stands at the gate actually, marking them in if they're late cos sometimes Nic is a bit late. And that's his own fault. But I says you must be the only one on the list and her says come on you, them is used to him by now.

It was to do with Mrs D, SSS mentor and S [school mentor]. They phoned me up and says we want to get him back in, what do you think. And N was in the meeting and you know what N's like yeah, heah, yeah. Yeah I'll be alright, yeah corse I can come. And he's fine because like I say I was taking him yu know. And I'd say to him, don't worry you know, you're going to school and he was fine. I think its because like, he was ok when there was no crowds. Its like half past eight everybodys going in and I think this was the big thing with him. Since his sister started its completely different. And I don't know.

No, actually I was taking him until his sister started. And then all of a sudden he started to go on his own when his sister started, September, this was just September gone, he started going on his own.

S. Cos he always knew that she was there if he ever had a problem. He knew that if he ever had a problem going to a lesson he could go to S, and S would say well you can either stay with me or I'll take you to the lesson and see how you're getting on. Her was always there in the background. So he always knew that he could go to Sally. And S'd sometimes like pop in, you what I mean in a lesson and say like you ok. And her was great, her is her's really, really good.

Her was always like, like a mentor really, I'd say cos if anything was to happen like he felt uncomfortable for some reason he always knew that he could go knock on S's door. You know, her's really calming as well S is, hers quite joking with him, he likes that. And her does understand him a lot. Her knows when he's coming it. He'd like come oh well I don't really feel like doing it, her'd say look N, I know you don't really like this subject but you gotta go in. Her really knew him, you know. Her really got to chat to him and her did, her was excellent.

Well to begin with he started to go in with S for lessons. And then throughout the day, he'd be with S like for two or three lessons and the he'd start going to like to his English lesson or like the lessons that he liked. Then gradually he'd start going into the lessons that he was a bit unsure about, like Science. He loves Science now, I mean when he was at SSS they couldn't get him into a Science lesson. Now he loves it, yeah, he loves Science. He doing well in his exams and everything. He loves it. And PE used to be a problem cos of the noises he didn't like it. But the Shepwell really did well with him there, cos they'd like, they'd take him in with just a couple of them to begin with to the sports hall, and he was ok and that's how the gradually got him used to that. And, I mean he took PE as an option.

Cos they already knew about his science as well and they really took their time getting him used to science. And like he could go in on his own and do little experiments and one on one, they did that at the SSS, that was good.

Yeah he did have some counselling, it was at Walsall. I can't remember what the woman's name was. No, that was before. But they couldn't find anything wrong with him. All he kept saying, waste of time coming here.

I think in the end it got to the stage where it was either all or nothing. It was either shove him straight in see how he copes or it was nothing at all. I think that was the best way with him. I think it was like, cos he only did a short time where it was a couple of days. And then all of a sudden it was like you're doing a week after this half term, you're doing a week and I think it was the jolt that he thought, I thin something clicked and he thought what I've got to aint I. I think something clicked there, its gotta have done cos. I think, like what do they call it, a short sharp shock and it was the best thing for him. I think it was, it was either all or nothing and I think that was the best. I think sometimes it is. I think it was for him anyway, it was the best for him.

Yeah I thought he was ready, and they knew at the SSS that he was ready.

I don't know.

I don't really know actually. No, I wasn't confident at all, I really wasn't. …. I still am actually, I've still got doubts. Yeah. I don't know its just, well to me without knowing somebody's background like their history, I couldn't advise them or tell them anything because with N he's always been a problem. From the day he was born he was a problem, so I always knew, its just, its something you know. See he was difficult at junior school, but he was the opposite he was always getting into trouble and fighting but he was always at school. And like, I don't hink you can advise anybody or tell them. You can't because, everybody's experience is different. I mean what works for one doesn't work for another.

You can't you just ride it out. You just have to ride it out. I mean cos SSS mentor would say to me I wouldn't like to be in your shoes I'd say no I wear enough out walking him to school. You can't cos its just an individual thing, cos what works for somebody …I mean I don't think anything worked, I really don't. It was just like trial and error with him. I think you've got to be patient, even though you're not. You're not, you don't, its hard it really is. I wouldn't like to go through it again.

Neil: SSS Mentor

[reasons]

N ended up being at the SSS because he was very anxious and very frightened. He was constantly washing his hands and his impression was that anything he came in contact with any slight pain he had was going to result in death or something detrimental to him

0:41

He was very worried and scared to go into science lessons because of the chemicals and when he first came to us his hands were quite red and raw because he was constantly washing them

0:52

[had he been out of school long]

He had been out a while but I don't know how, I cant remember exactly how long. But that was one of the reasons why he wouldn't go, because of science lessons

1:08

he was in and out of lessons and used to find it actually difficult to go in and settle.

[any other concerns for N?]

Yeah. He did, he had trouble making friends as well. The social side of things it was difficult. And with N's mum wasn't strong enough to push him to go to school so I think he got into a pattern where he was having his own way

1:54

He knew what strings to pull with mum and how to get what he wanted to a degree.

[bullying?]

No, no. We didn't have any written evidence or any such evidence that indicated, yes he was bullied

[year 7 when problems started]

that's right. Yes

2:19

[transition – any info on that]

I don't.

[how long at Shepwell]

Nic was with us for two years

2:36

Two and a half years 4th July 2005 he joined us to the 16 of December 2007.

[back at Frank F?]

A year and a half. Yeah, just over a year.

3:00

His reintegration started towards the end of year 9 simply because they'd chosen their options and it would have been better for him to reintegrate before year 10 so he wouldn't miss out any of his option subjects

3:15

and the work wouldn't be able to catch up.

[rate reintegration]

3:34

Overall? …. About 3 to 4.

[why]

N's reintegration, no reintegration is going to go smoothly and not have any drawbacks or set backs or days when they're really bad. N had a few of those days

4:04

But, sometimes that was just due to the fact that he didn't want to do something. But overall he did settle in quite well. Yes he needed support, he needed pushing but there wasn't anything that was really worrying to say he's going to struggle or he's not going to be able to cope with anything

4:30

[what do you mean days when he didn't want to do anything?]

Obstinate and also the fact that he was reintegrated with two other pupils from the centre sometimes if they didn't want to go in it was kind of jump on the bandwagon. Well if they haven't got to do it, why should I?

4:50

[full time now]

He's in full time. He has had a few hiccups along the way even after the support was taken off. There's been days or times when his attendance has dropped or its kind of been erratic but we still think but we've still been involved been told about it. And I've had meetings with him, gone in and spoke to mum and

5:17

given her a few ideas and strategies so that it hasn't gone completely smooth throughout there has been phases where he actually wasn't going to school. He told mum, one instance was he'd left the house and told mum he was going to school

5:36

He hadn't left the house, he told her he was going, he was actually in his bedroom all the while, she didn't know.

[things been hard bit since he's been back]

There has been a few things

5:48

Not recent, I would say, even six to eight months into the reintegration.

5:59

[any contact now?]

Yes, I do. I still keep in touch with S [school mentor] and the school and still hear how he's doing and if I'm there with another pupil visiting I will always ask about them

And they came to our children in need coffee afternoon

6:21

[a long term relationship?]

It can be because we always leave it open, not for them to come back to us but for definitely if the support is required or if they just want to come back and visit or have a chat. We encourage them to come back and sometimes talk to some of the children that we have in the centre presently as well

6:47

to tell them about their experience and how things went for them and how things were

[judge success of reintegration]

7:13

the key factors from my experience is finding somebody in school, preferably non-teaching staff who is there for their support. Don't necessarily have to do anything, don't necessarily have to support them in anyway. But just for the pupil to know, yes I have a person who I can go to at anytime

7:34

That normally helps and that is something that we always look for. Cos often enough just knowing that the support is there is enough to keep that child comfortable and able to operate properly if that's the right word

7:55

and then there's and always let them know that either myself or a member of staff, whoever they're comfortable with here at the centre will always be there for support

8:06

That isn't to encourage them to come back or to fail but its there. We don't just shove you out or push you away once you've been full time. We are always here for you.

8:19

[how do you know if its gone well?]

8:40

I think the obvious thing would be that there hasn't been any communication or contact. In terms of members of staff haven't come back and said, oh I'm having problems or the attendance has dropped. It's a huge factor.

8:58

[what made you decide he should return]

9:25

I don't know whether to say this but I'll say it anyway. When I first came to SSS reintegration wasn't something that was stressed on or concentrated on to the degree looking back now. I personally, I think that N's stay here with us or the period of time he's had with us was overdue

9:57

That, now that might look like a criticism on us and in a way I think yes, you would be right to think that. But reintegration wasn't the emphasis of things when I first started

10:09

Yes there were a few in the early years but not enough and to me it was kind of well the kids are here they're comfortable they're succeeding why disturb that. But that's not the point of the centre

10:25

and I think when Louise came on board it kind of gave me that extra encouragement if that's the right word. Support. That this is what we need to do and we have to progress it and we have to do it.

10:43

And with Nhis confidence had grown, he was able to socialise a lot better with his peers. And he was getting cocky sometimes. I mean he has got a great sense of humour he wasn't rude or nasty with it but the fact that he'd been here that long he was getting comfortable

11:04

and it was getting closer to the time of GCSEs and exam results and all that and the centre do really well with exam results he, we still couldn't offer him the full spectrum and the full variety a school can

11:18

[who decided]

If I'm completely honest, I think mum was quite happy that he's here and its one less problem for her.

11:36

N didn't push but he didn't retaliate or deny that he needed to get back. He was half on board sort of thing. Yes he had his worries and fears because he had been off for so long but I think he knew within himself that his confidence had grown and he was a different person

12:02

and was able to deal with situations a lot better.

[reintegration process]

12:18

Like I said earlier, the fact that there was a contact in school who was non- teaching, she was actually the learning mentor as wells [school mentor]. Her help and support was crucial. It really did help and the fact that N had a lot of support whereby a member of staff, whether that be myself or the teachers that were available who sat in lessons with him

12:49

[all the time]

To begin with, yes. And it helped N to know that things had changed at school in terms of support for him. Finding somebody else another member of staff at school, Nic knew that if he did have a problem or he was anxious in a lesson or couldn't deal with it there was somewhere for him to go for timeout.

13:26

[different from how it was before because this was same school]

It was the same school but without criticising the school and knowing that yes, they are busy I don't think N had the support fully before

13:47

[what created the change?]

13:56

I'm not sure the right answer to that, but looking from the school's perspective but I think the fact that they knew there was somebody supporting them and helping them as well in bringing these children back in may have been the factor. May have been something different for them. Yeah.

14:20

[barriers]

14:29

No, the school were pretty much on board, they were helpful. I think they had the confidence in us. Don't ask me how I know that, but I think they did have the confidence in us to say that yes, they're leading this and they're supporting and bringing them in

14:56

I think it is to build a good rapport with members of staff at school does help

15:04

with reintegration. With mum, mum has been supportive throughout she has. She was a little sceptical at first used to think well he has been out a long time and she did say he wont do it. But she as willing to give it a go.

15:30

mum, even with the time when N as here there was constant communication so the relationship had built up there wasn't any issues with mum re a problem

[anything anyone could have done to make return easier?]

16:07

I don't think so. Like I said school supported and they pretty much did as we asked.

[advice]

16:55

It is important I feel for .. feel as if its their needs that you're catering for. Give then a chance an opportunity to guide things as well, not just do it yourself. Every child is diefferent, there's not going to be any two children and their reintegration is going to be the same

17:20

I feel from my experience, they are all going to be different. Some may need a lot of support and you've got to be able to recognise that whereas others may not. Keep the child involved and informed all the time

17:35

[if resistant?]

Yeah, still talk to them about their fears and about …I mean what I used a lot was reflection and reminding them about situations where they had been which were similar. What was the outcome, had it been as bad as what they'd thought it was going to be

17:57

and how bad it affected them sort of thing

[still encourage return even if child saying I don't think it's gonna work?]

Yeah. Yes I would still encourage it just depending on the situation

18:16

use a different method or use a different, what's the word I'm looking for. Just try different strategies if its taking smaller steps and just going in even for 10 minutes or 15 minutes of the lesson

18:31

do that rather than not do anything. It can be very time consuming it can be very stressing at times. But honestly the results can be fantastic, the feeling is great

Neil: School Mentor

[how long N at Shepwell]

I believe with N, it was just about 15 to 18 months, I think with N. I'm sure it's well over a year.

[C?]

We referred Chelsea to the SSS, so her reintegration was when L. D was in post and she aimed for the six weeks programme. So C, it was about six weeks.

We had, it was us that actually referred C, now with N and N I wasn't in post in school when they got referred to SSS.

[N}

Again, very similar. It was about 12 to 16 months with N

[N, reasons in Shepwel]

That would depend on which member of staff you spoke to.

