USING A REALISTIC EVALUATION APPROACH TO EXPLORE HOW ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION PROGRAMMES SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO ARE AT RISK OF SCHOOL EXCLUSION TO REMAIN IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOL

By

JENNIFER ANN BIRCH

Volume one of a thesis submitted to the University of Birmingham for the degree of APPLIED EDUCATIONAL AND CHILD PSYCHOLOGY DOCTORATE

The School of Education
University of Birmingham
June 2015

UNIVERSITYOF
BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham Research Archive

e-theses repository

Abstract

The research uses a Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) to begin to identify and refine shared programme theories that underpin alternative education programmes (AEPs) that support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

A Realist Synthesis (Pawson, 2006) of the relevant literature begins to identify programme theories underpinning the AEPs' approach. Realist interviews (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) with a range of stakeholders, including education practitioners, children and a parent who have experience of one Local Authority AEP, are used to refine the programme theories identified.

Supportive programme outcomes included: increasing parental engagement, promoting an effective school environment and promoting skills and resilience in the young person. Programme context conditions and mechanisms are identified as promoting the achievement of these outcomes. The bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) provided a model that located one potential analytic framework which identifies the purpose of the programme as 'facilitating change in the child's ecological context systems to enable a more supportive environment for reintegration'. These embryonic programme theories and the RE approach are discussed in light of how they can enable practitioners to develop a clearer understanding of how AEPs, and other education programmes, can effectively support children.

I would like to dedicate this work to all the children and young people that are attending or have attended alternative education provisions. I hope that this research is just the start of my journey in working with others to continue to develop more effective ways to enable you to achieve your aspirations.

CONTENTS

List of appendices

List of figures

List of Tables

Abbreviations

AEP = alternative education programme

CMOC = Context- mechanism- outcome configuration

RE = realistic evaluation

RS = realist synthesis

LA = local authority

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This volume of work presents the research carried out through the Applied Educational and Child Psychology Doctoral Programme at the University of Birmingham. The research aims to contribute to the developing understanding of *how* Alternative Education Programmes (AEP), that provide off-site, short-term intervention programmes, support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

The current research uses a Realistic Evaluation approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) to begin to explicate programme theories (*the set of stakeholders' assumptions about what action is needed to solve a social problem, and why they assume this action will be effective (*Chen, 2012)) that appear to underpin these AEPs.

The research follows a realist ontology and constructivist and relativist epistemology, and consequently aims to identify middle range programme theories that are commonplace across the AEP. The research involves both a review of the literature using a realist synthesis approach (chapter 4), and empirical data collection using a realist interview method (chapter 5) to identify and refine the programme theories with a range of stakeholders who have experience of one Local Authority AEP.

A realist synthesis is a review of the relevant literature which aims to begin to "mak(e) progress in explanation" (Pawson, 2006, pg. 94) i.e. begin to identify the programme theories, thought to be underpinning the AEP, through the literature. The realist

interviews involved sharing these programme theories with stakeholders so they can begin to test and refine them.

Figure 1.1 *provides an overview of the research process that will be described in the remainder of this volume (please note chapter two provides an outline of the RE approach).*

Figure 1.1: Overview of RE research approach in this current study

RE stage 1 (Chapter 3): Explaining how the embryonic programme theories were derived from the literature. This chapter explains how the initial programme theories were developed from the existing literature. A Realist Synthesis approach (Pawson, 2006) was used to derive programme theories from a review of the literature to begin to identify how AEPs work to support children to remain in mainstream school.

RE stage 2 (chapter 4): Presenting the programme theories derived from the review of the literature. This chapter presents the findings from the realist synthesis: programme theories identified from the literature. Subsection 4.1 identifies the programme theory outcomes and subsection 4.2 identifies the associated contexts and mechanisms. Subsection 4.3 provides a summary of the programme theories identified.

RE Stage 3 (chapter 5): Describing the empirical data used to refine the programme theories. This chapter explains how empirical data was collected in this research study to begin to refine the programme theories identified. Realist Interviews were completed with a range of stakeholders that had experience of how one LA AEP supported children who were at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. The identified programme theories were shared with participants and their feedback was used to begin to refine the theories.

RE Stage 4 (chapter 6 and 7): Explaining how the data was used to refine the programme theories. These chapters explain how the empirical data was used to refine the programme theories derived from the realist synthesis. It describes how the process of thematic analysis of the data was used to test and refine the programme theories. It clarifies how a system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) was used to identify a potential analytic framework.

RE Stage 5 (Chapter 8): Presenting the refined programme theories. This chapter presents the final version of the programme theories and a potential analytic framework identified through this current research.

1.1 Research Rationale

This research area was chosen due to a combination of interest by me, the researcher, owing to prior experience of working in an AEP, and Local Authority (LA) interest in developing its AEP.

1.1.1 Local Authority interest

The LA Principal Educational Psychologist and the new Head of the LA AEP were interested in exploring further how the LA AEP supports the children, who participate, to remain in mainstream school and how the programme could further develop its effectiveness as part of a wider LA agenda to further reduce school exclusion. The programme has recently had a change of head teacher and had undergone changes in programme staff. The head teacher, following a positive Ofsted report in 2013, was keen to further develop the strengths of the programme in order to continue to contribute to reducing the number of primary school permanent exclusions. She felt having a better understanding of how the programme was working/not working to support children to return into mainstream schools could assist in informing future development.

1.1.2 Researcher interest

I have had prior experience working in an AEP with young people who were excluded from school. Concern about the effectiveness of this type of programme in supporting children to remain in mainstream school initiated early interest in this research topic.

1.1.3 Literature evidence

1.1.3.1 Defining school exclusion

Legislation in England has authorised the use of school exclusion since the 1944

Education Act, and permanent school exclusion for children considered disruptive

since the 1986 Education Act (Education Act 1944; Education Act, 1986; Parsons and

Castle, 1998).

In current English legislation (DfE, 2012c) head teachers are given the authority to use

exclusion

> *"as a last resort disciplinary sanction in response to a serious*
>
> *breach, or persistent breaches, of the school's behaviour policy; and*
>
> *where allowing the pupil to remain in school would seriously harm*
>
> *the education or welfare of the pupil or others in the school" pg.6.*

Government statistics suggest that the most frequent reasons given for permanent and

fixed term exclusion is persistent disruptive behaviour, and more recently, in primary

schools, physical assault against an adult (DfE, 2011; DfE, 2012b; DfE, 2013).

1.1.3.2 Level of school exclusion

Significant increases in exclusion were seen during the 1990s (Parsons, 1996; Social

Exclusions Unit, 1998; Parsons, 1999) but appear to be gradually reducing (DfE,

2014a), where permanent exclusions are now recorded at 0.06% of the school

population, which represents 4,630 children, of whom 670 children are from primary

school. Some have questioned the accuracy of the exclusion figures, due to the existence of unofficial, internal or informal exclusions, suggesting figures may actually be higher than stated (Vulliamy and Webb, 2001; Centre for Social Justice, 2011; Children's Commissioner, 2013). Despite the reported overall decrease, most recent analysis of exclusion statistics suggests some groups of children remain over-represented; boys remain more likely to be excluded than girls, and children whose ethnicity is Black Caribbean as well as Gypsy, Roma and Irish travellers are more likely to be excluded (DfE, 2014a). Children receiving free school meals or who have a statement of Special Educational Needs are more likely to receive a school exclusion than other groups (DfE, 2014a).

