VOLUME 2:

A COLLECTION OF FOUR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE REPORTS

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter commences by highlighting the context within which this volume of work is situated. An outline of each of the four professional practice reports included within this volume is then given, before concluding reflections are offered.

1.1 Context

The work contained within this volume forms the second of two distinct volumes of work meeting the requirements for the Doctorate in Applied Educational and Child Psychology programme at the University of Birmingham. This volume comprises four professional practice reports (PPRs) which highlight some of the experiences I gained whilst working as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) within an Educational Psychology Service (EPS) in a Midlands Local Authority (LA). The PPRs reflect my own personal interests as well as the nature of the work undertaken within the LA context.

The LA in which I was on placement is served by three educational psychology teams, each serving a different area of the county. I worked in the North-West of the county which covers two towns and some rural communities. The county is home to a diverse socio-economic and ethnic demographic. It includes areas within the 30% most deprived nationally as well as areas of considerable affluence. Whilst on placement I was the named visiting educational psychologist (EP) for nine schools (three of which were first schools, four primary schools, one secondary school and a secondary pupil referral unit). Alongside work within these schools I also completed work with seven pre-school children developing a formulation of their needs prior to the children entering school.

A review of the role of EPs in Scotland (SEED, 2002) suggested that the EPs' core functions are: consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training and that functions can be

carried out at three levels: individual, group, and organisation. In selecting areas of work for my PPRs I wanted to ensure that they highlighted my professional practice in relation to each of the core functions and work at each level. This necessitated looking for opportunities outside of my day to day work as a TEP. PPRs 2, 3 and 4 took place outside of the schools I worked with on a day to day basis.

The first of my PPRs offers reflections on the initial stages of work carried out within a secondary PRU aimed at developing an understanding of the behaviour management strategies that were already in place and gaining an insight into stakeholders' views of the effectiveness of strategies employed. This PPR highlights work at an organisational level involving consultation and research. The second PPR discusses how far members of the EPS within which I worked viewed the service as a learning organisation. This also demonstrates research carried out at an organisational level. The third of my PPRs (which is still to be added to this volume) involved work at an individual level and offers an account of my assessment work with one boy in a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The final PPR outlines research exploring the implementation of a programme developed by EPs in Coventry aimed at improving the social inclusion of children with special educational needs (SEN) and offers my reflections on an intervention situated at a group level. The only core function of EPs outlined by SEED (2002) and not explored within my PPRs is that of training. However, despite its absence in this volume of work, I have been involved in delivering training. In two of the schools I worked with I delivered training about inclusion, differentiation and maximising the impact of teaching assistants. I also delivered training about solution focussed approaches to members of the Children's Services workforce.

1.2 PPR1: Reflections on the initial stage of systemic work within a pupil referral unit

This report provides an account of the first stage of a systemic project I carried out working with staff and students at a pupil referral unit (PRU) I was the named contact EP for. The report details the first piece of work I carried out in the PRU. The work was aimed at developing an understanding of the behaviour management strategies that were already in place and gaining an insight into stakeholders' views about the effectiveness of strategies employed. This was the first stage in a longer lasting piece of research utilising an action research design. Within the report, the work is reflected on in terms of the traded service context, the role of the EP in systemic work, and consultation.

1.3 PPR2: Do educational psychologists working in a local authority context view the service as a learning organisation? A case study example

Much is written about learning organisations, but within the profession of educational psychology little consideration has been given to how far LA EPSs could consider themselves to be learning organisations. This report offers an account of research I carried out within the LA I was on placement in, aiming to uncover whether colleagues within the EPS felt that they were part of a learning organisation and to elicit their views on the service maintenance activities currently in place. A questionnaire was designed to collect data and all members of the service were asked to take part. Senge's (1990) work on learning organisations was utilised to inform questionnaire design. Responses to the questionnaire suggest that personal mastery and team learning are well established within the EPS but that a shared vision does not always exist. Within the report, recommendations for how the service can move closer towards becoming a learning organisation, should its members so wish, are made, before consideration is given to whether or not becoming a learning organisation should be of primary concern to all EPSs.

1.4 PPR3: The voice of the child in case formulation (A working title)

Due to difficulties identifying an appropriate case for this PPR it is still to be completed. The following synopsis is based on my initial plan for this piece of work.

My third PPR will present my involvement with an adolescent attending a school for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The report will critically explore the importance of gaining an insight into a child or young person's views when creating a formulation of their needs.

1.5 PPR4: Fostering inclusion through circles and strengths (FITOS): An individual case study

Fostering Inclusion Through Circles and Strengths (FITOS) is an intervention aimed at increasing empathy and social acceptance towards children with SEN. The intervention utilises four fictional characters and is based upon a discussion of the characters' strengths and difficulties and eliciting empathetic responses towards them. Initial evaluations have suggested that social acceptance towards the characters increases following the intervention and that children become more aware of strengths in themselves and others. However, prior to my involvement, no research had been undertaken with the aim of discerning whether or not the implementation of the FITOS programme led to the objective of pupils developing empathy and acceptance towards other pupils in real life. I utilised an individual case study design and implemented FITOS in one first school. However, there were difficulties in implementing FITOS and these are discussed within the report. The PPR concludes with reflections on both the research process and the intervention.

1.6 Reflections

The completion of these four pieces of practitioner research, alongside the substantive research report included in Volume 1 has allowed me to utilise a range of approaches to

research that I will continue to use within my practice as a qualified EP. In addition, I have been given the opportunity to spend time considering work carried out at each of the levels at which an EP works (individual, group, organisation) and developed my own practice in relation to the core functions of EPs (consultation, assessment, intervention, research and training). The work carried out to inform these PPRs has been beneficial to the individual, class, whole-school and EPS which they concern. In order to maximise the impact of this work I plan to contribute to published literature from the perspective of an applied-psychologist.

REFERENCES

Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED, 2002) **Review of provision of educational psychology services in Scotland**. Edinburgh: SEED.

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Chapter 2: REFLECTIONS ON THE INITIAL STAGE OF SYSTEMIC WORK WITHIN A PUPIL REFERRAL UNIT

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an account of the first stage of a systemic project undertaken by a trainee educational psychologist working with staff and students at a pupil referral unit. The stage described was aimed at developing an understanding of the behaviour management strategies that were already in place and gaining an insight into stakeholders' views of the effectiveness of strategies employed. This is the first stage in a longer lasting piece of research utilising an action research design. The work is reflected on in terms of the traded service context, the role of the EP in systemic work, and consultation.

1. BACKGROUND

As a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) on placement in an Educational Psychology Service (EPS), anonymised within this professional practice report as Greenshire EPS, I worked within a pupil referral unit (PRU) for young people aged 11 to 16; the school was created a year before this work took place, through the amalgamation of already existing Key stage 3 and Key Stage 4 PRUs. The school provides for young people who have been permanently excluded, or are at risk of permanent exclusion, from other settings and has three primary aims as outlined within official documentation:

1. to return young people who spend six weeks in the setting to their mainstream schools;

2. to provide students with an alternative curriculum; and

3. to prepare Year 10 and 11 students who have been permanently excluded from mainstream schools for the next stage of their education and life thereafter.

The school had entered into a service level agreement with the EPS, making the decision that the work carried out by the EPS would be systemic, since many of the children and young people remained on roll at mainstream schools and individual casework, if it took place, would be carried out by the named psychologist for the mainstream setting they had previously attended. The word 'systemic' is used in this context to describe work which does not focus on individual young people, but instead on an aspect of the system in which they are situated, in this case the school system. Since this was the first time the school had worked in this way it was important to ensure that any work carried out was consultative, so that staff had ownership of any changes implemented and so that, as far as possible this was not seen as a 'top down' initiative. In working in a consultative way I hoped to enter into a process with the school which allowed views to be shared and exchanged and solutions or possible next steps to be jointly decided upon.

Staff and students alike were viewed by myself as stakeholders, but as the start of this project was the first time I had visited the school I held my initial consultation with the head teacher. This was primarily for two reasons: it was important to form a sound working relationship with the head teacher and it was assumed by the head that the project would commence in this way. During an initial meeting with the head teacher I was told that he wanted to focus on the behaviour management policy and take an academic year to do so. This report focuses on the initial stage of the project, during which information was gathered about current practice and staff and student views on effective behaviour management strategies were elicited. During later stages of the project the work became more consultative as will be explained later in this report.

What follows is an account of the initial stage of the work and reflections on the difficulties I encountered whilst undertaking it. The literature review offers an overview of: the traded

service context within which I was working and the implications of this; the role of educational psychologists (EP) in working systemically; consultation; and an EP's role in developing behaviour management policies.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The EPS Context

Greenshire EPS had, six months prior to this work being carried out, become a partially traded service. Greenshire schools had traditionally had an allocation of time which an EP would spend in their setting. Since becoming partially traded, schools had two thirds of their previous time allocation paid for by the local authority, and thus free at the point of delivery, they then had the option to purchase the remaining third of their original time allocation at a cost and purchase additional three hour blocks thereafter. Conversations I have had with colleagues and exchanges on internet forums such as EPNET suggest that this move towards trading is taking place in many EP services across the country in differing ways and poses an interesting challenge and opportunity to services who have, for the first time, found themselves operating in a competitive marketplace.

Ball (2009) in an article which begins to outline the 'multi-faceted involvements of private providers in education policy' (p. 95) describes how policy solutions and school improvement are now retailed. In the context of my project work, this means that the PRU could, if they wish, purchase what Ball describes as an 'improvement package, CPD or consultancy work' (p. 85) and that this could set out to make the school 'more like those in other public and private sector organisations, 'more like 'the firm'.' (p. 85). For this reason, it is important to consider an EPS's unique selling point since other companies are carrying out consultation

within schools; this will be discussed in the next section of the report which considers systemic work.

The possibility of schools purchasing consultation packages from private companies creates competition, which, to my mind is a good thing since I agree with Ostrom and Ostrom's assertion that, in line with public choice theory, "public service industries characterised by multiplicity and overlap will be more efficient and responsive to user demands than highly integrated governmental monopolies". It is my view that this opportunity will encourage EPSs to consider what it is that they offer, and gather evidence of best-practice so that they can strive to become more effective and efficient. That said, whilst it is necessary to respond to user demands we must give careful consideration to who our client is and find a way to remain a 'critical friend' in order to bring about change. A review team established in Greenshire EPS, just prior to the move to trading, stated that there was a concern about maintaining the independence of EPs so that they can provide 'critical challenge' when necessary.

Since this has been a relatively recent change within many EPSs there are, as yet, no articles discussing the opportunities and threats that this new way of working brings; ethical dilemmas which arise as a result of being traded are yet to be fully explored.

I will return to consider the impact that this context had on my work in the discussion section of this professional practice report.

2.2 Systemic Work

The role of the EP has been debated perennially since the work of Gillham in 1978. However, there is a suggestion within some research that schools typically value individual assessment and advice giving (Ashton and Roberts, 2006). Ashton and Roberts' work,

however, is not without criticism. Schools were responding to the questions "If you had no EP visits through the year, what would you miss them doing?" It is possible that respondents had no experience of EPs carrying out systemic work and therefore would not offer this as a response. In more recent research, Boyle and MacKay (2007) have suggested that work at the systemic level collaborating with schools to develop strategies is in fact highly valued by head teachers. So it can be seen that what type of work is most valued by school staff remains unclear, but perhaps, rather than concerning ourselves with what, at present, is valued by head teachers, EPSs should be trialling new ways of working and evaluating their effectiveness so that they can contribute towards evidence based practice.

In response to a question about desirable areas of EP practice, a move to more systems work with schools looking at organisational development and change (including fixed term project work and input to policy matters) was commonly cited by principal educational psychologists (PEPs), coming second only to preventative work resulting in early intervention (Leadbetter, 2000). It might be then, that work which combined the two and took the form of a preventative, systemic project would be a highly desirable area of EP practice. How far the project discussed within this report could be deemed to be preventative is questionable, given that the majority of young people attending the setting have previously been excluded from other settings. However, it is my aim to work with the school over a period of time so that individual casework is less likely to be necessary since the needs of the students are being met at a whole-school level.

As mentioned in the discussion of traded contexts, it is important to consider what EPs can bring to this work that other companies or organisations may lack. Stratford (2000) offers a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) analysis of the factors which influence

EPs' ability to work systemically. EPs who took part in Stratford's research said that as a profession they could offer the following if they were to work systemically with schools:

- A psychological perspective;

- knowledge of organisational processes;

- consultation skills;

- pupil focussed input skills; and

- research skills

But that work in this area was constrained by, amongst other things, school context factors. Many of the other constraints discussed in Stratford's research are not relevant in the context of this project since, as stated above, a decision had already been made that any work which took place in the school would be at a systems level. School context factors were, however, relevant to my work at the PRU: school staff had assumptions about the role of an EP; there were difficult working conditions within the school when the project commenced (although I was not fully aware of the extent of this at the time) and, staff may have had a preference for piecemeal change (this will be discussed further later in the report). Although, at a glance, it would seem that this project was likely to be successful, since only one of the five constraints presented by Stratford's participants was relevant to my work, in reality, I underestimated the importance of school context factors in working systemically; consideration will be given to this in the final section of this report.

2.3 Consultation

As already noted, EPs in Stratford's study believed that consultation skills were a key skill-set that EPs could utilise in working systemically.   In aspiring to work consultatively my aim was to position myself as an 'agent of change' (Schein, 1985); my long-term hope was to undertake a process with stakeholders, during which problems would be solved by them,

since they themselves formed part of the context within which the problem was located and hence, were best placed to find a solution. Group-problem solving is more likely to result in commitment to changes than other forms of intervention, such as training or advice-giving (Baxter, 2000).

Baxter (2000) describes action research as a form of consultancy, during which information is gathered and inquiry, hypothesis testing and problem solving is undertaken by or with stakeholders. Since this report details the initial stages of a long-term project with a PRU it is largely concerned with the information gathering stage. This stage was planned and negotiated during three meetings with the head-teacher and therefore I did not involve all stakeholders in this early stage; this was largely due to imposed time constraints, and the limitations that this placed on the project will be discussed in detail later in the report.

<u>2.4 An EP's role in developing behaviour management policies</u>

This area is surprisingly underreported in work written by practising EPs. Work similar to the initial stage of this project, carried out within the last twenty years appears only to have been published by Leadbetter and Tee (1991) and Swinson (2010). Swinson (2010) and Leadbetter and Tee (1991) report on work aimed at developing behaviour management systems in place in schools; both emphasise the need for this work to be done on a consultative basis. Leadbetter and Tee carried out a full day of observations and asked staff to complete a behaviour review guide. Swinson built on this research by forming a small working group who made the decision to also consult with parents and pupils. Consideration of these two pieces of work alongside consultation with the head teacher led me to decide upon the methodology for this initial phase of the project.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Getting started

The head teacher had been in post for one academic year when the work commenced; he felt that, to date, he had met with some resistance by teaching staff to his ideas around positive behaviour management strategies and, in his view, behaviour was thought of and managed in a largely punitive way. Since my work would initially be negotiated with the head teacher, it was important at this stage to ensure that he understood the need to work collaboratively with all staff. I met with the head teacher on three occasions and discussed the need for staff to have ownership of initiatives which were introduced. If staff have ownership of projects going on within schools it is more likely that change will be maintained (see Butterfield, 2009 and Binnie et al, 2008) It seemed that at the start of the project the head teacher anticipated that we would sit down together and consider the behaviour policy and then go on to offer training to staff. We discussed the fact that training is sometimes not maintained (see Balchin et al, 2006) and that given the high-pressured environment that the staff were working within they would need to feel like a policy had been tailored to meet the needs of the students as well as their own needs. Through this initial conversation, it appeared that the head teacher could see benefits of adopting a consultative approach such as improved morale, shared accountability for problem resolution and enhanced skills (Labram, 1992). Due to time constraints however, a decision was made that the initial stage of information gathering would take place following our meetings and staff and students would be consulted with once this work was done.

It needed to be made clear to staff and students that, far from acting as a 'hero innovator', which Praill and Baldwin (1988) advise against, it was my aim to work collaboratively with them and the students to facilitate the development of their approach to behaviour. To

meet this aim I spoke to staff during a staff meeting and advised them that I aimed to work in a consultative way and that, following an initial phase in which I hoped to develop an understanding of the systems already in place, I would create a working party to develop new systems. I also met with students at break times and advised them that their views would be instrumental in shaping the changes over the coming year.

As far back as 1987 Raymond observed that very few researchers have looked at disruptive behaviour from the student's point of view and fewer still have used this approach as a means of intervention. The picture does not appear to be much changed, with Swinson writing in 2010 that recent projects on school behaviour have not made an effort to involve pupils when planning and implementing changes in policy and behaviour. Further discussion of the importance of pupil voice, whilst valid, is beyond the remit of this report (see Badham and Wade, 2008, for further information about pupil participation).

The long term aim of my work with the school was to work with them as they implemented changes to the current behaviour systems in place and to facilitate an evaluation of this. The aim of this initial phase, discussed here, was to develop a shared understanding of the behaviour management strategies that are already in place and gain stakeholders' views around effective behaviour management. This was seen as a logical first step since, as Kanter (1984) states, change is the process of analysing the past to elicit present actions required for the future.

3.2 Epistemological Stance

Any research is impacted upon by the researcher's epistemology. Taking a critical realist perspective, my work aims to integrate positivist and relativist approaches by utilising quantitative and qualitative methodologies, whilst assuming that any given set of data may

be explicable by more than one theory (Robson, 2002). My research in this context aims to have a practical value for the setting in which it is carried out. Furthermore, an understanding of staff and student views on behaviour management strategies as well as an overview of what is currently happening will be shared with staff and possibly pupils in a future stage of the project and used by them to hypothesise, and problem solve.

This research is a case study and for this reason I will not make suggestions about generalisability to other settings (Yin, 1989); that is to say that I do not believe that the findings of this project would be true of other settings even if they were similar provisions. Instead I hope that this research will be of value to staff and students in the setting and that other EPs or TEPs can reflect on the process I undertook, the difficulties I encountered and the decisions I made.

I aim to be as objective as possible in uncovering stakeholders' views around effective behaviour management strategies, whilst accepting that findings will always be "partial, limited and necessarily dependent upon further empirical and discursive revision" (Nightingale and Cromby, 2002, p.710). It is for this reason that a critique of the methods chosen and the validity of data is prominent in the following sections of the report; it is my view that social science research can never be truly objective but consideration should always be given to how subjectivity can, practically, be minimised.

3.3 Research Design

An action research design was utilised for the project as a whole, since the project involved change. Action research stems from the work of Karl Lewin in the 1940s. Its aim is to describe, interpret and explain social situations whilst implementing change (Waterman et al, 2001). Blum (1955) describes action research as a two stage process, believing there to

be a diagnostic process followed by a therapeutic one. What Blum was emphasising was the importance of change being implemented and described within a "social life situation" (p.1) however, action research can take many different forms and adhere to many models. In this instance meetings with the head teacher primarily shaped this work and a process of information gathering (or initial diagnosis) was embarked upon.

3.4 Deciding upon a research aim and data gathering instruments

During three meetings with the head teacher of the school an overarching research aim and subordinate research questions were identified. Since this work was constrained to half a term, the research was approached as Gorard (2011) advises, by first considering how the questions might be answered in an ideal world and then considering constraints and practicalities imposed upon the research process.

Below is a table which summarises the agreed outcomes of these initial meetings a critique of the methods chosen is offered in the following section of this report.

Overarching aim of this phase in the research:

To develop a shared understanding of the behaviour management strategies already in place and gain stakeholders' views of effective behaviour management.

Research Question (RQ)	Rationale for asking question	Method employed	Rationale for method employed
RQ1: Which behaviour management strategies do teaching staff (teachers and teaching assistants) feel are effective in this setting?	It is important that any changes made to the behaviour policy reflect staff views as well as evidence based practice.	A questionnaire developed and adapted from the work of Caffyn (1987) in conjunction with the head teacher and through consideration of documents detailing behaviour management strategies already in place. This asks teaching staff (teachers and teaching assistants) to rate behaviour management strategies based on their efficacy. For details of the questionnaire adapted from Caffyn (1987) see Appendix 1.	It is important to collate perspectives of all teaching staff. Myers et al (1989) suggest that checklists or questionnaires are an appropriate way of discovering staff views. The other way of doing this would have been through focus groups, however, Smithson (2000) suggests that focus groups should be reconceptualised as a forum for generating public discourse, not as a way of uncovering participant's real views.
RQ2: Which behaviour management strategies do children and young people who attend this setting feel are effective?	In my view, gaining an insight into the views of the young people who attend the setting before adding/adapting initiatives is especially important in work considering behaviour management since, for example, a reward is only rewarding if deemed to be so by the recipient.	The same questionnaire as given to teaching staff so that comparisons can be made (this questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.)	It was important to collate perspectives of all students, since many were in on a part time basis the only way of ensuring this was through asking teaching staff to administer questionnaires. Given time constraints, individual interviews/focus groups were not viable alternatives.

Research Question (RQ)	Rationale for asking question	Method employed to answer this question	Rationale for method employed
RQ3: How is behaviour within lessons currently being managed and to what effect?	Changes to the behaviour management policy need to build on existing good practice and result from the context that it addresses.	Observations of selected lessons with particular attention paid to student behaviour, the reaction of teaching staff to these behaviours and the consequences of these reactions. For details of the schedule developed for this see Appendix 2.	The head teacher felt it was important for me to observe some lessons within the setting to gain a richer insight into the way that staff manage behaviour and how successful this is.
RQ4: What disruptive behaviours are staff currently dealing with on a daily/weekly basis?	Whilst this question will not directly inform this initial phase of the project it will allow staff to share details of the disruptive behaviours they seek to reduce, it will allow myself an insight into the setting and, ultimately, may be used as a tool for evaluation.	A checklist developed from the work of Gray and Sime (1988) which lists possible behaviours displayed and asks staff to indicate if they observe any on a daily or weekly basis. Staff are also asked to contribute others if they feel the list is not exhaustive. See Appendix 3.	A checklist seemed the only viable way of collating this information since observations carried out may not be of 'typical' lessons.

Table 1: Research questions and associated methods negotiated with the school's head teacher.

3.5 Procedure and Ethical Considerations

3.5.1 Questionnaires

All students and teaching staff were asked to complete the questionnaire asking them to rate behaviour management strategies (Appendix 1). In addition to this teaching staff were asked to complete the checklist concerned with frequency of behaviours they observed (Appendix 2).

3.5.1.1 Administration to staff

Due to time constraints imposed on the process, the questionnaires and checklists were given to the head teacher to disseminate amongst teaching staff. The head teacher disseminating the questionnaire to staff could have impacted upon the return rate, since people may not have felt that the data was truly anonymous. As with all 'real world' research, ethical considerations were not straightforward (Robson, 2002). Teaching staff were asked to complete questionnaires and return them to the head teacher, staff were not directly asked for their questionnaires should they not return them, and the return rate would suggest that some chose to opt out of the process.

3.5.1.2 Administration to students

Teachers gave the questionnaire to students during tutor time for them to complete there and then. This allowed for teachers to read the statement aloud should students find this difficult; however it may have meant that students felt coerced to complete the questionnaire. I asked that it was stressed to students that they were rating the strategies in terms of their effectiveness, since Harrop and Holmes (1993) suggest that many studies have

confused effectiveness with like or dislike; that is to say that a young person may not like an aspect of a behaviour policy (such as being kept inside if they have been smoking on site the previous day) but they may feel it is an effective deterrent.

There are ethical concerns due to that fact that students were given time in lessons to complete the questionnaires and teachers facilitated this process. It may be that some of the young people felt coerced to give information and this is not ideal. I asked that staff made their right to withdraw clear to them but I do not know if this happened. That said, when I had previously met with the young people I had made all participants aware that data would be treated as confidential and only anonymous data would be shared with the school and, again, I asked form tutors to reiterate this.   Since the questionnaire aimed to empower students to have their views heard it is unlikely that any harm would have come from completing these.

3.5.1.3 Validity of the data

If staff or students did feel coerced to take part this would invalidate the data. This is more likely to be the case for students, since some staff chose to opt out, however, it is hoped that my meeting with them informally before the questionnaires were administered meant that they understood the purpose of the questionnaires and knew that it would serve them well to answer honestly since I assured them that their views would be shared with all staff members.

With regards to the checklist staff completed about behaviours they encountered, due to time constraints this had to be completed retrospectively; the data would have been more valid had the staff been asked to record behaviour for a set period of time.

3.5.2 Observations

A decision was made by myself and the head-teacher to observe both KS3 and KS4 lessons and at least one lesson for students in the refocus group who were taking part in a six week programme at the PRU so that I had observed lessons with all three groups of young people that attended the school. The refocus group is composed of children who are on roll at a mainstream school but at risk of permanent exclusion. They undertake a six week programme at the PRU before returning to their previous setting. Otherwise, decisions over which lessons were observed were based on pragmatic considerations such as the availability of staff. Again, I am aware that this is not ideal but time constraints impacted on this decision. Observations were carried out over two days and encompassed Key Stage 3 and 4 lessons in Science, English and Physical Education. The number of students in these lessons ranged from one to five. I had been told that staff who would be in lessons being observed were approached by the deputy head and asked if they were happy for the observation to take place; in reality it did not appear that this had happened and some staff were surprised when I arrived. When this happened, I explained why I was there to staff and said that I was happy to reschedule or arrange to observe another lesson, however all members of staff were happy for me to stay. I also explained my role to any students who asked why I was there. Although this differs from the process that would be applied if this were a separately negotiated research project, since it was carried out within the context of my local authority work no risks were posed beyond those that would normally be associated with an EP or TEP's work.

Notes from observations were recorded on the proforma shown in Appendix 2. I noted inappropriate behaviours carried out by students, along with the teacher's reaction to this behaviour and the consequence of this. For example, I noted that a child threw a piece of paper, that his teacher gave him a warning for this behaviour and that the child then walked out of the classroom. Teachers were given the opportunity to discuss my observations with me afterwards and all wanted to do so. Three of the teachers remarked that they found the observation schedule useful since it captured what the consequences of their behaviour management strategy or response to a student's behaviour were. This allowed me to quantify how successful each strategy was at that time. In an ideal world these observations with have been carried out in conjunction with a colleague to ensure that the data gathered was as reliable and valid as possible.

4. FINDINGS

17 students and 12 members of teaching staff completed the questionnaire and checklist administered and 5 lessons were observed for their duration. A summary of the findings follows. Findings will be presented by considering the information gathered to inform each research question in turn.

4.1 RQ1: Which behaviour management strategies do teaching staff feel are effective in this setting?

Means were calculated for the ratings given by teaching staff to each of the behaviour management strategies listed. The table below utilises the mean scores to present the strategies in order, from those deemed most effective to those rated as being ineffective. A score of 1 indicates staff felt it was 'very effective'; 2 indicates 'effective'; 3 'not very

effective' and 4 'not at all effective'. A full break down of individual responses to the

questionnaire is given in Appendix 4.

Behaviour management strategy	Mean ratings
A positive letter being sent home	1.30
A positive 'phone call being made to home	1.30
The teacher showing an interest in the work	1.40
Being allowed access to break time activities	1.60
Praise in private	1.60
Going on a trip	1.64
A negative 'phone call home	1.85
Being able to buy tea and toast	1.90
Being reminded of how you are expected to behave (prompts)	1.90
Being given a merit for good behaviour	2.00
Praise in front of the class	2.00
A negative letter home	2.05
Being given a boast card for good work	2.09
Being sent to a different room to work	2.09
Knowing the teacher is pleased	2.09
Not being allowed access to break time activities	2.09
Being told off in private	2.10
A fixed term exclusion	2.11
Half a day's isolation	2.18
Not being allowed to buy tea or toast	2.18

Being given a warning	2.27
Being sent out of the room	2.32
Being sent to another member of staff	2.32
Knowing the teacher is watching you closely	2.36
Being made to sit near the teacher	3.27
Being given lines	3.80
Being told off in front of the class	3.80

Table 2. Behaviour management strategies listed from most to least effective as rated by teaching staff.

There was little variation in responses from teaching staff with only one strategy (knowing the teacher is pleased) being rated as very effective by some staff and not at all effective by another. This would suggest that there is a level of consistency in staff's views of effective behaviour management strategies across the school.

4.2 RQ2: Which behaviour management strategies do children and young people who attend this setting feel are effective?

As with responses given by teaching staff, the table below utilises the mean scores to present the strategies from those deemed by students to be most effective to those rated as being ineffective. A full break down of individual students' responses to the questionnaire is given in Appendix 5.

Behaviour management strategy	Mean ratings
A positive 'phone call being made to home	1.59
Going on a trip	1.93
Being allowed access to break time activities	2.06
A positive letter being sent home	2.09
Being given a boast card for good work	2.18
Being given a merit for good behaviour	2.18
The teacher showing an interest in the work	2.33
Being able to buy tea and toast	2.41
Knowing the teacher is pleased	2.53
Praise in private	2.53
Praise in front of the class	2.80
Not being allowed access to break time activities	3.00
Being reminded of how you are expected to behave (prompts)	3.03
Not being allowed to buy tea or toast	3.13
A negative letter home	3.24
Knowing the teacher is watching you closely	3.27
A negative 'phone call home	3.28
Being sent out of the room	3.32
Being sent to a different room to work	3.32
A fixed term exclusion	3.44
Being sent to another member of staff	3.50

Being told off in front of the class	3.53
Being told off in private	3.53
Half a day's isolation	3.67
Being made to sit near the teacher	3.76
Being given lines	3.80
Being given a warning	3.81

Table 3. Behaviour management strategies listed from most to least effective as rated by students.

There was more variation in responses from students than was the case for teaching staff. This would support the views of teaching staff that 'one size does not fit all' and that the effectiveness of strategies will depend upon perceptions of the child or young person.