1:40

Erm, I know more information about N, my first details about N came from the SSS so when I started to reintegrate him and speak to other staff about him I was clear the staff here thought he was just a naughty boy who'd do what he chose, he'd walk out of lesson , or walk out of school if he didn't want to come. And then obviously from the SSS's point of view, they had done a lot of work with him and referred him to CAMHS so from that point of view they could see the state he was in when he got to the SSS and how much progress he'd made.

2:15

During the time he was there and the intervention that was put in which was a lot of CAMHS working

[staff in school had the same view, or did it differ]

It differed in school, even to the point where the attendance lady would make remarks that he'd walked off , that he couldn't be bothered and that he didn't wan to come in. Nobody had a real understanding of N, I don't think and why he acted the way he did in school. But again I wasn't in post at that point so I don't know what his behaviour was like then.

[but you picked up the different versions?]

Yes, but mainly I used the information the SSS gave me.

3:07

Concentrated on that. Because obviously they'd been working with him in depth and understood some of his, you know, got to understand some of the root causes of why he behaved the way he did and that it wasn't just his behaviour they were looking at. It was the reasons why. And they'd obviously worked very intensively and in a very small environment compared to a big school where you only ever see the behaviour that's it with some students.

[your role was?]

Well I'm in place as learning mentor for key stage 4 so when the referral came through for N to be reintegrated, because he was in year 10 it got passed straight to me. So I liaised straight with the SSS. And we did it between ourselves and I fed back into school what plans we'd made with N and what reintegration plans we'd put in place for him. So all my liaison was always with the SSS Centre and then I would feed it back into the mainstream school.

4:17

Geoff: Parent

12 years

Basically he started at Poole Hays as his secondary school. First week went very well. He got pushed over by the older kids, it happens. He went down hill very quickly. Within days he was refusing to go to school for fear of being beaten up and hurt. Because he was beaten up and bullied so severely in primary school. He just couldn't cope. I rang W Comp because obviously within my job I know people there. I found out they'd got places. Got hold of Mrs T [teacher name] took G down to meet her and he walked round the school with Mr H one of the teachers, very confident you know quite happy. Everything was great. I thought fine, he just needed to go to another school, he just couldn't cope. Sat in the office with Mrs T for about 20 minutes having a chat all of a sudden he went into a… Mrs T said we'll just go and walk over here G… he wouldn't budge. He went into panic mode again. And then Mrs T could recognise he was having panic attacks, he was having a problem. It took us about two weeks to get him in there, they pushed it through very quickly.

No this was still W comp

We got him into W Comp, and we literally tried from October through to April and starting off with half an hour a day we built up to an hour a day and we got on really well. And we got on to a full day and all of a sudden he got pushed over again in the hall , by accident, nothing malicious, couldn't cope. it literally took us an hour just to get in the car to W to the reception area where he wouldn't budge. Absolute stood still with fear. Absolute no way. Mrs T got hold of SSS, we went and had a look round. He said yeah yeah, I want to go but even that wasn't easy. The first, even HT SSS (Mrs D) will tell you, the first few weeks which seemed like forever I literally would have to put him in a hug and physically put my child through that door every morning and then he used to run through the building and back to the car park to try and get me. That bad.

He started SSS in the April, because he had his birthday I know he was there in the April and it took several weeks for him to walk through the door without getting upset. They were fantastic they used to…… but the golden key was …we found was what Greg wanted was he wanted

contact with me, like separation anxiety. And they said, I agreed with Mrs D, no way in a million years was I going to step foot in that reception area and I used to have to literally put him to the front door hold him in a bear hug until the front door ….and then firm hand in his back and through the door

So we had to do that for weeks

Still there now from April

No, no he's doing really well erm… they were closed on Monday this week for training day, Tuesday was first day back after half term which he finds difficult but hes very …. to go into SSS, he feels safe he looks forward to going. Wednesday he did a full day but he at W Comp. Couldn't cope with the first lesson, it took Kam and I about 20 minutes to persuade him to get out of my car to go into SSS mentor's car to try to persuade him to go to school. ….. he's not being naughty he's crying and he's I can't do it, I can't do it …….

Erm he started going back, he did a couple of visits as a visitor as a friend of the school sort of visit. Just have a little wander round and say hello to staff just to get his f being back, that was about 2 moths ago. That was very successful, he then wanted to go and then he literally started going for one lesson and then he and SSS mentor had a meeting and discussed what lesson they'd like to go to – it was English. Which was English. And then he's literally increased his time table, bit by bit. We've had the days where we have a blimp , we just say it's a little blimp in the road and we turn round and say like .. He's like 'I can't cope, I can't cope' and I say ok what's the worse that's gonna happen and we follow Evergreen's guidance on that – what's the worse that's gonna happen?

I would have said a 4 at the moment. Only because, I would have given a 5 only because we still get a blimp where G has a bad day but he.. he's a bit like a child, taking them to nursery once you've got on …. he's a lot more settled. I'm very concerned how he's going to cope when SSS mentor is off the scene. That's when I think we'll hit a massive problem

It is when that's gonna be my biggest worry because he's gonna feel as though he's lost his life line. That's what worries me. G has to feel safe.

No idea we've got a review on Monday. I don't think it will be yet. My ideal will be for G to be full time at W Comp and go to school like any normal child. Personally at the moment I can never

see that happening because it's been such a long year. I hope it will happen but the thought of G getting up in the morning going out of the house and walking to school with his mates and coming back home at three o clock. I can't visualise that happening. I can't visualise that happening. I hope it does I really do but at the moment we still have to pick him up from school because he's frightened of walking home. For fear he's going to get bullied. Like my mum has to pick him up for me every day but she picks him up from the shops. He's just got this massive fear of crowds, massive fear of being beaten up. But I mean if you look at him this time last year he walk up the corridors brushing.. his blazer was worn out on the left arm or the right arm where he'd lean on the wall and walk up the corridor no eye contact trying to get to the next lesson. Now he sort of plods around and he let it slip the other day he got told off I said what for, I was thinking great he got told off. And he said of he said this kid pushed me and I turned round it was one of me mates. I said oh right I said why did you get told off? He said I had him in a headlock on the floor. I said well …….but the teacher just said put him down….and he said I'm sorry. So he's obviously got the confidence but he wont go in the dining hall. He goes to the SEN office. I said why don't you go and have something warm? No. why? I don't see me having food he says like that cos they say I'm fat and if they think I'm eating something fattening they'll say I'm fat even more. And that's his, it's his guilt complex. He's very very self conscious he puts on this air of you had a good day – yeah, yeah fine, then I find out off the senco after before he went to SSS, J (mother's name) he's had a terrible day, I've had to walk him halfway home. He didn't tell me that. Oh great, no problems …

I really do think its when the night before, when G's got a full day at school he will quite clearly fret the night before. It could be I've got this – what if and if. He pre-empts a problem and I think when the pre-empting has gone then the child will be able to access the school properly, but when he's got such negative thoughts that something is going to go wrong… I think you have to sort of stop the pre-empting and what if, maybe start worrying about what if I haven't done me homework. He's very much what if I get hurt, what if I get hurt, what if I…he can't cope with supply staff. If he's got a supply teacher he leaves the room. Cannot cope. I still think, although he hasn't, he has a lot of autistic tendencies he cannot cope with change in anyway whatsoever. He really can't, if he goes to school …… and Mrs T wasn't there, no way would he go with anybody else. He don't like Mrs T. She's great, but she's very sharp. She's a lovely Irish lady but she's very very sharp. And obviously with G you need, he's so sensitive he can't cope with her being sharp. But that's what he's like.

No, not pre-empting and when he's happy to go in the mornings, when he gets up and he's sort of wake up mum and to get ready for school and come on you're going to be late and when he can make his own way to school and sort of feel confident in being accepted in part of the crowd. And it not because .. when he goes to school his friends are oh G oh G, and pleased to see him as far as G's concerned that doesn't happen. He sees it in a totally different perspective and I think he needs to sort of…. When they can get up and go with not massive confidence because all kids when they get up thinking on no I don't wanna go today but when he will sort of he will get up

and so ok I'll go and participate in after school activities and things also shows they're gaining the confidence on school refusal.

G asked for a visit. G asked Shepwell if he could go and visit W Comp. That's from what G has told me and I'm sure SSS mentor can confirm that. He said to me can I can I go and visit the comp because he is very fond of the support staff there because they are marvellous. He wanted to visit the comp. And he went on like I say a friendly visit to pop and say hello to people and then from there I think it's just SSS gave him a time to gain his confidence …and I think he gained enough confidence to say no I think I can try a lesson and he actually did his lesson which totally blew me away. Cos SSS mentor took him and SSS mentor was going to take him to the lesson, be his support assistant before the lesson and stop in there with him, he told SSS mentor he didn't want her in there and went in and did the whole lesson on his own. Which quite shocked me and SSS mentor. We didn't expect that because when he got there he was with his friends which he hadn't got when he first started, he has made friends which again this is where SSS gave him the confidence to talk to people. I think they just sort of made him realise he wasn't a freak. He felt he was a fat freak in his terms. G felt he was a freak he felt that he had no friends and it was purely by coincidence one day he started talking to this boy called J ..K and J and G are now very firm good friends and he's got another friend T, another friend H. Jcomes down like he might as well move in, and he sees Jack and they go out and they chat in his bedroom, they get up to God knows what… and I think SSS, G turned round one day and he said I realise now mum, he said there's other children the same as me and if anything now he helps them. He sort of chats on MSN and he'll say so and so's a bit down I'm going to go and cheer them up and hes like that. J accepts G for all his problems which and T does. Last night they were going out they were going out to watch Nemo on Ice. He rang me at work to say mum, mum can I go? Really excited I said course you can and I said I'll call to see T's mum on the way home from work, get it all sorted. Knowing full well no way in a million years would he go I knew he wouldn't go. And I got home, I came through the front door and I was just waiting for it and I said Hi and he burst into tears and I said what's the matter and he said I can't go, I can't go. Why? It's too far away, there's too many people, what happens if the coach crashes, what happens if there's a fire alarm and I get separated from T and his mum, what if, what if and I said fine. I'll tell T you can't go and I'll sort something out and I'll take you and Tom to a show in a few weeks. Oh alright then. But he was upset and he said why can't I go and I said you're getting there.

17:04

I said don't you know rush it. But he was all I want to go want to go, want to go. What if we have a coach crash, what if we get separated, what if there's too many people? And he just went to blind panic.

Yes, yes. G wanted to go back to W comp and he still he does want to go back to W comp. I would have said on average he's probably doing three and a half days a week now. He's, he's… its

just first lesson. In the ideal world what we could do with doing is G go to SSS every morning then be taken to second lesson and left there, that's in the ideal world, but if we could do that for the rest of his education we'd get through it, but of course we can't, I know we can't. But that what people tell you because he cannot cope with the going up to school, the amount of children going through the gate, the bells ringing, the hustle and bustle. Can't cope with that whats so ever and that's what frightens him off.

What they did was, SSS mentor, SSS mentor gets hold of a lady called Mandy Jordan I think she's like the senco's right hand lady. SSS mentor rings W Copm, erm they negotiate can Gcome in, they check the timetable and they say even to the point where they said no don't bring him in tomorrow for example, there's supply because there's an English course on, so don't bring him in. And they negotiate very well and SSS mentor will say ok G wants to come and do maths, English and science tomorrow and they go yeah ok we'll sort that out and make sure he's got a classroom assistant to take him to his first lesson. At one time he'd need someone to take him to every lesson now he copes with first lessons. And then he's on his own. Erm he doesn't do PE. PE is a major, major obstacle which I think its for a lots of children don't like PE because of his because of what, yes he is overweight and his medication he's on pro-panandol it's a basically it keeps his anxiety levels down and that obviously is a factor as well. Dr P put him on that, but I don't know how he'd be without it, being honest. But that's something Dr P will decide when he's full time and settled. Erm as far as I'm concerned, leave him on it. Until …says ok I think it's time we start weaning him off it now. But they actually ring, I mean when he's got PE he goes to the SEN office and he'll read a book or revise a subject he's missed cos he's missed such a long time off school. Erm and they literally do it that way. They contact SSS mentor if there's a problem not me. I stay out of it. For example the review on Monday SSS mentor thought it was at W Comp and I said it turned out it was at SSS but I turned round and said I do not want to go to W Comp to have me on the school premises would be a disaster. I said it wouldn't work.

Oh yeah, this is why they just did one lesson at a time and they've certainly made sure he doesn't try to run before he can walk. Cos once he'd done one lesson it was I want to go tomorrow and they'd go no, very firmly no and sometime he's got a little bit, a few weeks on the Friday prior to half term. He woke up on the Friday morning he was due to do a full day at W Comp very fretful all night, crying out in the night you know get off me, you know stay away from me. That happens a lot. He then turned round and then he was all tearful. I said what's the matter? He said I can't go today and I said why. I can't cope, I just can't cope with going. I said can you tell me why you think you can't cope. I don't know I just can't cope. I rang SSS mentor on her mobile and she said bring him to SSS. They talked to him at SSS and they made the decision that he wasn't to go. They said he wouldn't have coped because if he'd gone then and had a negative experience I don't think he would have gone again, I think it would have frightened him off. And this is, one day he's gonna have a bad day at school ..and I don't know what will happen then. This is what I think SSS are hanging on for a little bit as well, I think. They could be saying we'll hang on, he could have a bad day.