1.1.3.3 Impact of school exclusion

Research has demonstrated that exclusion from school has been associated with significant negative outcomes for both the individual and society more generally (Parsons et al, 2001). School exclusion has been associated with social exclusion in both the short and long term (McCrystal et al, 2005; Centre for Social Justice, 2007). Exclusion from school can both directly impact on aspects of childhood social exclusion including low academic achievement at school, disaffection from education and/or social isolation from peers (Phipps and Curtis, 2001), and often continues to be associated with social exclusion into adulthood (McCrystal et al, 2005; Centre for Social Justice, 2007).

Research suggests school exclusion is associated with negative effects on educational achievement with many ending up 'Not in Education, Employment or Training' (NEET)

(Evans et al, 2009). Links have been highlighted between school exclusion and offending behaviour (Berridge et al, 2001; Parson et al, 2001; Daniels and Cole, 2010; Kennedy, 2013).

Beyond the significant costs to individuals excluded from school, Brookes et al (2007) suggested the average excluded child costs society £63,851 including the costs of future lost earning resulting from poor academic attainment, and costs in terms of crime, health and social services. Parsons and Castle (1998) suggest the economy's financial public service cost of supporting excluded children is significant, with minimal return.

1.1.3.4 Summary

The literature provides a concerning overview of the outcomes frequently associated with school exclusion, including social exclusion (Vulliamy and Webb, 2000; Berridge et al, 2001;Daniels and Cole, 2010), crime (Daniels and Cole, 2010;) and poor educational achievement (Gazeley, 2010): outcomes which have given impetus to an on-going drive to reduce exclusions. This literature provides a considerable justification for the relevance of research exploring how support can best be put in place for children who present with disruptive behaviour, to enable them to remain in the mainstream school environment. Research has shown the effectiveness of AEPs in preventing school exclusion is variable (Ofsted, 2007). There is a need to develop the quality and effectiveness of these programmes as the costs to the individual, individual's family and wider society, if we fail to rise to the challenge, will continue to be extremely high (DCSF, 2008).

The current research aims to explore *how* AEPs contribute to supporting children at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

1.2 Local Authority context

The LA in which the research was undertaken in is a large multicultural metropolitan borough and has a population of over 300,000 people. The LA has in place a strategic initiative since 2012 for LA schools relating to the social, mental and emotional health of all children. One aim included within this initiative is to have no primary school exclusions by the year 2017. This aim has been agreed with all LA school head teachers and the LA support services, and is addressed through a range of approaches, including: promoting school capacity, promoting interagency working and promoting collaboration between support services and schools to optimise the use of resources.

The initiative also includes LA-wide strategies to reduce the number of school exclusions; one of which included the use of an intervention programme provided by the AEP. One aim of the programme was to align both the new Special Educational Needs and Disability legislation (DfE/DoH, 2014) and the new exclusions legislation (DfE, 2012c). The SEN-D legislation and Code of Practice (DfE/DoH, 2014) identifies the need to support children's underlying social, mental and emotional difficulties if they express troubled behaviour. The exclusions legislation (DfE, 2012c) states the LA must provide education for those children excluded from school.

In previous years the local authority has been a relatively high excluding LA with regards to primary school age children when compared to other local authorities (DfE, 2011-2014a). However, Government statistics suggest recorded primary school exclusions in the LA has been on a downward trend over the four years immediately preceding the current research (DfE, 2011-2014a).

1.2.1 Details of the Local Authority AEP

In line with the LA exclusion agenda, the AEP comprises a programme of targeted intervention for children presenting with challenging behaviour who are identified by schools as at-risk of school exclusion, and are judged capable of benefitting from a short time away from their mainstream school, and evidence- informed intensive support to improve their behaviour and their learning skills to enable them to reintegrate (Ofsted, 2013). The AEP provides the only off-site intervention programme in the LA for primary school children following a permanent exclusion or for children identified as at risk of exclusion. The AEP began in 2009 and previous Ofsted reports (2010; 2013) have highlighted the effectiveness of the intervention programme in supporting children's return back to mainstream school: "It provides short term help, intervention and support for pupils, which enables them to return to mainstream schools swiftly." (Ofsted, 2010, pg.4).

Children's access to the AEP occurs after schools have implemented a full programme of evidence-based support. Decisions regarding children's placement at the AEP require endorsement by an LA Educational Psychologist/Behaviour Support Teacher and informed consent from parents, and require collaboration between AEP staff and

school staff to support reintegration. The protocol permits some flexibility in cases where a child is at immediate risk of permanent exclusion.

A child attending the AEP targeted intervention programme will be dual-registered with the programme and the referring school, with an expectation that the child will return to the referring school at the end of the AEP placement. The placement duration is not intended to exceed 35 school days unless there are exceptional circumstances, where a panel will consider an application for an extension. The aim of the programme is to enable children to successfully remain in mainstream education provision (or specialist school provision if more appropriate).

1.2.1.1 Demographics of the children attending the AEP

A recent Ofsted report (Ofsted, 2013) states that at least half the children attending the AEP were receiving pupil premium, while just under a third had statements of Special Educational Needs and others were going through the statutory assessment process. Many of the children had fallen behind with their learning and were working below expected levels. These demographics were confirmed with the current AEP Head Teacher as similar for the current cohort, although just over a third had statements of SEN.

CHAPTER TWO: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research aims to contribute to the developing understanding of *how* AEPs support children at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. In order to do this a Realistic Evaluation (RE) approach was utilised to begin to identify how AEPs facilitate this outcome. The following section provides an overview of the RE approach used throughout this research project.