It can be seen, that there is some correlation between student and staff responses with three of the strategies given appearing in both of the top five lists:

- a positive phone call being made to home;

- a positive letter being sent home; and

- being allowed access to break time activities.

It appears that staff perhaps underestimated the impact of 'boast' cards, given within the setting to a student who has completed work to a high standard; students rated these as effective as the equivalent 'merit' for good behaviour.

4.3 RQ3: How is behaviour within lessons currently being managed and to what effect?

Further details of the observational data gathered can be found in Appendix 6. A number of

behaviour management strategies were employed by staff during the lesson observations.

These have been categorised in the table below and consideration has been given to

whether or not these were successful when observed.

Strategy	Example	Number of times strategy observed	Success rate
Ignoring the behaviour	A young person talked to another student across the room as the teacher introduced an activity. The teacher did not acknowledge the behaviour and continued.	6	On all occasions behaviour by the student either continued or worsened.
The use of formal warnings	A formal warning system existed in the school whereby three warnings meant the child had to go and work elsewhere and lost the opportunity to buy tea and toast the following break time.	6 (two students each given three warnings)	On both occasions the behaviour worsened with the young person going on to be given a third warning and being asked to leave the room.
The use of informal verbal warnings	"If you take your phone out again, I'll have to take it off you and I really don't want to"	2	On one occasion this was successful (resulting in the young person putting their phone away) on the other the behaviour worsened.
Addressing and acknowledging the young person	A young person interrupted the teacher who held his hand up and responded "Thank you Richard"	1	The young person waited and spoke to his teacher about this later.
The use of humour	A young person swore as he dropped a stapler, the teacher responded "Hey, I've got very delicate ears" as she pretended to be in pain.	1	The young person did not swear again.

Support of another member of staff	A member of the senior leadership team came in from the corridor and stood for a while, watching the class.	1	The behaviour displayed by the class temporarily improved but their previous behaviour resumed when he left the room.
The use of 'distraction and ambiguity'	This is a phrase coined by one of the members of staff I observed. He stated that he used the technique to distract the young people. For example, I observed as his class started to become off task and he said "Does anybody watch…." as he walked away and trailed off.	1	The class stopped talking as one child responded "Does anybody watch what Sir?"
The use of empathy	A class began to move on to doing the next activity as the teacher was trying to recap on the previous work. The teacher said "I know I've made the fatal mistake of telling you what we'll do next, could you just give me your attention for twenty seconds?	1	The class stopped what they were doing and listened.

Table 4. Behaviour management strategies observed, their frequency and the consequence.

As can be seen staff deployed a variety of behaviour management strategies with varying success. However the observation schedule did not allow for consideration of the link between teaching and learning and behaviour management, although it did appear that teachers whose lessons were fast paced and pitched at an appropriate level having to spend less time managing off-task or disruptive behaviour.

The schedule also did not allow me to explore or consider the relationship that staff had formed with the student. It was necessary to consider the behaviour management strategies employed in isolation since this was the brief of one of the research questions. However, a note was made to explore other factors that impact upon behaviour at a later stage of the project, since as Winnet and Winkler (1972) and more recently Rogers (2002) state an over emphasis on contingency planning can lead to an under emphasis on curriculum and learning.

4.4 RQ4: What disruptive behaviours are staff currently dealing with on a daily and weekly basis?

Details of responses given by teaching staff to this checklist can be found in Appendix 7. More than half of the staff who completed the checklist felt they were dealing with the following behaviours on a daily basis:

- cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses;

- general rowdiness or mucking about;

- a lack of concern for others;

- persistently infringing school rules (e.g. on dress, pupil behaviour);

- refusing to engage in lessons;

- verbal abuse towards other pupils; and

- winding up other pupils

and these on a weekly basis:

- leaving school premises without permission;

- physical aggression towards other pupils; and

- use of mobile phones in the classroom.

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 Reflections on the findings

5.1.1 Variations in student response: One size doesn't fit all

Whilst teaching staff's ratings of the effectiveness of strategies for behaviour management seemed to be similar, it may be that positions calculated from the mean rankings given by the students will mask very large differences between individual student's rankings. This reflects the observations made by staff that effectiveness varies depending on the child and the context.

One member of staff did not complete the ratings for behaviour management strategies, choosing to return it saying that "these statements all differ on a pupil to pupil basis". Whilst staff must be mindful of the different reactions individuals may have to behaviour management strategies, the Department for Education (2011) urges that schools develop a behaviour management policy which is applied consistently.

5.1.2 The discrepancy between staff ratings and practice

The responses given by teaching staff to the questionnaire would suggest that there was a level of consistency amongst staff, but informal reports from staff meetings and from my observations suggest otherwise. This perhaps illustrates that despite agreeing on what would be the most effective strategies, the reality of teaching in difficult situations perhaps leads staff to make decisions which do not reflect what they have planned to do.

Sutoris (2000) highlights Bion's (1961) description of survival behaviours which may serve to protect individuals from the emotional demands of their roles in an organisation. They are as follows:

- dependency (a search for a colleague with more authority to carry out the task);

- expectancy (unrealistic expectations of outcomes);

- fight (an attempt to resist the task); and

- flight (an attempt to avoid the task)

I would argue that I saw examples of all four of these strategies during my observations: one member of staff called on senior management to restore calm in the class (dependency), others stuck rigidly to the system of warnings with an expectation that this would be all that was required to 'control' the class (expectancy); others in their discussions with me afterwards talked about the difficult backgrounds that many of the students came from suggesting that they felt it would never be possible to expect appropriate behaviour from some of the students and therefore poor behaviour was not there responsibility (fight), whilst others ignored behaviour despite this only leading to it escalating (flight).

Despite the fact that the top five behaviour management strategies as rated by both teaching staff and students centred around praise, praise was not a common feature of the lessons I observed (with the exception of one). This is in line with research carried out by Martin and Hayes (1998) which suggests that opportunities for praise are not often seized and are more likely to be used in response to a student's academic achievement rather than them displaying appropriate behaviour.

5.1.3 The need for high quality teaching and learning

One criticism of the work being outlined in this paper is a challenge to the assumptions which underpin it. This work is based on there being a need to manage behaviour within this setting and that both teaching staff and students will benefit from the use of effective behaviour management strategies. Swinson (1990) might challenge this on the grounds that 'many behavioural interventions appear, at least at face value, to be more concerned with meeting the needs of teachers than they do with meeting the needs of children' (p.18). Swinson makes this point in order to emphasise the need for the content of lessons to be placed firmly on the agenda. My observations would suggest that high quality teaching and learning is not always taking place within this setting. This will need to be broached with the school and staff will be asked to be mindful that whilst behaviour management strategies are necessary for contingency planning, high quality teaching aimed at meeting the needs of individual students is likely to reduce the needs for these strategies to be employed. This is likely to be key in lessons in PRUs since, as Grundy and Blandford (1999) suggest disaffected students in particular are likely to need high quality teaching because they have no resources or desire to fill the gaps of a poor teacher-learner relationship. Further

consideration will be given to this in the next stage of the project and therefore detailed discussion of the relationship between teaching and learning is not within the terms of reference for this report. The next stage of the project is discussed in the final section of this report.

5.2 Further reflections on the research process

An action research design situated within critical realism does not aim to produce findings which will be generalizable and of use outside of the settings in which they are collated. The project outlined above aims only to offer the starting point in continued work with the school to adapt the current behaviour management systems in place. That said, it is still important to consider the effectiveness of the methods employed for gathering data in order to question whether or not the findings are truly representative of the reality within the setting.

5.2.1 The use of questionnaires and checklists

Gillham (2007) lists a host of limitations to the use of questionnaires and many of these can be applied in this context. The data generated from the questionnaires was not complete; some respondents missed items and one chose not to respond to any, stating that the success of behaviour management strategies was dependent upon the child and context. Futhermore, respondents may not have given thought and consideration to their responses. That said, the use of a questionnaire was appropriate in meeting the research aim and the correlation between student and staff responses as well as the limited variance within teaching staff's responses suggests that thought is likely to have been given to answers. Whilst individual interviews may have provided richer data, it is important to be mindful of

the time constraints within which this work was carried out. Additionally, I will be meeting with staff members and students during later phases of the project and this will offer an opportunity to gain a further insight into their views around behaviour management.

5.2.2 The use of observations

The extent to which an observer effects an observed event is still widely debated (Robson, 2002). It is hoped that by meeting the students in an informal setting at break time, my presence will have had less of an impact on the observations than had I not been known to them.   In an attempt to gain an insight into whether my presence did introduce bias, I asked each teacher whose lesson I had observed whether they felt that the lesson was typical, all of them said that it was.

5.3 Reflections of the impact of the traded service context and the role of the EP in systemic work

In my view the competition associated with working within a traded service discourages complacency. It has been important to reflect on this piece of work which, with hindsight would have been carried out differently. Since there are no guarantees that schools will continue to buy-in the EPS it is important that these reflections are shared with the Service as a whole so that they can learn from them and with the school so that they can see why things might be approached in a different way should similar work take place in the setting again.

Whilst EPs describe systemic work as desirable it is important that we consider what skills we bring to this work; consultancy companies will be carrying out this work in a variety of

settings on a daily basis and thus can invest all of their professional development time into this. EPs, on the other hand, carry out a wide variety of work, but to my mind time needs to be given over to professional development in this area if EPS want to be able to viably trade this work.

The final point made in my earlier discussion of the traded context relates to remaining a critical friend. In fact this was perhaps easier to do than I had anticipated; I think this was because staff practice was one of the main foci of the project and thus open to scrutiny. Critiquing practice would arguably be more difficult for individual casework when teaching staff may see the problem as centring around the child (and possibly their family) and may not naturally take a systemic view of this.

5.4 Reflections of how far this work was truly consultative

As previously stated the initial stage of the project detailed here was formed through consultation with the head-teacher alone. This was necessary given that this was the first piece of work I carried out within the school but I feel it limited the work which took place. My three meetings with the head-teacher prior to commencing data collection did not give me a good insight into school context factors. I have, more recently learnt that some staff perceive there to be 'political issues' at play with a division between 'old' and 'new' staff. It may be that the head-teacher was unaware of this, it may be that he did not see it as being relevant to my work or want to share it with me or it could be that I did not allow enough time for a detailed consultation at the outset, a difficulty also encountered by Roffey (2000).

In a volume of Educational and Child Psychology dedicated to organisational change writers discuss the importance of personal experience of the organisation in which an EP is trying to effect change (Bennett and Gamman, 2000 and Baxter, 2000), unfortunately I had no prior experience of the setting. Perhaps it would be easier for EPs to embark on this type of work once they have carried out casework within the school and have already begun to form some hypotheses about elements of the system which it may be beneficial to change (whilst of course allowing themselves to be influenced and their assumptions to be challenged through consultation with stakeholders).

It is my hope that the next stage of the project can be deemed to be truly consultative and inclusive of all stakeholders.

6. NEXT STEPS

Further work will take place over the coming two terms with the school. The first stage in this process will be to share the information gathered with stakeholders (the head teacher, staff and students). The work outlined above offers a good starting point for conversations around how the existing behaviour management policy can be amended and improved. This work has allowed me an insight into staff and students' views on effective behaviour management strategies that would not usually be afforded to outside agencies new to working with the school.

I aim to establish a cooperative inquiry group (Heron, 1996) made up of teaching staff as we enter the next phase of the project to give staff at the school the opportunity to shape their own behaviour management policy. As Hill and Parsons (2000) suggest it is important to encourage schools to take responsibility for finding solutions to challenging behaviour

through mutual support and as a consequence initiate a more dynamic relationship with external agencies.

The head teacher has suggested that some work be done around exploring the professional ideologies of the staff working in the setting. He feels that there may be low expectations set for students since staff sympathise with some of the students' difficult backgrounds. Handy & Atkin (1986) suggest that exploring the attitudes of staff and their professional ideologies can assist in uncovering the culture of a school, but, if this work is to be undertaken it will need to be negotiated with staff.

Appendix 1: Questionnaire completed by teaching staff and students, adapted from the work of Caffyn (1987)

Things which may happen….	How well I think they would work in this school			
	Very effective	Effective	Not very effective	Not at all effective
A fixed term exclusion	1	2	3	4
A negative letter home	1	2	3	4
A negative 'phone call home	1	2	3	4
A positive letter being sent home	1	2	3	4
A positive 'phone call being made to home	1	2	3	4
Being able to buy tea and toast	1	2	3	4
Being allowed access to break time activities	1	2	3	4
Being given a boast card for good work	1	2	3	4
Being given a merit for good behaviour	1	2	3	4
Being given a warning	1	2	3	4
Being given lines	1	2	3	4
Being made to sit near the teacher	1	2	3	4
Being reminded of how you are expected to behave (prompts)	1	2	3	4
Being sent out of the room	1	2	3	4
Being sent to a different room to work	1	2	3	4
Being sent to another member of staff	1	2	3	4
Being told off in front of the class	1	2	3	4
Being told off in private	1	2	3	4
Going on a trip	1	2	3	4
Half a day's isolation	1	2	3	4
Knowing the teacher is pleased	1	2	3	4
Knowing the teacher is watching you closely	1	2	3	4
Not being allowed access to break time activities	1	2	3	4
Not being allowed to buy tea or toast	1	2	3	4
Praise in front of the class	1	2	3	4
Praise in private	1	2	3	4
Other (please state)……	1	2	3	4
Other (please state)……	1	2	3	4
Other (please state)……	1	2	3	4

Appendix 2: Proforma used during lesson observations

Observation Record

Number of children present _____   Date _____   Time _____   Nature of lesson _____

Time	(A) Behaviour displayed by pupil	(B) Teacher's response	(C) Consequences	Other comments

Appendix 3: Checklist of behaviours completed by teaching staff (adapted from Gray and Sime, 1998)

Type of pupil behaviour	Frequency experienced	
	Daily	Weekly
Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses		
General rowdiness or mucking about		
Lack of concern for others		
Leaving school premises without permission		
Persistently infringing school rules (e.g. on dress, pupil behaviour)		
Physical aggression towards other pupils (e.g. by pushing, punching etc)		
Physical aggression towards you		
Physical destructiveness (e.g. breaking objects, damaging furniture and fabric)		
Refusing to engage in lesson		
Unruliness while waiting (e.g. to enter classrooms, to be told what to do, for lunch etc)		
Use of mobile phone in the classroom		
Verbal abuse towards other pupils (e.g. offensive or insulting remarks)		
Verbal abuse towards you (e.g. offensive, insolent, insulting or threatening remarks)		
Winding up' other pupils		
Other (please state)…..		
Other (please state)…..		

Appendix 4: Teaching staff's collated responses to the behaviour management strategies questionnaire

Key: 1 Very Effective   2 Effective   3 Not very effective   4 Not at all effective

	Average ratings	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10	T11	T12
1. A positive letter being sent home	**1.3**	1	2	-	1	2	2	1	-	1	1	1	1
2. A positive 'phone call being made to home	**1.3**	1	2	-	1	2	2	1	-	1	1	1	1
3. The teacher showing an interest in the work	**1.4**	2	1	-	1	1	2	1	-	2	2	1	1
4. Being allowed access to break time activities	**1.6**	2	1	2	1	1	1	2	-	3	-	1	2
5. Praise in private	**1.6**	1	1	-	2	2	2	2	-	2	2	1	1

6. Going on a trip	**1.64**	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	-	2	2	2	1
7. A negative 'phone call home	**1.85**	2	2	-	3	2.5	2	1	-	2	1	2	1
8. Being able to buy tea and toast	**1.9**	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	-	3	2	1	3
9. Being reminded of how you are expected to behave (prompts)	**1.9**	2	2	-	2	2	3	2	-	2	1	1	2
10. Being given a merit for good behaviour	**2**	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	-	2	2	2	3
11. Praise in front of the class	**2**	2	1	-	2	2	2	1	-	3	3	1	3
12. A negative letter home	**2.05**	2	2	-	3	2.5	2	1	-	3	2	2	1
13. Being given a boast card for good work	**2.09**	2	1	2	2	2	3	2	-	2	2	2	3

Item	Mean												
14. Being sent to a different room to work	**2.09**	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	-	2	3	2	2
15. Knowing the teacher is pleased	**2.09**	4	1	3	1	2	2	2	-	3	2	1	2
16. Not being allowed access to break time activities	**2.09**	2	3	3	2	1	2	1	-	3	2	2	2
17. Being told off in private	**2.10**	2	2	-	2	2	1	2	-	3	3	2	2
18. A fixed term exclusion	**2.11**	3	2	-	2	-	1	3	-	2	2	2	2
19. Half a day's isolation	**2.18**	2	2	3	2	2	2	2	-	2	3	2	2
20. Not being allowed to buy tea or toast	**2.18**	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	-	3	2	2	3
21. Being given a warning	**2.27**	3	2	2	2	3	1	2	-	3	2	2	3
22. Being sent out of the room	**2.32**	3	2	2.5	2	3	2	2	-	2	2	2	3

23. Being sent to another member of staff	**2.32**	2	2	2.5	2	2	2	2	-	3	4	2	2
24. Knowing the teacher is watching you closely	**2.36**	3	2	3	2	3	2	2	-	3	2	1	3
25. Being made to sit near the teacher	**3.27**	4	3	3	4	2	4	3	-	4	4	2	3
26. Being given lines	**3.8**	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	-	4	3	4	4
27. Being told off in front of the class	**3.80**	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	-	4	4	4	4

Respondent	Other	Other
T1	Consistent application of rules	Clear boundaries and structure
T12	Regular reviews with key staff, pupils and parents, i.e. meeting arranged in advance as a normal thing rather than if there's a problem (maybe after a four week settling in period and then termly if KS3)	

Appendix 5: Students' collated responses to the behaviour management strategies questionnaire

Key: 1 Very Effective   2 Effective   3 Not very effective   4 Not at all effective

	Average ratings	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	S7	S8	S9	S10	S11	S12	S13	S14	S15	S16	S17
1. A positive 'phone call being made to home	**1.59**	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	1	2
2. Going on a trip	**1.93**	2	2	1	2	4	2	1	2	1	2	3	3	-	-	1	1	2
3. Being allowed access to break time activities	**2.06**	2	2	1	4	2	2	1	2	1	4	4	4	1	1	1	2	1
4. A positive letter being sent home	**2.09**	2	1	1	-	2	4	2	2	4	2	2	2	4	1.5	1	1	2
5. Being given a boast card for good work	**2.18**	3	2	1	1	3	4	1	2	2	3	4	4	1	2	1	1	2
6. Being given a merit for good behaviour	**2.18**	3	2	1	1	3	4	1	2	2	3	4	4	1	2	1	1	2

7. The teacher showing an interest in the work	**2.33**	2	1	2	3	3	3	2	4	2	4	3	1	-	-	1	2	2
8. Being able to buy tea and toast	**2.41**	4	2	3	4	4	3	1	2	1	1	3	2	3	4	1	1	2
9. Knowing the teacher is pleased	**2.53**	3	2	2	2	4	2	2	3	3	2	4	4	-	-	1	2	2
10. Praise in private	**2.53**	2	2	2	3	2	4	2	4	2	4	4	2	-	-	1	2	2
11. Praise in front of the class	**2.80**	3	2	2	3	3	4	2	4	2	4	4	3	-	-	1	3	2
12. Not being allowed access to break time activities	**3.00**	2	1	3	4	3	4	1	4	3	4	4	4	-	-	2	4	2
13. Being reminded of how you are expected to behave (prompts)	**3.03**	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	-	2.5	1	2	2
14. Not being allowed to buy tea or toast	**3.13**	4	3	4	3	4	4	1	4	3	1	4	4	-	-	1	4	3
15. A negative letter home	**3.24**	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2.5	2.5	4	4	4

16. Knowing the teacher is watching you closely	**3.27**	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	-	-	1	3	3
17. A negative 'phone call home	**3.28**	3	4	2	2	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	-	2.5	4	4	4
18. Being sent out of the room	**3.32**	2	2	2	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	2.5	4	3	4
19. Being sent to a different room to work	**3.32**	2	2	3	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	2.5	4	2	4
20. A fixed term exclusion	**3.44**	2	2	4	-	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	4
21. Being sent to another member of staff	**3.50**	3	2	4	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	3.5	4	4	3	2
22. Being told off in front of the class	**3.53**	3	4	1	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4
23. Being told off in private	**3.53**	3	3	1	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4
24. Half a day's isolation	**3.67**	2	3	3	4	3	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	-	-	3	4	4

	Mean																	
25. Being made to sit near the teacher	**3.76**	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2
26. Being given lines	**3.80**	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4
27. Being given a warning	**3.81**	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	-	4	3	4

Respondent	Other	Other	Other	Other
S3	Games of football at lunch			
S6	Tea and toast for free	Be allowed to go for a fag	10 minutes alone	End of year stuff for year 11 (prom) and year 10 (…)
S11	Time out on my own	Being able to have fag	I think prom should happen for year 11 as some people won't be able to go to their school prom I think that will be nice	
S12	Going out for a fag when stressed out			
S15	Sweets	Going out at lunch time		
S16	Sweets	Go out at lunch		

Appendix 6: Data gathered in observation. Presented in a chronological order

Behaviour displayed by student	Teacher's response	Consequence
Interrupted the teacher as he was addressing the class	"Thank you Richard"	Richard waited and spoke to him later
Two students playing with equipment	"Does anybody watch (pause)…"	Both students stopped and one said "Does anybody watch what sir?"
Swore when something went wrong ("Oh shit")	Ignored	Lesson continued
Generally not settling, took a long time to come into classroom, lots of swearing	Another teacher came in and looked at class	They quietened but only for the time the additional teacher was in the room
Switched lights off	Ignored	Lesson continued with lights off
Talking whilst teacher introducing activity	Ignored	Continued for the remainder of the lesson
"F*** off you're doing my head in"	Ignored	"I'm going out, I don't care they do my head in" Student walked out and walked back in
Walked out and walked back in again	Ignored	Took phone out
Took phone out	"If you take your phone out again I'll have to take it off you and I really	Put phone away

	don't want to"	
Class generally talking and off task	"I don't want to have to give out warnings"	Behaviour worsened
"We'll get upset if you carry on going on at us so shut the f*** up"	One warning given	Carried on "I'm not bothered"
Carried on swearing and refusing to work	Second warning	Continued
"You're chatting shit again"	Third warning	Student walked out a while later
"Oh f***ing hell"	"Hey, delicate ears"	"I'm sorry miss it's just this stupid stapler" Did not swear again
Starts making paper chains with material left in classroom	Ignored and changed activity	Engages in new activity for a few minutes and then goes back to paper chains
Throwing pieces of paper	Given a warning	Walks out
Walks out	Given a second warning	Comes back into classroom but wanders, draws on the board, plays with equipment
Wandering, drawing on board, playing with equipment	Given third warning and asked to leave room	

Parentheses indicate that the rows can be taken together to represent a single incident involving one young person.

Other behaviour management strategies employed:

- Praise (some indirect, e.g. "Have you been practicing?")
- Task gradually being made more challenging
- Goals set for individual students – not for the whole class
- Students always knowing what was happening next (e.g. "Can we do three more of these and then I want to speak to you for 20 seconds")
- Empathised with students when they wanted to move on to next thing "I know I've made the fatal mistake of telling you what you're doing next, could you just give me your attention for 20 seconds?"

Appendix 7: <u>Teaching staff's collated responses to the behaviour they experience on a daily / weekly basis</u>

Type of pupil behaviour	Frequency experienced	
	Daily	**Weekly**
Cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses	11	
General rowdiness or mucking about	11	
Lack of concern for others	8	3
Leaving school premises without permission		11
Persistently infringing school rules (e.g. on dress, pupil behaviour)	6	4
Physical aggression towards other pupils (e.g. by pushing, punching etc)	2	9
Physical aggression towards you		4
Physical destructiveness (e.g. breaking objects, damaging furniture and fabric)	2	6
Refusing to engage in lesson	8	3
Unruliness while waiting (e.g. to enter classrooms, to be told what to do, for lunch etc)	6	3
Use of mobile phone in the classroom		9
Verbal abuse towards other pupils (e.g. offensive or insulting remarks)	10	1
Verbal abuse towards you (e.g. offensive, insolent, insulting or threatening remarks)	5	5
Winding up' other pupils	10	1
Other … Refusing to attend lessons		1
Other… Throwing pens		1

Other… Leaving classrooms without permission	2	
Other… Smoking		1
Other… Under the influence		1
Other… Refusing to do written work	1	

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Chapter 3: DO EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS WORKING IN A LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTEXT VIEW THE SERVICE AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION? A CASE STUDY EXAXMPLE

ABSTRACT

Much is written about learning organisations, but within the profession of educational psychology little consideration has been given to how far local authority educational psychology services could consider themselves to be learning organisations. As a trainee educational psychologist I carried out a piece of research aiming to uncover whether colleagues within Greenshire Educational Psychology Service felt that they were part of a learning organisation and to elicit their views on the service maintenance activities currently in place. A questionnaire was designed to collect data and all members of the service were asked to take part. Senge's work on learning organisations was utilised to inform questionnaire design. Responses to the questionnaire suggest that service members believe that personal mastery and team learning are well established in Greenshire EPS but that a shared vision does not always exist. Recommendations for how the service can move closer towards becoming a learning organisation, should its members so wish, are made, before consideration is given to whether or not becoming a learning organisation should be of primary concern to all Educational Psychology Services.

1. INTRODUCTION

In my second year of training as an educational psychologist, I was on placement in Greenshire County Council, which has a large Educational Psychology Service (EPS) with twenty-five main grade educational psychologists (EP), three senior educational psychologist (SEP) posts (filled by four employees) and a principal educational psychologist (PEP). The county is divided into three areas with each served by an educational psychology team. Six

months prior to my commencing the placement, the service had become partially traded in its delivery of services to schools. This meant that the local authority commissioned a set number of EP hours for each school; this allocation was based on their previous work with the EPS and schools were then given the opportunity to purchase additional hours.

Having approached the PEP of Greenshire EPS with a view to considering the service in the context of this change, an initial interest was expressed by the PEP in how far the service was, and individual EPs felt, equipped to carry out their role in response to both internal and external changes, such as those within the local authority and school context. During an initial meeting, the principal also expressed an interest in learning organisations. My initial reading about learning organisations (Pearn, 1994, Senge, 1999, Gould, 2000) suggested that learning organisation theory afforded an appropriate framework for any organisation, but particularly one going through a period of change, since learning organisations focus on adaptation and transformation. Pearn (1994), an occupational psychologist who works as an organisational consultant, states that organisations are liable to failure if they are not capable of identifying and responding to changes in their external environment. The PEP wanted the research to discern whether or not service members believed they were part of a learning organisation. In addition to this he wanted to gain an insight into colleagues' views on service maintenance activities, which, in the case of Greenshire EPS, referred to supervision, whole-service meetings and team meetings.

In light of the PEP's request, I set out to consider how far employees of Greenshire EPS believe they are part of a learning organisation and to gain an insight into their views of the utility of service maintenance activities in place. I explore the relationship between learning organisations and service maintenance activities in the literature review that follows, and

give an account of learning organisations, before considering the application of this approach to EP services.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organisations, Organisational Learning and Learning Organisations: An overview

Utilising Schein's definition, in the context of this paper the term 'organisation' will be taken to mean 'the planned coordination of the activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common, explicit purpose or goal' (Schein, 1997 p.15). This definition allows for organisations which focus on providing either products or services to be included. In the context of Greenshire EPS the explicit purpose of the organisation is to provide a specialist psychological service to schools within the county.

Within the domain of organisational psychology the terms 'organisational learning' and 'learning organisations' have been used commonly since the 1980s (Wang and Ahmed, 2003). In a review of the literature Ortenblad (2001) highlights that the terms are often used interchangeably but states that they are mutually exclusive. Organisational learning is an existing process through which organisations learn, whilst a learning organisation is an ideal type of organisation. As Tsang (1997) notes, those interested in organisational learning want to answer the question 'how does an organisation learn?' whilst those interested in learning organisations are interested in 'how should an organisation learn?'. Throughout this report the term 'learning organisation' is used to denote an aspirational form of organisation. In order to inform the design of the small-scale investigation of EPS colleagues' perspectives on the extent to which they considered that their employing EPS constituted a learning organisation, in response to the research commission summarised in Section 1 above, my

review of relevant literature focused initially on the main writers who have discussed learning organisations before considering the work of one seminal author in further detail.

A learning organisation is not simply an organisation in which all members learn. Dixon's (1994) definition of a learning organisation makes this clear by placing emphasis on learning occurring at different levels, describing a learning organisation as characterised by the 'intentional use of learning processes at individual, group and system level to transform the organisation in ways that are increasingly satisfying to stakeholders' (p. 6). This suggests that although learning at an individual level is a necessary component of learning organisations, in and of itself it is not sufficient.

Writing in 1994, Dixon considered definitions of learning organisations utilised by writers in the field and concluded that they had the following in common:

- an expectation that an increase in knowledge was related to improved actions;
- acknowledgement of the relationship between the organisation and the environment;
- a concept of unity created through collective or shared thinking; and
- a proactive stance regarding change.