No, I don't think there were. I think both W and SSS the way I, what I can gather, obviously I'm taking very much a back seat…I think to be honest I think W have tried very, very hard to accommodate him. I get the impression off SSS mentor that they have really tried hard. I mean I haven't had SSS mentor ring me once to say he can't go. You know W Comp won't take him. I think W have worked very well. …. Oh yes, one lesson, half a lesson, they'll have him in a room for lunch because he doesn't want to go in the dining hall. WComp have been … I'd give them 10 out of 10 for accommodating. They are, I can't fault them.

SSS they are my lifeline. I would .. if I win the lottery tomorrow they can have it. With SSS wouldn't have got where we are now. G would be… in my opinion G would be a recluse at home now. We would have had to have got permission to educate him at home. Lose my job. Probably lose this house. To be honest I am very much against, cos G wanted to be taught at home and I said it's not gonna happen. It's not gonna happen. And within two weeks of being at home we were ready to, we were getting on each others nerves. It would have been world war three.

Very worried and things like that. Erm, biggest problem I had …

[telephone rings and interrupts recording]

The only sort of obstacle that I came across erm because he started at P [mainstream school], and there was a lot went on at P like being pushed over. He was grabbed by a member of staff which made life very difficult. I witnessed that. Whch caused massive problems. Basically, I rang and got a friend who is in pastoral and said deal with it because my deputy (had seen the) head of year grab him by the scruff of the neck locked him in her office, this is where he's got his claustrophobia from as far as I'm concerned. And he was trying to get out. My friend ran and got me and said can you come quick. Thinking there was a problem with a pupil I went to offer support and was horrified to see it was my son. Hadn't got a clue you know.. Apparently he'd said I don't want to go in the lesson, I'm frightened. She grabbed him by the scruff of the neck and tried to drag him in. Caught him badly on the neck, scratched him. Started bleed, he panicked. She threw him in the office, locked him in there. I tried to get him out, my deputy ordered me to my lesson so I ran and got help. He got out the office. They got my husband from Birmingham to come and collect him. They wouldn't even let me take him home. I should imagine it was a terrible, traumatic experience for everybody concerned. Then I had to take time off work, obviously because G was only part time in education. My school weren't preprared to have me in for a lesson and things like that see. Wasn't prepared to ask my mum to take him. My husband is the main breadwinner so I had to have three months off. I found it very hard going back to work afterwards. Not only because I had to deal with the staff but obviously I had to go in. And you walk round with your phone in your pocket all the time for the first few weeks waiting for the phonecall and when it was at W comp until we got the place at SSS I was being

rang three or four times a day. Saying, you need to come and sit in the classroom with him. Because he won't go in and I virtually nearly lost my job. Fortunately, the boss, my boss, Mr C the headmaster realised that Poole Hayes were a contributory factor to the problem he gave me grace. Now it's great, I go to work. I know he's safe. I know it's being dealt with, I know they'll only ring me if it's an emergency, like any other mum if the child's poorly they'll phone me.

O gosh yes. Very much so. The fear factor my husband must have text me three or four times a day have you heard it he's ok? I think you become an over protective parent when this happens. And you've got this fear of is he ok? I still ring him every night about half three, cos I work till half four. I ring him at quarter past, half past three. Just hello have you had a nice day. If he's at SSS , I don't bother because I know he's alright. But just to, sort of acknowledge good boy you've been, you've done it another day over well done. But when I come home I want to ask him a thousand questions. I want to say what did you do in your lesson? Did you do the work? Did you cope? But I don't ask him anything because he'll tell, that's advice off CAMHS. He'll tell me if he wants to tell me. So I don't go had a good day and what did you do? Say alright mate, good day? Yeah. Work go alright? Yeah fine. And leave it, leave it and let him talk to me if he wants to. Don't pump him cos he'll switch off, like any other kid.

04:32

Spends all his time in his bedroom now. I'm over the moon about it. I'm absolutely over the moon about it.

She is my lifeline because without SSS mentor G would not go to W Comp, he .. if I took G to W Comp, took him down to reception for his classroom assistant or key worker or whatever you call them to pick him up, yeah? By the time they'd turn up to collect him because of the delay in phoning, getting down there, it's a massive school G would be half way home. He would not cope with that. But because I'm removed from the equation I just, I do exactly what SSS mentor tells me to do. If SSS mentor says, when he's playing up some mornings if he gets upset, SSS mentor will say to me, ok Julie I want you to go now. I do exactly what Kam tells me to do. Because she's the expert. I'm emotionally attached. SSS mentor's not. And the other day I had to drive off and I could see her quite firmly got her hand on his back and ushering him away. And he was quite ready rush towards me, I could see him going, erm. No but SSS mentor is, SSS is our lifeline because without them he would not be going to school at all. He wouldn't have gained the confidence he's got.

Yes, I think they've really, really sort of, they've observed G a great deal and they've only allowed him to go when I think they feel as though he's ready. I mean for somebody today to find the time to take a child to a lesson wait for that child to do another lesson then take him back to the centre .. is absolutely fantastic. I mean, you know I used to have to do that, I used to have to go and sit in reception wait for him. But he'd be fretting in a lesson knowing I'm in reception. Because the apron string was still there it had just been extended from the reception area to the

.. corridor. It was still there. But he knows quite clearly, SSS mentor was very firm with him. He had a couple of really nasty hissy fits which I was embarrassed about being honest because he said I wanna ring my mum, I wanna ring my mum now in the first few weeks. And SSS mentor went no. Oh. And one day Mrs D brought him out the one day and I was waiting for him and she brought him out and Mrs D said he wanted to phone you and I said quite clearly in front of Mrs D, I said G I love you to bits but I said from the time I drop you off here to the time I get home from work I don't want to talk to you. I said you leave me alone. I've got a job to do. I said do you want all your nice things and nice house? Yes. I said well leave me alone. And then I found out, apparently he told one of the teachers he thought Mrs D was a cow in the first few weeks. And she told me that and I tore a strip off him in front of her. I said how dare you. I said this woman is the only person prepared to help you. I said how dare you. And I took his play station off him. Cos I still, I still, I don't… We used to tread on egg shells with him and like sort of his older brother would look for a fight with him, play fight. We'd go no, no …don't upset him. Now we give as good as we get. If he's naughty he faces the consequences. To be honest he's very rarely naughty but if ..

Distance themselves from the child. As hard as is as a mother, your natural response is to nurture that child and love that child – distance yourself from that child. So the child becomes more independent. That's the only thing I can say 'cos that's the biggest mistake in my life I've made is when he got hurt and hurt again I protected him and I became, G and I, my husband and I became his best friends. That's not natural, to me that's not natural. His best friends should be his mates his own age. Somebody he probably tells secrets to, gets up to no good with, things I really don't want to know about. G (husband) and I became his best friends we smothered him because he was hurt. And because the hurt carried on and on year after year and it got worse and worse we were known then as the paranoid parents always moaning because someone had hurt our son. But the point was is it was going on and it was only when a parent went to the school so upset by what their child had told them they'd done to G they said mum they're picking on G so badly, the school acted. But this was six weeks prior to leaving in year six. That kid had seven years of hell. Oh without a doubt, but we did become protective with him because we got to a point where every day I took him, every single day I took him and I used to come home in tears. On the way to work, I'd go to school tearful because of what was happened.

11.03

Geoff: Young Person

Since Easter

Erm I started just before the six weeks holidays.

Well this week I've done mainly at comp full day today, most… I did second to last couple of days ago. I did third to last tomorrow, I mean yesterday. Most of the time at comp really.

We just sort out timetable, like who can take me when really at SSS.

Half and half really like now I try and do much as I can as possible really. It just depends if SSS mentor at SSS or N or something can actually take me.

Probably 5.

Its just we've only had one, a couple of blips really.

Completing your objectives and aims. Like for example if you have a target like do four lessons in form, you do that you've completed your aim. You just have to think about really what the next step is.

No one was really pushing really. I mean when I was at SSS, I'd been really thinking and I always wanted to go back to comp. Well, I was at SSS for a couple of months, like full time then we was thinking like, SSS mentor says we should go for a visit, when do you want to go for a visit? Sorted the visit out and after that we started different lessons ……

A bit of both [whose idea to return]

[so you were having conversations with SSS mentor quite frequently when you were at SSS]

Yeah

[in these conversations the idea of going back to school was talked about sometimes]

There probably is something, but I can't think [barriers that had to be overcome]

no [very welcoming to you] yeah

I was a bit nervous at first, like it was like going back to senior school and now I'm fine. I was only a bit nervous.

We sorted out a visit just before the six weeks holidays. Went for a visit then afterwards, after the holidays first couple of days I was at SSS, like going back. And then we decided to start, erm starting lessons at W. And basically it's been working a way up

It's not what anybody did really it's just what I wanted lots of support from my family and SSS and that.

[bit about the support you've had from SSS and your family]

At SSS they've just all been really nice to me. Like if I got a problem I can feel like I can tell them. And my family, they just, its just general, really supportive.

I think they're slightly nervous.

[family?]

Mum, dad, brother, nan.

[anything else could have been done]

not really

I wouldn't know really, like. I'd probably say, just if you're worried just think about something else. Think about how good you'll feel when you've done it. The problem is I don't know how to say the words really. No I just don't know how to put it into words really. I'd probably say to them at the end of the day what's gonna happen. And just think in your head everything's gonna be alright.

[Who or what's really helped you?]

Probably, all of the SEN. They've just walked me to my lesson, been nice to me, supportive.

[what have you done that's contributed to the success]

Just like put my head down really, and just think I gotta do it.

Geoff: SSS Mentor

[reasons]

G, a lot of worries and fears. His problems started when he was locked in a room at a previous school, Pool Hayes and that triggered off a fear in him. And things just went down hill he was then managed move I think it was to another school but he didn't overcome his anxieties and fears. It hadn't been dealt with it hadn't been looked at and it continued in that school as well so when he came to us he was genuinely scared and worried of being locked in a room and being not being able to go and see mum

1:08

with that I think the way it was dealt with at the first sign of a problem straight away the phone call was made to mum and she'd come and take him home instead of dealing with it and thinking how can we get over this, how can we combat this

1:23

it was just the way I see it, easy option, send him home. That just developed into a pattern, a routine and his attendance just deteriorated. And that then made things difficult for mum as well as G. And there was an element of that separating when he first came to us

1:45

He was being a worry for us because he was so used to just being able to go home without dealing, facing his fears.

[bullying?]

No

Not that I know of.

[stopped attending}

Yeah.

[how long at SSS?]

2:20

He came to us tenth of April 2008, this year and his reintegration started a few weeks before the end of that year, the end of the school year, academic year and then in more depth in September this year. He's been back full time he did his first week last week. It was gradual, built up so his first week of full time was last week

3:07

[rate return?]

about 4.

Because all the correct things and all the correct measures were put into place to make him feel comfortable in dealing with things and doing it, and plus G was ready

3:36

The difference between G and the other cases we've discussed it G was ready for it. He wanted to go back to school

[so he asked?]

Yes. He actually voiced that, he was ready, although mum mentioned at the time she wasn't sure, she didn't become an obstacle or refute it. But there were incidents along the period of time whereby she'd be more concerned and worried and apprehensive than G was

4:07

So he was actually ready himself

[where did idea come from, partly G's?]

Yes.

[process of returning – how planned]

Ok, with G very much the same. The process is very much the same for all pupils. We'll have a meeting with school and discuss what we need to do and want to do, what support they need to give us and them we start putting the strategies into practice

5:39

It would have to, the pupil being the main focus of support but it is helping us to a degree as well. But I won't come away from the fact that the pupil is the main focus of that meeting. And again it's gradual

6:01

but with G, he although he wanted me there to take him in and he also needed somebody to walk him to lessons he didn't actually request for anyone to stay in the lessons with him. So what I used to do was take him into the office it's like a success centre where pupils do various things when they have the mentoring sessions; I used to take him into there and the teacher or classroom assistant would walk him to his lesson

6:39

and right from day one he stayed in that lesson by himself, he didn't have any support in that lesson. So for him it was just the fear of walking to lessons in between lessons and to lessons in the corridor mainly as opposed to the actual lesson itself

6:59

[did he require level of mentoring you've talked about with the other YP?]

7:07

Yeah G did. With G there were moments where, what I used to do was meet him in the car park meet him and mum then mum would hand him over and just go and that was the best thing to do with G. Leave him with me any problems I will deal with it, you go. Simply because if mum hung around her fears and anxieties and her anxiousness would show and reflect on G

7:42

So we needed to make sure that straight away mum was out of the picture. She accepted that. It was at first with his attendance at the centre that sometimes, not always, sometimes there was a slight issue. But I think it was that mum needed to understand and trust us.