2.1 Realistic Evaluation: research design

RE (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) is a framework created to support researchers to develop a clearer understanding about *how* a complex social programme/family of programmes work(s) to achieve its outcomes. By social programmes RE refers to the realist view of social programmes: programmes that are developed to attempt to address social problems (i.e. AEPs) and consequentially enable social change i.e. change in behaviour (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The RE framework guides the researcher through an evaluation cycle that is theory-driven and that aims to evaluate, develop and refine programme theories underpinning a complex social programme. It aims to explain 'what it is about a programme that makes it work' i.e. how, why and under what conditions a programme is most effective (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pg. 26). The RE approach used in this current research consists of both a realist synthesis of the existing literature (chapter 4) and empirical data collection using a realist interview method (chapter 5) to identify and refine the programme theories. An overview of the approach is displayed below (figure 2.1).
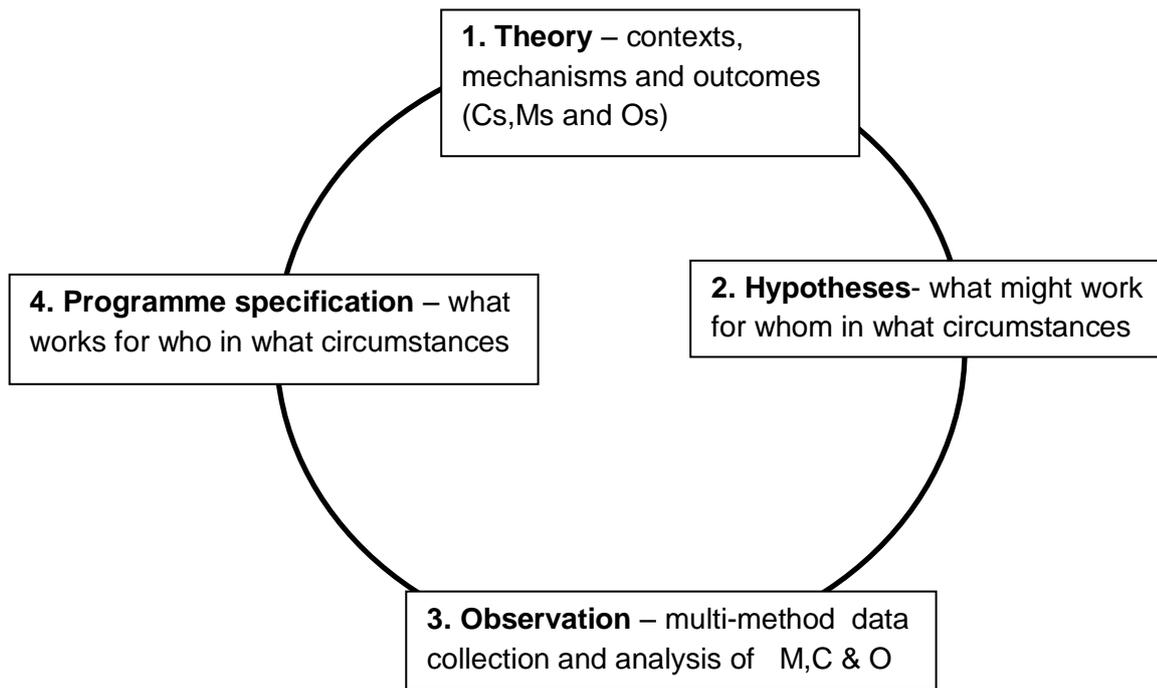
Figure 2.1*: Overview of the RE framework (taken from Pawson and Tilley, 1997 pg. 85)*

The following table will explain the **key features/assumptions** underpinning this RE framework (Appendix A provides more detail). The remainder of the volume explains the RE process/method in detail.

Table 1: Overview of key features of RE (see appendix A for more details)

Key feature	Explanation
Realist Philosophy	The realist philosophical view taken by RE identifies with a realist ontology: the idea that there is a 'real' world that exists independently of people's perceptions of it, but takes a constructivist and relativist epistemology in that each person (stakeholder) perceives their own construction of that world, which is influenced by their own social and historical experiences (Maxwell, 2012a). The assumption made is that these constructions can be used together to accrue over time, to enable us to gain an increasingly accurate interpretation of the 'real world' and therefore a clearer understanding about how a programme 'works' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).
Programme Theory	The realist approach assumes that social programmes are underpinned by programme theories that are common across families of programs. Programme theory is defined as *"a set of explicit or implicit assumptions by stakeholders about what action is required to solve a social, educational or health problem and why the problem will respond to this action" (Chen, 2012, pg17).* The aim of RE is to begin to explicate this theory.
Generative Causation	It is assumed that it is the identifiable generative causal elements (identified as mechanisms) that create the regularities of outcomes inherent in social programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The generative mechanism is not seen as a variable, but an account of the reasoning behind the outcome of a programme (Pawson, 2006). These mechanisms are thought to also include stakeholders' beliefs and reasoning. The realist view considers contextual conditions as intrinsic to the causal process, and believes that the contextual conditions (including the social, historical and political contexts) are inextricably linked to the outcomes (change in behaviour) of the programme (Maxwell, 2012a).

Middle Range Programme Theories	*"Theories that lie between the minor but necessary working hypothesis that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behaviour, social organisation, and social change"* *p.39). (Merton, 1968)*
Programme complexity	Programmes are viewed as inherently complicated and complex and embedded in wider complicated and complex social environments (Pawson, 2013). Pawson suggests social programmes are complex because they have human subjects, and that therefore there is a need to take account of the full range of human reasoning inherently influencing the programme. Programmes are complicated because they are implemented in different contexts, with different stakeholders, with different rules and traditions in different times influenced by different histories (Pawson, 2013).

2.2 Context Mechanism and Outcome Configurations (CMOCs)

Following Realism's unique way of understanding causation it offers a specific format for explicating the constituents of a programme theory: this is in the form of context, mechanism and outcome configurations (CMOCs). The Realist approach suggests to understand how a programme works, the researcher needs to identify these three elements in the programme theories:

- Context (C): social, historical, political "conditions that are likely to enable or constrain programme mechanisms" (Astbury, 2013 pg. 386); features include individuals' capacities, interpersonal relationships, institutional settings and the wider infrastructures relevant to the programme being explored (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

- Mechanism (M): is described as "the response that interaction with a programme activity or resource triggers (or does not trigger) in the reasoning and behaviour of participants" (Astbury, 2013 pg. 386). It includes changes in peoples' beliefs, values, intentions and meanings hypothesised to be created by the programme context conditions.

- Outcomes (O): are the anticipated or unanticipated changes in behaviour thought to occur due the combination or mechanisms in the right context conditions.

The realist assumption is that regularities in outcomes only occur if the "right" contexts are present and trigger a generative mechanism:

Context + (generative) mechanism = regularities in outcomes.

The aim of the RE process is to begin to explicate the CMOCs underpinning the AEP.

2.3 Why Realistic Evaluation?

The aim of this current research is to develop further understanding about *how* AEPs work to support children at risk of exclusion to remain in mainstream school. A variety in programmes, populations and locations means that more traditional evaluations of AEPs face a challenging task if they are to produce findings which can be generalised across studies (Tobin & Sprague, 2000). Traditional evaluation research regularly finds inconsistencies in whether a programme works, but often fails to explore why these differences occur (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

Alternatively, the aim of an RE approach is to find out 'what works, for whom and in what circumstances' (Pawson and Tilley, 1997, pg. xvi). The evaluation aims to explore *how* AEPs work rather than *whether* they work (Timmins and Miller, 2007). In RE, it is the programme theories that are under evaluation, rather than the programmes themselves (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The aim of the programme theory evaluation is to test and refine the programme theory, with the aim that the evaluation process will result in further research developing understanding about how a programme is able to create its desired outcomes. As this approach aligns with the aims of the current research it was selected to guide this study's research process.

2.4 Research question

Due to a combination of the research aim and the research design the overall research question developed was:

> What are shared programme theories underpinning successful AEPs that aim to support children identified as at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school?

2.5 Overview of the application of Realistic Evaluation approach in this research

Figure 2.2/2.3 provide an overview of how the RE approach was applied to developing, refining and evaluating the programme theories underpinning AEPs developed to support children at risk of exclusion to remain in mainstream school. The following sections (chapter 4 – 9) of the thesis will discuss each process in detail.

1. Theory – contexts, mechanisms and outcomes (Cs,Ms and Os) identified through the realist synthesis

4. Programme specification – what works for who in what circumstances - Data analysed using thematic analysis to refine programme theory

2. Hypotheses- what might work for whom in what circumstances? - programme theories explicated from the review of the literature

3. Observation – multi-method data collection and analysis of C, M& O
Realist interviews used to test/refine theories

Figure 2.2: Overview of application of RE process to this research study

RE stage 1 (Chapter 3): Explaining how the embryonic programme theories were derived from the literature. This chapter explains how the initial programme theories were developed from the existing literature. A Realist Synthesis approach (Pawson, 2006) was used to derive programme theories from a review of the literature to begin to identify how AEPs work to support children to remain in mainstream school.