Argyris and Schon (1978) were the first to use the term 'learning organisation' and Pedler et al. (1991) are credited with making the concept popular within the United Kingdom. In their influential book, Argyris and Schon (1974) discuss the differences between 'espoused theories' and 'theories of action'. They state that there is a difference between what people believe their governing theories to be and the theories which determine their behaviours. To Argyris and Schon, this gap between the two is not necessarily a problem, but means that reflection is important and that members of organisations should reflect on what theories

(or mental models) they bring to their work that lead to their acting in a certain way. In

addition Argyris and Schon differentiate between two differing forms of learning: single loop

and double loop learning. When a difficulty or unwanted consequence arises, single loop

learning would lead to the action taken being modified. Senge (1990) gives the example of a

shower being too hot, which can be corrected by turning the temperature down. Single loop

learning is based on receiving information and taking corrective action. In the context of an

EPS single loop learning could take place if members find that a standardised assessment

does not help them to answer the questions a member of school staff has asked about a

child who has been referred to the service; they may take corrective action and use another

assessment tool. Double-loop learning is a process in which all of the variables involved in a

situation are scrutinised, this may lead to a different way of perceiving the situation, the

action which needs to be taken and the consequences.   In the example given above, this

may lead to the psychologist who had received the referral considering why the referral was

made, what each person involved wants to achieve, the ethical nature of the referral and so

on.

Argyris and Schon (1978) give the following definition of single and double loop learning:

> 'When the error detected and corrected permits the organization to carry on its
> present policies or achieve its present objectives, then that error-and-correction
> process is single-loop learning. Single-loop learning is like a thermostat that learns
> when it is too hot or too cold and turns the heat on or off. The thermostat can
> perform this task because it can receive information (the temperature of the room)
> and take corrective action. Double-loop learning occurs when error is detected and
> corrected in ways that involve the modification of an organization's underlying
> norms, policies and objectives'. (p2-3)

There are many similarities between Pedler et al's (1991) and Senge's (1990)

conceptualisation of learning organisations; both draw on Argyris and Schon's work and add

to it a consideration of systems or 'the whole' (Moilanen, 2001). I have chosen to focus on

learning organisations as discussed by Peter Senge in his seminal text, The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of Learning Organisations (Senge, 1990). Senge's work is of practical value and he outlines its relevance to organisations which do not sell products in his later book Schools That Learn (Senge, 2000).

Gould (2000) draws a distinction between texts about learning organisations written by academics, who focus on the theoretical underpinnings, and those written by business consultants who focus on case studies; Senge's writing falls into the latter. Tsang (1997) notes that the concept of learning organisations could be criticised on these grounds since case study based accounts may lack rigour and thus lack reliability and validity. However, theories can be generated from case study designs (Yin, 1984) and this is typical within organisational psychology. In my view, Senge's work is of practical value and so I have utilised his description in order to inform this project since, in my opinion, his work synthesises and adds to the work of Argyris and Schon.

2.2 Senge's five disciplines

Senge (1999) outlines five disciplines which he feels are essential components of a learning organisation; I will consider each of these.

2.2.1 Personal Mastery

Senge states that we should all have aspirations which we continually strive to achieve. Personal mastery is concerned with having a clear picture of what it is that we want to accomplish whilst expanding the skills and abilities which would allow us to succeed in this. According to Senge, members of an organisation are more likely to work towards personal mastery if the organisation is a safe place in which to develop ideas and challenge the status quo. In terms of Dixon's (1994) definition, personal mastery refers to learning taking place

at the individual level; however, the group and system levels play a role in ensuring that individual learning is encouraged and nurtured.

2.2.2 Mental Models

The phrase 'mental model' refers to the thoughts and assumptions members of an organisation carry with them in their work. In a learning organisation, people would be aware of the assumptions that they bring to their work and allow these to be challenged and reformed if necessary.   Senge says that mental models should be 'surfaced' and 'tested'.

2.2.3 Shared Vision

Learning organisations should strive to develop a shared vision. If an organisation is working towards becoming a learning organisation, the vision should not be decided upon by a select few members or managers, but instead, should be co-constructed through honest and open dialogue.

2.2.4 Team Learning

As with shared vision, team learning takes place and develops through dialogue as opposed to discussion, the difference being that dialogue allows people to share their assumptions and thoughts (mental models) from different perspectives. If these thoughts and assumptions conflict, the conflict is seen as lying between the assumptions or thoughts and not between the people involved.   According to Senge's ideas, team learning allows people to understand more than they would be able to if they were to go about learning individually.

2.2.5 Systems Thinking

Systems thinking is the fifth discipline, and what Senge refers to as the conceptual
cornerstone of learning organisations. Systems thinking refers to the need to be aware of
the impact that systems are having on an organisation and an understanding of the impact
that the organisation can have on the wider systems at play. Hedderly (1997) says that
'employees in a learning organisation will not be trapped by learned helplessness described
by Seligman (1975)' (p. 49) since they see themselves as influencing the system.

2.3 Learning Organisation Theory: A critique

The concept of learning organisations is not without its critics and Fenwick (1997) and
Coopey (1995) urge that the concept should not be accepted without question.

Fenwick (1997) expresses a concern that learning organisation theory is based on a number
of assumptions. For example, writers in the area assume that all people within a learning
organisation can work in unity. Fenwick suggests that this is a simplistic view of the role
individuals play in organisations and that too little consideration has been given to the fact
that these individuals will reside in a number of spheres, bringing with them learning from
previous jobs, their family life, their social groups and so on. Another criticism Fenwick
levels at the theory is how far decision making can truly be participative. As Fenwick states,
much of the literature on learning organisations is aimed at managers and decision makers,
which begs the question, in any organisation based on a hierarchy, of how far the vision will
be that of the manager as opposed to that of all members?

It is my opinion that these criticisms are ill-founded, if considered in light of Senge's (1990)
work. My reading of Senge's work leads me to believe that he does not expect a point to be
reached where all colleagues are in unity and have the same vision; rather, he urges

members of an organisation to reflect on and be aware of the mental models that they bring to their work so that dialogue between colleagues can be ongoing and allow for assumptions to be discussed and challenged in a safe environment.

Despite urging his readers not to accept the learning organisation concept without question, Fenwick goes on to conclude that "The learning organization ideal, while problematic, seems to offer great promise for organizations seeking ways to change rigid hierarchical structures, clogged communication patterns, inefficient procedures and authoritarian leadership." It is my view that whilst further work may be required to ensure that learning organisation theory is a robust, evidence-based theory, it is still of practical value in so far as it will, in the context of this research project allow service members to consider how far the ideals of participative management styles, team learning and personal mastery are currently judged to exist within Greenshire EPS.

As noted above, much of what is written about learning organisations focuses on case studies from public sector companies, and this is certainly the case for Senge's (1990) work. In the following section I outline why this thinking may be relevant and useful for current educational psychology services.

2.4 Educational Psychology Services as Learning Organisations

Much of what is written about learning organisations stems from private sector companies and it is possible that some aspects are not transferable to EP services; arguably an organisation with no definable 'product'. In his article 'The Eastern Promise?' Hedderly (1997) counters this argument, before discussing Nissan as an example of a company with a 'philosophy' which EP services should consider, by stating that a psychological service should have a product, which could include a quality service to schools and individuals. This reflects

the definition of 'organisations' used throughout this paper, whereby an organisation is a group working towards an explicit shared aim.

So, we should not discard learning organisations on the grounds that EP services have no discernible product, but why might it be pertinent to consider EP services as learning organisations at this current time? Revan, who had experience of working for the Coal Board and the National Health Service (NHS), believed that for an organisation to survive, its rate of learning must be at least equal to the rate of change in its external environment; this became known as Revan's law (Revan, 1980). This law highlights why it may be useful to consider EP services as learning organisations. EP services are going through a period of change as a result of cuts to local authority budgets (AEP, 2011), and further changes are likely to be brought about by the impending publication of a Coalition government white paper declaring reforms to the special educational needs system (DfE, 2011). Greenshire EPS, has also found itself in a period of internal and external change as over the past three years it has moved out of multi-agency teams, become a 'traded service', and a new Principal EP has been appointed. Since learning organisations embrace change and consider their position in relation to wider systemic influences, it seems that it may be an appropriate and useful concept to apply to EP services at this time.

Many writers focussing on the organisation and management of EP services have advocated a learning organisation approach. However, when reading these writers' works one must be mindful that they may be working to a different definition of the term 'learning organisations' than that employed in the context of this project. The following reasons for considering an EPS in relation to learning organisation approaches are highlighted by educational psychologists:

- EPs should employ their existing skill set to consider change within their own organisation. EPs themselves do not, typically, participate in creative and reflective dialogue about change (Jenson et al, 2002).

- EP services and their members stand to benefit from such a move. Learning organisations encourage, what Maslow termed 'synergy': "if a person experiences growth (real learning) within the aims of an organisation, both the person and the organisation will benefit" (Rowland, 2002, p. 281)

- Becoming a learning organisation will also have benefits for the community they serve: by acquiring the skills necessary to participate in a learning organisation this should enable EPs to encourage and help direct organisational change in schools (Harrison et al, 1996) and in the local authority (Bracher, 2001)

- Working towards being a learning organisation is protective for services working under extreme conditions (Leadbetter, 2000) and Hedderley believes that it will enable employees to avoid experiencing 'learned helplessness' (Hedderly, 1997).

- Cherry (1998) writes that EPS frameworks for evaluation could reflect on the extent to which members see themselves as being part of a learning organisation, for example, how far they feel they are involved in decision making.

- Finally, as a participant in Stobie's (2002) study suggests 'EPs are not a profession which can be managed by instruction'! (p. 224).

In addition to the above, whilst Oudejans et al (2011) write with a focus on a healthcare organisation (substance abuse treatment centres), their assertion that a learning organisation approach fits organisations undergoing a shift from 'individual craftsmanship' to 'professional accountability' will resonate with EPs who are increasingly accountable for

their work. This is evidenced by the increasing use of evaluation measures such as goal attainment scaling (GAS) and target monitoring and evaluation (TME) (Dunsmuir et al, 2009).

Gould (2000) suggests that learning organisations rose to prominence within private sector companies at the same time as there was an increased emphasis on reflective practice in what he calls 'human service sectors'. Being a reflective practitioner in terms of casework requires many of the skills (or disciplines) which Senge outlines: being aware of our own mental models, considering systemic influences and the influence we can have over the system. It could be argued then, that EPs have developed these skills but may not be aware of their application to their own organisation. It is my opinion that reflective practice is a condition supportive of the development of a learning organisation but, as made clear by Dixon's definition outlined earlier, in and of itself, this form of personal learning is not a sufficient condition for an organisation to be considered a learning organisation.

Based on the advantages listed above, and the period of change in which Greenshire EPS finds itself, it seems both relevant and timely to consider how far service members feel they belong to a learning organisation.

Whilst many papers extoll the virtues of EPSs becoming learning organisations, only one (Harrison et al, 1996) sets out to explore how far a local authority EPS can move towards becoming one. Harrison et al contextualise their research in terms of continuing professional development (CPD) budgets being cut and the fact that selling services is, to their mind, causing an "uncomfortable tightness", which means EPs are less likely to attend CPD courses, conferences and events, as they are more focussed on delivering a service to schools. The published paper collates responses given by EPs within Oxford EPS, Hampshire EPS and delegates at a 1996 course entitled Working Across Boundaries to answer these questions:

- What purposes would be served by encouraging learning?

- What would be the consequences be of not succeeding with this?

- How would one tell if learning was being successfully encouraged?

- What blocks or prevents learning taking place?

It may be that the brevity that is required in a journal article that constrains Harrison and her colleagues' analysis, but it strikes me that they do not answer the question posed in the articles title, *can a psychological service be a learning organisation?* In contextualising the work in terms of professional development it seems that they focus on learning taking place at an individual level and do not consider transformation, which I see as being central to learning organisation approaches. In terms of Senge's work their focus appears to be almost exclusively on personal mastery.

So it can be seen that the literature on EP services operating as learning organisations is limited. The other focus of the questionnaire devised for this research project is service maintenance activities such as supervision and meetings, which are more widely written about. A full exploration of these activities is beyond this literature review but the link between service maintenance activity and learning organisations is highlighted below.

2.4 Service maintenance activity and learning organisation approaches

When this research project was negotiated I was encouraged to consider how far the EPS is a learning organisation, whilst also developing a specific focus on service maintenance activity. If Greenshire EPS can be considered to be a learning organisation, this would be evident in their service maintenance activity. Ideally facets of Senge's five disciplines would be intrinsic to these activities. For example, shared vision could be constructed during whole service meetings and team meetings, while team learning and systems thinking would take place if

constructive dialogues occurred within these forums. In terms of this research project, my remit was to explore colleagues' views of the service maintenance activities; however, it may be that consideration of their responses to questions concerning these would also illustrate whether or not the service is developing as a learning organisation.

What follows is an account of the methodology employed to gain an insight into employees' views on how far the EPS is a learning organisation and, linked to that, their views on the utility of the service maintenance activities in place.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Epistemology

As with my previous work I have been guided by a critical realist epistemology during the course of this research (Bhaskar, 1998, Robson, 2002). This means that my work is underpinned by the ontological notion that there is a difference between the external world and our representations of it (Searle, 1995). As made clear by the research aims, I set out to uncover the views of colleagues rather than answer the question *is Greenshire EPS a learning organisation?* Since this research is aimed at gathering views and perspectives, there is an acceptance that the findings will only ever be partial and will be open to differing interpretations, However, I aim to be rigorous, to be mindful of my own assumptions and to remain as objective as possible.

3.2 Research design

This research utilises a case study design since it considers only one organisation and following Yin's (1989) advice I will not attempt to generalise the results beyond Greenshire EPS, although I hope that the methodology applied and the theories discussed could be considered in the context of other services.

There are two over-arching research questions:

i)   Do colleagues within Greenshire EPS consider themselves to be part of a learning

organisation; and

ii)   What are their views on the service maintenance activities currently in place?

From these two research questions a number of more specific questions emerge:

• To what extent do colleagues believe they are improving their level of expertise in

order to achieve desired goals? (Personal Mastery)

• To what extent do colleagues believe they can contribute towards developing the

principles and guiding practice of the EPS, and in what forums can they do this?

(Shared vision)

• To what extent do colleagues feel that they learn with their team in order to achieve

results that they could not achieve individually? (Team learning)

• What forms of supervision do colleagues access and in what ways do they feel the

supervision systems in place could be improved?

• How useful do colleagues feel whole-service meetings are and how could they be

improved?

• How useful do colleagues feel team meetings are and how could they be improved?

The first three of these questions relate directly to disciplines outlined by Senge. Mental

models and systems thinking are the two disciplines not directly referenced within the

research questions; these are disciplines/skills psychologists are likely to be employing in

their work with schools and which may be explored during service maintenance activities,

particularly supervision. Further reference will be made to the omission of these two

disciplines from the research question in the discussion section of this paper. The final three questions refer to service maintenance activities.

3.4 Method

3.4.1 Tool development

A decision was made to develop a questionnaire so that the views of all members of the organisation could be gathered. This is true to a learning organisation approach since all members of the team are valued and seen to be potentially instrumental in effecting change. Oudejans et al (2011) provide an account of the limited amount of work which has previously taken place to develop questionnaires measuring how far Senge's disciplines are established in organisations. Both questionnaires they discuss in their literature review (Pang, 2004 and Jeong et al, 2007) are limited to Asia and translations were not available, so they developed their own Questionnaire for Learning Organisations (QLO) which is based on Senge's work and aims at developing the learning capacity of individuals and teams.

Harrison et al (1996) describe the use of Pearn Kandola's *Tools for a Learning Organisation* (Pearn, 1994) within Hampshire and Oxford EP services and at a Division of Educational and Child Psychology conference. However, Harrison and colleagues set out to answer a different set of research questions to those posed here.

Having considered using the QLO and Tools for a Learning Organisation I made a decision to design my own questionnaire for the purposes of this study. I wanted to collect both quantitative and qualitative data; the qualitative data were derived from asking people what changes they felt could be made so that in administering the questionnaire the EPS was engaging in learning organisation activity. A participative style of management is central to learning organisation approaches and in asking for people's comments on what elements of

service maintenance activity they felt could be improved there was an understanding between myself and the PEP that colleagues' comments would be used to inform changes.

As Bracher (2001) states, in considering whether or not an organisation can become a learning organisation it is necessary to evidence the existence of key features of learning organisations. The final version of the questionnaire (see Appendix 1) considers three of Senge's five disciplines (personal mastery, shared vision, and team learning) and has further questions relating to each of the three forms of service maintenance activity (supervision, team meetings and whole-service meetings). Careful consideration was given to ensuring that responses to the questionnaire would answer all of the research questions. Appendix 2 details the relationship between the items on the questionnaire and the research questions.

The questionnaire was submitted to Greenshire's psychology steering group (comprised of senior EPs) along with the research proposal. The proposal was accepted and only minor amendments to wording within the questionnaire were suggested.

4.1 Critique of questionnaires

Given time constraints, the use of a questionnaire as a tool for data collection was deemed to be the only method which would give the opportunity for all Greenshire EPS employees to take part in the research should they wish. Questionnaires have limitations (Gillham, 2007) and do not yield data as rich as other methods, such as qualitative interviews. However, interviewing a sample of colleagues would not have been congruent with the idea of a fully participative organisation as encouraged by Senge.

4.2 Procedure and sample

I was asked to introduce and contextualise the questionnaire during a whole-service meeting. Since the term 'learning organisation' is thought to be commonly misused and

misunderstood I illustrated the approach by outlining Senge's five disciplines and went on to discuss why this may be relevant to an EPS (as discussed within the literature review of this paper). Colleagues were assured that questionnaire responses would remain anonymous and that results would be fed back to the psychology steering group and afterwards to the whole service. Following this brief presentation, time was given to complete the questionnaire and some participants completed it during this time; others took it away for further consideration. The questionnaire was posted to any service members not at the whole service meeting. There was a 65% return rate with 19 employees completing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to main-grade and senior EPs.

4.3 Ethical considerations

Participation in the research was voluntary and this was made clear to those asked to take part. Although the questionnaires were completed anonymously there were occasional phrases or words which may have revealed either the participant's own identity or that of a colleague to whom they were referring (such as the use of the word 'he' or 'she' when describing their line manager). In such cases, these words were removed or made ambiguous before findings were shared.

4.4 Data analysis

For quantitative questions which utilised a Likert rating scale, mean scores were calculated. For questions which were likely to lead to similar responses such as 'in what forums have you expressed your opinions on policies and procedures?' the number of times a forum was given by respondents was calculated. For questions which asked for strengths and weaknesses, the strengths and weaknesses were collated and, as far as possible grouped into themes. For item 11, when participants were given the opportunity to add further

comments in relation to the two overarching research questions, responses were grouped

into themes. From this analysis I was able to provide the psychology steering group and

participants with a collation of their responses (see Appendix 3).

5. FINDINGS

What follows is a consideration of the findings relating to each research question in turn,

before a final summary is offered.

<u>5.1 To what extent do colleagues feel they are improving their level of expertise in order to</u>

<u>achieve desired goals? (Personal Mastery)</u>

Questionnaire item	Mean response
During the past 12 months I have developed as a psychologist (1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	2.58
I can exert influence on how I do my job(1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	2.58

<u>Table 1. Mean responses to questions about personal mastery</u>
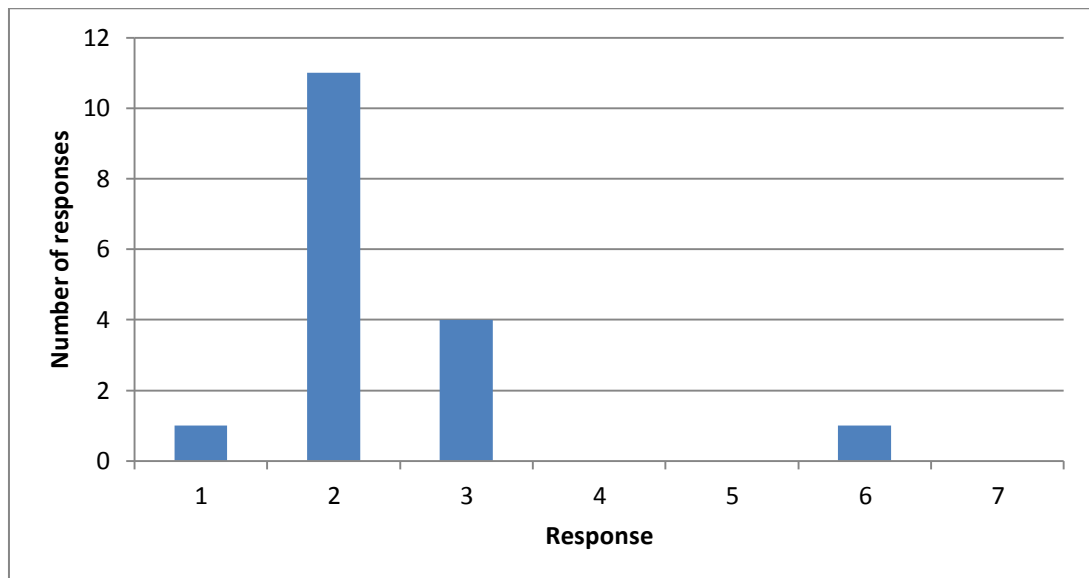
Graph 1. Participants' responses to 'During the past 12 months I have developed as a
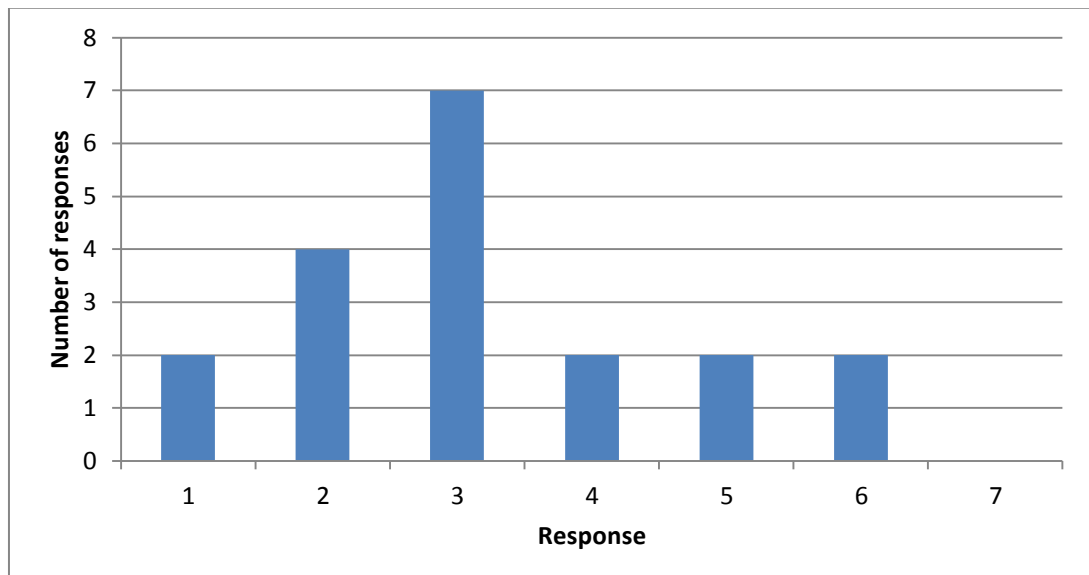
psychologist'

Graph 2.Participants' responses to 'I can exert influence on how I do my job'

As the graphs above highlight, the majority of EPs within Greenshire feel that they have

developed as a psychologist during the last 12 months and can exert influence on how they

do their jobs.

However, there is a distribution of scores given in response to the above two questions. One

EP expressed a sense of having not developed as an EP and a significant minority of

respondents did not assert confidently that they feel empowered to influence how they fulfil their own professional responsibilities.

5.2 To what extent do colleagues feel they can contribute towards developing the principles and guiding practice of the EPS, and in what forums can they do this? (Shared vision)

Questionnaire item	Mean response
My opinion matters when policies and procedures are being considered (1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	3.89
I think the EPS has a clear perspective – for example on how we deliver services to schools (1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	2.37

Table 2. Mean responses to questions about shared vision
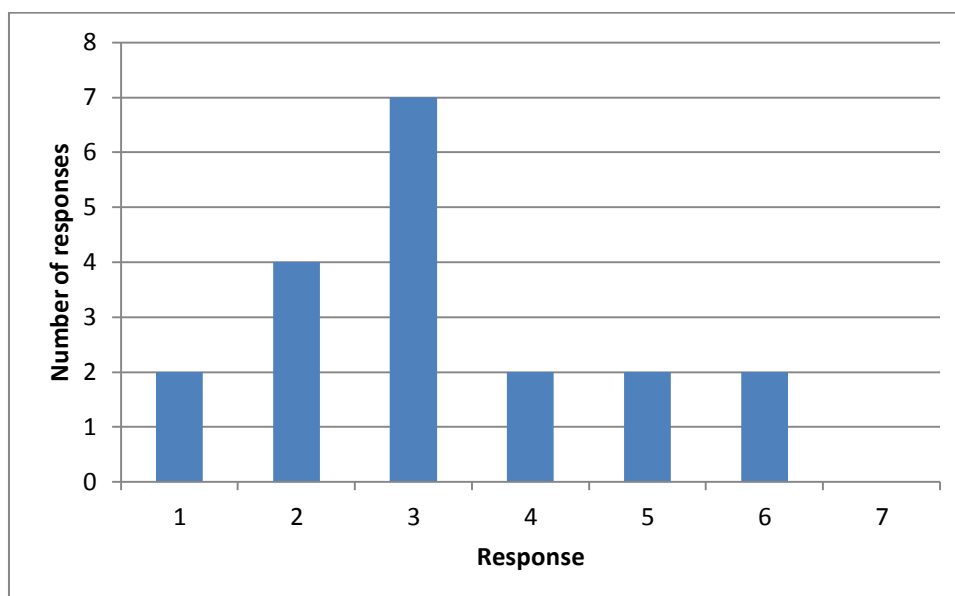
Graph 3. Responses to 'My opinion matters when policies and procedures are being considered'
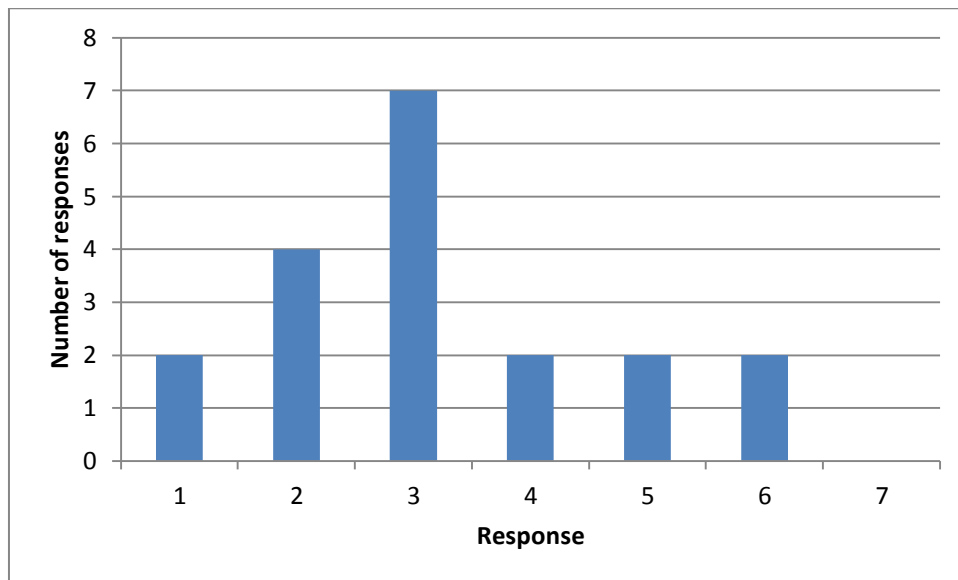
Graph 4. Responses to 'I think the EPS has a clear perspective for example of how we deliver services to schools'

Although the majority of responses to the statements were positive, 6 participants did not assert that they believe that their opinion matters when policies or procedures are being developed and the same number did not express confidence that the EPS has a clear perspective.

Responses suggest that opinions on policies and procedures are most likely to be shared during team meetings (16 participants gave this as a forum in which they expressed their opinions on policies and procedures), whole-service meetings (noted by 9 participants) and through personal contact with a principal or senior EP (noted by 5 participants).

The above numerical responses to the statement 'My opinion matters when policies and procedures are being considered', taken alongside general comments given in response to other questions (discussed later), suggests that how far EPs have the opportunity to shape the vision of the service is questionable. Whilst some EPs remarked that they see the service as being inclusive and participative additional comments, such as *'it would be good to*

establish a shared vision through all the changes happening across the service' led me to believe that further work needs to be done to ensure a shared vision exists.