8:05

and get to know us before she could actually let go completely and feel comfortable with yes I can leave you here and if there's a problem yes I will know about it. I will be contacted.

8:18

But with the reintegration there were initial, I think mum had kind of fears and worries and did mention a few times, are you going to pace it? I know you know what your're doing I know you'll pace it right but you're not going to do it too quickly sort of thing. So she was demonstrating how she felt more than what he did

8:39

but she didn't interfere in any way of what I did or how I worked with G. She was confident enough to leave that to me and say I know what, I'll leave it to you and I won't interfere and I won't or do sort of thing

9:01

but the few times where G did struggle I think mum felt the fear and anxiety more so that what he actually felt

9:21

and there were times when I'd pull up in the car park and mum would come out and shaking her head, he's crying, he won't come out and all of the times that happened he did come out of the car for me. Sometimes it took a bit longer that others but he did come out

9:40

and we didn't come back to the centre, we'd go to school. Cos what I felt with G was that it's pointless bringing him back to the centre I would rather find an area in school where I could sit

and talk to him and know that he's still there and then get him into a lesson once he's ready which always worked cos he always did do it. He always was ready to go in

10:00

I think, looking at it with all the pupils that we work with they know which buttons to press for their parents to get the response that they need sometimes.

[all of them?]

Yes. Not in a negative way but they do know the parent's weaknesses

[named person in school, had that, what about the get out card?]

Again yes. He had the get out card and he could if need be come out of a lesson if he couldn't deal with things or if things were difficult. Cos another thing with G was that

11:04

he found it difficult to deal with supply staff conducting the lesson. Simply because his experience with supply staff they'd never managed a lesson properly there was always upheaval or disturbances in a lesson with supply staff. So that was something that we were aware of and had already put strategies into place and all had agreed that if they knew the lesson was going to be taken by supply G would not have to attend that lesson

11:36

He'd bring the work out and sit in their office and work there.

[supply staff specifically or different staff?]

11:46

Mainly supply staff if it was the teacher teaching a taught lesson then he didn't have a problem.

[so no just about change of routine]

I think what he felt and he has said it in so many words was that the supply staff can never handle the children and it's never a good lesson. That's what G's saying

12:19

[anything that helped?]

I thing the main thing for G was that knowing that he was not going to be pushed into doing something that he's not comfortable or happy with. I think that with all of the kids it is important to let them know that you have confidence and trust in them and voice that to them and say that you know, erm

12:56

encourage them into believing in themselves and show that you do believe in them as well. And I think that sometimes that is where the schools fail. But with G it was important for him, I feel.

13:13

to know that he was not going to be pushed or forced into doing something he wasn't happy with.

[barriers?]

[you've already mentioned mum]

13:34

Yeah cos you know what cos I don't know if that was G's barrier or mum's concern. Because one of the things that mum said to me which stuck in my head was he can't deal with the fact that go to the school I will not be able to drop him off in reception

13:54

he will not want me to go beyond the car park. And I'm thinking is that G or is that mum. I haven't explored that

[what do you mean?]

14:14

Mum taking him into school or into reception. But I don't know if that was G or mum, cos G had never mentioned it. It was always mum's concern

14:31

or even like I said I used to meet him in the car park and then the two of us would walk down into school and then I started pulling away from having to then the teaching assistant would meet him

14:44

so it wasn't mum that walked into reception, which is something that stuck in my head and I couldn't work out is that G's fear or is that mum's

1505

[any other barriers?]

No cos with G I did think that it would be difficult and he'd need a lot of support in lessons but he was happy to go by himself and if he was happy to do it, I was happy to let him do it

15:18

Geoff: School Mentor

[reasons]

Yeah just not able to cope really with some of the lessons he was going into. He'd get very worried very stressed, especially if it was like a cover teacher. Or a really rowdy class cos its like big classes. So really rowdy classes and cover teachers he would find it really difficult to cope. And he would get really, really stressed and really upset

0:43

and I work in the SEN office, so what would happen is he would come out of a lesson and he'd come to sit in the office, he'd need time out, he'd need to calm down. And this was getting worse really, it was happening more often

0:57

[with same class]

I think some times the group was slightly different and I think also it depends on the teacher. Like sometimes they could be not too bad, but other times if it was perhaps a new teacher or especially a cover teacher they just you know, it was just like noisy and he just couldn't cope with that

1:25

[bullying?]

I don't think so not majorly I don't think. Might have been the odd occasion when somebody might have said something when he got distressed but I don't think it was a major factor.

1:46

[not the reason]

[how long at SSS]

Oh God, … I don't know to be honest. It was a few weeks but I'm not sure without checking I'm not sure how long. Well he's only just gone into year 8 now and he's like he's sort of coming back to, he's back with us now and he sort of started coming back to us some time last term so he, you know it wasn't that long

2:25

[so he started coming back..]

Last term. [part time basis?] yes, what would happen was, he'd go to SSS and then for certain lessons sort of starting off with small amounts, SSS mentor would bring him in, and then it sort of built up and built up till in the end what happened was SSS mentor was meeting him on the car park and he was coming in here and then that changed to a member of our team meeting him on the car park

3:02

and now he comes in on his own.

[and he's in full time?]

Yeah [how long full time?]

Some time before Christmas he started back with us full time, I think towards the end of November, probably it was. Yeah.

[rate reintegration]

3:38

Well at the moment I would say its probably a 5. It seems to have gone really well, he seems to be doing really well.

3:45

[why?]

Well, cos he's here. I'm hoping that nothing changes, I'm hoping we don't have any setbacks or anything like that but sometimes with the nature of kids but you know, as it is, at this moment I would say it was a 5.

4:02

He seems fine. He seems fine. I mean he's not doing PE still at the moment, that was quite a stumbling block for him but the arrangement is he comes to our office and he sits in there for PE and he does that. He comes to us, he sits with us and he seems quite happy to be doing that. There doesn't, he seems to be coping well.

4:23

[negotiated not into PE, was this one of the most stressful lessons?]

I don't think it was one of the most difficult. But I think perhaps it was quite difficult and I think perhaps at the moment he doesn't quite feel able to perhaps cope with that as well. So its you know keeping him comfortable isn't it and making sure that he's coping rather than throwing everything at him all at one go.

5:01

Let him cope and feel happy with what he's doing before we try and introduce something else

[judge success of reintegration]

5:33

I suppose whether the child's back in school. Whether they're back in school and the level of attendance I suppose like if they're, do they have a lot of time off sick or are they back quite consistently. I suppose that would perhaps be an indication because if they're not having much time off they must be coping I would think

[idea for reintegration]

6:18

It, we were led by SSS really, what they felt and then SSS mentor would bring G in and we'd sort of have a chat about what he felt, what lessons he felt he was able to do. And we'd sort of have a bit of a meeting where we'd look at the next few days and what he felt he was able to cope with. And we'd, I was led by SSS who I think were really led by G, on how he felt

6:50

What he thought would be good lessons to come in for and then SSS mentor would bring him in for those lessons and it just built up from there

6:59

[meetings frequently and planned for the next few days?]

yeah, yeah. No it was like, I don't mean it was a proper sit round the table, SSS mentor and G would come into the office where I work and it would just be an informal chat really to say G wants to try these lessons and I'd have his timetable and we'd say like right what are you gonna do. And we'd look at the timetable and SSS mentor would say right G's gonna come in for these lessons so I'll bring him in at this time and then he would either stay for the rest of the day and make his own way home

7:39

or sometimes it would be he came in a bit earlier and perhaps went back to SSS. And it just built up from there

[having meetings with SSS before reintegration started?]

7:56

Not really, no. Not the time that he was at SSS we didn't really have meetings. It was just when they were going to start to bring him back into school, SSS mentor would ring and say that she was gonna bring G over for a visit, would I be available really just to have a chat just to meet him

[idea of how long he would be at SSS?]

8:31

No, not really. But I think it all sort of depended on how he coped

[so it might have been long term?]

I don't think it would have been long term but I wasn't really sure how long I'm not sure whether they'd… Cos initially it was dealt with by our senco. Who is Mrs T that was who… So whether in the initial instant a certain amount of time was agreed, I don't know say a six week block or something like that, I don't know

9:01

whether it was just said we'll just play it by ear. I'm not sure what happened right at the beginning whether there was a set time, I'm not sure.

9:09

[views were expressed]

9:42

I don't know really how mum feels, I think G was a bit apprehensive. One of the things that we did was try and get a teaching assistant to speak to all of his teachers. As he came in perhaps the first time he went to a lesson, get a teaching assistant to take him down just to sort of remind the teacher who he was and to say he's gonna be joining your class today

10:12

cos I think G was a bit sort of felt a bit uneasy perhaps about going into a lesson for the first time. I think most of the teachers were sort of quite positive, oh its good to have you back G and it was like that kind of

[were you fairly confident it would work?]

10:34

… Well he seemed ok you know, the first few times he came in. He seemed ok. You jus t sort of think yeah, he looks good and he seems good so let's hope it's all you know. I don't think you can ever be 100 percent with kids.

10:54

[particular things put in place]

11:28

We used what we call a green card system where the pupil gets a green card so if they feel that they're not coping in a lesson they can come out. So we'd do that with Gand I think the very first few times he actually went into a lesson and he was taken down I think the teaching assistant would sort of say, he's here. He's here for the lesson but if at any point he feels like he can't cope just let him leave. Don't question him, don't stop him

 11:59

Just let him leave. And this green card system was used just the same. And he knows, I'm based in the SEN office, there's me and my colleague and G knows who we are and where we are so if he does have a problem and he's not able to cope he can always come to us at any point he knows where we are

12:19

And that system not just like, it's a system we use with a lot of kids and it does seem to work well. I f they know that there's somebody they can go to if they feel, if they're not coping. Then that does seem to work well, so that's something that's in place as well

12:38

[did he use it?]

I think a couple of times he went to a lesson and it was a cover teacher and it was really rowdy so he'd just get his work and he'd come and work in the office. But he was quite fine with that. He'd come and we'd say are you alright G and he'd say yeah cover teacher. So we'd say no problem then, have you got your work? Yeah. He seemed quite confident to be able to do that. So it did happen like I say but it seems to be happening less.

13:15

So those sort of things are in place for him

[still keep a special eye on G?]

13:26

We like to know, like we sort of check that he's in cos we don't always see him now because we don't have registration first thing in the morning. They go in and they go straight to first lesson so its not as if they have registration so you can check or they'll come to you before they go to registration. So we sort of check that he's in and like I think it was yesterday, Oh has anybody seen G. Is G here? He actually came to the office today cos it was PE and so we just had a chat then. So yeah just making sure that he's in and that everything is alright even if its just somebody just having a brief chat with him.

14:10

Say now is everything alright? Yeah, I suppose we do at the moment. Yeah.

[barriers]

14:38

No not really, it was just the things like I say that we've done. Getting, making sure that he felt comfortable in the lesson and we seemed to do that just by taking him to that initial lesson and just letting the teacher know he was back. But no I don't think he had any major issues with any particular kids he seemed to just once he'd sort of knew the teacher knew who he was and to let him go that seemed to just give him that bit of, the bit of security that he needed.

15:16

[anything that helped]

15:39

I don't know to be honest, I don't know. I think G's done well himself, I think he's coped well. And you know it is a big thing when you're not able to cope and he came back I think quite positive. You know something that perhaps he was – yeah I'll give it a go, that kind of attitude

16:09

So I think that helped perhaps you know. His own attitude, I think really, yeah I'll give it a go. And you know where we are if you need us and that was sort of

[advice]

16:46

My title is special educational needs manager. I work for the SENCO. Sort of we've got the senco, we've got the deputy senco, there's myself and my colleague who are managers and then we've got a team of 18 teaching assistants and we sort of coordinate that department if you like.

17:35

I think from my point of view I felt that listening what they had to say at SSS. You know, being led by what they said rather than, I mean I don't know whether anybody would sort of say we'll do this and this. But I think to be led by them because they've probably got to the root of the problem

17:59

and so to be led by them and if they say we'll build it up gradually we'll do this. To be led by them I think is important. And wait for them to say when they think a pupil is ready to come back full

time. I you know, I felt that that was important cos I felt that over that time they would have got to know G well. So I felt that my role really was to be led by them and to put into place whatever we could to support what they were trying to do, which was to get him back into school full time.

18:35

[there's been a handover]

Yeah, yes.

[SSS mentor still involved?]

Yeah , they are still involved in as much as we just have contact as is he coming in, is everything alright? And I think mum can still ring them if mum's worried about things. So they are still involved but its just kind of more like a monitoring role now.

19:10

[role changed?]

19:13

Yeah, I think so yeah, Cos like he's back with us full time so he's sort of back in our hands and they're just kind of on the outside looking in, you know

19:24

Is everything alright. There's actually a meeting I think its Friday at SSS for you know, a review for G to make sure that everything is still ok. So what will come from that I'm not sure

19:39

but there is a meeting on Friday.