RE stage 2 (chapter 4): Presenting the programme theories derived from the review of the literature. This chapter presents the findings from the realist synthesis: programme theories identified from the literature. Subsection 4.1 identifies the programme theory outcomes and subsection 4.2 identifies the associated contexts and mechanisms. Subsection 4.3 provides a summary of the programme theories identified.

RE Stage 3 (chapter 5): Describing the empirical data used to refine the programme theories. This chapter explains how empirical data was collected in this research study to begin to refine the programme theories identified. Realist Interviews were completed with a range of participants who had experience of how one LA AEP supported children who were at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. The identified programme theories were shared with participants and their feedback was used to refine the theories.

RE Stage 4 (chapter 6 and 7): Explaining how the data was used to refine the programme theories. These chapters explain how the empirical data was used to refine the programme theories derived from the realist synthesis. It describes how the process of thematic analysis of the data was used to test and refine the programme theories. It clarifies how a system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) was used to identify a potential analytic framework.

RE Stage 5 (Chapter 8): Presenting the refined programme theories. This chapter presents the final version of the programme theories and a potential analytic framework identified through this current research.

Figure 2.3: Overview of the application of the RE framework in this research study

CHAPTER THREE: REALIST SYNTHESIS APPROACH

RE stage 1 (Chapter 3): Explaining how the embryonic programme theories were derived from the literature. This chapter explains how the initial programme theories were developed from the existing literature. A Realist Synthesis approach (Pawson, 2006) was used to derive middle range programme theories from a review of the literature to begin to identify how AEPs work to support children to remain in mainstream school.
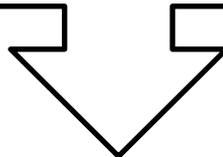
Figure 3.1: RE stage 1 overview (taken from figure 2.3 pg18)

3.1 Cumulative review of the literature

In order to understand how a programme works Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest the development of a underlying shared programme theories to begin to hypothesis how AEPs might be able to support identified outcomes and what contextual conditions may be needed to enable these social (generative) mechanisms to create these desired outcomes (changes in behaviour).

Previous RE research based in education has used reviews of the literature (Thompson, 2012; Davies, 2011), experiences of stakeholders/ developers of the programme (Soni, 2010; Bozic and Crossland, 2012) or a combination of both (Thistleton, 2008) to develop hypothesised programme theory. In this study I decided to use a cumulative review of the existing literature to develop initial programme theories, this was in order to maximise the effectiveness of data collection in developing the understanding of programme theories beyond what can already be identified in the literature.

3.2 Realist synthesis approach

A realist synthesis (RS) approach (Pawson, 2006) was used to review the existing relevant literature and to develop embryonic programme theories in the form of CMOCs through using theoretical understanding and empirical data from previous literature that evaluates AEPs developed to support children to remain in mainstream school (Pawson et al, 2005; Pawson, 2006).

A RS approach is a theory-driven qualitative synthesis of the literature, underpinned by a realist philosophy (realist ontology and constructivist and relativist epistemology) developed to work with complex social programmes (Pawson, 2006; Pawson et al, 2005). The primary aim of an RS is to build explanations (Pawson, 2006). The RS aims to use evidence from previous literature to begin to understand and explicate the conditions for programme efficacy; investigating for whom, in what circumstances and how an intervention programme works (Pawson, 2006).

The aim of the review is illumination of potential programme outcomes and associated contextual conditions and generative mechanisms rather than to produce generalisable truths, and refinement as opposed to standardisation (Pawson et al, 2005). The approach used to identify embryonic, hypothesised CMOCs from the existing literature (was based upon Pawson's (2006) approach to RS. A summary of this approach is provided in *table 2*. (more detail about this approach can be seen in appendix B)

Table 2: Overview of the RS approach (Pawson, 2006)

Identifying the review question	Review question developed with key stakeholders; head of the PRU and Principal EP of the LA EPS. Initial review of the literature used to identify the most frequently (well supported in the literature) recognised supportive outcomes *Sharing initial shared abstracted outcomes identified with intervention staff to explore applicability to current context – prioritising key theories for RS*
Searching for studies	Identification of studies that explored the outcomes in question for e.g. exploring if/how the intervention programme develops parental engagement. Use of studies to test model i.e. look for evidence of mechanisms being facilitated by AEPs and related outcomes
Quality appraisal	Assessment of relevance and rigour of studies throughout the synthesis (see subsection 4.1.4 for further detail)
Extracting the data	Use annotation, note taking, collation of material
Synthesising the data	Using the data to find links between context and mechanism factors identified in the literature to develop middle range programme theories that begin to explain how AEPs support children and young people to change their behaviour and consequently remain in mainstream school Recording of the developed model (see chapter 4)

3.2.1 Developing the review question

The realist review does not aim to offer a simple yes/no evaluation of whether an intervention works but is able to begin to explore how, why and when it might be

successful in changing social behaviour (Pawson, 2006). In line with the RS approach, the review question was identified in conjunction with the research commissioners (Pawson, 2006): the head of the programme and the LA SEN Service's Principal Educational Psychologist. Pawson (2006) emphasises the need for the review question to be specific to enable the review to be manageable.

Discussion highlighted a need for clarity in identifying how, when and why the programme appeared to be successful in some cases but not others, in order to develop the quality of the programme. An initial scoping of the literature revealed the potential for a synthesis of previous studies exploring the role of programmes in supporting children at risk of/who had experienced exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

The realist synthesis review question consequently identified was:

How are AEPs supposed to work to enable children identified as 'at risk' of exclusion from school to remain in mainstream school?

The aim of the review was therefore to explore:

•what are essential outcomes that need to be supported by AEPs to enable children to remain in mainstream school?

•what are mechanisms facilitated by the AEP that enable these outcomes?

•what are context conditions that enable these mechanisms to occur?

3.2.2 Identifying the programmes

The review of the literature aimed to abstract the shared programme theories underpinning AEPs that temporarily removed children, who are at risk of school exclusion, from mainstream school to AEPs and intervened to enable them to return to mainstream school.

The literature explored included

a) research that explored outcomes necessary to enable children who were at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school;

b) research relating to intervention programmes where the aim was to support children who were at risk of school exclusion (displaying challenging behaviour) to remain in mainstream school

Programmes were only included if they involved children's short-term removal from the mainstream classroom on a full time basis for a time limited period of intervention as the LA programme does. This was due to the research aiming to uncover how programmes that support children who are removed full-time from school (as children are in this case study LA) are thought to work to support a child's reintegration. Accounts of the use of AEPs to support children to remain in mainstream school are limited in the UK literature, however, a wider exploration of literature revealed that in America, similar programmes called Disciplinary Alternative Education Programmes (DAEPs) also exist, which are used to support children identified as at risk of exclusion from the mainstream school system. In addition, some Nurture Group

programmes were found to provide insight, as they sometimes provided full-time support for children identified as at-risk of exclusion from mainstream school.

All age ranges of children were included, as there was limited literature focusing specifically on primary or secondary school age children, and in light of commonalities of the abstracted outcomes identified in both primary and secondary school age interventions.

These studies all had limitations in terms of relevance, particularly in relation to context factors. For example one American study, subjects were children already excluded from school. In some nurture group studies not all children were identified as at risk of exclusion.