5.3 To what extent do colleagues feel that they learn with their team in order to achieve results that they could not achieve individually? (Team learning)

Questionnaire item	Mean response
As a service we regularly talk about the outcomes of our work (1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	3.32
As a service we support each other in learning new skills (1 strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree)	2.47

Table 3. Mean responses to questions about team learning
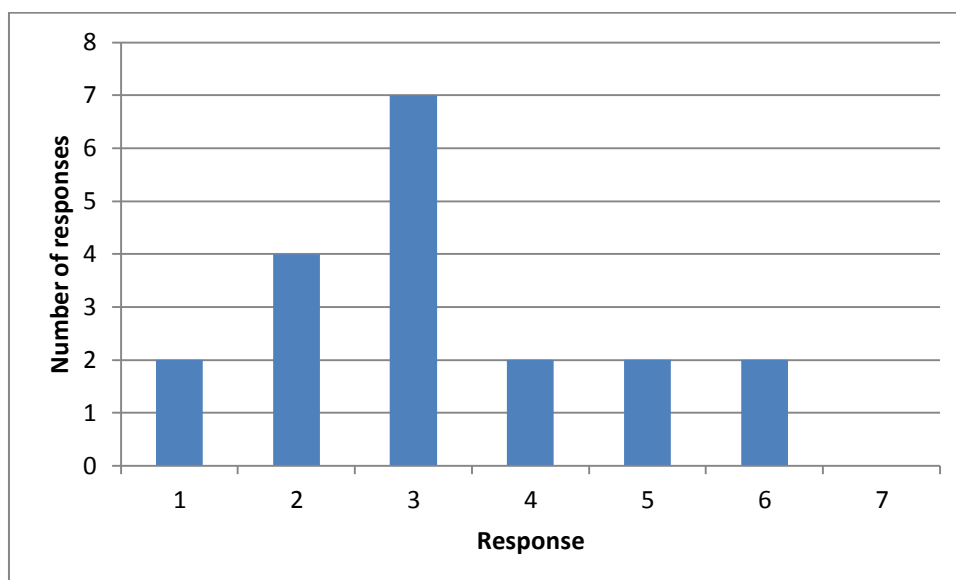
Graph 5. Responses to 'As a service we regularly talk about the outcomes of our work'
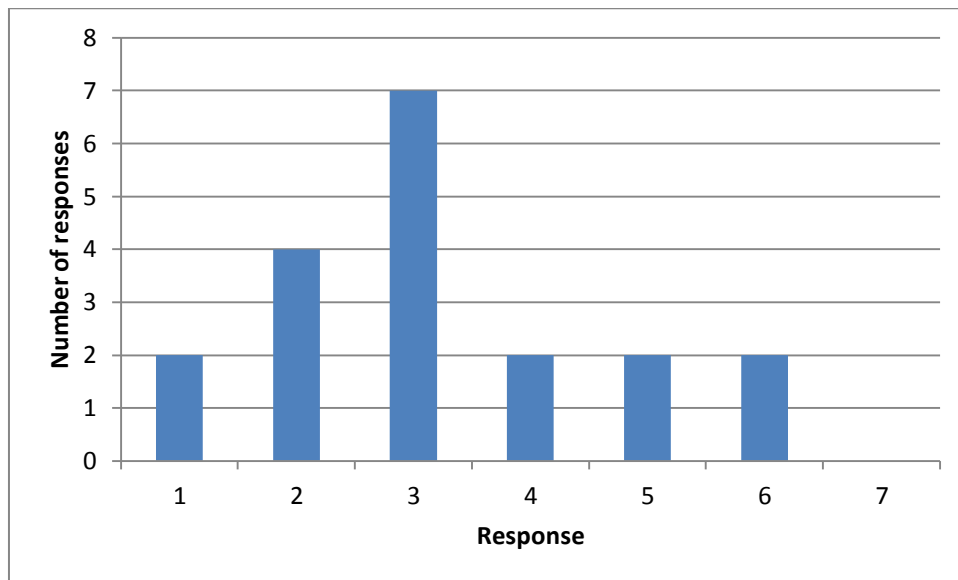
Graph 6. Responses to 'As a service we support each other in learning new skills'

The majority of respondents believed that they support each other in learning new skills. However, six participants did not share this view.

Supporting each other in learning new skills occurs in whole services meetings (according to 16 respondents), during group supervision (9 respondents), incidental conversations with colleagues (7 respondents) and during peer supervision (4 respondents).

Mean scores suggest that respondents do not agree to the same extent that as a service they regularly talk about the outcome of their work. Responses suggest that discussion about outcomes of work takes place during supervision (10 respondents), team meetings (9 respondents), whole service meetings (9 respondents), during incidental conversations with colleagues (5 respondents) and during group supervision (5 respondents). Additional comments showed that one respondent believed that more feedback from schools was necessary to inform discussion about outcomes of work; and another believed that whole-service meetings only offer a reflection on particular types of work. Later answers to questions about service maintenance activity reflect a view held by three participants that good work is not always celebrated or shared.

5.4 What forms of supervision do colleagues access and in what ways do they feel the supervision systems in place could be improved?

Members of Greenshire EPS have access to individual supervision with their line manager (a senior EP), group supervision (which takes place on a monthly basis in each of the three areas) and 64% of participants access peer supervision. Additional forms of supervision accessed by respondents were cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) supervision and what many termed 'incidental supervision' with colleagues.

Participants were asked to elaborate on what components of supervision they viewed as strengths, and offer ways in which they believe supervision could be improved. I grouped these comments into strengths and improvements for each of the forms of supervision accessed (See Table 1).

Form of supervision	Strengths outlined by participants	Areas for improvement outlined by participants
Individual supervision		One participant noted that individual supervision was irregular, another that it was not always prioritised and 'protected' and a third that this supervision would benefit from greater structure and adherence to models of supervision.
Group supervision	Five participants commented on the strengths of group supervision. Responses suggest that these participants view group supervision as an excellent form of learning. They value its solution focussed nature, the use of models during supervision and the fact that bringing problems is construed as a positive thing to do.	Two participants noted that they believed group supervision should be led by a peer and not by a senior. One participant believed that this form of supervision should adhere to a clear structure. Another, that it can be confusing when several people are trying to give advice on a problem. One participant remarked that problematic cases were typically shared and successes weren't discussed during this forum. One participant felt that group supervision was not useful when they did not have a similar case to the one being discussed. Finally, a participant remarked that group supervision for SEPs would be useful.

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Peer supervision	Four participants commented on the value of peer supervision, with one associating this with reduced stress.	Two participants noted that they would like to access peer supervision but had not been able to.
Incidental supervision	Two participants noted that incidental supervision and colleagues' willingness to share resources was a strength of Greenshire EPS.	
General comments relating to supervision (type not specified by participant)	Comments made by participants suggest that they learn from supervision, that they gain emotional support from it and enjoy the opportunity to talk to colleagues and share their experiences.	Six participants stated that they believed that supervision should follow models and adhere to a structure. With another adding that expectations and boundaries should be regularly reviewed. One participant shared their view that supervision should cover emotional wellbeing.

Table 1. Participants' responses to elaborate the components of supervision they see as strengths and any ways in which they believe supervision could be improved.

As can be seen, some participants stated that models of supervision should be better understood and utilised; that individual supervision should be more regular and that consideration should be given to the fact that individual, and sometimes group, supervision is carried out by a senior colleague.

5.5 How useful do colleagues feel whole-service meetings are and how could they be improved?

Questionnaire item	Mean response
Overall, how useful do you feel professional development meetings are? (1 very useful; 7 =not at all useful)	2.42

Table 4. Mean response to question about whole-service meetings
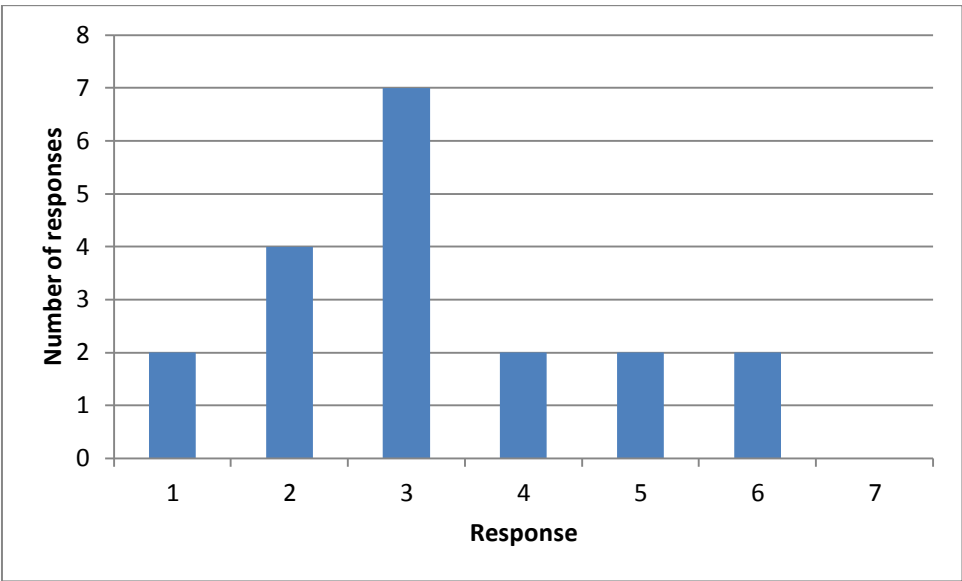
Graph 7. Responses to 'overall how useful do you feel professional development meetings are?'

The majority of participants found whole-service meetings to be useful. Responses elaborating the components of professional development meetings they found useful and ways in which they felt they could be improved were grouped into themes and are collated

in Box 1. Again, it is important to note that some service members did not assert that they

found professional development meetings to be useful.

Strengths of professional development meetings highlighted by participants could be grouped into two overarching themes, learning and meeting up.

Learning
Most participant stated that whole service meetings offered an opportunity to learn about:
- Courses colleagues had attended
- Research projects that had been carried out
- Interventions colleagues are using
- Changes within the service and the local authority context

Appreciative Inquiry
Two participants noted that they valued the Appreciative Inquiry activities which had taken place in this forum during the previous academic year.

Meeting up
Four participants noted that whole service meetings offered an opportunity for members of all three teams to be together.

Improvements which respondents said could be made to whole service meetings.

'Information overload'
Three participants remarked that there was a lot of information to consider during whole-service meetings and that limited time for reflection could lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed.

Focus
Two participants noted that they believed there was too much focus on changes within the local authority and not enough focus on input about psychological research and interventions.

Box. 1. Participants' responses to which components of whole service meetings they

see as strengths and any ways in which they considered these could be improved.

Responses suggest that EPs considered that whole-service meetings offered a useful learning

opportunity and that time spent with colleagues was valued. Praise was also given to a

recent Appreciative Inquiry activity (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1995) which had taken place

across the service. Three participants said that these meetings can feel overwhelming (in terms of the number of issues discussed and limited time for reflection). Some additional comments were made about the content of these meetings, with those who did refer to this saying that they preferred input which was psychological in nature rather than input focussing on local authority changes.

5.6 How useful do colleagues consider team meetings to be, and how could they be improved?

Questionnaire item	Mean response
Overall, how useful do you feel team briefings/ meetings are? (1 very useful; 7 =not at all useful)	3.21

Table 5. Mean response to question about team meetings
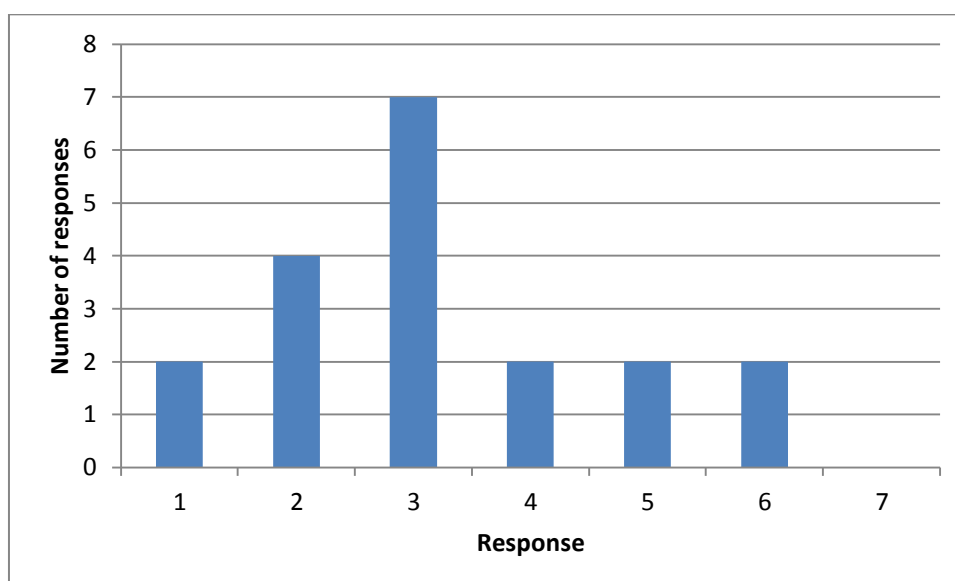
Graph 8. Responses to 'Overall, how useful do you feel team briefings/meetings are?'

Scores given by respondents on the Likert rating scales suggest that team meetings are thought to be less useful than whole-service meetings. However, additional comments made by participants (See Box 3) suggest that they are still valued and recognised as an opportunity to exchange information and 'touch base' with colleagues.

Areas for improvement centred around time keeping, the lack of minutes and the variability

with which information from the psychology steering group was disseminated.

Strengths of team meetings highlighted by participants could be grouped into two overarching themes, exchanging information and meeting with colleagues.

Information exchange
Six participants stated that team meetings offered an opportunity to gain information about changes. In addition to this two noted that team meetings offered an opportunity to share their views on these changes.

'Touching base'
Eight participants' responses suggest that they enjoy the opportunity to spend time with colleagues that team meetings afford. Respondents noted the 'nurturing ethos' and the opportunity to 'feel like a team' whilst others referred to the 'collaborative' and 'supportive' nature within which ideas were shared.

Improvements participants believed should be made to team meetings:

Time keeping
Despite many participants remarking on the value of team meetings, eight participants noted that time keeping was an issue. Two queried whether some of the information could be shared over email whilst others referred to the way in which the time was used, stating their view that not enough time was spent on discussing ideas and changes.

Minutes
Two participants noted that they would like minutes for team meetings to be taken and circulated.

Consistency with information shared between teams
Two participants remarked on the need for the same information to be given to all three teams.

Finally one participant felt that team meetings could become a 'little negative'.

Box 2. Participants' responses indicating the components of team meetings they see

as strengths and ways in which they believe meetings could be improved.

<u>5.7 Additional comment on how far Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation</u>

Finally, participants were given the opportunity to add further comments on how far they

feel Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation and / or their views on service maintenance

activities. Again this were grouped into comments about strengths and areas for

improvement and within this whether they referred to learning organisation theory

generally, one of Senge's five disciplines, or service maintenance activities (See Box 3).

Participants' additional reflections on how far they feel Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation and how they view the utility of the service maintenance activities currently in place.

Positive comments:

Learning organisation
"I feel the EPS is a very strong learning organisation – this is dependent upon/created by the culture and ethos of the service which is again dependent upon the skills and attitudes of <u>all</u> service members"
"… with XX as PEP the ethos of the service is already very participative and inclusive"

Personal Mastery
"I feel I am able to continually develop my skills on a personal level and this is a real strength of Greenshire EPS"
"…especially in terms of CPD, it's one of the things I value most about Greenshire"

Service maintenance activity
"I value the high quality of and variety of service maintenance activity, always useful and relevant"

Comments about areas for improvement:

Shared vision / co construction of vision
"It would be good to establish a shared vision through all the changes happening (e.g. using the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) across the service"
"I definitely feel we could easily be an excellent example of a L.O. with a few 'tweaks' ie more consultation / co-construction of vision and policies"

"There needs to be mechanisms like this for us to raise concerns/difficulties we are experiencing in our EP role and to problem solve as a service."
"Also, it would be good to talk more about changes to service delivery before it happens and to problem solve in a team (whole service) about how to manage this 'on the ground' in our daily interactions with schools, e.g. moving to buy-back model TME, PBAs, core/non-core etc. etc. e.g. how to manage difficult conversations with schools

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developing scripts, responding to difficult questions – and to be prepared to know these things before the school does"

Time constraints
Two participants remarked that pressures on their time were impacting upon their ability to access and utilise service maintenance activities.

Systems thinking
"I feel there may be ways forward in terms of systems thinking – perhaps not an area that we think about much"

Team building activities
"…and perhaps to have more team-building activities and shared projects across the whole service to get to know other teams and share good practice and work we are proud of/resources and ways of work we use regularly e.g. consultation frameworks, therapeutic resources."

Box 3. Participants' additional reflections

5.8 Summary of findings

The graphs above illustrate that there was a wide distribution of responses. Further scrutiny

of the data suggests that, although some negative responses are given to the six questions

relating to Senge's disciplines, there were no respondents who consistently offered low

ratings to these. Satisfaction seems to vary across dimensions and disciplines. The figure

below illustrates this: red indicates that the participant gave a negative response (numbers

5-7 on the Likert scale), green that they gave a positive response (numbers 1-3) and orange

highlights neutral responses (number 4) to Likert rating scales

Participant	PM	PM	SV	SV	TL	TL	PDM	TM
1	green	green	red	yellow	red	green	red	green
2	yellow	green	red	green	yellow	red	green	yellow
3	green	green	red	green	red	green	green	yellow
4	yellow	yellow	red	green	red	red	green	green
5	green	green	green	green	green	green	green	green
6	green	green	red	green	green	green	green	green
7	red	green	green	green	green	green	green	green
8	green	green	green	green	yellow	green	green	green
9	green	yellow	green	green	green	green	green	green
10	green	green	green	green	green	green	green	green
11	green	green	green	green	green	green	green	green
12	green	yellow	yellow	yellow	green	green	yellow	green
13	green	green	yellow	green	green	green	green	green
14	green	green	green	green	green	green	yellow	green
15	green	green	green	green	yellow	green	green	red
16	green	yellow	yellow	green	green	green	green	red
17	green	green	yellow	green	red	green	red	red
18	green	green	red	yellow	red	green	green	red
19	green	green	red	green	yellow	green	green	green

PM – questions relating to personal mastery
SV- shared vision
TL – team learning
PDM – professional development meetings
TM – team meetings

Figure 1. A chart illustrating participants responses.

The majority of employees of Greenshire EPS believe that the discipline of personal mastery is well established within the organisation and that service members support each other well in learning. Attention should now be given to ensuring that a vision is co-constructed and that service members engage in discussion about the outcomes of their work.   Service maintenance activities are valued but areas for further improvement were outlined in participants' responses. It seems that many participants shared the view of one participant who said that Greenshire EPS "could easily be an excellent example of a learning

organisation with a few 'tweaks' i.e. more consultation / co-construction of vision and policies".

6. NEXT STEPS FOR GREENSHIRE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

6.1 Feeding back

Findings and recommendations were fed back to the service in several ways. I gave a presentation to the psychology steering group and prepared an executive summary (Appendix 4) which was presented to the whole service. Each member of the service was given a copy of the executive summary and had the opportunity to access an electronic copy of the full summary of responses (Appendix 3).

Following presentations to the psychology steering group and the whole service, colleagues were given the opportunity to respond to my interpretation of the findings and consider a way forward in light of this.

6.2 An evaluation tool

The PEP of Greenshire EPS has suggested that the questionnaire may be used year on year as part of a wider evaluation process (which currently includes questionnaires to schools, to parents and the use of target monitoring and evaluation (TME) for work with schools).

Cherry (1998) recommends that how far members of an EPS feel they are part of a learning organisation should form part of a service's self-evaluation and this would seem an appropriate use of the tool developed for this research. As Cherry states, an evaluation process 'opens up possibilities for staff involvement and genuinely reflective practice (p. 126) and this encapsulates what a learning organisation strives to do.

6.3 Changes to the data collection tool

As with all research it is important to reflect upon the process undertaken and consider whether any flaws will have had an impact upon the findings. With hindsight the questionnaire should have been piloted since there were flaws within it that a pilot would have highlighted. If the questionnaire were to be re-administered I would suggest the following amendments:

- Strengths and weaknesses for individual / group / peer supervision should be addressed in separate questionnaire items; this would ease the process of data analysis and reduce ambiguity: for example, when one respondent wrote that "expectations and boundaries are not regularly reviewed" is was not possible to discern if s/he meant in one particular form of supervision or in all supervision s/he accessed.

- It would be useful to establish what service members identify as the goals of supervision; how useful they consider these forms of supervision to be could then be quantified, as was done for whole-service meetings and team meetings.

- Using this as a pilot study, a series of options could be given for questions such as 'In which forum do you express your opinions on policies and procedures?' with a space for 'other' responses, not listed. This would reduce the time need to complete the questionnaire and analyse the responses.

- For Likert scale questions the sides on which 'strongly agree' and 'strongly disagree' should be reversed since these were not presented in the conventional manner and this may have been confusing for respondents.

- Dependent on how long the questionnaire could be, consideration could be given to the other two disciplines outlined by Senge, mental models and systems thinking.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1 Learning organisations: a way forward for EP services?

Following the presentation of these findings to members of Greenshire EPS, a decision will be made about how far the organisation will change in an attempt to encompass learning organisation principles.

It will have been clear within the literature review that I and many educational psychologists believe that EP services should aim to be learning organisations. As Jenson (2002) states, this will not require a new skill set, more the application of existing skills (such as the ability to apply systems theory and reflect on their own assumptions) to the organisation within which they work.

Following the initial presentation to the service one senior EP remarked that a learning organisation fostered good mental health; Hedderly (1997), Leadbetter (2000) and Rowland (2002) suggest that this is likely to be the case and that a learning organisation approach will benefit not only the EP service, but the EPs within it.

Furthermore, many of the disciplines outlined by Senge are those that we encourage school staff and colleagues to practise on a daily basis, in case work and also if organisational work is undertaken (Harrison et al, 1996). Whilst Greenshire EPS is clearly practising some of Senge's disciplines, it would be advisable to make small adjustments to the service so that EPs, who will then be members of a learning organisation themselves, will be better placed to advise school staff and other colleagues. As noted in the literature review it is Bracher's (2002) vision that EP services will operate as learning organisations and then be able to work with local authorities, such as Greenshire County Council, to help members of the wider

organisation consider the local authority within the context of learning organisation approaches.

Since EP services are undergoing a period of change (AEP, 2011) and experiencing a greater need for professional accountability (Dunsmuir et al., 2009) , now is an appropriate time to give further consideration to how far EP services are learning organisations and what changes can be made to facilitate them moving closer towards become learning organisations. However, it is important to be aware that others may contest this assertion. Learning organisations have a participative style of management but one participant in this study alluded to the fact that it may not always be possible for all decisions to be shared and for visions to be co-constructed:

> 'We perhaps have a tendency as EPs to need or want to debate/discuss/share opinion. We are often working alone and team meetings are a forum for commenting / offloading. But a balance needs to be kept between action and reflection....as a group we need to be aware of the point that EPs don't like to just accept info. Sometimes we might need to in order for action to be agreed. I am concerned at times that our need for debate delays the agreeing action stage or limits meetings'

A paradox exists here, where, on the one hand, there seems to be a consensus (amongst writers and participants in this study) that a learning organisation is desirable but what is highlighted by the quote is a suggestion that perhaps not all visions and decisions can be communal. It seems that the participant quoted above would see Senge's emphasis on 'dialogue' (honest and open discussion about mental models and assumptions that we bring to our work) as delaying action. This brings to mind the reflection made by Fenwick (1997) that when considering learning organisations we must also consider who holds the power and who stands to benefit from decisions made. It may be that a hierarchical organisation can never truly be a learning organisation since one member or a group of members is charged with making decisions and being accountable for them.

In addition to the fact the EP services are hierarchical organisations, how far they can become learning organisations may also be affected by the fact that they do not have a 'product'. Whilst Hedderly (1997) would challenge this claim, and Senge, in applying learning organisation theory to schools, believes that the approach can be applied to organisations without products, this warrants further consideration. It is also worth considering that services such as the one discussed in this paper are not independent organisations, but sit within the complex structure of local authorities, where constraints will be imposed upon the service by the local authority.

By commissioning and taking part in this research Greenshire EPS have begun to consider how far their members feel they are a part of a learning organisation, this is a first step, now closer consideration will need to be given to whether or not changes need to and can take place to ensure that the organisation is practicing all five disciplines outlined by Senge.

7.2 Reflections on the project

The remit of this project was largely donated by the PEP and this had implications for the conceptualisation of the project. The research questions were a reflection of the information which the principal wanted to find out about the service. Had this not been a commissioned piece of work, it may have been interesting instead to have considered how service members understood learning organisations and whether or not they saw them as an aspirational form of organisation, before going on to consider whether they saw Greenshire Educational Psychology Service as moving towards becoming a learning organisation. Since this was not within the remit of this project, I gave a presentation to service members prior to administering the questionnaire which gave Dixon's definition and outlined Senge's view of learning organisations as outlined by his discussion of the five disciplines.

The constraints imposed upon this project mean that I have focussed on only three of Senge's five disciplines. The disciplines of systems thinking and mental models have not been explored. It could be said then, that the criticism I aimed at Harrison et al's work (stating that they focussed on personal learning as opposed to focussing on organisational learning and development) could be directed toward my own work outlined here. However, what has been offered here is not an answer regarding whether or not Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation but, instead, an account of how far members of Greenshire EPS feel their service practises the disciplines of team learning, shared vision and personal mastery. Should I have set out to consider how far the EPS was a learning organisation I would have needed to have looked for evidence of Senge's disciplines in practice with a particular focus on seeking examples of double-loop learning.

In addition to this, the project had two differing foci: learning organisation theory and service maintenance activities. How far the two are linked was not clear at the beginning of the project. However, in responding to questions about team learning and shared vision, many participants referred to service maintenance activities playing a role in the practice of these two disciplines. For example, participants stated that they supported each other in learning new skills during team meetings and whole-service meetings. This supports my earlier assertion that if Greenshire EPS can be considered to be a learning organisation this would be evident in their service maintenance activity.

8. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In carrying out this research my aim was to answer the question of whether or not EPs working for Greenshire EPS felt they were members of a learning organisation and to elicit their views on service maintenance activities. I have been able to conclude that Greenshire EPS has some characteristics necessary for being a learning organisation but that further

work could be done to ensure that visions are clear and that all service members have an opportunity to shape these. As stated previously these findings will be unique to Greenshire and not generalizable to other services; however, I hope that, with a few adjustments, the tool will be of continued use to Greenshire EPS as an evaluative measure (assuming they chose to move closer towards becoming a learning organisation) and perhaps the tool, or this paper, will be of use to other EP services wishing to embark on a similarly reflective process.

Appendix 1: <u>The questionnaire administered</u>

Greenshire Educational Psychology Service (EPS)

Senge (1990) defines a learning organisation as *"an organization where people continually expand*
their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are
nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn
together"

We are interested in gaining your views on how far you feel Greenshire EPS can be considered to be a learning organisation and, linked to this, your views on service maintenance activities such as supervision, team briefings/team meetings and PDMs.

The questionnaire is anonymous and should take no more than twenty minutes to complete. The results will be shared with the Psychology Steering Group and will contribute towards one of my Professional Practice Reports for University.

1. During the past twelve months I have developed as a psychologist

    Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

2. I can exert influence on how I do my job

    Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

3. During the past 12 months, in what forums have you expressed your opinions on policies and procedures?

4. My opinion matters when policies and procedures are being considered

    Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

5. Overall, I think the EPS has a clear vision

    Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

6. As a service we regularly talk about the outcomes of our work

    Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

6b. In what forums are you able to do this?

7. As a service we support each other in learning new skills
     Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

7b. In what forum are you able to do this?

8. Please indicate which forms of supervision you have accessed during the past 12 months?

| Group supervision | | Peer supervision | |
| Individual supervision with a senior colleague | | Other (please state) | |

8b. Please elaborate on what components you see as strengths, and any ways in which you feel supervision could be improved

9. Overall, how useful do you feel Professional Development Meetings (PDM) are?
     Very useful   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Not at all useful

9b. Please elaborate on what components you see as strengths, and any ways in which you feel they could be improved

10. Overall, how useful do you feel team briefings/team meetings are?
     Very useful   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Not at all useful

10b. Please elaborate on what components you see as strengths and any ways in which you feel they could be improved?

11. Please add any further comments on how far you feel Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation and/or your views on service maintenance activity.

Appendix 2: A table detailing where the research questions are addressed within the questionnaire

Research Question	Where addressed within questionnaire
• To what extent do colleagues feel they are improving their level of expertise in order to achieve desired goals? (Personal Mastery)	• Questions 1 and 2
• To what extent do colleagues feel they can contribute towards developing the principles and guiding practice of the EPS, and in what forums can they do this? (Shared vision)	• Questions 3, 4 and 5
• To what extent do colleagues feel that they learn with their team in order to achieve results that they could not achieve individually? (Team learning)	• Questions 6 and 7
• How do colleagues feel supervision systems in place could be improved?	• Question 8
• How useful do colleagues feel PDMs are and how could they be improved?	• Question 9
• How useful do colleagues feel team meetings are and how could they be improved?	• Question 10

1. **During the past twelve months I have developed as a psychologist**

   Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

   Mean response: 2.58

2. **I can exert influence on how I do my job**

   Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

   Mean response: 2.58

3. **During the past 12 months, in what forums have you expressed your opinions on policies and procedures?**

Forum	Number of participants who listed forum
Team briefing/Team meetings	16
Professional development meetings (PDM)	9
Personal contact with SEP/PEP/OM	5
Group supervision	4
Supervision with senior	4
Psychology Steering Group (PSG)	3
Informally with other EPs	2
AEP meetings	2
Appreciative inquiry (AI) work	2
Conferences	1
CASBAT	1
Pre-school forum	1
BOLD briefing	1
Management meeting	1
CAMHS review	1
University	1
DECP	1
Personal contact with SEN services representative	1
Over-prescription of DSM V	1

Additional comments:
- "Lack of influence is due to factors outside EPS"

4. **My opinion matters when policies and procedures are being considered**

Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

Mean response 3.89

5. **I think the EPS has a clear perspective – for example on how we deliver services to schools**

Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

Mean response 2.37

6. **As a service we regularly talk about the outcomes of our work**

Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

Mean response 3.32

6b. In what forums are you able to do this?

Forum	Number of participants who listed forum
Supervision	10
Tem briefing / Team meeting	9
PDMs	9
Incidental conversations with colleagues in the office	5
Group supervision	5
Peer supervision	3
Questionnaires to school written up and redistributed	2
Personal contact with SEP and PEP	1
SRDs	1
Praise emails from SEPs	1
On an individual level with schools	1
PSG	1

Additional comments:
- "We touch upon this in team meetings but I don't think we discuss it as much as we could. I think we need more feedback from schools if we are to achieve this."

- "Team meetings – to an extent.   PDMs – more so. "
- "PDMs for some EPs / some types of work "
- "Some times in PDMs, for example if people are presenting the results of their project work"

7. As a service we support each other in learning new skills

Strongly agree   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Strongly disagree

Mean response 2.47

7b.   In what forum are you able to do this?