Simon: Parent

Age 14 years

What happened, me and his dad, obviously we went through a separation and he didn't take it brilliantly. He took it quite badly and he'd started high school in B where I used to live found it incredibly difficult moving there because of the stress we were going through. I then moved back over here, where I grew up. And we moved back by the family for the support like you would. And I was taking him back to this high school….[everyday] yeah.

0.54

… and he just couldn't settle there but ..and in the end I got him into A school. And he did settle a little bit. It was just a really difficult time..you can imagine a twelve year old, its hard time for them anyway enit?

And then he just got worse and worse and worse erm having time off school and in the end …it just kind of, its hard to explain, he just kind of ….it weren't like a fit it was like, how do you explain. He just went off on one. He didn't recognise anybody, it was really bad and I took him to the doctors.

1.42

the school were good, they tried to give him support and stuff but he lost such a lot of time from school and that's when the SSS stepped in to try and integrate him back into school.

1.52

That was it. It was an emotional crisis they called it. He got admitted into the hospital. I think it was the doctors that sent us there. It's a couple of years back now and you forget don't you. But yeah we got admitted to the hospital. And he would only relate to me at the time, he didn't want to know anybody else

2.22

He was frightened like, he gone inwards. Frightened of silly things like radiators, anything. It was really horrible, it was like he'd had a complete break down. It was really, really horrible. And he spent it must have been three or four days in hospital.

2.39

And that's when they referred us to whats his name, there's a psychiatrist, [Dr T] that's it Dr T. They referred us there and I think Dr T then sent us on to the SSS, I think. I forget which way round it was.

2.58

I think that's what happened. And he started attending there and he really did settle in ever so well there, it really helped him

3.08

Into the SSS? Yeah, I mean he obviously found it difficult at the time, but it was such a slow process. I think he went there for a couple of months.

3.95

[how long out of school, not attending anywhere?]

It's got to have been a month

Maybe a bit more, maybe a bit longer. It was quite a while and obviously I was contacting the school all the time, explaining the situation. And they were good, they were sending things home for him to do, but like, it was really horrible

3.43

We had no other problem with the separation other than S being like this, but I mean at the time, another thing which may have tipped him over his dad had got a new partner and she put a lot of pressure on both of the kids, cos they just weren't ready for it. But that all fizzled out anyway but that didn't help. But I think it was just an overload of all the things that were happening.

[starting a new school as well]

Well he started the high school at where we were living and it was just too much all these new things at once he just couldn't cope with it.

[SSS for about two months]

I think it was about two months. It was quite… quite… like six to eight weeks, something like that.

[how long since back at A school?]

Let me think now. It was year seven he attended SSS, he's in year 10 now. Towards the end of year seven, over the, so it was year seven year eight type of thing [that he was at SSS] yeah.

He's back to normal now. Completely back to normal now.

[scale of 1 – 5]

Brilliantly – I'll go number 5. Because I wouldn't have got him in there without the help that SSS provided. And they did it in a way, he went there for like an afternoon and then a day and they increased it that way and then worked with the school and me to keep him there. It worked, I wouldn't have been able to get him there without their help, put it that way. [convinced of that?] Oh one hundred percent convinced. Hundred percent.

The way he was, I was part of his problem too, cos me and his dad had separated. I was part of the problem in his head, d'you know what I mean and it took outside people to help him. It's hard to explain.

6.23

[general reintegration how judge]

Well obviously them not wanting to get up and go there in the morning's a big think, I mean I did have a bit of that. It's obviously nerves, nervousness isn't it, but like coming back from school having the positive feedback is brilliant. But like you gonna get negatives aren't you, you can't get away from that. But like, yeah, I think I was fetching him out at lunchtimes as well when it was back here and that helped as well. Small and often is the way to play it and I think that's what helped with us. Its difficult one to answer.

[posivitive feedback..]

Yeah cos I mean I had times where I couldn't even get Sam out of the house to go, so the fact that he's quite happy, voluntarily going and get in the car and going off his steam, you know, obviously I took him there but like things like that. My S's never been a big talker you see, I mean he is now but then he's not the sort of person that would approach you and say well this is, you know… I'd have to, it's like dragging teeth our of him, d'you know what I mean. So I found that hard cos he wouldn't tell me. Now he'd tell other people in the school now and at SSS.

8.24

So the fact that he was coming back and communicating with me better it's told me that things were definitely working.

[idea of return]

Well it was like a bit of a joint thing really, cos we all , we knew it was only a temporary solution, it was just like to boost him so he didn't fall behind with his education. So that was the ultimate goal at the start of this anyway [for Sam as well?]

Yeah, he did want to be there, he actually wanted to be at school but he just found it so hard cos it's a lot of pressure anyway to go to high school after primary. He just found it so hard getting in there and getting through his day. He just broke down crying in class these were the things and I'd have to fetch him out. But like .. he actually wanted to go and obviously in the end Mrs D, I think her name was, she was really good and she .. we'll try this and we'll try that

10.13

and it worked for us I mean as I say it's your own experience isn't it. But yeah, he actually wanted to get back himself.

We weren't really pushing him one person individually it was like a, all of us was sort of, but he knew that from the start it was just a short term thing to give him the confidence and that to get back to school.

[process of reintegration]

Yeah, well obviously I used to take Sam there, I used to pick him up every day and then I used to then… I think it was SSS mentor, SSS mentor used to ring me a couple of times a week and that. And I had a meeting with Louise a few times and we discussed that and getting into school. And she sat us down and said right we're gonna try this or the other and that's basically how that happened. She sort of more or less took the reins.

11.15

In that respect of how it was gonna be done.

[and S was there as well?]

Oh yeah he was there. Everytime we spoke he was there. And he understood, he understood so that helps as well if they understand. But erm yeah cos it's so long ago that you forget all the detail. With him being so well now you do forget

11.52

[barriers]

The biggest, emotion was the biggest problem. The biggest fear S had of going back there was being in a lesson and getting upset, who would he turn to. So the school set up a few people that he could go to if that happened to happen. And we had meetings in the school while we was doing that. It's coming back slowly. They set up, I mean obviously they've got the head of house haven't they and that lot…. I forget what her title was …..[mentor?] sort of thing like child support….

S knew where she was all week, he knew exactly where he could get hold of her in school and that helped

We sent him into lessons with a little note, that's how we had to do it. He had a little note and if he felt like he couldn't cope he just took the note up and he left and went to see the it was J[school mentor], her name was

13.20

and that seemed to work, the fact that he knew he could go some here and if he was that upset he could phone me and I could pick him up. It was just emotions for him you see and if he felt that he couldn't go anywhere that's what could get him there. But that was a big help. Once we'd got over that and his friends, being a new school as well and the friends problem wasn't there as strong so that he had to re- re-encourage himself with the friends he'd already got. His friends were really good. Yeah, they hadn't known him that long really and they were really quite good.

14.02

[you feeling]

I was confident, but I was still apprehensive. At times it was frustrating cos you don't understand what's going on in his head, I mean it is difficult, but we just had to work together and it was a slow process really. But as long as I stayed in regular contact with the school and the SSS, everyone was happy and we. You know everybody knew where he was, d'you know what I mean?

[use the note?]

Yes, he did an few times.

[inform all of his teachers?]

Yeah they did, they did anyway they did let all the teachers know what had happened. Cos he'd lost that time … anyway so yeah they all were aware of the situation. Some of them dealt with it better than others, but that's…

He got really close to his head of house and that was good, he helped him loads. Now it's just like, he responds like all the kids at school. He's now back to being cheeky , naughty and…

15.40

[really helped]

The note was a big thing and like I say gradually, slowly, slowly, he felt he could cope with it better rather than that's it you go back to school. That wouldn't have worked, I know it wouldn't have worked. But it was good and then when he actually was going in there fine, cos he started with two days and then it go to three days and eventually but then he'd still have the odd afternoon at SSS. Cos they've done things, they've done videos and things and he's been invited back to see these videos. And they went out for a day, where did they go. He'd already started back at school and there was a trip that they'd organised and he still went with them Which was nice.

[part of that community]

It was like a little group that he felt comfortable in.

16.27

And he made a couple of nice friends there, but he did point out that there were some strange kids there with a lot of strange problems. And like he found that weird he says I don't understand why I'm there with how I feel. Cos some of them… and I said they're there for lots of different problems isn't it, you know. What works for you doesn't necessarily work for everybody else.

A lot of them was completely different, Cos he'd talk to you about things like that you know, he's quite sensible in that respect. He can tell. He knows the difference and but erm. No he made a couple of nice friends there. He couldn't understand that some of the kids there were quite long term there. He said the one girl had been there for quite some time and he used to ask me whether they'd go back to school. I said I don't know.

17.24

You don't know do you. No he did say, I don't want to be here forever. I don't wanna be here, I want to go back to my school. He said that practically all the way through

17.47

[danger not wanting to go back]

That wasn't the case for S, he wanted to be at school. He just couldn't handle it.

18.07

[anything else supported reintegration]

His friends were quite good, they sent him all cards and … I think the fact that he felt wanted as well helped him to pushed him in that. I suppose when you go through something like that and you feel you haven't got any friends, finding out you have got some friends is a good thing. And they did all send a massive get well card. All the class signed it, the teachers signed it. That was good, that really perked him up that did.

I mean, it was a difficult time there, trying to get him involved with things like the drum kit for a start. He got a drum kit for Christmas and that helped cos I used to take him, my dad was in a band at the time and we used to take him to band practice and that helped him as well with his confidence. He used to have a bash around. I am starting to regret the drum kit now, I have to admit.

19.20

But that helped it as well. That's something an interest for him outside of school. And I used to take him to the studio every Thursday night, he used to love it and that give him a good confidence turn. Like outside interests isn't it. Got loads now, the difference is unbelievable.

[advice]

I found ….. I did leave a lot of it to the school and SSS. I didn't put my personal opinion in there too much cos I think sometimes you can get too involved cos of your own emotions and I think sometimes they know better than you, you know what I mean? And I think sometimes trust in their judegment, d'you know what I mean? Cos they got it right for me, whether they do all the time, I don't know but they got it right for me. And the, but like being in regular contact with all the parties that helped. You know if you're prepared to work with the school and work with everybody it just, you have to be able to. I mean luckily I had no problems with getting out from work

20:56

I could do whatever, I had time off and everything, I don't know whether everybody could have that. That's probably an issue for people, I don't know, but I never had that problem but to me S comes first anyway over any job so I found that like just trusting their judgement helped me because sometimes it's too close isn't it. I would have loved for him to go back there straight away if it was possible but obviously you have to take it at their pace and I found they ….. weren't pushy, they weren't pushy but they sort of took the reins, oh we'll try this and I was like oh ok

21:36

 I mean luckily for us everything worked, went quite smoothly really once I'd got him there and he was settled it went quite smooth, d'you know what I mean. It's hard. It's just off your own, your own things. I'm not very good at explaining things sometimes.

22.17

I practically went through a lot of that on my own, his dad wasn't really too overly involved. His dad wouldn't really get too involved because his dad is not like that, his dad, he has regular contact with his dad, with both of them, he's brilliant like that but he's not good at sorting problems you see.

22.45

So I practically took all of that on myself. And dealt with it myself, but I'm quite a strong person though, in that respect anyway so it doesn't phase me in that way, do you know what I mean? Some people wouldn't be like me would they? So it's hard to explain. But I just sort of went with the flow, you know they've dealt with these problems

23.07

so many more times than I would have, so I felt that trusting their judgement was the best way for me, and working together, you know.

Simon: Young Person

[reasons in SSS]

Having trouble at home and in school.

My mum and dad split up and I got a bit stressed

00:23

cos I was stressed from at home and it affected my school so I wasn't concentrating

[mainly split up of parents?]

[how long at SSS?]

I think it was a couple of months

1.03

[how long since back]

about a year and a half

[rating scale]

four.

[why?]

Cos they helped me a lot and I looked forward to going to SSS and then

2.09

I was more confident going to school

[why 4 not a 5?]

It took be a while to get back to school, a couple of days. I couldn't go straight back in

[gradual]

[what's it like at school now?]

back to normal now. Everything's fine

[how judge successful reintegration]

3.39

speak to the teachers, see how, if, like if they've spoke to the teacher about their problems and stuff, like the head of house

[if spoke to head of house would this be a good sign?]

yes it would if they'd progressed

[idea of reintegration]

4.49

we agreed, at SSS we agreed. After I was there for a while I'd got better and more confident then we agreed, I agreed with SSS mentor at SSS to go back to school

[did SSS mentor suggest?]

Every week she used to, I had to go in her office and we used to talk about the problems and she asked when I wanted to go back to school

5.23

[was it if you want or when]

when do I want to go

Agreement. She asked me when I wanted to go and I said when I feel more confident I'll go in and try.

[was she satisfied with that?]

Yeah

6.15

[waited until you said I feel confident now?]

No they did push it a bit

6.21

Like limited sort of. Say if I am at SSS I am confident and normal they'll suggest cos I'm back can't stay cos I'm.....