All the selected studies were used to abstract the shared context, mechanisms and outcomes to begin to help identify how AEPs may work to support children identified as presenting with disruptive behaviour and consequently at-risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

3.2.3 Purposive Search strategy

Initial search strategies were purposive in seeking publications from which potential programme theories may be abstracted. As Pawson (2006) highlights throughout the review, the search becomes more iterative, as lines of inquiry identify further key elements of the programme theory, so that supplementary searches may be required in order to further develop the theory. Pawson (2006) advises search terms are likely

to evolve as the synthesis develops, and purposive sampling makes use of a snowballing approach (following up references of relevant studies (Cooper 2009)), in addition to exploring databases using keywords (as described below). Pawson (2006) argues that purposive samples will reach closure when they reach 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 2009). The snowballing approach supports the identification of theories/literature upon which programme theories are based (See appendix C for comparison with a traditional systematic literature review approach). Consequently although search terms were used initially to identify studies exploring the AEPs, the theories derived from the studies were further developed and refined using snowballing and a more iterative search process.

3.2.3.1 Search strategy

Search terms were; education provision; reintegration; Pupil Referral Units; Behaviour; children; alternative education/provision; education; school exclusion; alternative education programme; Disciplinary Alternative Education Programmes used in combinations to obtain articles accessible from the University of Birmingham.

Databases/Journals searched included Pro-quest-social science, Educational Review, Google scholar, ERIC, Educational Psychology in Practice and the University of Birmingham library search engine and were used iteratively to explore the literature.

3.2.4 Relevance and Rigor

All accessible and relevant literature exploring the use of AEPs to support children who present with challenging behaviour to remain in mainstream school were used to shape and guide the development of programme theories (Pawson et al 2005). Studies judged more relevant and methodologically rigorous were drawn upon more heavily in the initial stages of theory development (Pawson, 2006).

Pawson (2006) suggests the guiding principle in considering relevance and rigor of studies is that the "appraisal criteria should be subordinate to the usage the primary study is put" pg. 87) i.e. appraisal of the contribution a study makes to the synthesis. Distillation of relevant information is what contributes to the refinement of the programme theories. Consequently it is the fragments of the study that are relevant not necessarily the conclusions of the whole study. As a result it is the methodological techniques of the study that are used to assess the rigor of the research.

The literature was explored to find studies that could identify potential context, mechanism and outcomes that may be linked to how this intervention programme worked. The relevance of a study was judged by its ability to deliver inferences that developed the review hypothesis (Pawson, 2006).

The assessment of the research quality has to be carried out alongside the research synthesis process. The review of a studies' quality will be assessed as information for the study is considered for the synthesis. The aim of assessing rigor is to identify

whether an inference made by a researcher has sufficient methodological weight to

contribute to developing the review hypothesis (Pawson et al, 2005). Pawson (2006)

states that the goal of this approach is to safeguard the inferences made from the

studies and exemplar reviews of some of the studies in this research are included for

the reader in appendix D. In this case in order to enable the reader to understand

how relevance and rigor was tested an established approach from Gough (2007) was

used to evaluate the studies.

Table 3: Weight of evidence criteria: taken from Gough (2007)

Weight of Evidence Criteria	Gough's definition	Interpretation for this study
A – the relevance of the study to the review question	This is a review-specific judgement about the relevance of the focus of the evidence for the review question.	The purpose of the study must be related to identifying/exploring how the programme works/how children are supported to remain in mainstream school, making reference to context, mechanisms and/or outcomes. Relevance of sample, context, etc
B- appropriateness of the evidence to add knowledge to the realist synthesis	This is a review specific judgement about the appropriateness of that form of evidence for answering the review question, that is the fitness for purpose of that form of evidence: e.g. the relevance of certain research designs such as experimental studies for answering questions about process	Consideration of appropriateness of data in developing an understanding of the programme i.e. does data contribute to understanding of C, M or Os e.g. qualitative data – more useful for exploring process, quantitative data- useful for regularities in outcomes
C- quality of research to draw conclusions	This is a generic, and thus non- review-specific judgement about the coherence and integrity of the evidence in its own terms. That may be the generally accepted criterion for evaluating the quality of this type of evidence by those who generally use and produce it.	Methodological/technical quality of the research is considered in terms of reliability and validity; studies that attempt to minimise bias and increase trustworthiness were considered of higher quality. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods were included in the review.

Studies with more highly weighted evidence (for relevance, appropriateness and rigor) were used in the early stages, to begin to develop the embryonic programme theories. Literature exploring the use of AEPs/outcomes that support children with behavioural difficulties to remain in mainstream school, is limited. Consequently all findings relating to this, including those from less rigorous studies, were used to provide sufficient data from which to develop the embryonic programme theories. The RE approach (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) encourages the development and refinement of these programme theories as an iterative process, so these theories were then further refined through the synthesis and subsequent empirical data collection process. Findings from poor quality research which were unsupported by other research studies or in the empirical data collection were discarded through the refinement process (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

3.2.5 The development of an initial model

3.2.5.1 Identifying outcomes

When exploring the literature to identify outcomes necessary to support children to remain in mainstream school, a wider range of research including theories, experiences of exclusion/reintegration for both excluded children and children at risk of exclusion was explored. Literature that focused on identifying key elements in reintegration into mainstream school for children with behavioural difficulties were included to ensure all potential required outcomes for successful reintegration were explored through an iterative process. This model was then used as a lens through which to view primary studies to develop a

clear understanding of the potential contextual conditions and generative mechanisms that AEPs creates to enable these outcomes. In order to contain the RS only outcomes with the largest amount of supporting evidence in the literature were included in the RS results. This was due to having chosen this approach to prioritising outcomes explored due to limited resources to explore all potential programme theories evident in the literature.

3.2.5.2 Identifying context and mechanisms

In exploring the contexts and mechanisms linked to the AEPs, only studies were included that were directly exploring AEPs that supported children with behavioural difficulties to remain in mainstream school.

The process of extracting data to identify the context, mechanisms and outcomes from the research studies is explained in appendix B.

3.2.6 Reporting the finding of the Realist Synthesis

The programme outcomes derived from the RS and included in the results of the synthesis, were those middle range outcomes that had the most supporting evidence in the literature. The outcomes are explicated in chapter 4 (4.1) alongside a summary of the evidence that was located in the literature that supported the identification of each outcome.

Subsection 4.2 (split into three sections: one for each outcome identified) concludes by explicating the middle range programme theories (context-mechanism-outcome configuration) I derived from the RS. Each section

summarises evidence from the literature that supported the identification of the middle range contextual conditions and mechanisms, judged to be present in AEPs, which are thought to be facilitative of each identified outcome.

Subsection 4.2.4 identifies an additional middle range programme theory that is reported separately as it looks at the role of the AEP at a wider system level than previous sections of the synthesis.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS OF THE REALIST SYNTHESIS

RE stage 2 (chapter 4): Presenting the programme theories derived from the review of the literature. This chapter presents the findings from the realist synthesis: embryonic hypothesised programme theories identified from the literature. Subsection 4.1 identifies the outcomes and subsection 4.2 identifies the associated contexts and mechanisms. Subsection 4.3 provides a summary of the programme theories identified.
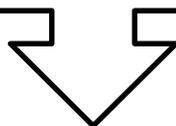
Figure 4.1: Overview of RE stage 2 (taken from figure 2.3, pg 18)

4.1 Middle range programme outcomes

This section explicates the middle range programme outcomes derived from the literature and summarises the evidence that supports this identification for each outcome.