Forum	Number of participants who listed forum
PDMs	16
Group supervision	9
Incidental conversations with colleagues in the office	7
Peer supervision	4
Supervision	3
Being able to go on courses	3
Team meetings	2
Joint training and planning	2
U-drive	2
SRDs	1
CBT supervision	1

8. Please indicate which forms of supervision you have accessed during the past 12 months?

Group supervision	94% (18)	Peer supervision	68% (13)
Individual supervision with a senior colleague	100% (19)		

Other**:**

- Incidental conversations with peers (2)
- CBT supervision (1)

8b. Please elaborate on what components you see as strengths and any ways in which you feel supervision could be improved.

Strengths:

Group

- "Group supervision is an excellent form of learning as have access to very experienced colleagues who are open to sharing their views and ideas and supporting my learning and development"
- "Group supervision is a strength"
- "Resourcefulness and solution focused nature of group supervision"
- "Use of peer supervision models"
- "Seen as a positive to bring problems/questions/cases we're stuck on"

Peer

- "Peer supervision reduces stress levels"
- "Peer supervision has been an excellent development"
- "Peer supervision is a strength"
- "Peer supervision and group supervision very valuable"

Incidental

- "Incidental supervision is a real strength as we have a supportive team with a wide range of strengths"
- "People's willingness to answer questions/send things/share knowledge/resources: group knowledge and experience base is a great resource"

General

- "Exploration to solution focussed thinking"
- "Fulfils resourcing function"
- "Offering ideas/advice/reassurance"
- "Emotional support"
- "Opportunities to discuss complex cases"
- "Touching base with colleagues – it is a lonely job otherwise"
- "Good to share experiences with colleagues"

Improvements:

Group

- "Group supervision could be better if it was led by a peer not a senior due to power dynamics"

- "Could be improved if it was more democratic i.e. team person led rather than line manager led feels very managerial at the moment as opposed to educative/supportive/developing"
- "Clearer structure for group supervision – return to the model we used some years ago
- "Group supervision for seniors"
- "Group supervision is good for gaining alternative perspectives but sometimes can be confusing when a lot of people are trying to help you all at the same time"
- "Often share when we've been stuck on a case not when we've been successful"
- "Group supervision is not always useful if you don't have a particularly similar case"

Peer
- "I would like to develop peer supervision as I have not accessed this in a formal way"
- "Would like to access peer supervision, but part time"

Individual
- "Individual supervision with a senior is not very regular"
- "Protected time for individual supervision – it isn't always and in a stressful job it is stressful to have to chase supervision. Also we all cope with stress in different ways and some people are least likely to speak up or ask for help unless previously agreed and protected in the diary"
- "Line management supervision could have greater structure and follow models"

General
- "Sometimes supervision can feel more like a general update than a space to explore things in depth or to a framework. Maybe it is my fault for not asking he right thing, following presentation today about supervisee responsibilities"
- "Expectations and boundaries are not regularly reviewed"
- "Use of psychological models, skilled questioning, encouraging me to come up with my own solutions, use of psychological theory"
- "Cover our emotional wellbeing and how we are coping with the job/personal issues as well as professional / job-related"
- "It would be helpful is psychologists felt free/supportive to donate the type of supervision style they preferred during a given supervision session, as well as generally"
- "More structure to supervision"
- "Ensuring it takes place regularly"
- "It would be good if managers / supervisors applied Nick Bozic's model"
- "Adherence to guidance (e.g. contracts)"
- "Use of models"
- "Review models of supervision and equality i.e. peer element vs. managerial"

9. Overall, how useful do you feel Professional Development Meetings (PDM) are?

Very useful   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Not at all useful

Mean response 2.42

9b. Please elaborate on what components you find useful and any ways in which you feel they could be improved

Strengths:

<u>Learning</u>

- "Share ideas and listen to new speakers"
- "People feeding back on courses they've been on or areas of specialism"
- "Outside trainers coming in"
- "New initiatives people have been working on"
- "New interventions"
- "Action research"
- "Sharing practice"
- "Developing knowledge"
- "Interesting to learn of areas I wouldn't normally come across"
- "Regularity"
- "Informed of service changes"
- "Wider context updates are important"
- "PPR feedback helps to keep our research minds in gear (still)!"
- "Any inputs which relate directly to practice are real strengths and very important"
- "Useful for information sharing, good forum to share training and research people have conducted"
- "Keeping in touch with LA developments and service policies and opportunity for contributing to formation of these in discussion with peers"
- "Professional development – learning from visiting speakers"
- "Keeping up with changes, development of skills/training"
- "Sharing resources"
- "Presentations on things relevant to our practice (e.g. useful tools)"
- "Sharing good practice and new ideas is a strength"
- "Ensuring information exchange and that we are all 'in the loop' especially in the current climate of rapid change"
- "Sharing examples of interesting/good practice that can refresh or inspire our own work and stop us getting to set in our ways and unaware of alternatives practised by colleagues"
- "Getting access to other people's ideas/work is really positive"

<u>Meeting up</u>

- "Meeting up with colleagues"
- "Good to see the whole service and to stay away from work for a while"
- "Meet as a whole team, feel like a whole service"
- "Touching base with colleagues from other offices – don't see them much otherwise"

<u>Appreciative Inquiry</u>

- "AI"
- "AI updates feedback is very useful"

<u>General</u>

- "Well led, coordinated and opportunity to meet everyone, Julian is great!"
- "Lots of input on different themes"
- "Freedom to discuss, give views"

Improvements:

<u>'Information overload'</u>

- "Can feel quite intense, lots of information to take on board without time for reflection"
- "Limiting the information overload – meetings can be very intense and at times disheartening in relation to wider LA changes and challenges. Could mean more effective follow-up, debrief and peer/senior support processing information and its implications"
- Sometimes there is too much to digest in one session"

<u>Focus</u>

- "Sometimes the important but not very psychological WCC stuff takes over. I much prefer the psychological ones"
- "Some very useful some not at all: find professional development issues very useful e.g. NLP presentation. Don't find LA type issues – these could just be sent as an email!"

<u>General</u>

- "Skill and expertise of colleagues isn't fully utilised at PDM"
- "More outside speakers RE: new strategies, techniques, approaches to update practice"
- "Not always in Worcester – it's a long way!"

- "More time for three services to meet informally i.e. team building exercises, shared lunches in PDM time, not as an add on"
- "Opportunity for local updates / sharing info / meeting with wider EPS"
- "They could be improved by clearer aims about what each component is trying to achieve for us as a service"

10. Overall, how useful do you feel team briefings are?

Very useful   1   2   3   4   5   6   7   Not at all useful

Mean response 3.21

10b. Please elaborate on what components you find useful and any ways in which you feel they could be improved?

Strengths:

Information exchange

- "Ensuring information exchange and that we are all in the loop with changes relevant to our team and daily practice (admin changes etc.)"
- "Good way of disseminating information, opportunity for discussion"
- "Information sharing – minutes very helpful"
- "Sharing concerns, frustrations"
- "Going over certain aspects of job (e.g. new policies) that need to be clarified"
- "Information from PSG transmitted to team"

'Touching base'

- "Touching base with colleagues and sharing experiences/debriefing/encouraging each other"
- "Simply taking the time to meet in a safe place and be with each other"
- "Wonderful to touch base with colleagues"
- "Nurturing ethos"
- "Feel like a team"
- "Culture of sharing practice / ideas. I like the collaborative ethos in these meetings"
- "They bring the team together which is important when everyone is busy working in their own schools"
- "Sharing of experiences"
- "Peer support"

<u>General</u>

- "Minute taking"
- "A rotating chair"

Improvements:

<u>Time keeping</u>

- "Time keeping: focus on actual topic that is being discussed"
- "Can be lengthy with many team members contributing"
- "More time to discuss our thoughts on PSG and have our thoughts fed back"
- "Info sharing aspect good, but not much time allowed to this e.g. would be good if more opportunities to share / discuss 'good' practice / ideas etc – again the more democratic the better"
- "Better if less time on information give, this could be done through email, more time on discussion of professional issues etc"
- Stuff can be shared via email easily, they do provide a forum to discuss issues in more depth but they're usually more logistical/office based and so don't always need to be done face to face"
- "Query whether some info can be e-mailed"
- "Most information could be shared via email"

<u>Minutes</u>

- "Need to have minutes to refer back to"
- "Useful for part timers if meeting notes were emailed"

<u>General</u>

- "Useful for info sharing but I don't really learn from them"
- "Ensuring the same information is passed out in all area teams"
- "Would be good to share good practice and resources"
- "Don't always feel that information from PSG is filtered down"
- "Can get a bit negative"
- "Clarification on information giving versus opinion seeking/consultation might be helpful. But we perhaps have a tendency as EPs to need or want to debate/discuss/share opinion. We are often working alone and team meetings are a forum for commenting / offloading. But a balance needs to be kept between action and reflection. Is group supervision more reflective and team meetings more for action agreeing? As a group we need to be aware of the Senge point that EPs don't like to just accept info. Sometimes we might need to in order for action to be agreed. I am concerned at times that our need for debate delays the agreeing action stage or limits meetings"

11. Please add any further comments on how far you feel Greenshire EPS is a learning organisation and/or your views on service maintenance activity.

Comments about strengths

Learning organisation

- "I feel WEPS is a very strong learning organisation – this is dependent upon/created by the culture and ethos of the service which is again dependent upon the skills and attitudes of all service members"
- "However, with JR as PEP the ethos of the service is already very participative and inclusive"

Personal Mastery

- "I feel I am able to continually develop my skills on a personal level and this is a real strength of Worcs EPS."
- "Yes, especially in terms of CPD, it's one of the things I value most about (but haven't worked anywhere else so don't have anything to compare it to!) ☺ "

Service maintenance activity

- "Value the high quality of and variety of service maintenance activity, always useful and relevant"

General

- "FAB!!!"

Comments about areas for improvement

Shared vision / co construction

- "Perhaps questions wishing to consult us could be emailed"
- "It would be good to establish a shared vision through all the changes happening (e.g. using the Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) across the service"
- "I definitely feel we could easily be an excellent example of a L.O. with a few 'tweaks' ie more consultation / co-construction of vision and policies"
- "There needs to be mechanisms like this for us to raise concerns/difficulties we are experiencing in our EP role and to problem solve as a service."
- "Also, it would be good to talk more about changes to service delivery before it happens and to problem solve in a team (whole service) about how to manage this 'on the ground' in our daily interactions with schools, e.g. moving to buy-back model TME, PBAs, core/non-core etc. etc. e.g. how to manage difficult conversations with

schools developing scripts, responding to difficult questions – and to be prepared to know these things before the school does"

Shared vision / co- construction and appreciative inquiry

- "I think it could become more of an L.O. if there were more AI type activities which meant policy and procedure was more bottom-up."
- "Useful to review e.g. via AI been some recent positive developments. Perhaps a regular slot for review. "

Constraints (time and administration)

- "Some developments feel hampered by inconsistent / supportive admin. "
- "SMA – don't feel I have enough time, e.g. not sure if weekly timetable does apply – need more admin/travel time etc"
- "Service maintenance aspects such as admin can feel unmanageable which can impact on peer supervision. Time needs to be better protected"

Systems thinking

- "I feel there may be ways forward in terms of systems thinking – perhaps not an area that we think about much "

Team building activities

- "…and perhaps to have more team-building activities and shared projects across the whole service to get to know other teams and share good practice and work we are proud of/resources and ways of work we use regularly e.g. consultation frameworks, therapeutic resources."

Miscellaneous

- "Purchase of Evidence Based Assessments"
- "Planning of evidence based courses (Early Help)"
- "Open-Honest discussions"

Appendix 4: <u>Executive Summary</u>

<u>Learning Organisation Approaches and Service Maintenance Activity within Worcestershire EPS: A Summary</u>

Do members of Worcestershire EPS feel that they are part of a learning organisation?

EPs working within Worcestershire feel that they develop as psychologists and exert influence on how they do their jobs. Opportunities for learning and CPD are seen as strengths of the service and many EPs rate the service maintenance activities, which they undertake, highly.

How far EPs in Worcestershire feel they have the opportunity to shape the vision of the EPS is more questionable (although the mean score still fell on the positive end of the rating scale). Whilst EPs feel their opinions do matter and that the service is inclusive and participative, additional comments lead me to believe that this is an area for further development.

Participants stated that the extent to which a shared vision exists could be improved upon by more consultation; suggestions for how this could be done were: by emailing questions to the service for consideration; by carrying out a PATH with the whole service; by providing a mechanism for colleagues to raise any concerns they may have, by entering into group problem solving and reflection; and by the introduction of more appreciative inquiry activities.

EPs believed that they support each other in learning new skills; the mean response to a second question about team learning suggests that they do not agree to the same extent that as a service they regularly talk about the outcomes of their work. Consideration needs to be given to how this can happen more frequently.   One EP remarked that they feel they need more feedback from schools in order to do this, another reflected that PDMs only offer a reflection on particular types of work.   Answers to questions around service maintenance activities reflect a view held by some participants that good work is not always celebrated or shared.

What are members' views on the service maintenance activities currently in place?

Supervision is clearly valued by members of the service, particularly peer supervision. Many participants also remarked on the value of what they termed 'incidental' supervision from colleagues.

In terms of improvements to the supervision process, there was some consensus that models / frameworks for supervision should be better understood and utilised; that individual supervision should be more regular (or at least protected) and that consideration should be given to the fact that individual (and sometimes group) supervision is carried out

by a senior colleague as opposed to a peer. One respondent remarked that they felt group supervision for seniors would be useful.

On the whole EPs felt that PDMs were useful and that they learnt from these; enjoyed the opportunity to spend times with colleagues and that activities such as the appreciative inquiry the service had recently undertaken were positive.

Three participants remarked that these meetings can be overwhelming (in terms of the amount discussed and the limited time for reflection). Additional comments were made about the content of PDMs, with those who commented on this saying that they preferred input which was psychological in nature rather than input focussing on local authority issues. One participant stated that the PDMs should not always be held in Worcester and, another, that there should be more time for service members to meet informally (during PDM time, not as an 'add on').

Scores suggest that team briefings or meetings are felt to be less useful than PDMs although they are still valued and recognised as an opportunity to exchange information and 'touch base' with colleagues.

Areas for improvement for team meetings centred on time keeping, the lack of minutes and the variability with which information from PSG was passed on by seniors to team members.

Recommendations

Should staff within Worcestershire EPS wish to move closer towards being a learning organisation and improve service maintenance practices currently in place, I suggest that consideration be given to the following;

1. Processes through which EP participation in decision making could be strengthened should be considered and trialled.
2. Processes should be in place so that outcomes of work are discussed beyond individual supervision, they can then act as learning opportunities for the whole service.
3. Individual supervision should be protected and, should supervisees wish, time should be given to agreeing on an appropriate model of supervision.
4. Further input on possible models of supervision should be offered.
5. Further time should be spent exploring colleagues feelings and views around individual supervision being carried out by a senior colleague, **or** opportunities for peer supervision should be extended across the service.
6. Consideration should be given to the balance between PDM input which has a CPD element and that which is informing colleagues about local authority changes, ensuring that all EPs feel that they have the opportunity to share their work should they wish.
7. Systems should be in place to ensure that team meetings / team briefings are a valid use of time; minutes should be circulated following team meetings.

8. A system should be established to ensure that all colleagues receive the same information from PSG.

Conclusions

Worcestershire EPS has much to be proud about: the disciplines of personal mastery and team learning appear to already be established and a shared vision is emerging. That said, additional steps towards becoming a learning organisation could be taken, particularly through ensuring that decision making is participative.

Service maintenance activities are clearly valued within the service but, with small changes, could be improved.

In summary, I echo one participant's assertion that Worcestershire "could easily be an excellent example of a [learning organisation] with a few 'tweaks' i.e. more consultation / co-construction of vision and policies"

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Professional Practice Report 3:

ELCITING THE VIEWS OF YOUNG PEOPLE DURING INDIVIDUAL CASEWORK

ABSTRACT

In my final year as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP) I carried out a piece of individual casework in a secondary school. It was established that the aim of this work was to help school staff to understand why Tristan (pseudonym) was not engaging in lessons. I embarked on this work hoping to engage Tristan in a series of one to one meetings and elicit the constructs he held which were impacting upon his view of the world. This transpired to be problematic. I encountered difficulties engaging Tristan and this placed limitations on the utility of the work carried out. Despite this, I argue that eliciting the views of children and young people is an important component of casework and one that EPs should endeavour to retain regardless of the changing political context and changes to models of service delivery. Within this professional practice report I explore literature considering the reasons why EPs elicit the views of children and young people; how EPs elicit these views and the difficulties which can be encountered along the way.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Professional Practice Context

Educational psychologists (EPs) working in school settings engage in activities at a number of levels: individual casework, group work and whole-school work (Farrell et al, 2006). This report, the third of my professional practice reports, takes as its focus a piece of individual casework I became involved with during my final year of training to be an EP.

The role of the EP has been considered regularly by members of the profession, since Gilham's work in 1978. Some EPs believe systemic work to be a highly desirable area of EP practice (Leadbetter, 2000). However, responses to a survey sent to special educational needs coordinators (SENCos) suggest that they typically value individual assessment and advice giving (Ashton and Roberts, 2006).

Whilst debate within the profession about how EPs can best utilise their time looks set to continue, EPs employed by Greenshire educational psychology service (EPS) carry out individual casework amongst other activities. Greenshire EPS is a partially traded service. Schools have an amount of EP contact time paid for by the local authority, and thus free at the point of delivery, they then have the option to double the time they receive at a cost. This essentially means that half of the time given to schools who buy in additional hours is protected for statutory work, whilst the other half allows for non-core work to be carried out. Non-core work is defined in local authority documentation as 'early intervention and support, includes work at school action plus of the SEN Code of Practice and aims to prevent children and young people progressing to increasingly more specialist services'[1]. Non-core work is typically negotiated between school staff and the link EP at termly planning meetings and, in line with responses to the survey carried out by Ashton and Roberts (2006), many members of school staff prioritise individual casework for EP involvement.

Prior to my final year of training, I identified a professional development need to gain additional experience of working in a secondary setting. During my first year in Greenshire County Council I had one secondary school on my 'patch'. The school was a pupil referral unit and, for a variety of reasons, the work carried out there was predominantly systemic. Undertaking individual casework in this setting was problematic due to a number of factors.

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[1] Reference not given to preserve anonymity of local authority.

The attendance patterns of many of the young people were poor and some of the young people only remained on roll for limited periods before being reintegrated into mainstream schools.

For this reason, I liaised with a colleague who spent a day a week working in a secondary school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The majority of the work carried out in the school was individual casework and the EP working in the school was afforded significant amounts of time to get to know the young people she worked with in the setting.

During a termly planning meeting with the school, my colleague identified a young person that school staff wanted support with. It was in this context that I came to work with Tristan during my final year as a trainee educational psychologist (TEP).

1.2 The Case of Tristan

At the time of starting this work Tristan was 13 years old and had been known to the EPS for a little over seven years. Prior to beginning his placement at the EBD school he currently attends, Tristan had been on roll at three other schools (two primary schools and a secondary school). Tristan has had a statement of special educational need (SEN) since November 2011 and in December 2012 he was given a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (ASC) following an assessment by a multi-agency team of education and health professionals. Tristan also has a diagnosis of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and receives medication for this. Prior to my involvement Tristan had been subject to a child protection plan following an incident of sexual abuse. File notes suggest that Tristan may not have been offered appropriate support following this incident.

Tristan had been attending his current school for a term when a request was made to the school's EP for support. School staff reported that Tristan was not motivated and that they were finding it difficult to engage him during lessons. Staff reported that Tristan was more likely to complete his work early in the morning and with 1:1 support. Providing this level of support was unsustainable and school staff were aware of the need to develop Tristan's independence in classroom tasks.

During an initial consultation with the school's intervention manager, it was established that we would know that this work had been successful if school staff could understand why Tristan was not engaging in lessons. This would lead to staff feeling better placed to be able to motivate him.

The school Tristan attended often referred young people to their link EP for therapeutic work and they were planning to do so with Tristan after another term had passed. Because of this, an additional aim of my work was to formulate Tristan's needs to inform the approach taken by the school's EP when she commenced work with him.

It was important for me to engage Tristan in this work for a variety of reasons. Firstly, Tristan's history meant that he had been subject to a number of decisions which appeared to have been made for him (being subject to a child protection plan; placed on medication for ADHD; moved to a specialist provision) and as a result it was possible that he felt he lacked control in his life. For this reason, it was important that Tristan felt involved in this process which would ultimately lead to decisions being made about how best to meet his needs.

Secondly, as will be discussed further in the literature review, pupil participation has rightly come to the forefront of educational policy and practice and EPs have a legal and ethical obligation to seek the views of the children and young people they work with.

Thirdly, individual work being carried out directly with young people was a model of service delivery which staff at the school Tristan attended were familiar with. Because this was a single piece of work I was carrying out on behalf of a colleague, it was important that it fitted within established boundaries of service delivery.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, my work as a TEP has been guided by the theoretical propositions of personal construct psychology (PCP) and therefore direct work with children is always intrinsic to my formulation of needs. Whilst some services and EPs may favour a consultative model of service delivery (Leadbetter, 2000), I have always met with children and young people at least once when I have been supporting schools to meet children's needs so that I can begin to consider how they construe the world and, particularly, the school environment. Kelly developed the theoretical underpinnings of PCP in the 1950s and advised 'If you do not know what is wrong with someone, ask them, they may tell you' (Kelly, 1955, p. 322). It was with this in mind that I began my work with Tristan.

For the reasons outlined above, eliciting Tristan's views was central to this piece of work but it was also the main difficulty I encountered. For this reason, EPs eliciting the views of children and young people forms the focus of this professional practice report and, therefore, its literature review.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review takes as its focus eliciting the views of children and young people. Literature was identified initially through the reading of recent key texts (such as Hammond, 2013) and searching for the publications of key authors such as Gersch. A systematic approach to searching the literature was then taken. A Boolean search was carried out using combinations of the terms 'educational psychologist/psychology', 'voice', 'participation',

'rapport', 'eliciting' 'views' and 'engagement' using the University of Birmingham's library catalogue.

These searches returned journal articles and texts which pertained to three types of 1:1 work which EPs may carry out with children and young people. Firstly, EPs may work with the child to elicit their views. This may be to inform a psychological advice, or allow the psychologist to make recommendations to the school about how to meet the child's needs. Secondly, the EP may work with the child to actively involve them in the assessment process (e.g. Gersch, 1996). Thirdly, the EP may carry out direct work with a child aimed at effecting change, such as a therapeutic intervention. My work with Tristan centred on the first of these three types of 1:1 work. I hoped to elicit Tristan's views using PCP techniques.

This literature review considers answers to three questions and takes these questions as its subheadings:

1. Why do EPs elicit the views of children and young people?
2. How do EPs elicit the views of children and young people?
3. What difficulties do EPs encounter when eliciting the views of children and young people?

2.1 Why do EPs elicit the views of children and young people?

My review of existing literature suggests that there are four reasons why EPs should engage children and young people in direct work when carrying out casework. Primarily, eliciting children's views is central to forming an understanding about any difficulties they may be experiencing in the school setting. In addition to this there are: reasons pertaining to improved outcomes; reasons pertaining to policy and legislation; and reasons pertaining to ethical practice.

2.1.1 Policy and legislation

The 'voice of the child' and 'pupil participation' are prominent areas of policy for all professionals who work with children and young people. This can be traced back to the publication of three seminal documents in 1989. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states that all children have the right to express a view in processes affecting them. The Children's Act, brought in during the same year in the United Kingdom, ensures that the feelings and wishes of children in care are taken into account during court proceedings, and, perhaps with the most relevance to EPs, the Department of Education and Science (DES) advised that, when assessing educational needs the views of the child or young person concerned should be taken into account (DES, 1989).

More recently, the SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 2001a) gave a mandate that children with SEN should be involved in decision making, particularly with regard to assessing their needs and setting learning targets:

> 'Children and young people with special educational needs have a unique knowledge of their own needs and circumstances and their own views of what sort of help they would like to help them make the most of their education' (DfES, 2001a, Para. 3.2)

The SEN Toolkit published to accompany the Code of Practice (DfES, 2001b) advises professionals working with children with SEN about how they may elicit the views of children they work with. It is acknowledged within the toolkit that this is not always easy and that it is particularly challenging when the child is very young or has severe communication difficulties. In such cases, professionals are encouraged to form an understanding of the child's feelings and views through observations and discussions with others who know the child well.

So, it can be seen, that the legislative context within which the EP currently operates necessitates eliciting the views of children and young people. However, the SEN Code of Practice is currently being revised by the current Government. The consultation document *Support and Aspiration: A new approach to special educational needs and disability* (DfE, 2011) makes no reference to pupil participation or voice but places a great emphasis on parental choice. However, as stated above, EPs do not engage young people in direct work solely because they are required to do so through policy and legislation. Even if the document which replaces the 2001 SEN Code of Practice does not make pupil engagement and participation an essential part of the assessment process, I envisage that many EPs will continue to see this as an important part of their role for the reasons outlined below.

2.1.2 An attempt to improve outcomes

Gersch (1996; Gersch et al, 2008) extolls the virtues of involving children as actively as possible in their assessments, arguing that it leads to an increase in the effectiveness of any interventions put into place as a result of the assessment, and an increase in the child or young person's confidence and self-image.

Research based in classrooms and focussing on academic outcomes indicates that self-assessment is linked to improvements in outcomes. The use of self-assessment strategies by children is thought to increase their perceptions of personal control and reduce dependence on other sources of control (Fontana and Fernandes, 1994). Meta-cognition and self-regulation strategies have a consistently high or very high impact on learning outcomes according to a meta-analysis published by the Sutton Trust in 2013 (Higgins et al, 2013).

It can be hypothesised then that engaging children and young people in self-assessment of their behaviour would lead to improvements in this area. Whilst, I am not aware of any

research evidence which considers this hypothesis it follows that young people are more likely to change their behaviours if they have been actively involved in the assessment process and are therefore motivated to make changes which they see as being possible and worthwhile.

Hobbs et al (2000) suggest that involving children and young people in the assessment process may itself lead to positive change:

> '...the process of psychological assessment should not only provide the educational psychologist with a fuller understanding of the child's educational world it should also provide the child with a greater understanding of their own situation and what actions may be open to them to undertake positive change' (Hobbs et al, 2000, p 113).

The argument outlined by Hobbs et al (2000) can be applied within a PCP framework since the act of exploring contructs with a client can lead to the client reconstruing an event or situation and this can lead to change. In the case of Tristan then, it was possible that through exploring his school life and behaviour with him, he may have begun to make changes as a result of construing things in a different way.

One final way that involving children and young people in direct work can improve outcomes results from sharing their views with school staff. Ravenette (1997) writes about the importance of feeding back to school staff. By giving staff an insight into how a child or young person views their world, adults may adjust how they interact with him or her. The potential for conflict increases if adults working with a young person do not have an insight into how the child views their world (Roller, 1998). So, by gaining an insight into a child's views we can improve their outcomes by affecting change in the adults around them.

2.1.3 Ethical practice

The Division of Educational and Child Psychology's Code of Ethics and Conduct states that 'educational psychologists have a responsibility to redress the potential power imbalance by involving clients fully in decision making' (BPS, 2002, p5). More recently, psychologists were urged to support their client's self-determination (BPS, 2009). Psychologists must take steps to reduce the power differentials in their relationships with clients and ensure that the client remains in control of the service they receive.

Minimising power differentials between EPs and the children and young people they work with is difficult. At present EPs work with children and young people from 0-19 years of age (although this is due to change to 25 years of age (DfE, 2011)) and currently many children will have been referred to EPSs by their parents or teachers. EPs must remain mindful of this. In order to minimise this power differential EPs should:

- ensure the child is aware of who they are;

- fully explain their role

- explain and explore why they are meeting the child

- be clear with the child about what they aim to do and why the work is important (Roller, 1998).

In addition to the above suggestions made by Roller (1998), EPs should minimise power differentials by ensuring that they give due consideration to how to elicit the views of the child or young person, by listening to the views of the child or young person and by acting on these views as appropriate. It is to these factors that attention now turns.

2.2 2. How do EPs elicit the views of children and young people?

Harding and Atkinson (2009) suggest that EPs largely used language based methods for eliciting young people's views and these views are often then expressed in written reports. However, Harding and Atkinson's conclusions must be viewed with caution since they are based on research carried out in one small metropolitan authority. EPs from this authority taking part in a focus group discussed a range of techniques which they used to ascertain the views of children and young people they worked with. These included:

- discussion based methods such as direct questioning;

- task related procedures such as self-report scales;

- therapeutic based approaches such as the use of PCP or solution focussed approaches;

- indirect methods such as talking to parents; and

- measures for children with significant difficulties such as Bear Cards (St. Luke's Innovative Resources, 1997). These are a set of cards featuring bears with a variety of facial expressions which can be used to elicit children's views, whilst minimising the need for expressive language.

It seems that EPs are likely to draw on a range of techniques and psychological theories when aiming to ascertain a child's views. However, as Hammond (2013) points out many of these are language based and many of the children EPs work with will have difficulties expressing themselves orally. A growing body of research suggests that many children displaying challenging behaviour are likely to have underlying speech and language difficulties (Clegg and Hartsholme, 2004). As a result it is necessary for EPs to have in their repertoire, techniques which do not rely on good receptive or expressive language. The use of the arts in this area is developing. For example, children's views can be elicited through

the use of drawing (e.g. Ravenette, 1999; Moran, 2001), drama (Sharp, 2001; Hammond, 2013) and, using PCP as its basis, the use of inanimate objects such as 'talking stones' (Wearmouth, 2004).

2.3 What difficulties do EPs encounter when eliciting the views of children and young people?

Difficulties in the area are related to all three of the activities that EPs engage in when working directly with children and young people: eliciting views; listening to and understanding views; and reporting views.