[cos the way you were..]

[feelings about reintegration?]

scared. A bit of looking forward to it, seeing friends but scared at the same time

[mum feelings]

I think she might have felt that she was glad that I was going back into school, everything was back to normal

7.45

[SSS mentor - feelings]

Proud

[process of reintegration]

8.15

Can't remember now, I'm not sure

I think I went in, I went in, yeah, I went in school for three days two days of the week I was at SSS. So I was there I think it was Wednesday and Thursday. Yeah for about, not sure, for a while

[half days?]

I think so

[what sort of planning?]

9.23

Yeah we had meetings on my attendance on the days I went to SSS. So you know when I went to school for three days and to SSS for two? My head teacher they tried to pick the best days when I could go to SSS – in my subjects.

9.56

[barriers/problems]

10.10

Just my confidence.

Going to SSS, having …. Looking forward to going to SSS having fun and waiting for my confidence to come back up

[being happy and relaxed at SSS, knowing you could have fun then helped you go back to school]

Yeah

10.49

[other barriers? Special arrangements?]

11.29

I'm not sure

I think I just. I'm sure I did many half days, I only did a couple of them. I had some like homework to catch up on my lessons as well. They just found me like revision of what was done in lessons, like the objectives.

[friends]

12.29

I hadn't been there long enough to. I was worried of what they would ask me where I'd been and what I was gonna say. I just told the truth

12.59

[helped reintegration]

My head teacher, he helped me a lot. I had like, when I went back in school, I went, he said I could go and speak to him and see him about my problems when I want, in his office at break

13.48

so that helped me and …. Yeah he gave me a card for my lessons, if I got stressed in lessons so I could come out and go and speak to him or the assistant head

[did you use this?]

Yeah. That was helpful, yeah

14.18

[school wanted to make it work]

Yeah

[anything else that helped?]

14.47

I can't remember now, they did help but…

[anything you did that helped?]

Not sure. I just went.

15.29

[advice]

15.50

I'm not sure. It's hard. I'm not sure. Be happy and positive at SSS

Simon: SSS Mentor

[Reasons]

S was referred by CAMHS, Dr T and he, he was just so scared and anxious. I remember Dr Tsaying that when he went to see him in hospital that S was clinging on to the radiator would not let go. Just didn't feel safe

0:45

His problems in school and I can say this now because of how he was, were personal, were home related rather than any issues he had at school. There were no issues with any of the pupils at school or teachers or lessons but after talking to him and finding out his parents went through a split during the summer and that affected Sam when he went back to school

1:27

he was insecure and worried and scared. So I'm not quite sure what to put that down to in terms of not going into school, but that's , and that was after I'd been talking to him for a while and trying to establish what was whether there were issues at school

1:47

and when he did have those problems school didn't deal with them

[were signs at school]

Yeah where he'd just get anxious and scared and panicked. Have panic attacks. They'd just send him home. They'd phone home and send him home. And I think that just developed into a pattern or a routine and the first sign, ok he's got to go

2:25

rather than spending time and trying to find out and deal with it

[how long at SSS?]

six weeks, six weeks if that.

[and went back to the same school?]

Same school

2:55

[rate return]

5

[why?]

S is a huge success. Honestly he is. He came to us and yes he was crying, yes he was worried. I think that attachment to mum was beginning to develop

[what do you mean attachement?]

whats the best way to describe it. I think because his parents were going through problems he felt he had to be there with mum and for mum and he may lose mum as well. Because mum and dad had split up and he was seeing less of dad I think he was thinking that I need to be with my mum, and am I going to lose my mum, sort of thing. That's the attachment I'm looking at. That's what was happening at school.

4:03

And he did when mum dropped him off the first day after his initial visit and his interview he did panic he did start crying and wanting mum, wanting to go home. I want to go home. But both myself and Louise sat down and talked to him and tried, and calmed him down, got him into lesson and you know what by break he was running around outside playing football

4:32

and baring in mind this was a completely new environment, new people.

[following day, back to..?]

No, he was fine

4:47

Its difficult to try and gauge what changed for him, whether it was just the fact that somebody had actually took time out and spoke to him and given him that attention.

[whose idea return to school?]

SSS

5:19

Yes it was, but mum was happy with it all for it. She did want him back at school, she did want him to be back in a normal routine.

[sam?]

S was fine. He didn't instigate the idea or, or once he was spoken to about it, because I think it's important for me to say, all the pupils that come when their initial interview and visit they are told that this is a stop gap, it's like a respite, it's not a permanent position

5:54

do have to go back to school and if their home school isn't the right place then an alternative, but they do have to go back. So I think that kind of helps them think well I'm not here forever more; which is something different to what we were doing in the earlier years.

6:12

So they always know at some point they'll have to be spoken to right we need to look at school. So with S his reintegration went very well. Yes he had one or two days where he just couldn't go in to lesson or he cried showed the same sort of fears that he did when he first came to us but to combat that I just stayed at the school with him rather than bring him back here, stayed at the school with him

6:45

talked to him in a separate room and we just discussed things waited for him to calm down and then got him back into lesson.

[any particular approaches in place for S?]

Again it was giving a member of staff at school who would be there for him. It was putting a member of staff in place he would feel comfortable and know if he needed he could go to someone at that time.

[school mentioned card]

yeah they call it a get out card

7:46

that if hes in a lesson and he's beginning to feel anxious or can't stay in there for whatever reason he just has to show that card he didn't even have to say anything. Just show the card and the teachers were made aware and he'd just be able to come straight out.

8:02

so those are the sort of things we do ask. Some schools have them anyway. There's got to be a strategy in place just in case they can't deal with lessons and they can't even talk how are they going to be able to go out

[discuss with all of the young people?]

yes.

8:34

[barriers?]

No nothing other than just showing S that somebody is there to support him if he needs it. I mean Sam didn't need a lot of support. I mean I don't think he used that card much in school. Cos I mean I used to go and see him visit or phone J [school mentor] would say oh I haven't seen him. That's a good thing. But I think for S just knowing that something was there if he needed it, if he ran into problems

9:11

I've been back to A school a few times and seen S and he is a different kid. S's changed and his success is so admiring if that's the right word that even the receptionist knew how he was before he came to us and when he started going back and she'd seen the change in him over the period of time. Everybody in the school are saying he's a different kid. What did you do?

[his problem started year 7?]

Yeah

9:54

Yeah but prior to his parents splitting up he was fine the change of school he was fine, his attendance. We didn't have any issues.

10:08

[what point in the year did he have this problem?]

I think it was a few weeks after going back in the September. I think it was year 8

10:16

It was after a holiday period. And I think it was, if I remember correctly, it was during the summer holiday. I think he just tried to deal with it and couldn't and that was his way of showing.

.

Simon: School Mentor

C3

[how long at SSS]

Yeah I can give you that information …..(going through data base) …… sorry about this.

1:09

Ok, I've got it down that S was referred, the referral was on the 20th of the 11th 08 and the intervention started in the January ok. So it was just a matter of 3 months.

[reasons]

1:31

We hadn't heard anything its just that Mr B just had a call, it's the guidance centre to go to the classroom and when he got there they'd removed all the students he was absolutely shaking he was petrified and he would not come away from the room. And Mr B said that in all the years that he's taught he's never come across a pupil he was absolutely petrified

1:50

He could have no signs and no concerns from any teachers or anything he just didn't want to move. It was like a break down, I suppose

1:58

And we'd had, nothing had been picked up before from staff it was just but Mr B had never seen anything like it, he was obviously very, very concerned cos he was shaking.

2:13

[referred to SSS?]

I believe that he went, he had to go to hospital. His mom came into school and he ended up in the hospital and the doctor picked it up at the hospital and then it was passed on and a referral was made to, it wasn't and then Mr B had to fill in all the paperwork from that, yeah.

2:34

[how long back in school]

Well. Coming for a year and a half now. January, yeah.

[were you involved in reintegration]

Yeah

2:58

Actually it was one of the first things I dealt with when I first started. We had a mentor, SSS mentor came in we went through everything, we discussed what she wanted to do. And he came in on a restricted timetable. Had a couple of sessions where he just had a look round the school, no lessons or anything, just gradual for a period I'd say about three or four weeks.

3:17

[same year group?]

Same set and everything, yeah. So that was fine

3:23

[how rate reintegration]

It went very well and what I liked was the opportunity, SSS mentor kept coming back to me and said how did it go any concerns at all we can go back. We were all in touch with mum, the three of us worked together and really there were no hiccups.

3:45

There were a couple of times when he was outside, and I didn't push it. I phoned mum and said can you come and pick him up so it just didn't. There was a lot of talking to him and listening it went smoothly

[so a 5 or a 4?]

A five

4:01

It really was, it was brilliant. I was amazed. And he'd got the back up which was fantastic.

4:11

[judge success of reintegration]

4:34

It's just really how comfortable they feel at school if they feel at ease. Do they realise they've got support in school so it doesn't build up. You know, you've got to remember there's a first port of call so from a school's point of view you've gotta make that clear, there's always somebody to talk to.

4:47

That's really important, perhaps some of the year 7s although we do induction days and interviews its not always, they don't register that there is someone there and it all builds up and.. Whereas with S the straight away when there's an intervention programme, you give them someone to talk to no matter how silly he thought it might be, he'd come and tell you. It's great.

[did he use that?]

Yeah

5:08

He did, yeah. He was quite, and with his form tutor as well he'd approach his form tutor. It was really fantastic.

5:14

What was great SSS mentor like, she was obviously very professional, knew precisely what she was doing, it was all planned, strategically planned, like you know. It was like we're gonna communic…. We're gonna walk round school and this is Mrs Band a just couple of his friends. By the end of it he was really looking forward to it.

5:30

[how long preparation]

I'd say within a month he was back in like full time education. Like a couple of blips, it was nothing really. We did expect it, you know, he'd sit out there, I can't, no I don't wanna do it today.

5:44

 We'd encourage just try it for a little bit longer we'll see how you feel, how it goes. But no. We didn't put any pressure on him then just decided mom would come and pick him up and that was fine.

5:53

And he got some, he got involved with all of a sudden with activities as well with school which he'd never done before. He'd got the confidence to put his name down. So it was brilliant the way it went.

[more confident]

Probably yeah. You should see him round … Yeah honestly, it was fantastic the way he felt and he thoroughly enjoys school now and you know he's positive and we haven't had any problems what so ever and his attendance is good.

6:18

Like he wants to come into school which is good. And mum was very supportive as well. She …

[worked as a threesome]

Its positive. That's what's necessary isn't it. You've got to have good communication or it wouldn't work. You can't say, one can't just put the effort in its got to be between the three, the school, mum and SSS.

[barriers]

6:58

The only perhaps, its like talking to some of the teachers to get them to be a bit open minded and try and be a little bit patient but you find that with anything isn't it. You have to make sure the teacher is fully aware and because its senior school you've got a number of lessons and that can be quite difficult but

7:16

fortunately the teachers who he'd got down were pretty good

[how did you do that?]

7:21

Well Mr M called a meeting and said we're letting you know that S's coming back into school and this is what happened this is the how we'd like you to deal with it. And also SSS mentor had put some strategies together for us which was helpful. So we were well prepared if you know what I mean.

7:36

I didn't get involved in that cos like I say I started in January and I heard that Mr B did lots of preparation by informing his teachers that the family's coming back to school and this …..

Yeah they responded. I think they were happy to get the information

7:52

to be aware. There's nothing worse is there to have something then find out afterwards .. you know. And also the change over of staff and sometimes people wouldn't remember S or perhaps you know. That's really important, communication.

8:07

between the ambassador if you know what I mean and the teachers.

[any other barriers]

No, honestly. Even the children … he didn't have any problems I don't know. I think he talked to SSS mentor about how to deal with if they said well where have you been.

8:26

SSS mentor had said well look this is what to say. But no he didn't, no everybody was really good and with regards to his friends. He didn't have problems building up friendships again. You'd think wouldn't you with after a break.

[under the circumstances, other children would have seen him]

It worked out quite well. I don't know. He didn't have anything at all. He didn't talk to me about anything like that. Like I say it went very smoothly. ….impressed. And it has worked it wasn't just a temporary thing.

8:57

He's contented round school now, its brilliant. He's confident, he was here talking to me about his options and what he'd like to do. He'd like to stay on in sixth form. Well you know it's fantastic isn't it.

9:16

[things that helped] [already talked about communication and working together]

preparation so the staff knew what to expect and really I mean the support from his mum. She was one hundred per cent behind it she was always available. You know like sometimes you can't get hold of the parent. She was there and she made the time to come in if we'd got a query

9:41

to talk to SSS mentor. And every step of the way she knew what we were gonna be putting in place and I think that's important. You know and she could pick up the phone to talk to SSS mentor myself. I think its important as well to have someone who's nominated in the school and so they can be responsible for making sure he's got the feedback

9:59

and support from a particular person

10:15

I think S, he just really tried and he didn't sort of, bear in mind what happened every day he sort of said this is another day it's a, I can do this. He was brilliant, you know he listened very carefully to what SSS mentor said and if SSS mentor came in you know he'd keep to the appointment

10:32

he'd be here and you know he was fantastic. It was apparent that SSS mentor [and S] had got a sound relationship. You know they really worked well together and he'd got every confidence in SSS mentor. You could see he was listening intently which is fantastic.