4.1.1 Increasing parental engagement

One particularly prominent factor for children who experience school exclusion or are at risk of school exclusion is lack of, or reduced parental engagement in their learning (McDonald and Thomas, 2003; Wilson, 2010; Wood, 2011). Research has highlighted the association between children who are at-risk of school exclusion and negative home factors including social disadvantage (Cohen, et al., 1994; Parsons, 1999; Eastwood, 2000; Wilson, 2010; DfE, 2012a) and/or negative home experiences (e.g. parental conflict/separation, neglect) (Parsons, et al., 1994; Hayden, 1997; Lawrence & Hayden, 1997; Pomeroy, 2000; Solomon & Rogers, 2001; Wilson, 2010; Lally, 2013). Research has shown that the families that experience these types of challenging home factors are often identified as 'hard to reach' (Harris and Goodall, 2007) and

parents are less likely to be engaged in their child's education (Ball, 2003; Desforges & Albouchaar, 2003; Vincent et al, 2007; Wood, 2011).

Much of the literature however recognises the importance of the role of parental engagement in their child's education in supporting children to remain in mainstream school (Schifano et al, 1999; Lindsay, 2001; Daniels et al, 2003; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Lawrence, 2011; Thavarajah, 2010; Wilson, 2010; Wood, 2011; Jones, 2013; Lally, 2013; Michael and Frederickson, 2013; Mills, 2013). The positive impact of supportive parental engagement on their child's general educational success in school (Hoover- Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Amato and Riveria, 1999; McNeal, 1999; Hill et al, 2004; Harris and Goodall, 2007) and on children's behaviour (McNeal, 1999; Hill et al, 2004; Harris and Goodall, 2007) is well documented in the literature. It is suggested that it is parents' engagement in a child's education, rather than involvement in school per se, that has been shown to have a positive impact on a child's behaviour (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003: 28; Harris and Goodall, 2007).

The literature identifies factors that begin to explain the link between parental engagement and school exclusion. Ofsted (2011) highlighted that a key element of the home-school relationship is a consistent use of strategies and approaches to managing children's behaviour. Both Hill et al (2004) and McNeal (1999) suggest that parental engagement has a social control mechanism that impacts upon children's behaviour, as the relationship serves "as an extra source of social constraint to stem potential non-normative behaviour" (McNeal,

p122). Harris and Goodall (2007) found that negative parental response to poor in-school behaviour acted as a preventative measure to further inappropriate in-school behaviour. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) suggest home factors such as modelling, reinforcement and instruction was important in encouraging positive school related behaviours.

Increasing parental engagement in a child's education is well supported in the literature, as a change in behaviour (outcome) supportive of enabling children at risk of exclusion to remain in mainstream education (Tobin and Sprague, 2000; Wilson, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013) and is therefore identified in this research as a programme outcome thought to be supporting children to remain in mainstream school.

4.1.2 Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support

Research has highlighted school based factors associated with children experiencing school exclusion (Parsons, 1999; Pomeroy, 1999; Osler et al., 2002; Daniels et al, 2003; McCall et al, 2003; Wilson, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Wood, 2011). Factors included school ethos, schools behaviour policy, relationships in school and school meeting the child/young person's needs (Lloyd and O'Regan, 1999; Wilson, 2010; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013). Key factors regularly identified particularly appear to focus around key themes of relationships in the mainstream school and a supportive mainstream school environment.

Often children who experience exclusion identify a lack of positive relationships/sense of belonging in the mainstream school environment (Lloyd and O'Regan, 1999; Pomeroy, 1999; Munn et al, 2000; McCall, 2003; Williamson and Cullingford, 2003; Hawkins, 2011; Wood; 2011; Lally, 2013). McCall (2003) identified a commonality across children who dropped out of mainstream school, after attending an AEP: the lack of a positive and productive relationship with mainstream school staff. Positive relationships in mainstream school have been identified as a potential protective factor essential in facilitating successful reintegration (Wise, 2000; McCall, 2003; Lown, 2005; Harris et al, 2006; Thavarajah, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Hart, 2013; Thomas, 2013). Often it is hypothesised that this enhances a child's sense of belonging and school attachment (Smith, 2006; Cooper, 2009; Hawkins, 2011).

Research has identified a link between children who are at risk of exclusion and Special Educational Needs (SEN) which may impact upon children's/ young people's academic progress (Wilson, 2010; Schifano, 2011; DfE, 2012b). Recent government statistics suggest that 7 out of 10 children who receive permanent exclusion have SEN, with children with statements of SEN six times more likely to be permanently excluded (DfE, 2012b). The most common SEN associated with children experiencing school exclusion is Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties with the second being Specific Learning Difficulty (DfE, 2012b). Research has associated placement at PRU programmes with unidentified SEN and multiple SENs (Wilson, 2010; Lally, 2013).

Consequently research generally indicates that children encountering school exclusion regularly experience additional needs that need to be supported within the mainstream school environment. Research has indicated that children at risk of school exclusion are often not getting their social, emotional and academic needs met in the mainstream school environment (Lloyd and O'Regan, 1999; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013). There is therefore evidence for a need for mainstream schools to better understand and support children with these needs more effectively to enable them to remain in mainstream school environments (Hill, 1997; McCall, 2003; Lawrence, 2011; Wilson, 2010; Lally, 2013). Gold (1995 cited in McCall) reports it is the teacher's ability to connect with students and draw out skills that supports children's success in mainstream school and this requires competence in skills (McCall, 2003). Lally (2013) identified that the skills of school practitioner's enabled the promotion of children's motivation and self-belief and enabled the development of children's resilience.

As a consequence one of the crucial outcomes identified in supporting children/young people at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school is a supportive mainstream school environment (Feather, 1999; Lindsay, 2001; McCall et al, 2003; Visser, 2003; Lawrence, 2011; Wilson, 2010; Hawkins, 2011; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013).

4.1.3 Developing the child/young person's resources/skills

It is well documented in the literature that children displaying challenging behaviour (particularly including those experiencing school exclusion) often experience underlying difficulties which pose a challenge to academic learning/progress (DfE, 2012). Challenging behaviour has often been associated with a range of underlying difficulties including literacy difficulties (Ofsted, 2009), language difficulties (Lindsay and Dockrell, 2000; Lindsay, Dockrell and Strand, 2007; Clegg et al, 2009) and social and emotional difficulties (Sullivan & Strang, 2003; Petrides, Frederickson and Furnham, 2004). These difficulties are frequently associated with reducing children's educational resiliency "Students who succeed in school despite adverse conditions" (Waxman et al, 2003) and are mediated by a negative impact upon characteristics such as 'self-efficacy'; "the belief the child has in their capability to achieve set goals" and impact on beliefs about their locus of control after experiencing repeated failure (Bandura, 1977). The literature highlights that children experiencing school exclusion have an increased likelihood of facing these types of difficulties and consequently may lack the associated resources/skills to enable success in the mainstream school environment (Kinder et al, 1996; DfE, 2012c; Lally, 2013).