2.3.1 Difficulties encountered when eliciting views

As Hammond (2013) notes, most of the techniques employed by EPs to elicit children and young people's views are language based. This is problematic since many of the young people EPs work with will have language difficulties.

Accessing the views of children and young people with significant learning difficulties is another challenge faced by EPs. Whilst the SEN toolkit (2001) suggests that talking to people who know the child well or observing them to discover their likes or dislikes is an appropriate alternative, some techniques to help professionals elicit the views of children with such difficulties do exist (Bear Cards (St Luke's Innovative Resources, 1997) for example).

An additional difficulty may be encountered when a young person does not want to engage with the EP. Despite activities or tasks being appropriately differentiated, a young person may not feel able to answer questions or may choose not to answer questions asked of them or take part in activities. 'Educational psychologists cannot just ask the child for a view and expect them to tell us' (Hobbs et al, 2000). Typically, school staff or parents will have

referred a child to the EPS. The child may not perceive the work to be worthwhile or they may not view the issue identified by school staff and leading to the referral as being problematic.

Within therapeutic and counselling work there is an emphasis on rapport building. In the context of an EPs work this rapport building can be difficult as a result of the referral route and the limited amount of contact time some EPs have with individual children and young people. This is important since 'rapport is the most influential factor in determining a successful solution' (Beaver, 2002, p.2). EPs draw on a range of psychological theories (PCP, motivational interviewing, and solution focussed brief therapies) and associated techniques in an attempt to overcome low levels of engagement and it is important that we are able to take the time to do so, this may be particularly problematic in a traded context. However, in a culture of 'payment by results', it is likely that the best results will be gained by those who see the importance of rapport building and eliciting the views of the child.

2.3.2 Difficulties encountered when listening to or understanding views

Whilst most writers in this area focus on the act of eliciting children and young people's views, Gersch (2011) has considered the act of listening to those views. EPs are impacted upon by their own world view and circumstances at the time of listening. Gersch (2011) gave the example of a helper (the psychologist) feeling out of their depth in helping a child or young person and this distracting them from being able to listen to them fully.

Once an appropriate method for eliciting a child's views has been established, EPs must give thought to how they will listen to and interpret these views. The use of appropriate psychological frameworks and supervision should ensure that EPs are not acting beyond their competencies in this respect.

2.3.2 Difficulties encountered when reporting the child's views

Once a child's views have been ascertained, consideration must be given to how to share

this with others. Ravenette (1997) views feedback as an important opportunity to change a

teacher's perceptions or constructions. As discussed above, the process of feeding back to

adults involved in a situation may lead to them making changes (consciously or

unconsciously) which impact directly on the young person. EPs must acknowledge that

giving feedback is an important stage in the process of casework and must give due

consideration to how this is done and the impact it might have.

In a thought provoking article Billington (2002) urges EPs to address the issue of power

relations between them and their clients and consider in detail how they speak of, speak

with or write about children.   Discussing the use of diagnostic terms such as autism,

Billington argues that the condensation of a lived experience to a single word means that the

word (or signifier) may contain many different meanings:

> 'It is my suggestion here that it is through our activities (our modes of assessment for
> example) and our language-making practices that we contribute to the creation of
> knowledges that often bear too little resemblance to that of real experience'
> (Billington, 2002, p.34)

 EP reports or minutes from meetings are likely to exist as a concrete artefact for many

years. As a result EPs must be very careful about the words they use when having a

conversation about a child or writing a report about a child, as they may be taken to mean

something other than intended.

To summarise then, although some services take a consultative approach to service delivery

many EPs engage children directly during the course of casework as they seek to gain an

insight into the child's views. They choose to do this for a variety of reasons: ethical, legislative or outcome driven. Once the decision to elicit a young person's views has been made a number of difficulties or dilemmas may then be encountered. The EP must choose how to elicit their views, they must listen to those views, before considering how best to share those views with others.

These were decisions I had to make over the course of my work with Tristan. During the remainder of this professional practice report I outline the decisions I made and offer reflections on the implications that these had.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Aim of work

The primary aim of this work was agreed during my initial consultation with the school's intervention manager. This aim was to help staff to understand why Tristan was not engaging in lessons. A secondary aim was to formulate Tristan's needs so that, if deemed appropriate, the school's educational psychologist was well placed to begin therapeutic work with him the following term.

3.2 Ontological and epistemological stance

Moore (2007) states that, whether consciously or not, all psychology practice is underpinned by ontology, epistemology and methodology. It is important for practitioners to consider this and, in the context of this report, for me to be explicit about the underlying assumptions influencing my work.

As stated in the introduction to this professional practice report, much of my work as a TEP has been guided by PCP (Kelly, 1955). PCP sits within a constructivist ontology since it concerns itself with the way events are constructed by individuals:

> '...the assumption is that whatever the nature may be, or howsoever the quest for truth will turn out in the end the events we face today are subject to as great a variety of constructions as our wits will enable us to contrive' (Kelly, quoted in Bannister and Fransella, 1986, p 5)

In the context of this piece of work, I believe that everyone involved in the case, including Tristan, will construe the situation differently.

As noted in the introduction, prior to my involvement, Tristan had been diagnosed as having ASC and ADHD. I believe that these labels have been socially contructed. They are not real things in a traditional sense but they do have real implications. Whilst these labels may allow us to predict some of Tristan's behaviours or some aspects of his personality they do not allow us to assume causality. To do so would be to employ a circular argument which is fallible (Timimi, 2013) i.e. 'Tristan cannot concentrate because he has ADHD. We know he has ADHD because he can't concentrate'.

Utilising a critical realist stance (Bhaskar, 1998), I believe that Tristan's levels of engagement are explicable by more than one factor or theory and that any understanding I develop about his levels of engagement, will be partial, limited and open to revision. As such, I see formulations as working documents, always open to amendment and revision.

3.3 Ethical considerations

As with all of my work as a TEP, I was guided by BPS guidelines (2002) and the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) code of conduct (HCPC, 2008). I paid particular attention to:

- gaining informed consent;

- respecting confidentiality; and

- making appropriate use of supervision.

In addition, I took the specific advice of Roller (1998) who writes about power differentials between an EP and a child when the EP is aiming to elicit their views. In light of Roller's article I paid due attention to:

- ensuring that Tristan was aware of who I was;

- fully explaining my role;

- explaining and exploring why we were meeting; and

- being clear with Tristan about what I aimed to do and why the work was important.

Prior to meeting Tristan I wrote to him to tell him that I would be coming into school to see him. I gave him some information about my role and the things we might do. I asked his learning mentor to share this letter with him in advance of our meeting. I also explained my role again when I met with Tristan for the first time. We discussed my role as a TEP, the reason why I had been asked to see him, and what his teachers and I were hoping to gain from us meeting. At all times it was clear to Tristan that he could opt out of our work and leave at any point. On two occasions Tristan did choose to end our work for the day.

I followed the EPS's guidelines for confidentiality and I spoke to Tristan about these. In addition to this I asked him at the end of each session what he would and would not be happy for me to discuss with staff at his school.

I sought regular supervision about this case from my colleague who worked with the school Tristan attended. Supervision serves a number of functions but specifically supervision ensured that:

- I was acting within my professional competencies;

- I had an opportunity to develop my knowledge and skills; and

- I became aware of my own response to my meetings with Tristan and how that may be impacting on my formulation.

3.4 Approach to problem solving

As during the course of my work with Tristan, it was envisaged that I would listen to multiple voices (Tristan, school staff, his mother, other professionals who had worked with him), it was necessary to employ a problem solving framework to ensure I took a methodical approach to reconciling ambiguities (Hobbs et al, 2000). As a trainee I had previously utilised the Monsen et al six-phased problem analysis cycle (Monsen and Frederickson, 2008) and found this to be useful in structuring my approach to casework. The table below outlines the aims of each phase of the model and the actions I took during each of these. Appendix 3 expands on this by offering a worked model of the framework with specific references to Tristan's case and hypotheses generated.

Phase in Six-Phased Problem Analysis Cycle	Aim of Phase	Actions carried out
Phase 1: Background information, role and expectations	To hold an initial consultation with a member of school staff identified as the problem owner and who knows Tristan well in order to discover what the issues are and what the problem owner hopes to achieve. To ensure the referral to the EPS is appropriate. To identify the scope and parameters of the investigative process	I carried out an initial consultation with the intervention manager at the school.
Phase 2, Part 1: Initial guiding hypotheses are generated	To generate initial guiding hypotheses based on file notes and the initial consultation. To begin to form a 'problem map' in the form of an Interactive Factors Framework (IFF)	I utilised the information gained from my initial consultation with the school's intervention manager, information from Tristan's file and information gathered through a consultation with a colleague within the EPS who had previously worked with Tristan to generate some initial hypotheses and began to place information gathered on a problem map (See Appendix 1).
Phase 2, Part 2: Active investigation (data collection and assessment)	To systematically investigate various lines of inquiry. To triangulate key conclusions.	I met with Tristan five times on a 1:1 basis. I observed Tristan during a lesson. I had hoped to meet with Tristan's mother but despite giving her consent for me to work with Tristan she did not return my telephone calls or respond to my letter asking to arrange a meeting with her.

Phase 3: Identified problem dimensions	To identify problem dimensions and summarise them in writing	I added the information I had gathered during Phase 2, Part 2 to the problem map (See Appendix 2) and summarised the problem dimensions in writing (see Appendix 3 and anonymised draft report, Appendix 4).
Phase 4, Part 1: Integrated conceptualisation	To formulate an over-arching integrating statement that argues for interconnections

To give reasons for selecting one or more of the dimensions as being a priority for intervention rather than targeting all dimensions. | I argued for interconnections in the concluding section of my report which provides the rationale for the interventions suggested (see Appendix 3). |
| Phase 4, Part 2: Interactive Factors Framework Diagram | To complete a working version of the IFF | I completed a working version of the IFF and will share it with the school's SENCo (see Appendix 3). |
| Phase 5: Intervention plan and implementation | To agree a final action plan with the problem owner | I will agree an action plan with the SENCo during a meeting and summarise this in the 'agreed actions' section of my report. I will also summarise the outcomes of this meeting in a letter to Tristan and ask his learning mentor to talk to him about this. Unfortunately the SENCo has not been able to meet with me to date, a meeting is arranged for September 2013. |

Table 1. Work carried out during each phase of the six phased problem solving model (Monsen and Frederickson, 2008)

3.6 Direct work with Tristan

The main form of information gathering in this piece of case work was 1:1 work with Tristan. As stated in the introduction, EPs engaging children and young people forms the basis of this professional practice report since it was the main focus of my work and the main difficulty I encountered during the course of it. The difficulties I encountered placed limitations on the usefulness of my work and the conclusions I was able to draw.

I had planned to meet with Tristan six times and as my problem map and guiding hypotheses formed a working document I did not approach our work with a set series of information gathering techniques in mind. Instead, I entered into a cycle of plan, do, review for each of my meetings with Tristan.

Tristan was absent on many of the occasions I had arranged to see him. This meant that, to date, I have only been able to meet with him four times. I have arranged to meet Tristan for a fifth time to share my formulation with him during the coming school term.

The table below offers a brief overview of the meetings I had with Tristan: what I planned to do, what we did and my reflections on the meeting.

Meeting	Plan What I planned to do.	Do What we did.	Review Reflections on the meeting and difficulties encountered
1	During my initial meeting with Tristan I planned to: • Talk to him about my role and our work together • To get to know Tristan and begin to develop a rapport • Discover some of his likes and dislikes	I explained my role to Tristan telling him about my job, why I was meeting with him and that this work would be used in a report for University. Once Tristan had expressed that he would be happy to stay and talk to me we played some games to break the ice. We then talked about what schools Tristan had been to and what he liked or didn't like about each one. He rated his current school out of ten.	I was not expecting to leave my first meeting with Tristan with a great deal of information about him. The aim was to gain his informed consent and begin to get to know him. These aims were achieved. However, some useful information could be placed on the problem map: • Tristan moved a lot during our meeting, he preferred to stand. • Tristan found it difficult to answer a lot of my questions giving what seemed to be non-committal answers, alright' or 'dunno'. • Tristan said that he would like to meet with me again. He seemed pleased at the thought that he was helping me. • Tristan volunteered some information about himself most of which was related to fighting. I felt that this first meeting had gone well and the objectives had been achieved. I had found out that Tristan likes drawing and so would offer

			opportunities for him to draw in our second meeting.
2	During my second meeting with Tristan I planned to consider my hypothesis that a structured approach which allowed him controlled choices was more likely to engage him. I developed a visual timetable showing two games that he could choose from to play 'now' three activities which he could choose from 'next' and two games he could choose from 'last'. The activities I was giving Tristan the choice of were: • Drawing the Ideal Self (Moran, 2006) • Self-characterisation sketch (Kelly, 1955) • Triadic elicitation activity utilising a list of professions. My aim was to begin to elicit Tristan's constructs.	Tristan played a game of his choice to begin with. When we came to the second phase (the PCP activities) he asked to leave the room.	A more structured approach to our meeting in and of itself was not helpful. However, once again I was able to add information to my problem map: • Tristan was aware of boundaries, he did not walk out of the room despite wanting to leave and it being unlocked but instead waited for me to take him back to class. • Tristan was able to lose at games and regulate his emotions when this happened. • It was possible that Tristan did not want to take part in tasks that were new to him and weren't being modelled to him. In light of this I decided that in our third meeting I would offer Tristan reassurance about there being no right or wrong answers and that I would model some of the tasks for him.
3	During our third meeting I was hoping to begin to elicit some constructs.	Again, although I allowed Tristan choice he would not engage in any PCP	Again the brief amount of time allowed me to gather further

	Again I took three activities for Tristan to choose from: • Drawing an Ideal School (Williams and Hanke, 2007) • Looking at Gogo figures (Moran, 2011) • Modelling the ideal self (using play dough and adapted from Moran, 2006).	activities. We played games and then he asked to leave. Despite not wanting to engage in the activities Tristan said that he wanted to see me again.	information about Tristan. • Whilst playing the game Tristan displayed a sense of humour. • During a game of Connect 4 Tristan was able to anticipate my move and alter his response in light of this. • Tristan took one of the pieces from the Connect 4 game and put it in his pocket. He then asked me to count my pieces to see how many I had. It seemed that Tristan wanted me to know that he had taken the piece. I wrote to Tristan to let him know that I would be back to see him next week and that I was going to change my approach .
4	During our fourth meeting I decided that rather than differentiate between the games we were playing and our work I would play games with Tristan for the whole of my time with him and attempt to elicit constructs during conversation whilst we were playing.	This was the longest that Tristan was able to engage with me for. He chose to stay in throughout his break as well as lesson time. I asked Tristan questions and engaged him in conversation as we played.	• Tristan still found it difficult to answer any of my questions but on this occasion he started to say "What do you mean?" • Tristan told me that he had taken the Connect 4 piece "to see if you'd notice". • Tristan presented as being very independent and very isolated

			telling me that he didn't have a friend because he didn't need one.
			• Tristan was able to concentrate for long periods of time on a simple activity of his choosing.
			I was aware that I hadn't been able to engage Tristan and elicit his views directly through PCP techniques. However, I was beginning to form some hypotheses about why he may be showing low levels of engagement in the classroom. To try to ensure that Tristan felt he had a say in decisions made about him I decided to meet with him one last time to share my thoughts with him before feeding back to school staff.

Table 2. An overview of each of my meetings with Tristan.

5. FORMULATION

The aim of this piece of work was to help staff to understand why Tristan was not engaging in lessons. A secondary aim was to formulate Tristan's needs so that, if deemed appropriate, the school's educational psychologist was well placed to begin therapeutic work with him the following term.

I had hoped to meet these aims through engaging Tristan in direct work using techniques from PCP. I was unable to do so. Despite attempting a range of techniques Tristan would often not engage in the work I had planned. Due to his low attendance I was not able to engage with him over a longer period of time or spend longer developing a relationship with him.

Despite this I was able to begin to hypothesise about some of the problem situations school staff were reporting to me. My hypotheses can be found in my report to Tristan's school. In summary, I was able to hypothesise that:

- Tristan's language skills may be impacting on his ability to access the curriculum;

- Tristan appears to have low self-esteem; and that

- Tristan's behaviour can helpfully be seen as a way of gaining control over situations and ensuring he receives adult attention.

Since this PPR takes as its focus EPs engaging children and young people in direct work a full exploration of my formulation in the main body of this report is not necessary. Instead the following section of the report will consider my reflections on engaging Tristan and implications for my own work in the future.

6. DISCUSSION AND REFLECTIONS

6.1 Reflections on my meetings with Tristan

It had been important to me to engage Tristan in direct work for reasons outlined earlier in this report. Predominantly, this was important because I utilise PCP in my casework; because it is hypothesised that direct work to gain the young person's views will improve the outcomes of any interventions put in place, and because it is ethical to do so.

In line with policy and legislation (UN, 1989; DfES, 2001), I gave Tristan the opportunity to contribute towards his assessment and influence decisions made about how best to meet his needs.

The SEN Toolkit (DfES, 2001b) outlines the difficulties professionals may face when trying to elicit the views of a young person. Hammond (2013) highlights the reliance of EPs on language based methods for eliciting children's views. Early on in my work with Tristan, it became apparent that he may have difficulties with speech and language. It was hypothesised that Tristan has difficulties with his expressive and receptive language and I therefore attempted to utilise techniques (such as Drawing the Ideal Self, Moran, 2006) which limit reliance on these skills.

I made several attempts to engage Tristan during our meetings with limited success:

- I explained my role and the purpose of our work clearly

- I ensured that some of the activities were not language based

- I structured our sessions so that they were predictable

- I aimed to make our meetings as empowering for Tristan as possible by giving him an element of choice

- I included an ice-breaking game of Tristan's choice at the start of each of our meetings.

Given the time constraints, I finally had to take the advice of the SEN toolkit and rely on observations and conversations with others who knew Tristan, to formulate a view of his needs to feed back to school staff. I recognise that this is not ideal and in my report to school staff I acknowledge that this places limitations on my work.

Although the primary aim of my work with Tristan was to gain an understanding about his levels of engagement, I had hoped that my one to one work with him would effect change. However, reflecting on my meetings with Tristan, I think it is very unlikely that my work with him will have resulted in him having 'a greater understanding of [his] own situation and what actions may be open to [him] to undertake positive change' (Hobbs et al, 2000, p. 113).

That said, I do not see my work with him as being without any positive implications. It may be that by attempting to elicit his views, and by returning to work with him despite him not always feeling able to engage, his feelings about school may have altered slightly in light of this. Despite not feeling able to share his views with me, Tristan may have learnt through our one to one work that the adults at his school care about him and that his views and opinions are valued.

Despite the difficulties I encountered engaging Tristan, I am confident that given a similar case in the future I would still want to meet with the child or young person and attempt to engage them. Engaging young people in direct work has formed an important aspect of my work as a TEP and has, on many occasions, been more successful than the piece of work outlined in this professional practice report. There are imminent changes to the SEN legislation in place but I hope that I, and many other TEPs and EPs, will continue to attempt

to engage young people in direct work to add to the rich picture we build, regardless of whether or not an imperative is placed on us to do so.

However, EP services are going through a period of change as a result of cuts to local authority budgets. Many services are now commissioned, in part, by schools and other organisations and stakeholders (AEP, 2011). Commissioners need to see a value in EPs engaging children and young people with a view to eliciting their views. EPs who are already convinced of the importance of eliciting the views of children and young people must, if necessary, take the time to convince staff in schools and other commissioners of the same.

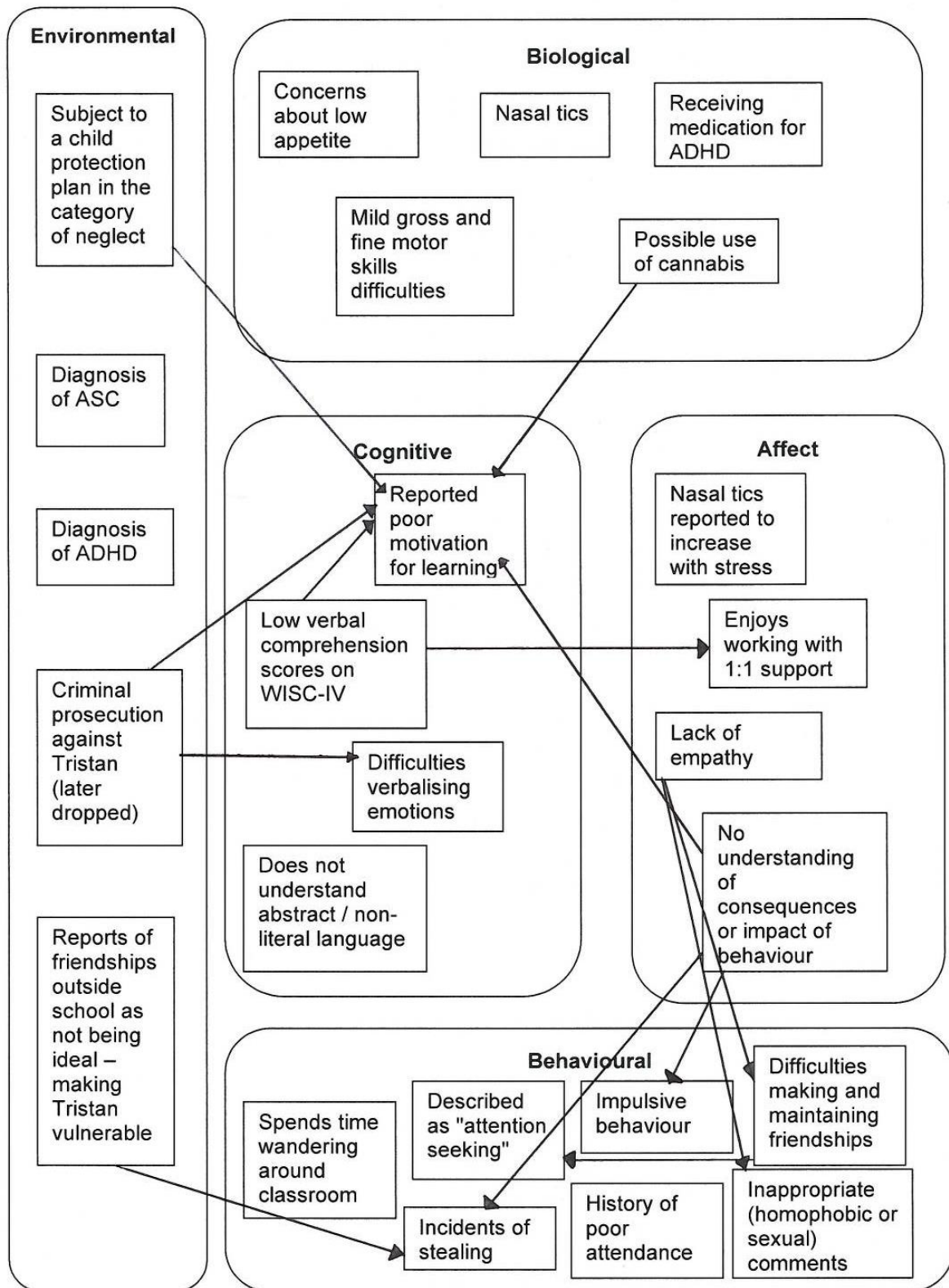## 6.2 Reflections on feeding back my work to school staff

In the literature review I highlighted the difficulties EPs may face when engaging children and young people: difficulties associated with eliciting their views; difficulties associated with listening to their views; and difficulties associated with reporting their views.

Despite my work with Tristan being limited, I still have a formulation to share with staff and due care will be given to reporting this. As Hartas (2011) states, 'a young person's limited participation in learning and training is often seen through the prism of disaffection as a within-the-person factor without accounting for systemic and socio-cultural factors that shape the interface between participation and disaffection' (Hartas, 2011, p. 104). It is possible that Tristan's teachers view his disaffection as being an aspect of him, his personality or perhaps his 'conditions' (ASC and ADHD). The fact that I was unable to engage him in one to one work may, in the eyes of the staff working with Tristan, be seen to support this view. For this reason, I will be careful about the way in which I report my work with Tristan. In line with the constructionist ontology of PCP, the words I select are likely to go some way towards shaping the views of teaching staff about Tristan (Billington, 2002).
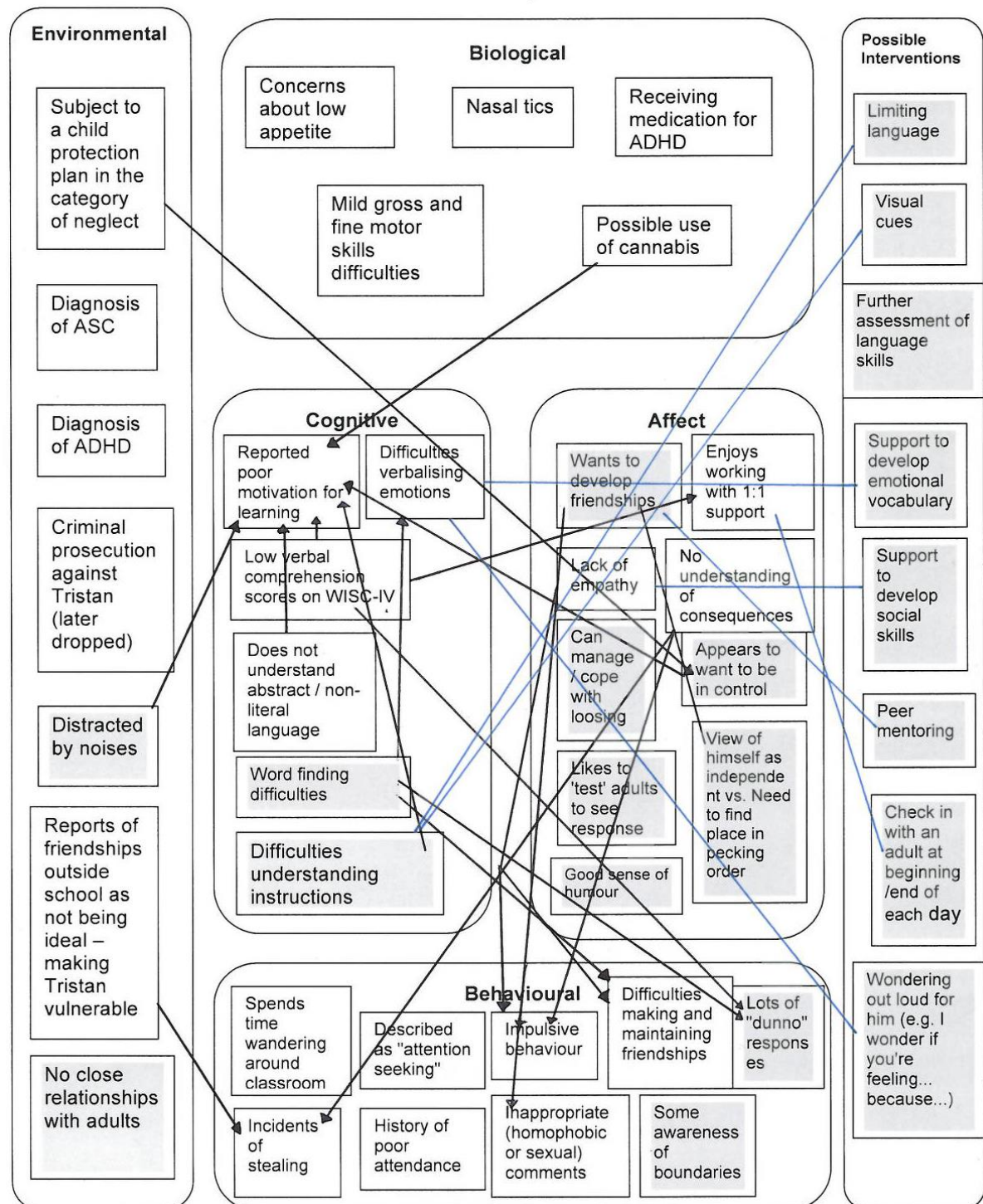
The overall aim of this piece of work was to support staff to understand why Tristan was often not engaging in school work. I had hoped that I would achieve this by giving staff an insight into how Tristan construed the world. I have not been able to do this. As stated in the literature review, the potential for conflict increases if adults working with a young person do not have an insight into how they view their world (Roller, 1998). For this reason I have spoken to school staff about the importance of gaining an insight into Tristan's views. As a result of my work with Tristan, school staff have appointed a key adult so that Tristan can begin to build a positive relationship with one member of staff, who may then be able to gain an insight into his views.

7. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

Many EPs routinely elicit the views of children and young people when undertaking casework. Whilst this may not be an easy task, appropriate efforts should be made to engage with children and young people in this process. EPs who work on time allocations in schools or in a traded context may need to state a strong case for doing so when consultative models of service delivery are arguably more cost and time effective. However, children and young people have a right to feel listened to and it is by engaging them in this work that we are likely to achieve the best outcomes for them.

Appendix 1: Interactive factors framework developed in March 2013. Based on information held on file and consultation with intervention manager

Appendix 2: Interactive factors framework developed in July 2013. Based on information held on file, consultation with intervention manager and 1:1 work with Tristan (shaded boxes contain information added to previous version).