10:53

[advice]

I think you've got to be aware of what the history of the student well aware of that. Make sure you've got contact numbers. And lots of patience really because they're gonna come back and you're not to like rush things. I think you've got to, it's just something like individually. You've got to put a lot of time into it. You can't rush or make that student feel they're a hindrance. That's really important. They know that you genuinely believe it can work and you're prepared to put the time in as well. Not to rush it.

[time commitment]

11:55

Because of the house office, we've always got someone here full time. So I think that's really important. I mean it wasn't just a matter he could drop in break time or after school, he knows that there's somebody always here so if its getting a bit uncomfortable in a particular lesson or he was nervous he could come here

12:09

I think that's important, they know where to locate anybody during school time. I think that's …. Well its always me in here you see and because he's in house, yeah the system that's how it works. Or Mr B he knows the two. That's the guidance leader so it does work.

12:36

[go in the class with him?]

He didn't need, I think a couple of times I may have gone in the class for a few minutes but he really didn't, he was quite happy. He was fine. He could even remember which rooms.

12:43

I gave him a map if he needed it but I think prior to him actually starting and it being just a temporary, you know restricted timetable that was important to get on his feet again.

[recap on advice]

You got to talk, be laid back, calls to mum and to SSS mentor. You know they were fantastic I was really impressed. All the effort work they've put into it that made it work.

Carla: Parent

Yr 11, 15yrs

Cos she was refusing to go in her lessons at school. That's basically all it was really. Just, well, weren't just refusing go in her lessons was refusing to go to school altogether. … That's basically all it was really, refusing go in her lessons and do things at school.

I used to have to take her to school on the bus myself just to so I know I'd got her inside the gate. Otherwise her wouldn't go in her just make her way back home.

Might have been about, four, four months. Yeah, could have been about four months. Cos to start with they said it was only a six weeks but they kept her there four months I think. Roughly, I ain't exactly sure but it was roughly about that time.

Year 10, she was in.

When she started going back to FF school…I ain't sure cos me heads all over the place with her cos she's here, there and everywhere.

It was after that she went back. After the four months cos SSS they helped her get back into school. Cos they was taking her like part time. She was going to SSS on the morning or something then her'd go to FF on the afternoon and then gradually them was taking her. SSS was taking her and then and gradually worked round her that way.

Er could be about six months. Round about that yeah, Cos we had a few good months with her and then her just suddenly dropped back again. So, ..

No, her's getting there at 3 o clock in the afternoon, finish at 4 o clock.. But its like the learning centre where, you know where some of the children go if they've got detention. They have to go to this certain block that's where C's been going. She's been doing that the last two weeks but today she hasn't gone back to school. I don't know, back to square one.

Yeah, yeah, she had to come home cos the headmaster phoned me, said he was sending her home so..

I could ask her.

It was, I'd give a 5 on it cos it was brilliant when they first got her back into school. SSS really helped. We had two or three meetings after with the SSS at FF school, and then that was it. And then SSS said, oh that's it she's settled back into school, her won't need us anymore. But then like you say two months down the line her just suddenly went, I don't know. Suddenly went back to where we started from with her.

Yeah, she was going full time.

I just don't know what to say, I don't know

It's like when we, when she first started the SSS it took her say about a month before she settled in there, cos her don't get on with people who her don't know. See, C, she won't just talk to somebody no if you just talk to her she won't just talk to you till her knows you like, you know what I mean.

I don't really know. I don't know, I ain't got a clue, I don't know what to think.

I don't think so, they was just working with her at SSS and, cos there was quite a few pupils from FF there and gradually, like a say after a few months they just started taking them up to FF. Sometimes it would be an hour a day, just take them there try to go back into the school and gradually after a few weeks it just come out she want to go back full time.

Not really, cos we sort of knew that it was gonna have to happen anyway cos after some time cos they're only allowed to stay in SSS for so long

7:31

They didn't say, like all its gonna be for them to help and to get back into school, that she could actually stay there. It was just a temporary thing

Went to a lot of meetings. Sometimes it was a SSS sometimes we went to them at Frank F. A couple we had at FF school, a couple we had at SSS. We always talked about the same thing anyway. Just talking about trying to get her back into school and you know, things like that.

Yes. She never spoke though. She wont talk to nobody, just sits there. Just, don't say nothing but when she actually got back into school she was talking then. I know the teachers were saying gosh SSS's really worked for C cos hers coming out of her shell now and talking to us and telling us things like. She was even at the stage at FF where she was helping another girl who was in the same situation as C. And then all of a sudden it just stopped again. I don't know why.

Yes. She won't tell nobody, she wont tell you anything. She don't talk to nobody about nothing. I think its just girls meself. You know like, hers had an argument with one girl so four five of them they all stick together. That's what I think it is, but she don't say nothing. Perhaps I should say it's nothing to do with me, its her problem not mine.

…..It's the same as the school really, aint it. They're …..situation cos she won't talk to them.

I don't think she like it at first. But then, I think that's why ….was taking her like slowly and just taking her like once a week for half a day. Things like that, then gradually they got her in they just said you gotta go back full time like. But at first she went back part time. And then she got back full time. But her seemed to be alright at the time, so.

I felt alright, actually, cos I thought it had really worked, I thought o yeah it had really helped her like, but. No, no.

No, as far as I know. Like there was staff from FF used to be at the meetings as well, from C's school, a teacher or a mentor, people who.. cos she goes to mentors and that at school, she needs to go to as well. One of them might have always been at the meeting and her form teacher would be there too. That's it really.

The mentor used to offer her loads of different things so she'd stay with them for a lesson or sometimes they would try to take her to a lesson and sit with her. You know the mentors have done all that with her, they've done everything really that they possibly can with her. Her's been on reduced timetables and everything, they've tried everything. ..they'd do everything for them, but they have, even I've gone up the school and tried to get her in her lesson meself, I mean, I've gone up meself. Tried to get her to go in like, but there's no way, so..

No, no not really really no. It just seemed to be all ok like.

Is now, yeah, just getting her back into her lessons, but she won't go. If I say to her why don't you go into your lessons her just says I don't like it. I don't want to go in. What can I do, I can't … I try and talk to her before she goes out, I say make sure you go in your lessons and that's it and then I get a phone call say she won't go in her lessons. And what can I do? I can't do nothing, can I? Really, my job is to send her to school and that's what I do.

I think SSS mentor helped her a lot, I think her built a bit of a friendship with SSS mentor, SSS mentor at theSSS. That why I think she spoke about a few things to SSS mentor, I mean, got herself …. I think that helped her a lot. I mean SSS mentor was the one who used to keep taking her to FF like, trying to get her back settled in. So, I think that was it like. Yeah, I think she actually built a relationship with her, where she could actually sit and talk to her. …but she don't she just totally ignores her, her just sits there totally blank you. She's done it at the school, her done it for two weeks solid just sat there in the corridor, two weeks. …Not spoke to anybody. [must have very determined streak]

That's what the school said, god, even we couldn't do that.

I don't know. I think its just that her used to have a bit of a laugh with her and her sort of got friendly with her. …she was feeling down when her was at home her used to say, oh can't I phone SSS mentor and her used to phone SSS mentor like. …Well if it was something to do with school, like FF or something her used to come back and say, oh can I phone SSS mentor. But there have been a couple of times when school have phoned SSS mentor and asked SSS mentor to go up the school and have a talk to C, but I know the last time they called her I don't think she'd talk to her. I know that's happened on one occasion. SSS mentor went to the school to see her but she wouldn't talk I don't know whether it was cos it was on the school's territory that's why she wouldn't speak to her, like that, I don't know.

14:58

I don't think anybody else could have done anything that they haven't done …everybody's done everything that they possibly can for her. I don't think anything else could have been done.

I don't know, all I would say is just be willing to work with them, just be willing to work with them at SSS, just stick to their …, just try to do whatever you can. You have to take each step as it comes really, like. That's all I can say really.

Carla: Young Person

I don't know, I just don't like school.

[when you were in Infant school did you like it?]

I did like it then.

[when did you stop liking it?]

year 9.

[so in yr 7 you liked it, but in yr 9 you stopped liking it?]

Yeah

[stopped going altogether, did you?]

Yeah.

I just woke up and .. thought I don't like it, so I never went.

[how long were you at SSS/ Do you know when started there?]

Two months. No I'm not sure, I know it was just before the six weeks

[year 9?]

Yeah

[how long back at FF?]

Well, I come back, say half way through year 10

[and you're yr 11 now, so been there 8 months?]

[how successful your return?]

about 4

Just helped me get back into school and I needed to get in.

Yeah

[happy to be back?]

No. mm

[did that get better as you went along?]

No it's never happened

[how were you managing to go full-time then..]

4.01

I never really went full time, I never used to, I never been around…. That's why I ain't going now. They keep on sending me home cos I don't like it there.

4.11

[so you haven't done a full week, since you started half way through year 10?]

No

[you done 4 days?]

No

[what's the most you've done?]

At least half a day when I was on part time

[half a day every day?]

I dain't do it today, cos I'm off my part time timetable now

I have to go back in full time

[not tried full time before, so it's a big step]

I went this morning, but they sent me back home cos I wouldn't go in my lesson.

[how do you think this will end up, this bit?]

I don't know

5.07

[trying to judge how successful someone's return to school's been..]

[long pause]

6.27

[ever feel happy at SSS, did you feel settled there?]

mmm

I knew I had to go back because even when started at SSS for six weeks

[who was pushing the idea..]

No

I don't know, just like they used to like take me in certain days to do some of my lessons then I'd go back to SSS. It started like that.

Them would choose them for me.

Yeah

SSS mentor

 [stay with you?]

Sometimes

7.56

[how did you feel at the thought of going back]

I didn't like it

[mum or other do anything to help prepare?]

Not really

[problems or barriers]

8.47

No

[anything really helped]

[long pause]

9.53

Its just that sometimes I like them come and sit with me in my lessons and I'd feel comfortable after that cos getting ready to go in.

Sometimes S [school mentor] would, and sometimes SSS mentor would

No

[break times]

Nothing

[friends?]

Yeah, but I never used to go out

[advice to someone at Shepwell..]

11.07

[long pause]

Carla: SSS Mentor

[why C at SSS]

Again C, the reasons we were given were bullying and finding it difficult to make friends and socialise.

[stopped going to school altogether?]

She had. She had erm but when she came to us and we started working with her we did actually find that it wasn't anything. The bullying had never been confirmed or anybody dealt with circumstances where she'd been bullied. It was, if I have the right to say, an excuse.

0:52

The problem was of just stubbornness and just doing things her way. With C when she first came to us the problem we had was getting her to talk. She used to do the same at school where she'd just turn her back onto the person who was trying to talk to her and just go into a corner and not listen

1:20

Well she could listen but she wasn't showing that she was listening or responding and not or just standing in the corridor not moving. And it was difficult to think why is she behaving like this. Again, I thik sometimes she did things to upset mum because there was many a time when she voiced mum doesn't care about me. She only cares about my brothers

1:57

[any evidence of this?]

I didn't see anything in the times when mum had been in, cos mum had in touch a few times and I didn't see anything or evidence to show that mum didn't have her interests at heart. I thought it was just what C thought and used as an excuse.

I didn't, other members of staff didn't see any anxiety issues with C. It was chosen behaviour.

[rate success of reintegration]

Overall I think it would have to be a 3 for C again because she was a little difficult simply because she would go into these relapses and phases where she chose not to talk to anybody or communicate and thought that was her way of getting out of things.

3:26

[still use this behaviour at SSS when things going well for her?]

Sometimes. No I think she, talking to the mentors and keeping updated and receiving feedback she still that after she was reintegrated sometimes.

[was she at SSS for 18 months?]

No C, she came to us in April 2007 and her reintegration started in the July of the same year. And she was fully reintegrated by September, October 2007. [so much shorter period] Much shorter, yeah.

4:15

[whose idea return to mainstream]

SSS's

[any resistance?]

No mum was ok, she didn't refute or she didn't, she just said that yes she does want her back at school and she should be, she was on board and happy. Again the same few members of staff from the initial meeting weren't too happy, but I think that was purely for selfish reasons so that they wouldn't have to deal with her… cos she was so difficult.

5:06

But with the mentors and the staff that did help with the reintegration and were the points of contact they were fine, you know to try and do whatever was required.

[C's view?]

5:19

C's view, she didn't oppose it, in that she didn't voice that she didn't want to go back or wouldn't go back. No she wouldn't show any signs of fear.

[what put in place, planning]

No it was pretty much the same, support in lessons gradually building up erm and handing over and they were, the mentors involved were also supporting in lessons. So there wasn't anything special that took place for C.