In support of this, research has highlighted a range of children's characteristics/skills/resources that seemed to be associated with an improved chance of a successful reintegration. Thavarajah (2010) emphasises the importance of the young person's self-efficacy and Bandura's (1977 in Thavarajah, 2010) suggestion that self-efficacy can impact on "behaviour and

ability to function". Lochhead (2011) highlighted the importance of children/young people learning skills including how to manage their emotions and behaviour. They highlighted that the research supported the need for developing skills such as self-reflection (self-efficacy, control, attribution) and metacognitive skills (self-reflection, appraisal of action) in order to increase motivation, control over behaviour and resiliency within the mainstream school environment (Lochhead, 2011). Lawrence (2011) identified through focus groups with stakeholders involved in reintegration from a PRU programme, key characteristics for success, which included motivation, positive self-esteem and ability to reflect.

Overall the research identified the young person's learning skills, motivation and engagement, and their self-esteem and beliefs about their ability to successfully reintegrate back into mainstream school, as key characteristics associated with supporting children to remain in mainstream school (Daniels et al, 2003; Wilson, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Lochead, 2011; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013).

Another theory about why children appear to misbehave within school is through a lack of social skills or a social information processing difficulties (Sugai & Lewis, 1996; Sullivan & Strang, 2003; Schifano, 2011). Research highlights the importance for children to develop social skills to support with reintegration into mainstream school (Mattis, 2002; Lown, 2005; Wilson, 2010; Lochhead, 2011; Lally, 2013).

Schifano (2011) highlights the inverse relationship between socially competent behaviour and disruptive behaviour. Research has highlighted that children who have experienced exclusion/ risk of exclusion often identify poor social relationships and limited social connection in schools (Pro, 1999; Wood, 2011). In interviews with school staff and young people who had reintegrated into mainstream school, Lally (2013) identified that positive changes in social engagement appeared to result in increased sense of autonomy and belonging; which has been identified as a factor that influences children's behaviour (Mattis, 2002; Lown, 2005).

Wilson (2004) explains that "social networks also influence connectedness. The larger a student's network of friends, the stronger his/her connection will be to school". Wilson (2004: 298) consequently identified a 'sense of belonging' as an important factor not only in coping at school on a social level but also having a direct impact on academic achievement and motivation. Research substantiates, to a large extent, the Social Bonds theory of Hirschi (1969 cited in Wilson, 2004). Hirschi postulated that social bonding is the mechanism that drives control and constraints and protects the individual from violating the rules and norms of society. Behaviour problems evolve as a result of the weakening of the bond between the individual and significant others such as the family, friends, and school; consequently social bonds are needed. Positive peer relationships in school have been associated with a range of positive outcomes for children including social inclusion e.g. positive mental health, positive adult

relationships, whereas social isolation can contribute to disaffection from school (see McGrath and Nobel, 2010).

Research has highlighted the impact of school attachment or belonging as a factor that influences children's behaviour and experiences in school (Pro, 1999; Mattis, 2002; Lown, 2005). Pro (1999) found that children attending an AEP were statistically more likely to have a weaker school attachment if that connection is not maintained.

The review of the literature appears to indicate the significance of the need to equip children with the learning and social skills needed to support them to be successful in the mainstream environment (Lown, 2005; Lochhead, 2011; Wilhite and Bullock, 2012; Jones, 2013; Thomas, 2013).

4.1.4 Testing outcomes (*empirical data collection*)

The outcomes derived from the synthesis were shared with programme staff through a focus group, to begin to test if outcomes identified matched their empirical experiences (appendix E), judged by staff to be supportive of children's reintegration and to identify any other outcomes that may have been missed. Participants were asked to discuss/edit these outcomes in their group and to rate how important each outcome was thought to be in supporting children to remain in mainstream school. (see appendix E for detail of this process).

4.1.4.1 Findings

All staff felt that the outcomes derived from the review were key outcomes in supporting reintegration in to a mainstream school environment. All "new" outcomes identified by staff, once abstracted, could be placed under one of the current middle range programme theories. The outcomes identified from the review of the literature were therefore used to guide the second part of the RS which focuses upon identifying associated contexts and mechanisms created by the AEP. (see appendix E for detail).

4.2 Middle range programme theories – context and mechanisms

This section identifies the middle range contextual conditions and mechanisms, judged to be present in AEPs, that are thought to facilitate each of the identified outcomes. A summary of the evidence found in the literature that supports the identification of these context and mechanisms is presented. Each section concludes with explicating the middle range programme theories that I derived from the RS.

4.2.1 Increasing parental engagement

Research suggests that parental engagement is critical in enabling children to be successful in mainstream school (Tobin and Sprague, 2000; Lindsay, 2001; Lown, 2005; Thavarajah, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Spink, 2011; Lally, 2013; Pillay, 2013). Parental engagement includes a range of forms, including providing a secure and stable environment, social and educational values, high aspirations and collaborating with school (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). Research suggests that AEPs often facilitate this outcome in a variety of ways:

providing context variables which enable social mechanisms to create a change in home-school relationships/parental engagement.

The synthesis of the relevant literature suggests the way programmes appear to aim to develop parental engagement is through developing/changing parental knowledge/ skills and views (Lindsay, 2001; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Lown, 2005; Wilson, 2010; Ofsted, 2011; Hart, 2013) through increasing communication with parents.

4.2.1.1 Promoting communication with parents

One way AEPs promote parental engagement/ home-school relationships is through promoting regular communication with parents (Feather, 1999; Lindsay, 2001; Lown, 2005; Wilson, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Schifano, 2011; Wood, 2011; Mills, 2013; Thomas, 2013). Communication with parents has been identified as key in enabling home-school relationships; school initiating and maintaining contact with parents can influence parental engagement through both encouraging and enabling parents to be involved (Tobin and Sprague, 2000; Lindsay, 2001; DfE, 2011; Wood, 2011; Bevington, 2013).

Desforges and Abouchaar (2003) describe how parental engagement strategies; "providing parents with information, (b) giving parents a voice and (c) encouraging parental partnerships with schools" pg. 7, are used as strategies to increase parental knowledge. Most of the AEPs identified supporting parents and increasing parental knowledge, by promoting parental engagement through

regular communication and encouraging parental partnerships with mainstream schools, as essential (Feather, 1999; Lindsay, 2001; Lown, 2005; Wilson, 2010; Schifano, 2011; Lawrence, 2011; Wood, 2011; Mills, 2013; Thomas, 2013). A range of activities enabled by the AEPs were identified in the literature ranging from more formal meetings to less formal opportunities such as coffee mornings, that promoted communication between parents and programme staff (Lindsay, 2001; Ofsted, 2011; Mills, 2013;Thomas, 2013).

The role of the communication during the programme has been identified as an approach to share ideas and skills, promote confidence and to assist families with parenting (Lindsay, 2001; Lown, 2005; Wilson, 2010; Ofsted, 2011). Lown (2005) reports this open communication supported parents by allowing them to feel involved, informed and reassured. Staff-parent communication appears to be offered in a variety of ways by schools, where allocated time is dedicated to enabling the development of home-school relationships, supporting parents to feel valued by the schools and programmes (Lown, 2005; Ofsted, 2011).

In addition to enabling direct communication with parents the AEPs generally attempt to promote home- mainstream school communication as well, through the use of transition meetings (Feather, 1999; Lindsay, 2001; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Lawrence, 2011; Ofsted, 2011). The increased engagement from parents facilitated through the AEPs communication activities e.g. home visits, is often transferred to the mainstream school staff through the use of transition meetings which encourage the involvement of parents and the home school in

supporting children to remain in school (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wood, 2011; Pillay, 2013; Thomas, 2013). GHK consulting et al (2004) highlighted the importance of informed planning and sharing of information between the programme, parents and the mainstream school for successful reintegration.