Environmental

Subject to a child protection plan in the category of neglect

Diagnosis of ASC

Diagnosis of ADHD

Criminal prosecution against Tristan (later dropped)

Distracted by noises

Reports of friendships outside school as not being ideal – making Tristan vulnerable

No close relationships with adults

Biological

Concerns about low appetite

Nasal tics

Receiving medication for ADHD

Mild gross and fine motor skills difficulties

Possible use of cannabis

Cognitive

Reported poor motivation for learning

Difficulties verbalising emotions

Low verbal comprehension scores on WISC-IV

Does not understand abstract / non-literal language

Word finding difficulties

Difficulties understanding instructions

Affect

Wants to develop friendships

Enjoys working with 1:1 support

Lack of empathy

No understanding of consequences

Can manage / cope with loosing

Appears to want to be in control

Likes to 'test' adults to see response

View of himself as independent vs. Need to find place in pecking order

Good sense of humour

Behavioural

Spends time wandering around classroom

Described as "attention seeking"

Impulsive behaviour

Difficulties making and maintaining friendships

Lots of "dunno" responses

Incidents of stealing

History of poor attendance

Inappropriate (homophobic or sexual) comments

Some awareness of boundaries

Possible Interventions

Limiting language

Visual cues

Further assessment of language skills

Support to develop emotional vocabulary

Support to develop social skills

Peer mentoring

Check in with an adult at beginning /end of each day

Wondering out loud for him (e.g. I wonder if you're feeling... because...)

Phase 1: Background information, role and expectations

- Tristan is a 13 year old who attends an EBD provision. He had attended three schools prior to this placement.
- Tristan has previously been subject to a child protection plan under the category of neglect.
- The 'problem owner' (the school's Inclusion Manager) clarified the nature of their concerns: Tristan was not engaging in lessons, he was reported to often sit with his head on the desk and not communicate with staff.
- The inclusion manager said that they wanted Tristan to begin to communicate with staff; and to understand why he was not engaging in lessons.
- The scope of my involvement was to begin to formulate Tristan's needs and hypothesise why Tristan was not engaging in lessons. The parameters of this were that I would work with Tristan on a 1:1 basis to formulate his needs and feedback to staff working with Tristan verbally and in writing. This formulation may also then be used to inform therapeutic work to be carried out by the school's named educational psychologist.
- At the time of my consultation with the Inclusion Manager they rated their understanding of Tristan's lack of engagement as 2/10.

Phase 2, Part 1: Initial Guiding Hypotheses

Based upon my 'initial client interview' with the Inclusion Manager, and information held on file, I generated my initial Guiding Hypotheses:

- Tristan is finding it difficult to engage in the school curriculum due to unmet emotional needs following a criminal prosecution and neglect.
- Tristan is finding it difficult to engage in the school curriculum because of his difficulties with verbal comprehension
- Tristan is finding it difficult to engage in the curriculum because he has no understanding of the consequences or impact of this
- Tristan is finding it difficult to engage in the school curriculum due to his early experiences of neglect

Phase 2, Part 2: Active Investigation (data collection and assessment)

- I sought information which could confirm or disconfirm my hypotheses during my work with Tristan.
- Unfortunately, it was not possible to triangulate this information with members of Tristan's family.

Phase 3: Identified Problem Dimensions

I identified the problem dimensions and gave them labels which were used consistently throughout my oral and verbal feedback. The 'problematic' areas for Tristan are:

- Speech and language
- Social relationships
- Emotional development

Phase 4, Part 1: Integrating Statement

I created an integrated statement arguing for possible interconnections, influences and causal relationships:

- Tristan's language skills are impacting upon his ability to form positive relationships, access lessons and regulate his emotions and behaviour. In addition to this, Tristan has experienced some significant life events which have impacted on his mental health and psychological wellbeing. Tristan's behaviour can helpfully be seen as a way of gaining control over unpredictable situations and ensuring he gains adult attention.

Phase 4, Part 2: Interactive Factors Framework

A working version of the interactive factors framework was created (see Appendix 2). This also represents possible interventions to be discussed with school staff.

Phase 5: Intervention Plan and Implementation

This phase is still to be completed – I will meet with the problem owners, share my formulation and agree an action plan. If necessary I will review and revise the IFF during this meeting.

Appendix 4: <u>Draft report to be amended and sent to Tristan's school following my final meeting with Tristan and the SENCo.</u>

Nature/Purpose of Involvement

Tristan has been known to the Educational Psychology Service since October 2006. Prior to beginning his placement at XXXX School, Tristan had attended XXX Primary School, XXXX Primary School and XXXX High School. Tristan has had a statement of special educational need since November 2011 and in December 2012 he was given a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (following an assessment by Greenshire's Communication and Social Behaviour Assessment Team). Tristan also has a diagnosis of   attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and receives medication for this.

Tristan had been attending XXXX for a term when a request was made to the school's educational psychologist for support. School staff reported that Tristan was not motivated and that they were finding it difficult to engage him during lessons. Staff reported that Tristan was more likely to complete his work early in the morning and with 1:1 support but providing this level of support was unsustainable and they were aware of the need to develop Tristan's independence in classroom tasks.

During an initial consultation with XXXX (then Intervention Manager), Lisa said that she felt she would know that this work had been successful if school staff could understand why Tristan was not engaging in lessons and, in turn, feel better placed to be able to motivate him.

Summary of Involvement

I carried out an initial consultation with XXXX on 5th March 2013, and met with Tristan four times during April and May (29th April, 8th May, 14th May and 20th May).   My work with Tristan was limited, in part due to his attendance patterns and in part due to him not being able to engage on some occasions when I saw him; this has placed some limitations on my formulation of Tristan's needs.

It has been a pleasure working with Tristan, what follows is a description of his needs and recommendations for staff working with him during the coming academic year.

Formulation

<u>Speech and Language</u>

It seems that Tristan has some difficulties understanding language and expressing himself. When I initially tried to engage Tristan in our sessions, he gave what seemed to be non-committal responses, answering 'alright' or 'don't know' to many questions. It became clear that Tristan often gives these responses when he is not able to understand the speaker or is not able to articulate a reply. As Tristan became more confident and relaxed in my presence he would sometimes say "What do you mean?".

It is possible therefore, that Tristan finds it difficult to understand staff at XXXX when they speak to him or does not know how to respond appropriately. Responses such as 'I don't know' may be

taken as a sign of disinterest or disaffection by staff when Tristan may genuinely not know the answer or be unable to express it. It may be that in the classroom environment Tristan does not feel able to ask staff to re-explain things.

Tristan appeared to have some word finding difficulties and would sometimes refer to items as 'the thing'. In our first meeting he struggled to recall the name of his cat but later referred to the cat by name. Tristan's use of expressive language was generally limited. In particular, he seemed to find it difficult to discuss emotions, this placed limitations on the work I was able to do with Tristan.

The purpose of my work with Tristan was not to assess his learning and speech and language skills. I understand that XXXX has advised school staff to refer Tristan to the Speech and Language Therapy Service for a more detailed assessment of his needs.

In the meantime, staff working with Tristan should ensure that they are differentiating the language they use when they communicate with him. It is important they do not rely on Tristan expressing himself verbally, to achieve success in a lesson.

Tristan would benefit from support to develop his emotional literacy. Staff could support Tristan in this by commenting on how he might be feeling throughout the day (e.g. 'I wonder if you are feeling…because…').

Social Relationships

Information from school staff and my one to one work with Tristan, suggest that he does not have any friendships. When I asked Tristan if he had a friend, he responded, 'No, I don't need one'. I understand that Tristan will choose to spend break or lunch times indoors away from his peers or will remain on the periphery if he does go outside with his classmates.

Tristan presents as being very independent but it is likely that he would like to experience a sense of belonging and friendship with his peers. Tristan's difficulties with speech and language will be impacting on his ability to form friendships.

During my work with Tristan he did not typically engage in any reciprocal conversations. Tristan was always polite and would answer direct questions but beyond this he did not initiate interactions other than to say when he wanted to go. The only exceptions to this were during our first meeting when Tristan initiated interactions to tell me about incidents of fighting that he had been involved in in the past.

Tristan needs to be taught how to initiate social interactions as at present he only does this in a negative way. Staff report that Tristan chooses to isolate himself from his peers and the few stories he did tell me about interactions with his peers were negative. For example, Tristan told me that he kicked a boy who walked past him on the playground, but could not articulate why he did this. Tristan tries to interact with his peers by being aggressive towards other pupils or by copying the behaviour of others. The latter makes him vulnerable. It seems that Tristan does not know how to initiate interaction with his peers and he would benefit from teaching in this area. Tristan would benefit from a programme aimed at developing his social skills.   Children with ASC often find it difficult to generalise, so Tristan is likely to need further support to generalise what he has learnt to the playground and classroom settings.

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<u>Emotional and Behavioural Development</u>

Tristan responds to some boundaries and showed some restraint/impulse control. For example, after telling me that he was bored during a session ,Tristan moved towards the door and put his hand on the handle to signal that he wanted to leave. But rather than open the door, he looked at me and asked me if it was unlocked. Despite the door being unlocked, Tristan did not leave the room until I had communicated that it was okay for him to do so and that I would take him back to class.

Tristan was able to lose at the games we played and regulated his emotions when this happened. He demonstrated a good sense of humour and appeared to enjoy adult attention. Tristan may gain this adult attention in a classroom by refusing to engage in the work independently. If Tristan knows that he Is guaranteed adult attention through the provision of a key adult who meets with him on a daily basis, staff at XXXX may see a reduction in times when Tristan does not engage in work.

Tristan appears to be aware of the boundaries in place at XXXX but he likes to test these and explore how adults will react to his behaviour. On one occasion Tristan took a counter from the game we were playing and put it in his pocket. When I raised this during our following meeting, he said that he was doing it to see if I noticed and to see what I did.

I understand that staff feel that their usual sanctions do not motivate Tristan because he is happy to stay with them at break and lunch times. Instead, staff should focus on finding a rewarding activity to motivate Tristan. Staff report that Tristan enjoys gardening, so this may be successfully used as a motivator.

I understand that Tristan has experienced significant life events which mean that he finds it difficult to rely on and trust people. Much of Tristan's behaviour can helpfully be seen as a way of him testing the boundaries, to see how adults will react. Tristan will benefit from staff reacting in a predictable and consistent way.

Tristan likes to feel in control of situations. He told me that he would like to go to a school where they let him do what he wanted. He maintained control during our work together by refusing to carry out any activities which he saw as challenging, preferring instead to play Connect 4. Tristan could be given a feeling of empowerment and control in school by utilising controlled choices.

During my initial meeting with Tristan, he told me voluntarily about lots of 'bad things' he had done. Tristan may have been finding out whether or not I still cared about him and wanted to support him despite this information. Alternatively, it may be that Tristan sees himself as being defined by these bad behaviours.

The way in which Tristan talked about himself suggests that he has low self-confidence. I understand that Tristan does not like praise and that when given praise publicly, he will often respond by stopping work. Tristan would benefit from support to develop his self-esteem.

During our work together Tristan would often choose to finish the session and leave the room. This appeared to be whenever what I was asking him to do could be perceived as challenging. He was reluctant to attempt new tasks (colouring, using play dough or toys) but would happily play

Connect 4 for long periods of time. Tristan avoided tasks when he thought there was a risk that he might fail. I was not able to reassure him that there were no right or wrong answers and that he just needed to try. This will have implications in the classroom where tasks will need to be appropriately differentiated so Tristan feels he can be successful.

During one of our sessions Tristan used a word that could be deemed to be offensive to describe another child. When I explored the use of this word Tristan was unable to articulate what it meant, other words that could be used instead or reflect on whether it was a 'good word' or a 'bad word' and whether or not it was acceptable to use in school. I understand that Tristan has previously used inappropriate language towards other pupils but this is a behaviour that staff at XXXX are seeing less of. When Tristan does engage in this name-calling it may be that he does not fully understand the connotations of the words he is using but knows that saying those words will get a response from staff and students alike.

Other factors impacting on Tristan

Tristan was easily distracted by noise and movement in the corridors. Once distracted he would forget what we were doing and would need reminding. As far as possible noises and distractions should be limited when Tristan is working. He may benefit from the use of a workstation or headphones when working but these strategies should be discussed with Tristan in advance and trialled and monitored.

During my work with Tristan he often appeared tired, his eyes sometimes became glazed and he would put his head on the desk. At these times he was able to engage in repetitive tasks such as Connect 4 but unlikely to engage in conversations or other work. School staff report that Tristan is better able to engage first thing in the morning. It is rare that he will complete work after 11am (two hours after taking his medication). I have suggested that Tristan's paediatrician is contacted to review his medication since it may be that this is impacting on his motivation levels.

Formulation

As stated above there have been limitations to my work with Tristan. From the evidence I have available to me, it seems likely that Tristan's language skills are impacting on his ability to form positive relationships, access lessons and regulate his emotions and behaviour. Despite these difficulties, Tristan does adhere to boundaries and would therefore benefit from clear and consistent rules and routines.

In addition to this, Tristan has experienced some significant life events which are very likely to have impacted on his mental health and psychological wellbeing. It is likely that Tristan has low self-esteem. Tristan's behaviour sometimes appears confusing: he presents as being very independent and defensive but enjoys high levels of adult attention. Tristan's behaviour can helpfully be seen as a way of gaining control over unpredictable situations and ensuring he gains adult attention.

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Chapter 5: FOSTERING INCLUSION THROUGH CIRCLES AND STRENGTHS (FITOS): AN INDIVIDUAL CASE STUDY

ABSTRACT

Fostering Inclusion Through Circles and Strengths (FITOS) is an intervention aimed at increasing empathy and social acceptance towards children with Special Educational Needs (SEN). The intervention utilises four fictional characters and is based upon a discussion of the characters' strengths and difficulties and eliciting empathetic responses towards them. Initial evaluations have suggested that social acceptance towards the characters increases following the intervention and that children become more aware of strengths in themselves and others. However, to date, no research has been undertaken with the aim of discerning whether or not the implementation of the FITOS programme led to the objective of pupils developing empathy and acceptance towards other pupils in real life. I utilised an individual case study design and implemented FITOS in one school in Greenshire. There were no apparent differences between pre and post data and it did not appear that children were more socially accepted following FITOS. However, there were difficulties in implementing FITOS and these are discussed. To conclude this professional practice report I offer reflections on both the research process and the intervention.

1. INTRODUCTION

In my second year of training as an educational psychologist (EP) I worked with a boy who had been referred to the educational psychology service (EPS) by his school. The boy was in Year 4 and had been on the school's Special Educational Needs (SEN) register for two years as a result of his difficulties with literacy and numeracy and with social communication. Staff at his school had concerns that he was increasingly not focussing on his school work. He was described by staff at the school as a 'class clown' and as having 'odd behaviours'. During 1:1 work with this child, to gain an insight into his views of school and during a playground

observation, it became apparent that he was socially excluded by members of his class. I hypothesised that this social exclusion was impacting on his behaviour in class and his ability to focus on his work. This led to conversations between myself and staff at the school, during which I suggested that the work that needed to be done was not direct 1:1 work, aimed at modifying the boy's behaviour, but instead, work with his peers to improve his social inclusion. Staff at the school were supportive of this and a Circle of Friends intervention seemed to offer an appropriate approach to this work, however, on hearing details about this intervention his parents did not want it to be implemented: they expressed concerns about the whole class session in which the boy's strengths and difficulties would be discussed with his classmates.

Whilst receiving supervision about this case from my University tutor, I was made aware of Fostering Inclusion Through Circles and Strengths (FITOS), an intervention developed by two members of Coventry EPS and, at the time, solely being implemented in Coventry. The intervention aims to raise the social inclusion of children with SEN but does this through the use of characters as opposed to real life focus children. I made contact with two EPs who had, along with a colleague from Coventry's Learning and Behaviour Support Service, developed the intervention. Following this I was offered the opportunity to implement the intervention in one school in Greenshire EPS.

In the literature review that follows I discuss the importance of developing social inclusion and existing concerns about the Circle of Friends approach before giving an overview of FITOS in the following chapter.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

FITOS is concerned with raising the social inclusion of children with SEN. For this reason, this literature review focuses on: outlining the current educational context whereby many children with SEN are educated in mainstream schools; discussing what is already known about the social inclusion of children with SEN; and critiquing Circles of Friends, one popular intervention aimed at improving social inclusion.

2.1. Inclusion: Legislation and the current picture

Current legislation, in the form of The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA, 2001), states that children with special educational needs (SEN) must be educated in a mainstream setting unless this is incompatible with the wishes of their parents or the provision of efficient education for other children.   This is a radically different situation to the one of a little over 40 years ago when children could be declared to be 'ineducable' and, therefore, not entitled to schooling.   In 1970 the Education Act removed the distinction between 'educable' and 'ineducable' children and it was only after this point that all children had the right to an education. Since this time, there has been a gradual change in how and where the needs of children with SEN are met. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) signed up to by 25 countries stated that children with SEN 'must have access to regular schools':

> Regular schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all; moreover, they provide an effective education to the majority of children and improve the efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the entire education system (UNESCO, 1994, p. ix)

At present, the majority of children with statements of SEN attend their local school (DfE, 2011[a]). The SEN Code of Practice (DfES, 1994) highlighted the need for mainstream schools

to be able to respond to the diverse needs of children.   This code was revised in 2001 and is

still a legal document today. The SEN Code of Practice is currently being revised by the

Coalition Government, however, the consultation document (DfE, 2011[b]) suggests that

parents of children with SEN will continue to have a choice about what type of school their

child attends and that mainstream schools will need to demonstrate inclusive practice.

Ainscow (1995) draws a distinction between 'inclusion' and 'integration', making clear that

inclusion is not simply an issue of which school a child attends. Ainscow describes inclusion

as a process of accommodation whereby the mainstream school restructures itself to be

better able to meet the needs of all pupils. More recently, Gibb et al (2007) reiterate that

inclusion is not only about the physical placement of children with additional needs in

mainstream schools but add that it is about making adaptations to the curriculum and to

teaching to ensure that all children make academic progress and are socially included. FITOS

is an intervention which schools could utilise in an attempt to ensure that all pupils are

socially included. At the heart of the FITOS intervention is the aim of improving the social

inclusion and acceptance of children with SEN in mainstream schools. It is the issue of social

inclusion to which attention will now turn.

2.2 Social Inclusion

2.2.1 Social inclusion: why does it matter?

Social inclusion is of the utmost importance if children and young people with SEN are to

experience a sense of belonging.

> The concept of inclusion must embrace the feeling of belonging since such a feeling
> appears to be necessary both for successful learning and for general wellbeing
> (Warnock, 2005, p. 15)

Warnock highlights the links between belonging and learning and belonging and wellbeing. For a long time a sense of belonging has been considered to be an important human need (Maslow, 1962) without which individuals are unlikely to experience emotional wellbeing and intellectual fulfilment. Threats to belonging are thought to impact on intellectual performance (Baumeister et al, 2002) and Frederickson and Baxter (2009) suggest that a sense of belonging in a school setting is likely to impact positively on engagement with learning, mental health and happiness.   This further highlights the importance of considering the social inclusion of all pupils but particularly those with SEN, since, as outlined in the following section, research suggests that they are more likely to be rejected than their peers who do not have SEN (Frederickson et al, 2007).

2.2.2 Social Inclusion: The research

Those who debate the importance of inclusion may do so on the grounds of rights or the grounds of efficacy (Lindsay, 2003). Gallagher (2001) argues that empirical evidence relating to the effectiveness of inclusion is unnecessary since all children should be included in their local school by right. However, Lindsay (2003) disputes this claim stating that there is a need for more robust research into how the needs of children with SEN can best be met.

FITOS is concerned with the inclusion of children with SEN, more specifically, it is concerned with the social inclusion of these children and young people. Therefore, it is important in the context of this professional practice report, to consider what is already known about the social outcomes of children with SEN who attend mainstream settings.   First, it must be acknowledged that research in this area is difficult to conduct for several reasons highlighted by Frederickson (2008):

- Since a wide variety of provisions which could be deemed to be 'inclusive' exist, it is difficult to specify the independent variable;

- there are often differences between the children who attend mainstream school and specialist provisions, therefore comparisons between the two groups have limited utility;

- there are often different curricula taught in settings and assessment methods vary with these; and

- there are differences between the qualifications and the experiences of teachers in different settings.

Nonetheless, it is important to examine existing research into the social inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream provisions, albeit with these factors in mind.

Frederickson et al (2007) argue that research considering the social outcomes of children with SEN, educated in mainstream schools, produces unequivocal results: children with SEN attending mainstream schools have poorer outcomes than their non-SEN peers. Many researchers have utilised sociometric techniques to consider the social inclusion of children with SEN. Gresham and MacMillan (1997) found that children with SEN were less accepted and more often rejected than their mainstream peers. Similarly, Nowicki and Sandieson (2002) carried out a meta-analysis aiming to summarise children's attitudes towards peers with 'physical and intellectual disabilities' and   concluded that there is evidence that children are negatively biased towards children with disabilities. However, they did state that inclusive classrooms are likely to facilitate positive attitudes toward children with SEN.

Whilst it appears likely that children with SEN are less socially accepted than their peers, attention in research is now turning to how the social inclusion of children with SEN can be improved. Marom et al's (2007) research provides evidence that contact with children with

disabilities improves disability related attitudes. In research which took place in Israel, a group of children had fortnightly or weekly contact with children with disabilities for the course of a year. Following this, it was found that their attitudes towards children with disabilities were seen to improve and this was not the case for children in a control group.

Frederickson et al (2007) conducted a research project which compared the social inclusion of children who attend a mainstream school and do not have any additional needs, children who attend a mainstream school and are on the school's SEN register and children with SEN who had, within the previous two years, begun to attend a mainstream school , having previously attended a special school. They found that the children who had attended the special school previously were more socially included than the other children on the SEN register. In discussing these results, Frederickson et al (2007) hypothesise that peer preparation workshops, which highlighted the strengths and enlisted empathy for the difficulties of the children transferring to the mainstream setting, may be responsible for the differences between the former special school pupils and the other SEN pupils. However, this is a hypothesis and there may be other factors, such as the amount of time classmates had to get to know the children with SEN, impacting on the results of the sociogram. It may be that it was the fact that children from the specialist provision were newly arrived that led to them being more socially included than other children on the SEN register.

These studies by Marom et al (2007) and Frederickson et al (2007) have begun to consider two ways in which the social inclusion of children with SEN may be improved: through social contact and through direct discussion of the strengths and difficulties of children with SEN. One commonly used intervention employed by schools hoping to improve the social inclusion of children with SEN, is a Circle of Friends. The following section of this report highlights the approach and research considering its efficacy.

One popular intervention aimed at promoting the inclusion of and a sense of belonging for children and young people with SEN is Circle of Friends. Circle of Friends originated in Canada and has become an increasingly popular intervention in the United Kingdom. It was an intervention recommended by the Department for Education and Skills (1999). In its original form, Circle of Friends aimed to improve the inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream schools; it has now been adapted and is more broadly used to tackle any incidence of social isolation in childhood, including the social isolation of children with SEN.

As with many interventions Circle of Friends takes on slightly different forms depending on who is delivering it. Typically, a Circle of Friends intervention starts with a session involving the 'focus child's' class. During this session the child is not present and the class discuss his or her strengths and difficulties. Following, this, a group of children who have volunteered to form the Circle of Friends, take part in six weekly circle meetings. In 2003 Frederickson and Turner conducted research with twenty children – 10 received a Circle of Friends intervention and the remainder acted as a control group. The results suggested that the intervention changed other children's attitudes towards the focus children.

However, in an interesting extension of this work Frederickson et al (2005) went on to consider if an element of the intervention could be isolated and deemed to be effective. They utilised a naturalistic sample of 14 children who were having Circles of Friends initiated. Overall, they found that acceptance increased and rejection decreased. The planned comparison suggested that acceptance increased following the whole class session and there was no evidence to suggest that the weekly circle meetings resulted in further enhanced acceptance or reduced rejection. A small sample was followed up at 18 weeks and it was found that overall rejection decreased after the initial whole-class session, it remained

relatively stable during the 6 weeks of Circle meetings and then increased over the 18 weeks of follow up, returning to pre-intervention levels. Acceptance increased after the whole class session and then gradually fell away during the following 6 weeks of the intervention and 18 weeks thereafter. Based on this research, Frederickson et al (2005) question whether there is any value in the six circle meetings forming part of the intervention. The whole-class session appears to be the session which results in changes in social inclusion. However, based on this one piece of research, the effects of the whole-class meeting are not maintained over time, this would lead me to question the utility of the intervention as it currently stands.

As outlined when introducing this professional practice report, during my time as a trainee EP I have heard colleagues express reservations about the whole-class session intrinsic to the original Circle of Friends model during which the focus pupil is discussed in their absence. Whilst undertaking a placement in one local authority, parents of a child I was working with did not want a Circle of Friends to be initiated for their son since they had reservations about his class discussing him in his absence.

A dilemma exists whereby a limited body of research suggests that the whole-class session is the most effective part of the Circle of Friends intervention but there are ethical reservations, relating to confidentiality, about discussing a child in their absence. The EPs who designed FITOS shared these concerns and so went on to design an intervention which aims to improve the social inclusion of children with SEN without referring to individual 'focus' children. The first lesson included in FITOS uses the format of a Circle of Friends whole-class session but discusses a fictional character, Simone. In the following section of this report I will outline the FITOS intervention.

3. FOSTERING INCLUSION THROUGH CIRCLES AND STRENGTHS (FITOS)

3.1 The intervention

FITOS was developed in response to concerns expressed by staff at a Coventry primary school about a lack of empathy shown by children towards their peers with SEN. The intervention aims to increase empathy by raising children's awareness of strengths and difficulties in themselves and others. The programme includes six lesson plans and additional interim activities to be delivered by teachers in consultation with educational psychologists. During the lessons the class are introduced to four fictional characters who each have an area of additional need (social, emotional and behavioural difficulties; social communication difficulties; literacy difficulties and physical difficulties). Each child becomes familiar through a description of their strengths and difficulties and, in line with a positive psychology orientation, labels of diagnosis, such as dyslexia, are not used. For each of the characters three types of empathetic responses are taught to children taking part in the intervention:

1. Cognitive empathy – develops the children's ability to know why a character has particular difficulties

2. Emotional empathy – develops the children's ability to understand the feelings a character may be experiencing

3. Behavioural empathy – develops the children's ability to understand how they could help the character as they experience particular thoughts or feelings. Pupils are encouraged to consider how the child's strengths could be used to support them in overcoming difficulties.

For copyright reasons the lesson plans and resources for FITOS are not appended in this report, instead the table below offers an overview of the structure and content of the six lessons.

Lesson title	Outline of content
1. Circle of Friends for Simone	The class are introduced to Simone, a pupil with social emotional and behavioural difficulties. They are asked to reflect on what it would be like to have Simone in their class. The class then complete the 'our circles' activity typically incorporated into the whole-class session which initiates a Circle of Friends. The class complete the circle by including the names of people they love; people they really like; people who are members of groups they attend; and, finally, people who are paid to spend time with them. They are then presented with Simone's circle which has very few names inside and asked how she might think, feel and, as a result, behave.
2. Strengths	Gardner's (1983) multiple intelligences theory is introduced and strengths are defined as something which people are good at and enjoy doing / are interested in.
3. Helping Simone to recognise her strengths	This lesson incorporates a role play. The class are reintroduced to Simone who is having a bad day. The class are asked to pose a question each to help Simone to identify her strengths.
4. Meet Harry	Harry is a pupil with social communication difficulties. Harry's thoughts are shared with the class and emotional and behavioural empathy are elicited from the class.
5. Meet Eva	Eva is a pupil with literacy difficulties. Eva's thoughts are shared with the class and emotional and behavioural empathy are elicited from the class.
6. Meet Pavan	Pavan is a pupil with physical difficulties. Pavan's thoughts are shared with the class and emotional and behavioural empathy are elicited from the class.

Table 1. The lessons included in FITOS and their content

The delivery of FITOS is situated within a consultative framework, and therefore during the course of the intervention, three consultations are held by educational psychologists with the school staff delivering the intervention. These consultations allow FITOS to be tailored to the needs of each class/ school and for staff to have a space to reflect on how they might adapt the resources or implement bridging activities to consolidate the application of these skills in 'real life' situations. For example, during the mid-intervention consultation the 'Thoughts, Feelings, Strengths, Solutions' framework is introduced. This framework outlines a process of reflection which can be undertaken with children after an incident of challenging behaviour, such as an argument on the playground. The framework encourages those involved in the incident to consider what they and others were thinking and feeling and how strengths could be utilised to find a solution. During the course of the consultation school staff are encouraged to think about how they might implement this framework in their class.

3.2 Evaluating FITOS

Lunham and Pahill (2012) reported the evaluations of FITOS which had already taken place. Based on a case-study which utilised the Social Inclusion Survey they concluded that there was a positive shift in the social acceptance of all 4 characters following the intervention.

Anecdotal evidence and evidence collated through the case study carried out by Lunham and Pahill (2012) suggests that following the intervention, children are able to partly define the concept of a strength but tend to focus on the 'something people are good at' element of the definition and omit the second part of the definition given, which states that it is also something that people enjoy doing or are interested in. The case-study suggests that children are more likely to identify strengths in themselves following the intervention: on

average the number of strengths the children were able to identify in themselves had increased from 2 to 3.

At the point when I contacted the developers of the programme, they had not yet evaluated the intervention in terms of whether or not pupils developed empathy and social acceptance towards peers in real life. I negotiated my work with two of the intervention developers and it was decided that it was this gap in the evaluation which would form the focus of my research. In the following section of this professional practice report, I outline the work undertaken which aimed to consider whether or not, following the intervention of FITOS, there was an improvement in the social inclusion of peers in real life.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In this section I outline the research aim and the research question I sought to answer. Ontological and epistemological assumptions which underpin my role as a researcher are explored as is the research design employed. Within a discussion of the data collection stage of research, I discuss the sample, data collection tools utilised and the procedure undertaken. Alongside this, I discuss the ethical considerations which underpinned all stages of the research project. I outline how the data was analysed before finally discussing the generalisability in the context of this project.

4.1.1 Research aim and question

As discussed previously, the developers of the FITOS programme had already developed an evaluation guide and previous evaluations suggested that, following the implementation of FITOS, pupils and class teachers had developed their awareness of strengths in self and others, and empathy and social acceptance towards the FITOS characters was developed.