[barriers?]

6:12

Her stubbornness. Just her stubbornness.

[and yet she was quite cooperative in terms of going back]

She was cooperative but there were times where she didn't … and say I'm not going or I can't do it. And not because she couldn't do it, it was simply because she didn't want to.

6:31

So she did have moments where she would just decide, I don't fancy doing this today. [how deal with that?]

 I sat and talked to her, stayed in the lesson with her. I mean, I tingk, I actually saw C on, yesterday I saw her yesterday, Monday I was starting to reintegrate another pupil and she came in at quarter past 11, so she was late, she was just signing in. And I did ask why are you late, I just didn't feel like coming in. So her kind of chosen behaviour hadn't quite….

7:32

[anything that helped?]

With Ch it's just, you have to tell her that this has to be done, rather than try and coax her into things. She reacts better to strict precise orders, if you like as opposed to well, let's try this or let's try that she will then play on that and think well I can try and get out of this.

8:13

I have to be firmer with her cos of how she behaves or reacts.

Carla: School Mentor

[reasons]

She was excluding herself from lessons, yeah. And we couldn't, really we wanted her to get some intense counselling support because she wasn't talking to any staff on what her issues on what her concerns were and what was going on for her and staff here felt they couldn't understand her, we couldn't, there was no pattern to her behaviour. We couldn't… N and N were… you could kind of see a big picture with them and they were very open and very honest, very good verbally about their feelings. They kept a feelings diary erm during the time they were with us and it was how they felt

14:17

about coming which was always bad and then how they felt once they'd been here. So any time they felt bad about coming they'd look back over this diary and no actually I did really well then or

C he was referred by my colleague S, she'd actually gone through all of us mentors and we hadn't got, made any progress with her anywhere. She'd been to one counselling appointment never went again. Mum did attend some family learning sessions although there was only mum and one other most of the time, but mum did engage well with school, mum engaged much better than C

14:50

But then C just excluded herself from lessons and just used this silent approach, wouldn't speak. So the referral to SSS was a bit like I wonder what's gonna happen I wonder if this is the right place. We wonder if CAMHS is gonna be able to work with her

15:19

So she was very, she was difficult really in the sense that you weren't sure what's going on with her

[whose idea reintegration]

The SSS decided it was time for C to come back cos I think they felt they'd done all they could with her and she was starting to go into the lessons

313

15:58

initially she refused to go into the lessons even at SSS, ..was going in no problem. Now her reintegration didn't take as much doing as obviously N's and N's cos she hadn't been out for that long

16:16

and she knew the school very well, teachers hadn't changed, the school hadn't changed where as it had for N and N, whereas C it hadn't. And she went in the SSS knowing full well she was only doing a number of weeks and coming back. And again initially she came back in and went into all the lessons

16:38

fine. C's barriers was I think depending on who she hooked up with, what other students or peers she hooked up with. Whereas N and N initially didn't want to make any friends and were quite happy to go about on their own and seek out adult support

16:56

especially N. She would rather sit with a teaching assistant or the teacher than her peers. That's not the case anymore, she's got a good network of friends. C would definitely hook up with other people and if they were truanting then she would go off and truant

17:17

There were times when she didn't come in at all. But not as often as it was more often than not she'd come into school and refuse to go to lesson. Well, they'd see her in the corridor and either she would say what you doing come with me, or they'd say what you doing let's not to lessons. I'm not sure who was the main influence there

17:48

But she did hook up with another girl who had her own, her own issues and that wasn't a good match at all and then both of them refused to go to lessons. But again a lot of time was spent on Cin terms of taking her to lessons

18:08

Not sitting in with her, but physically walking her to the class, escorting her somethere

[why a different sort of treatment?]

I don't think she, … one it was getting her in the class. A lot of the time she didn't get through the door to get in the class. There were times when we did sit with her, but once she was in there she was fine

18:32

She, like I say she's very, when she's with her peers.. For example with C we had her all morning outside our room, wouldn't speak , refused to go into lesson we took her round to the library with us for lunch club as soon as we walk in the library its oh hello where've you been what have you been doing and socialising no problem with her peers, no problem

18:58

And then the bell goes for lesson, she doesn't want to go

[not social anxiety? A different]

[period when she did get into her lessons]

19:19

We had we even rang SSS mentor to see if SSS mentor can come back and speak to her because she didn't… it happened all over again she'd not come into lessons. SSS mentor come, she wouldn't speak to SSS mentor. When SSS mentor came in she wouldn't speak. And then one day out the blue this was when she was put in time out I think

19:42

she said that she had got a problem with a girl and this girl was in her child care class so she wasn't gonn go into that. And we said brilliant you talking to us. So we identified some of the lessons this girl might have been in with her and excluded those off the timetable

19:59

and put her in everywhere else, and that worked for a while and then she stopped doing that as well. The difficulty was as we said to C these problems were two years ago, you know, this girl, you know anyone else would say come on you gotta deal with it lets sort it out but we'll take one thing at a time with you C we won't expect you to go into those lessons

20:20

If you go to your other ones. It was very difficult with C, sometimes she would, sometimes she wouldn't and you could never get to what it was, but she did a lot of internet Bebo, chatrooms kind of thing at home. So she'd come in say she'd got problems with someone and we'd say you haven't seen them for months

20:42

She'd say I spoke to them on the internet. And often it was somebody had got the hump with her cos she was going out with someone else's boyfriend. It was very difficult. I think you needed to track her outside school as well as in. I'm not really sure what's going on there with her

20:59

The others were, C got to a point where we had to lock up down our end one day to go on duty and she physically wouldn't move down there for us to lock up. You know she was, se we couldn't always go to offer to sit in the classroom with her cos we couldn't move her or get her there or

[not the cooperation]

No, no cooperation. She didn't engage with it at all. She did occasionally when she felt like it. I remember the summer time she'd been sat outside our room all day and in the end I said to her come on let's sit in the sun and we sat in the grounds here, just outside here away from everyone else

21:45

and she didn't look at me and I didn't look at her and we were just messing with the grass making little flower chains and things and she did start talking there. And it was about you know a lad she was going out with and what she'd done at the weekend. She was a bit worried cos she hadn't come on her period and we explore what could be going on there and where she'd need to go for advice and whether we spoke to her mum about it

22:09

and she did really open up in that hour or 45 minutes but again the next day absolute closed book

[how she felt about coming back]

No, I don't know. Again its very strange, at times she'd tell her mum she wanted to find another school so when that was gonna be explored she'd say I don't want to find another school

22:32

[rate reintegration]

About, now, as it stands right today she hasn't been in for about two weeks, so I would say today 2. The fact that we can keep communicating with her mom. She, when she started to refuse to come into lesson and sit outside she hooked up with another girl and they'd be truanting together and C was staying at her house and we've got concerns about that family anyway.

23:05

 What we offered C for a couple of weeks, again as reintegration was to come into school from 2 o clock till 4 o clock everyday, which she did. 100 per cent and she was brilliant when she was here so the head increased that amount, put her back on the timetable she was on in school and again she didn't come.

23:24

[what advice]

I would like advice on C if I'm honest with you. We've gone through all the routes we can think of and CAMHS, we've been to counselling, SSS have been involved again, she's been offered alternative provision after school I just, I don't know where to go with C.

23:59

 I mean obviously never to give up on a child, I'd always say that. But the fact she came in from 3 to 4 after school is brilliant, it's not encouraging with her being at home all day or whatever she's doing but just the fact not to lose her altogether.

24:16

The difficulty with C her is it was difficult to set her up with anything else like the MAP project or NACRO or any other alternative provision cos she'd never tell you exactly what she wanted to do, so I think that's one of the, the one student, I've found most challenging cos we got no communication from her.

24:40

School Refusal Interview Schedule

1. Please explain the background behind you/the young person being at the SSS and the current situation?

Prompts:

- DOB, Age

- What were the reasons that led to the young person being at the SSS?

- How long did s/he attend the SSS?

- How long since his/her return to mainstream school? Is it the same school as before SSS?

2. In your opinion, how successful was the reintegration?

Prompts

- On a scale of 1-5, with 1 being totally unsuccessful, and 5 being very successful, how successful has the reintegration or return to mainstream school been for the young person?

1…………………………………………………………………………..5

- Please explain your response:

3. In general, what factors do you think should be considered when making a judgement as to how far a return to mainstream school has been successful?

Prompt

- How can you tell if reintegration has been successful?

4a. Think back over the process of how ……'s return to mainstream school was planned and put into practice – tell me about it

Prompts:

- How did the idea of a return to mainstream school arise?

- Who was involved in planning the return?

- Did anyone take a lead in moving towards reintegration/return to mainstream? Was anyone pushing this idea? Whose idea was it?

4b. What views and feelings were expressed (yours and others) about the prospect of a return to mainstream school?

Prompts:

- How did you feel about the idea of a return to mainstream school?

- How do you think people (name them) felt about the idea of reintegration?

4c. How was the return to mainstream school planned and prepared for (by the young person, parents, school staff Shepwell staff)?

Prompt:

- For example were there discussions or meetings?

5a. In executing the return to mainstream school what barriers or problems did you face, or think you might face and how were these handled or overcome?

Prompts:

- For example in terms of views, attitudes, , policies or procedures etc

- Did anything happen to make reintegration harder? Were there any barriers to reintegration that you were aware of?

5b. Describe how the return to mainstream worked, how this happened

Prompts:

- For example was it a phased or full time return

- How was the return supported?

5c. Think of any factor or person or action (an individual, something about the school, some advice, an attitude or anything else) that made a positive difference/ really helped the reintegration / return to mainstream

Prompts:

- Can you think of anyone or anything that facilitated/ helped the return the mainstream school?

- Did anyone do anything that helped the reintegration/ return to mainstream go well?

5d. Is there anything else that could have been done to make the reintegration/ return to school easier/ more successful?

6. From your perspective (as parent, SSS mentor, school mentor, young person) what advice or pointers would you give to someone in a similar position who was returning to mainstream or supporting the return to mainstream of a young person, what advice would you give: things to do or avoid.

APPENDIX 3: Letter to Head of Service

Dear

Re: Doctoral Research

As you are aware I am being supported by .... Children's Services in my doctoral studies at the University of Birmingham. I have completed the taught component of the course and I am now planning to undertake a period of fieldwork which is a necessary part of the programme. The broad area I intend to focus on is School Refusal. This is an important and worthy area of study as it addresses key issues of attendance, vulnerability, multi-agency work and inclusion. The planned research will seek to identify factors that support the successful reintegration of pupils from a medical PRU (NAME OF CENTRE) to mainstream school and will adopt a case study approach. I have discussed these proposals with Mrs D. at (NAME OF CENTRE) and she is in agreement with the proposals. The research design is such that I will need to interview a small number of pupils, (around six), their parents and a member of staff each from the (NAME OF CENTRE) and from the mainstream schools receiving the pupils.

The research will be conducted in such a way as to be mindful of ethical considerations (BPS Code of Conduct, Ethical Principles and Guidelines, University of Birmingham Ethical Review). Please let me know of any additional information required by the Local Authority or procedures to be completed. I have written a rather lengthy research paper on the topic and my aims for the research which has been submitted to the university and to which you can have access if you wish. I attach draft letters I intend to send out to participants.

I look forward to you response on this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Karen J Grandison

APPENDIX 4: Letter to Parents

Dear *Name of Parent*

I work for .... Children's Services as a Senior Educational Psychologist and I am also a member of the management committee for the (Name of Centre) Pupil Referral Unit. At present I am carrying out a small scale research project focusing on school refusal. Specifically I am interested in finding out about the processes involved in helping pupils to return to mainstream school successfully following a period in a pupil referral unit like the (Name of Centre). One of the aims of this work is to discover ways of supporting reintegration of pupils more effectively.

Ms K Learning Mentor at the (Name of Centre) has suggested that you might be able to help. This would involve taking part in a short interview about your recollections of the reintegration process. If you have any queries about this or if you do not wish to participate please contact me on the above number or alternatively you may wish to speak to Mrs K at the (Name of Centre). I will contact you by telephone to discuss the matter further and hopefully to arrange a time for the interview to take place.

Yours Sincerely

Karen Grandison

APPENDIX 5: Letter to Young People

Dear *pupil name*

Mrs K has suggested I contact you as I am carrying out a research project looking at how young people who have spent some time at a pupil referral unit, like the (Name of Centre) can be supported to return to mainstream school. I understand you have some experience that would be useful for my research project and I would very much like to speak to you. I work for .... Children's Services, and I am also a member of the management committee for the (Name of Centre) and would value your contribution.

I have also contacted your parents to let them know about the research. I would like to arrange a time to come to school to explain more about the project and to answer any questions you may have and if you agree to interview you about your experiences, so I will make contact in the near future. However, if you have any queries or concerns in the meantime you can contact me on 01.................... or you may prefer to speak to Mrs K at (Name of Centre)

Yours Sincerely

Karen Grandison