The aim of the current research project was to consider whether or not the implementation of the FITOS programme led to achieving the objective of pupils developing empathy and acceptance towards other pupils in real life. More specifically I was concerned with whether pupils demonstrated their acceptance of other pupils showing willingness to play and/ or work with them. No previous research with this aim had been undertaken.

The research question to be addressed is: Following the implementation of the FITOS programme is there a change to how willing members of the class are to play or work with other members of the class?

It is important to note at this stage, that this research centred around one primary school class, it is a case study and as such cannot be used to make claims about causality. This is discussed further when the research design is outlined.

4.2 Ontological and epistemological stance

Ontology concerns itself with how one views knowledge or 'reality', whilst epistemology is concerned with how an understanding of that knowledge can be acquired. In my role as a trainee educational psychologist, I am influenced by constructionist ontology: I believe that the social world is constructed through people's interactions and that there is no one true 'reality' when social phenomena are being considered. This work is underpinned and influenced by a critical realist epistemology (Bhaskar, 1998) which can sit alongside constructionism. In line with a critical realist epistemology this study utilises quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection. A critique of the research process is prominent throughout this research report since I accept that the findings will be partial and limited due to difficulties encountered during the research process (Nightingale and Cromby, 2002) and that the data generated may be explicable by several factors or theories (Robson, 2002).

Research design concerns itself with the aims, purposes and intentions of research alongside the restraints which may be imposed upon a piece of work (Hakim, 1987). Gorard (2011) urges researchers to begin their work by considering what claims they want to be able to make at the end of the research and consider what research design would allow them to make those claims. Ideally, I would like to be able to claim that the implementation of the FITOS programme causes a change to how willing members of the class are to play or work with other members of the class. However, in order to be able to make a causal claim, a stronger design, such as one which employs control groups would be necessary. I have had to adapt the research design in light of time constraints imposed on this project and resources available to me. I was only able to recruit and work with one class and, for this reason, have utilised a case-study design. As you will see in this research report this design has impacted on the claims I can make and following Gorard's (2011) advice, the limitations imposed on my choice of design means the claims I make following this research are more humble.

4.3.1 Case study design

Robson (2002) defines a 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 of evidence' (Robson, 2002, pp. 146). This research utilises an independent case study design since it focuses on one class. True to case study design, more than one method of data collection is used and these methods will be outlined later in this chapter.

4.4 Data collection

4.4.1 Recruitment

Having spoken to the programme developers about FITOS, I approached members of the EPS

in which I worked asking them if they felt it was an intervention which could appropriately

be carried out within one of their schools. One member of my team had a discussion with

the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo) working within a First School in

Greenshire and the SENCo expressed an interest in meeting with me to discuss it further. I

met with the SENCo and discussed details of FITOS and the research I was hoping to carry

out. Following this discussion, the SENCo wished to implement FITOS in her school and for

her class to take part in the research.

4.4.2 Sample

The SENCo decided that she would like to implement the intervention with her own class

since she felt it would be relevant and useful. She felt it would be useful since there was, in

her view, 'an issue with some children picking up on other children's difficulties at the

moment'. Her class was a Year 4 class who were taught by two teachers. At the start of the

intervention there were 27 children in the class; 9 girls and 18 boys all aged between 8 and 9

years of age. By the end of the intervention, one boy had left the class.   All children in the

class participated in the research by completing a Social Inclusion Surveys. Three of these

children were also selected to complete a measure of belonging (as described in section

4.4.3.2) the three children were chosen because results of the Social Inclusion Survey

suggested that one was 'popular', one was 'average' and the other 'rejected'. All three

children selected to complete the belonging scale were also on the SEN register, this

decision was made because FITOS is primarily aimed at promoting a social inclusion for children with SEN.

4.4.3 Data collection tools

> *4.4.3.1 Social inclusion survey*

The Social Inclusion Survey is a measure included within the Psychology In Education Portfolio (Frederickson and Cameron, 1994). It uses sociometric techniques and contains two questionnaires which indicate how well a child is included within their class. The names of each pupil in the class are listed on the side of a sheet of paper, next to each name there are four boxes, the first contains a question mark, the second a happy face, the third a neutral face and the fourth a sad face. Both questionnaires look the same: on the first the participants are asked to indicate how much they would like to work with each pupil and on the second how much they would like to play with each pupil. Circling the happy face indicates that they would like to work/play with this person; circling the neutral face indicates that they don't mind whether they work/play with this person or not; circling the sad face indicates that they would not like to work/play with this person; and the question mark indicates that they do not know the person well enough to decide. Frederickson and Cameron (1994) advocate the use of the social inclusion survey to evaluate the success of interventions or strategies adopted.

The tool is appropriate for use with children aged 7 years upwards. A script is provided for administering the social inclusion survey and I adhered to this. The participants were assured about confidentiality: it was made clear that their responses would not be shared with anyone and they were asked not to discuss their responses with their classmates. The children were given the opportunity to ask any questions before they completed the

questionnaire. A copy of the script used with the class prior to them completing the social

inclusion surveys is given in Appendix 1.

4.4.3.2 Belonging scale

The Belonging Scale is also taken from the Psychology In Education Portfolio (Frederickson

and Cameron, 1994). It is adapted from the Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale

(PSSM); it is a simplified version of the PSSM designed for use with children from 8 years

upwards (the PSSM was developed for children between the ages of 10 and 14 and therefore

was not an appropriate tool to use within this research project). The Belonging Scale

provides an indicator of a child's sense of belonging within their school. Children are asked

to respond to twelve statements such as 'Other kids like me the way I am' by circling a

response from the choices 'Yes true', 'No not true' or 'Not sure'. A copy of the script used

with the two participants who completed the belonging scale is included in Appendix 2.

4.4.3.3 Qualitative discussions with class teacher

Administering the FITOS intervention involves three consultations with the teacher

delivering the intervention: a pre-intervention planning meeting, a mid-intervention review

and a post-project consultation meeting.   As well as using these meetings for their intended

purpose (to develop the implementation of FITOS and the principles which underpin the

intervention), I used these meetings as an opportunity to gain an insight into the class

teachers' views about the intervention. I took notes during these meetings which I have

referred to in writing this report.

4.4.4 Procedure

The process undertaken consisted of three phases. During phase 1 I administered the pre-

intervention measures; during phase 2 the intervention was implemented (as it would be in

any other school) and during phase 3 I gathered the post-intervention data. Further details

about these phases and the timescales involved are given in the table below.

Phase	Work undertaken	Dates work undertaken on
Phase 1 – Pre intervention	• **Pre-intervention planning meeting with class teacher** • **Social inclusion survey administered with whole-class** On the day that the social inclusion survey was administered one boy and one girl were absent. • **Belonging scale administered with two pupils** I had chosen three children with SEN to complete this measure, results of the social inclusion survey suggested that one was 'popular', one was 'average' and the other 'rejected'. The decision was made to ask children on the SEN register to complete the scale because FITOS is primarily aimed at promoting a social inclusion for children with SEN. On the day that I administered the questionnaire the child who was 'rejected' was absent and therefore only two children completed the measure.	9.1.13 22.1.13 5.2.13
Phase 2 – Intervention	• **FITOS Lesson 1 (delivered by the researcher)** • **FITOS Lesson 2** • **FITOS Lesson 3** • **Mid-intervention review meeting** • **FITOS Lesson 4** • **FITOS Lesson 5** Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances, the class teacher was not able to deliver the sixth and final FITOS lesson (implications of this are outlined in the Section 4.6 'Extraneous factors likely to have impacted on the research').	5.2.13 12.2.13 26.2.13 28.2.13 5.3.13 12.3.13
Phase 3 – Post intervention	• **Social inclusion survey re-administered with whole-class** On the day that the social inclusion survey was re-administered one boy was absent and another had left the school a week before. • **Belonging scale re-administered with two pupils** • **Post project consultation meeting**	26.3.13 26.3.13 28.3.13

Table 2. Table detailing the work undertaken during each phase and the dates that this occurred.

4.4.5 Ethical considerations

I referred to the British Psychological Societies' Code of Human Research Ethics (2010) to inform this research and as with everything I do as a trainee educational psychologist, I was mindful of ethical dilemmas from start to finish. I paid particular consideration to confidentiality, consent and risk; the table below outlines the decisions taken with regard to each of these.

Ethical consideration	Steps taken to ensure study was ethical
Confidentiality	All of the children were assured that their responses would remain confidential this was explained to them prior to administering each measure. To ensure this confidentiality the data collected was stored in a locked draw and destroyed following analysis. Each child was assigned a participant number and no names are used in the reporting of results.
Consent	Given the age of the participants parents were informed about the intervention and research surrounding it through the school's newsletter and given the opportunity to speak to the class teacher should they have any concerns. The purpose of the research was explained clearly to the participants in a way they would understand and they were given the opportunity to opt out of completing the pre and post measures. It was made clear to them that opting out was okay and would not be punished (see Appendices 1 and 2).
Risk	In the early stages of the project I was concerned with risks associated with asking children to consider how far they liked playing and working with each other and asking specific children how they viewed their belonging in school. I discussed these concerns with my University supervisor, the FITOS designers and the class teacher delivering FITOS. Frederickson and Cameron (1994) cite research which suggests that asking class members who they least like to associate with does not lead to negative consequences (Bell-Dolan et al. 1989; Hayvren and Hymel, 1984; Iverson et al., 1997, Iverson and Iverson, 1996). Consulting research by these authors made me feel confident that there were no risks posed to the class.

Table 3. Ethical considerations and steps taken to ensure research was ethical.

4.5 Data analysis

4.5.1 Social inclusion survey analysis

The numbers of smiling, neutral and sad faces for each member of the class were tallied. Tallies were created for same sex, opposite sex and whole class. The number of faces ticked can then be used to discern whether the child falls into one of three social acceptance descriptors 'popular', 'average' or 'rejected'.

These categories were too crude to use in the analysis since the majority of pupils fell within the 'average' category both before and after the intervention. Instead, I calculated what percentage of the faces each child had been given were sad faces.

Following Frederickson and Cameron's (1994) advice my analysis was based on same sex acceptance. Because there was a large gender imbalance in the class, girls in particular were more likely to appear 'rejected' because of boys circling sad faces for them. This is to be expected in the primary age range when it is common for pupils to interact with members of their class who are the same sex.

Because responses to the social inclusion survey were being used as a pre and post measure I excluded data from children who had not been present on both occasions from the final analysis (four pupils in total).

4.5.2 Belonging scale analysis

Two items on the Belonging Scale ('Most teachers at my school like me' and 'There is an adult in school I can talk to about my problems') were discounted from the analysis since they were not thought by myself and the designers of FITOS to be relevant to the aims of the project. Following the set scoring system a score of 1, 2 or 3 was given for each answer. The

total score was then divided by 10 (the number of items in the questionnaire) to give each child's average response. A score lower than two is taken to suggest 'low belonging'. Each child's response to the scale prior to FITOS was compared to their response following FITOS.

4.5.3 Analysis of qualitative discussions with class teacher

Since the discussions I had with the class teacher were informal, were not tape recorded and only formed a small part of this evaluation, no data analysis tools (such as thematic analysis) were employed. Instead the notes are used to supplement my account throughout this report and are explicitly referred to when they are used.

4.6 Extraneous factors likely to have impacted on the research

A number of 'school based' factors are relevant to this research and limit its utility these are listed below and each will have had possible impacts on the delivery of the intervention and the results generated in this research project.

4.6.1 Staff changes

The class was taught by two teachers but half way through the intervention one of these teachers left suddenly (with little notice). Members of the class were reported to be unsettled by this and a supply teacher taught the class for a period of time before another teacher was employed by the school. This is likely to have impacted on some class members' social and emotional wellbeing. Furthermore, the second and third teachers in post will have had limited knowledge about the FITOS intervention and are therefore unlikely to have consolidated the skills and techniques being taught.

4.6.2 Time between intervention ending and post measures being carried out

Ideally, I would have administered post-measures after an elapsed time during which the ethos of FITOS could have been further consolidated and reinforced by the class teacher. Unfortunately, the class teacher began maternity leave the week after the intervention finished and so this was not possible. This places limits on the research since any differences noted are short term changes and do not highlight, whether, in this case, the intervention can be judged to have had a long term impact on the social inclusion of class members.

4.6.3 Fidelity of intervention

As previously noted the sixth and final lesson included in the FITOS project was not delivered to the class. Although this lesson takes the same format as lessons 4 and 5 (albeit with a different character) its omission limits the utility of this research since the sixth lesson may have served to further reinforce the ethos and messages of FITOS.

4.7 Generalisation

As noted above there are factors which limit the utility of this research, even if this had not been the case, following Yin's (1989) advice I would not attempt to generalise the results beyond the case considered. However, there are two types of generalisation: generalisation of results to populations (i.e. suggesting that results are representative of whole populations) and generalisation to theory (Sharp, 1998). Lincoln and Guba (2002) suggest that case-study researchers can generate 'working hypotheses'. This individual case study provides results which will be of use to the programme designers as they develop FITOS further and the addition of other case studies carried out in a similar vein will allow for the formation of working hypotheses

5. RESULTS

5.1 Introduction

Results are presented by outlining the responses to the Social Inclusion Survey, the

responses to the Belonging Scale and the discussions I had with the class teacher in turn.

5.2 Social Inclusion Survey

5.2.1 'Like to work' with survey

The figure below shows the percentages of each participant's classmates who indicated on

the Social Inclusion Survey that they would <u>not</u> like to work with them. As stated previously,

the analysis discounts anyone who indicated that they did not know the participant well. To

illustrate using an example, prior to the intervention 18.8% of Participant 20's classmates

indicated that they would not like to work with him/her, following the intervention none of

his/her classmates indicated that they would not like to work with him/her. This indicates a

decrease in the number of children who would not like to work with him/her. Since the

percentage of children indicating that they did not want to work with someone is being

taken as a measure of social exclusion, a decrease suggests that, in relation to their peers

wanting to work with them, the child is more socially included at the end of the intervention

than they were at the beginning,

The table below can be consulted for further details however, in summary:

- For 5 children a lower percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them

    following the intervention.

- For 7 children there were no changes to the percentage of their classmates who

    wanted to work with them following the intervention

- For 15 children a higher percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them following the intervention than before the intervention.

- On average the percentage of children who did <u>not</u> want to work with other children increased slightly from 11.2% to 18.8% following the intervention.

Since FITOS is aimed specifically at increasing the social inclusion of children with SEN their scores on the social inclusion survey were considered separately. Participants 1, 2, 4, 7, 8, 16 and 24 were on the schools SEN register. In summary:

- For 1 child with SEN (participant 8) a lower percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them following the intervention.

- For 1 child with SEN (participant 7) there were no changes to the percentage of their classmates who wanted to work with them following the intervention

- For 5 children with SEN (participants 1, 2, 4, 16 and 24) a higher percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them following the intervention than before the intervention.

- On average the percentage of children who did <u>not</u> want to work with children with SEN increased from 10.46% to 27.09% following the intervention.

Participant	Percentage pre	Percentage post	Change	Direction of change
20	18.8	0	-18.8	Decrease
25	14.3	0	-14.3	Decrease
13	64.7	53.3	-11.4	Decrease
8	7.1	0	-7.1	Decrease
11	7.1	0	-7.1	Decrease
6	0	0	0	Stayed the same
7	0	0	0	Stayed the same
9	0	0	0	Stayed the same
15	0	0	0	Stayed the same
19	0	0	0	Stayed the same
23	14.3	14.3	0	Stayed the same
27	0	0	0	Stayed the same
5	6.7	7.1	0.4	Increase
18	12.5	16.7	4.2	Increase
10	28.6	33.3	4.7	Increase
2	6.3	14.3	8	Increase
22	14.3	25	10.7	Increase
12	1.4	13.3	11.9	Increase
26	25	37.5	12.5	Increase
24	14.3	28.6	14.3	Increase
14	0	16.7	16.7	Increase
21	8.3	25	16.7	Increase
4	6.7	26.7	20	Increase
3	0	25	25	Increase
17	14.3	50	35.7	Increase
16	20	60	40	Increase
1	18.8	60	41.2	Increase
Average	**11.24**	**18.77**	**7.53**	**Increase**

Table. 4 A table highlighting the percentage of pupils who did not want to work with each participant pre and post intervention

Overall, there do not appear to be any obvious trends in data, with some children appearing to be more socially included (in terms of the willingness of other pupils to work with them) and others less included following the implementation of FITOS. The average percentages indicate that overall there was a slight increase in children not wanting to work with other children. However, it is worth noting that for the only child who was initially classed as 'rejected' (Participant 13) on the measure the percentage of sad faces he was given by classmates reduced from 64.7% to 53.3%.

5.2.2 'Like to play with' survey

The figure below shows the percentages of each participant's classmates who indicated on the Social Inclusion Survey that they would not like to play with them. Again, the analysis discounts anyone who indicated that they did not know the participant well.

The table below can be consulted for further details however, in summary:

- For 13 children a lower percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to play with them following the intervention.

- For 2 children there were no changes to the percentage of their classmates who did <u>not</u> want to play with them following the intervention

- For 12 children a higher percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to play with them following the intervention than before the intervention.

- On average the percentage of children who did <u>not</u> want to play with other children increased slightly from 14.76% to 16.55% following the intervention.

For children with SEN:

- For 2 children with SEN (participants 1 and 24) a lower percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them following the intervention.

- For 5 children with SEN (participants 2, 4, 7, 8 and 16) a higher percentage of children did <u>not</u> want to work with them following the intervention than before the intervention.

- On average the percentage of children who did <u>not</u> want to work with children with SEN increased from 14.54% to 20.00% following the intervention.

Name	Percentage pre	Percentage post	Change	Direction of change
20	26.7	0	-26.7	Decrease
25	16.7	0	-16.7	Decrease
10	28.6	14.3	-14.3	Decrease
11	14.3	0	-14.3	Decrease
24	33.3	21.4	-11.9	Decrease
26	37.5	28.6	-8.9	Decrease
19	7.1	0	-7.1	Decrease
18	20	13.3	-6.7	Decrease
1	33.3	28.6	-4.7	Decrease
21	21.4	18.8	-2.6	Decrease
15	8.3	6.25	-2.05	Decrease
13	58.3	57.14	-1.16	Decrease
12	7.7	6.7	-1	Decrease
9	0	0	0	Stayed the same
27	0	0	0	Stayed the same
17	14.3	16.7	2.4	Increase
4	21.4	26.7	5.3	Increase
2	7.1	13.3	6.2	Increase
8	0	6.7	6.7	Increase
6	7.1	14.3	7.2	Increase
14	14.3	22.2	7.9	Increase
3	0	12.5	12.5	Increase
23	0	12.5	12.5	Increase
7	0	14.3	14.3	Increase
22	14.3	37.5	23.2	Increase
5	0	25	25	Increase
16	6.7	50	43.3	Increase
Average	**14.76**	**16.55**	1.79	**Increase**

Table. 4 A table highlighting the percentage of pupils who did not want to play with each participant pre and post intervention

Again, there do not appear to be any obvious trends in data with some children appearing to be more socially included (in terms of play) and others less included following the implementation of FITOS. The average percentages indicate that overall there was a slight increase in the percentage of children not wanting to play with other children.

5.3 Belonging Scale

The Belonging Scale was administered with participants 1 and 7. As discussed in the methodology section scores on the Belonging Scale are calculated by averaging responses to 12 items: a score of 3 indicates a positive response; 2 a neutral response; and 1 a negative response.

Participant 1 (a boy with SEN) scored 2.2 prior to the intervention and his score remained the same following the intervention. Participant 7 (a girl with SEN) scored 2.3 prior to the intervention and her score increased slightly to 2.4 following the intervention.

None of these scores indicate a low sense of belonging, which is to be expected given that the children were categorised as being 'popular' or 'average' based on responses to the Social Inclusion Survey. As stated before, a third child was not available to complete this measure; the third child I had planned to administer the measure with was classed as 'rejected' prior to and following the intervention being carried out and so his results would have been of interest.

5.4 Qualitative discussions with class teacher

Since this was the first time I had been involved in the delivery of the FITOS intervention, I was interested in the class teacher's views about it. During the mid-meeting review the class teacher delivering the intervention commented on the following:

- She felt that the majority of the class were enjoying the intervention and that Simone was a strong character which had helped to engage them.
- She remarked on the fact that at this stage it felt that there were too many strengths for the children to take them in

- She wondered if there was scope to include more activities as the lessons involved, to her mind, a lot of 'chalk and talk'

- Anticipating Lessons 4, 5 and 6 the class teacher was considering carrying out some pre-teaching around the differences between a thought and a feeling and extending the children's emotional vocabulary.

- She wondered if it would be useful for class teachers to have the interim activities built in to a plan, rather than expecting the teacher to select these from a range.

At the end of the project during the post project consultation meeting the class teacher predicted that there would be no clear improvements on the Social Inclusion Survey or Belonging Scale. Despite this, she said that she would like to deliver the intervention again. The following points were raised by the class teacher:

- The class teacher enjoyed seeing her class recognising strengths in themselves and each other

- She had implemented some consolidation activities, getting the children to write about their talking partners' strengths and note the thoughts and feelings of a character they were looking at in literacy.

- The class teacher believed that whether or not the intervention was deemed to be successful in increasing empathy towards and the social inclusion of children with SEN, would be related to the consolidation activities implemented by the class teacher and the time given over to these. The class teacher had not been able to do much consolidation work, for example, the use of the Thoughts, Feelings, Strengths and Solutions (TFSS) framework which had been discussed during the mid-intervention review had not been implemented with the class although she saw this as a useful framework for mediating playground disputes.

- In addition to this the class teacher felt that to be beneficial the project should be carried out across the whole-school simultaneously, so that the ethos of FITOS could be embedded by all staff and in assemblies etc.

6. DISCUSSION

This case-study was aimed at discerning whether or not following the implementation of the FITOS programme there was a change to how willing members of the class were to play or work with other members of the class. There were no clear trends in the pre and post data gathered using the Social Inclusion Survey, as noted in the results section there were slight increases in the percentage of children stating that they did not want to work or play with other children.

As highlighted in the methodology section of this report, there were several limiting factors that impacted on the implementation of the intervention and so, this case study is of limited utility and must be considered in light of these factors. It may be the case that, had the sixth and final lesson been delivered and more time allowed for the interim activities and consolidation, then the results would have been different. This research does not imply that FITOS is ineffective in its aim of increasing social acceptance. Humphrey (2013) highlights the fact that variances in the implementation of interventions are related to variances in the achievement of expected outcomes. Since, in this instance, FITOS was not delivered in its entirety or in an optimal context expected outcomes were unlikely to be achieved.

Since evidence based practice is highlighted as being of importance to educational psychologists (see Dunsmuir et al, 2009), it is important that FITOS is evaluated and, if necessary, further developed in light of these evaluations. It is my hope that others will utilise the methodology I have described to carry out evaluations of FITOS in various

contexts. It is important to note however, that if the developers of the intervention would like to know whether or not the implementation of FITOS causing an increase in the social inclusion of children with SEN, then a more complex experimental design must be employed (Gorard, 2011).

It is my view that FITOS offers a promising approach to improving the social acceptance of children with SEN and its positive psychology orientation will appeal to many schools and psychologists. It is interesting to note that despite hypothesising that responses to the post-intervention Social Inclusion Survey would not highlight any changes, the teacher who delivered the intervention said that she would like to implement the intervention again with other classes.

In this discussion I will offer my reflections on the methodology employed and more general reflections on FITOS and its value in light on the critique of Circle of Friends outlined above.

6.1 Reflections on the research process

Humphrey (2013) highlights the need to assess and monitor social and emotional learning. Carrying out a meta-analysis of studies considering social and emotional learning Durlak et al (2011) highlights that many evaluations:

- rely solely on child self-report;

- did not monitor implementation in any way;

- used measures with no reported reliability; and

- used measures with no reported validity.

By these criteria this evaluation offered a robust attempt at a case study evaluation:

- Rather than relying solely on child self-report (of how included focus children perceived themselves to be) the Social Inclusion Survey involves the whole class in evaluating the social inclusion of each child, a self-report measure was also used with two children and the class teacher was asked if she had noted any differences in the social inclusion within the class.

- Implementation was monitored through three consultation meetings.

- Frederickson and Furnham (1998) highlighted test-retest reliability of the Social Inclusion Survey (0.70 to 0.78 over a 5 week period).

- Frederickson and Furnham (1998) also investigated construct validity and found that, compared to those with 'average' ratings, those with 'popular' ratings were noted to be more co-operative and less disruptive and when those described as 'rejected' were compared with those described as 'average' the reverse was found.

For the reasons highlighted above, I believe this to be a well-designed research project. The utility of this case-study is limited primarily by the fidelity of the implementation of the programme.

One other flaw within this project may have been related to the sample utilised. The class teacher and educational psychologist working with the school described members of the class as not being socially accepted. However, only one member of the class was classified as 'rejected' according to the results of the Social Inclusion Survey. Figures taken from Frederickson and Furnham (1998) suggest that of their sample of 115 pupils aged between 8 and 12 with statements of SEN, 27.8% were classified as 'rejected' using the Social Inclusion Survey. In this research, 7 children out of the sample of 27 were on the schools SEN register but none were classified as 'rejected'. However, none of the 7 children with SEN had

statements and there is likely to be a difference between the social inclusion of children on the SEN register at school action or school action plus and those with statements of SEN. That said, the results of the Social Inclusion Survey whereby only one child was categorised as 'rejected' suggests that social acceptance within the class was not as big a concern as originally hypothesised by the class teacher and educational psychologist.

6.2 Reflections on FITOS

Since I have previously noted concerns about Circle of Friends, a common intervention for raising the social acceptance of a child with SEN, I believe that FITOS is a necessary tool to add to the educational psychologist's toolkit. In comparison with Circle of Friends the use of FITOS reduces ethical dilemmas and risks since there is no need to discuss individual children. However, whilst FITOS is clearly an enjoyable intervention which appears to lead to changes in the social acceptance of its characters and in children's ability to discuss and spot their strengths, it is as yet unclear whether the intervention will have any 'real life' impact on the social inclusion of children with SEN. Further evaluations are vital and it may be that these evaluations highlight a need for closer consideration to be given to bridging the gap between the characters and real life. During my involvement with FITOS the developers have been adapting a framework for use as a mediation tool. The Thoughts, Feelings, Strengths and Solutions framework which can be used to talk through conflicts between peers may offer one opportunity to apply the thinking skills developed during FITOS to a real life context. I wonder if the use of this framework should be incorporated as a mandatory component of the intervention but I am aware that this may not sit well with the consultative approach taken by the developers of FITOS.

As noted previously, FITOS incorporates six lesson plans and several interim activities. The programme should be used flexibly and three consultations held throughout the

implementation of FITOS exist to allow the EP and class teacher to discuss adaptations and allow the teacher space to consider interim activities which they may want to utilise. The class teacher who implemented FITOS queried whether teachers should be directed to compulsory activities, rather than given a choice. Durlak and DuPre (2008) highlight that absolute fidelity is rare (if not impossible) and that expected outcomes can be achieved with around 60-80% of the intervention's features being implemented correctly. Humphrey (2013) highlights that research is beginning to distinguish between the 'must do' and 'should do' components to interventions (Greenberg et al, 2005). Perhaps as evaluations of FITOS take place the programme developers should concern themselves with determining which elements of the intervention are vital and which can be taken to be optional. Although I am aware that this may not adhere to the consultative approach favoured by many EPs (and the programmes developers) it may be necessary if we are to ensure that the intervention is effective in meeting the outcome of increasing social acceptance for children with SEN.

6.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, this individual case study, whilst not demonstrating that FITOS leads to improvements in social acceptance does, however, outline a methodology which could be employed in future evaluations of the intervention. FITOS offers a unique approach to addressing the reported social exclusion of children with SEN. It is also an approach that both children and staff alike enjoy. However, I would encourage further evaluations of FITOS and depending on the findings of these, it may be necessary to give further consideration to how children can be supported to generalise the skills learnt to real life.

Appendix 1: <u>Script used with whole class prior to them completing the social inclusion survey</u>

Next week I will be coming back to see your class to start a project about strengths. But this week I am here to complete some questionnaires with you. The questionnaires are about how your class get along with each other in school. There are no right or wrong answers and you do not have to take part if you don't want to.

These questionnaires are about how you get along with people and I know that that is a private thing so I will be careful to keep your questionnaires private. I will not tell your teacher, other children in your class or anyone else what answers you put.

You must be careful to keep these private too. That means that you shouldn't look at your neighbour's answers and you shouldn't talk about your answers with other people after I've gone.

[Explanation of how to complete measure using script provided by Frederickson and Cameron (1994)]

Now you know what the questionnaire is if you don't want to complete it that is absolutely fine, just tell me when I hand the questionnaires out and we can find you something else to do.

Does anyone have any questions?

Appendix 2: <u>Script used with participants prior to them completing the Belonging Scale</u>

As I said to your class earlier, next week I will be coming back to see your class to start a project about strengths. But this week I am here to complete some questionnaires with you. I wondered if you would be happy to fill in an extra questionnaire telling me how you feel about school. The questionnaire is about belonging. I will read some sentences and you have to show whether they are true or not true for you. There are no right or wrong answers and you do not have to take part if you don't want to.

These questionnaires are about how you feel about school and I know that that is a private thing so I will be careful to keep your answers private. I might write about your scores but I won't use your name so people won't know that it is you.

You must be careful to keep these private too. That means that you shouldn't look at your neighbour's answers.

Now you know what the questionnaire is if you don't want to complete it that is absolutely fine, just tell me when I give you the questionnaire and I can find you something else to do.

Does anyone have any questions?

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