Environmental factors to enable this transfer included the need for processes which enabled the involvement and encouraged the commitment of parents within the reintegration process (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Rogers et al, 2008; Wood, 2011; Mills, 2013; Thomas, 2013). Pillay (2013) found that where reintegration was gradual and there was clear communication between mainstream school and home, reintegration was experienced as a promotive factor. In order for the AEP investment to impact upon the home-school relationships/parental engagement, mainstream school need to provide a supportive environment that maintains the home-school relationships (Lindsay, 2001; Lown, 2005; Thavarajah, 2010; DfE, 2011; Wood, 2011).

Parental views about their capacity to support their children both in terms of their perception of their own ability to offer support and in terms of the opportunity to provide this support (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler, 1995; Harris and Goodall, 2007) impacted upon parental engagement. Parents have been found less likely to engage if factors such as: their own experiences of education were negative, if their child had a negative view of parental engagement, or community, cultural or intergenerational negative views, impacts negatively on parental engagement (Hill and Taylor, 2004; Harris and

Goodall, 2007; Gazeley, 2010; Thomas, 2013). The opportunity and demand

from school and children for parental support is suggested to have an impact on

parental engagement (Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler,1995; Harris and Goodall,

2007).

4.2.1.2 Increasing parent skills and knowledge

Some programmes offer direct support for parents through more specific

support processes such as classes or counselling (Foley and Pang, 2006;

Wilson, 2010; Schifano, 2011; Mills, 2013) or indirectly through external

agencies or more generally through regular communication/support (Lindsay,

2001; Lawrence, 2011). Research has indicated that parental engagement can

be enhanced by parental education (DfE, 2011). Many of the intervention

programmes aim to increase positive parental engagement by increasing

parents knowledge, skills and confidence (Foley and Pong, 2006; Wilson, 2010;

Ofsted, 2011; Mills; 2013). Ofsted (2011) found more effective Nurture Group

provisions if parents were not only kept regularly informed and involved in their

child's progress, but they were also offered training and support to help develop

their child's behaviour.

Wilson's (2010) qualitative review of an Early Years PRU found that

stakeholders consistently identified parental classes and training as an

important activity. They felt that educating parents enabled them to feel more

skilled in supporting their children, more positive about their children and have

improved aspirations for their child, which research indicates can improve

45

children's behaviour (Hill et al, 2004). Research has highlighted the potential impact of supporting parents by increasing their confidence, allowing families particularly of low SES to feel more able to become involved with their child's education (Wilson, 2010; Ofsted, 2011).

Lindsay (2001) and Wilson (2010) however, found that even those parents that did not participate in the classes, experienced key worker support and advice in the family home as positive. Rogers et al (2008) found evidence to suggest that parenting programmes had a positive impact on parents' capacity to support their child when they were experiencing behaviour and attendance difficulties in school. The research indicated that parents generally increased in their school related activities. Factors need to be considered that inhibited the involvement from parents which sometimes concerned practical barriers i.e. clashes with other commitments and personal or perception barriers i.e. lack of perceived relevance (Harris and Goodall, 2007).

Wilson (2010) reports that it appears parental education not only supported parental engagement in their child's education but may also have had an impact in developing home-school relationships through developing parental confidence to work with school.

Table four summarises the middle range programme theory: increasing parental engagement (in the form of a context-mechanism-outcome configuration), evidenced in the summary above, that I derived from the relevant literature.

Table 4: Programme theory one: Increasing parental engagement

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities and accessible support, advice and education provided to willing/motivated parents	Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education	Increased positive parental engagement in child's education

4.2.2 Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support

A review of the literature suggests that AEPs promote this outcome by providing time, support/resources and advice through the programme to the mainstream school (Hill, 1997; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wilson, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Thomas, 2013). The research has highlighted that the AEP facilitates this process by enabling the school to successfully support a child/young person by sharing information about their needs and sharing knowledge about how school can best support the child/young person. This section explores the contexts the AEPs provide to facilitate mechanisms that support schools to increasingly be able to meet a child's/young person's needs more effectively.

4.2.2.1 Sharing knowledge

Many studies exploring how AEPs enable schools to more effectively meet the needs of children at-risk of exclusion identify it is by sharing knowledge and

developing skills (Hill, 1997; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wolf and Wolf, 2008; Wilson, 2010; Ofsted, 2011).

One strategy evidenced in the literature is increasing school practitioners' knowledge through training (Hill, 1997; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wolf and Wolf, 2008; Wilson, 2010). This can be delivered systemically through whole staff training or through individual training and modelling. Research highlights the role of AEPs in delivering training to school staff to raise awareness and develop skills to support children more effectively in school (Hill, 1997; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wilson, 2010). Wolf and Wolf (2008) highlighted one of the key roles of their transition programme was to offer training sessions and meetings to promote collaboration across school staff. As Ofsted (2011) highlighted with their Nurture Group programme, it was necessary to develop and support the whole school practice to also include nurture principles in order to promote a successful reintegration environment.

Training also appears to include school practitioners receiving support in small groups in school, through one to one support with staff and through observing programme practitioners in the AEP and learning from experience about how to support children who display challenging behaviour (Wilson, 2010).

Training has been used to develop skills that promote relationship building with children/young people, develop staff awareness of behaviour management strategies and offer more specific training linked to anti-bullying or child abuse

(Hill, 1997; GHK consulting et al, 2004; Cobb, 2008). However, it is also recognised the importance of the need for the school to be incentivised and have capacity to change and develop, in order to enhance the school practitioners' skills/knowledge to support these children more effectively (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Lawrence, 2011; Wood, 2011).

Wilson (2010) emphasises that the role of the AEP is not to take the child/young person away from the mainstream school but to support the mainstream schools to manage.

4.2.2.2 Sharing information

Many studies highlight the importance of transition in supporting mainstream schools in being prepared to support the child/young person when returning back to mainstream school (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Cobb, 2008; Avery-Sterud, 2009; Wilson, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Wood, 2011). This process involves sharing information honestly between the two provisions about the individual child's needs and support needed in the mainstream environment (Lawrence, 2011). Where this isn't the case children can return to mainstream school and continue to face the same difficulties (Cobb, 2008).

Avery-Sterud (2009) found that transition planning to share information about a child was essential for successful reintegration as it enabled the school to be prepared to reintegrate the child/young person in both the short and long-term. In the short-term this may be supporting the school in enabling the child to

successfully transition into the mainstream school ensuring additional resources are in place to maintain progress made in the AEP (Wood, 2011). McCall (2003) found one of the important elements to supporting children to remain in mainstream school is supporting staff to transfer the same strategies into the mainstream environment.

Lawrence (2011) found that barriers for reintegration occurred when no responsibility was taken for the reintegration process. Lawrence (2011) found that if the school did not want to reintegrate a child, this resulted in AEPs withholding information about a child's needs, school having negative or unfair expectations of the child and resulted in the school having a lack of skilled staff to meet the child's needs. The research emphasises the importance of the school being on-board and pro-active if the reintegration is to be successful, which can be supported through mechanisms such as keeping the child on role to promote ownership and a sense of expectation about the child's return (GHK consulting et al, 2004).

In terms of capacity much literature makes reference to the need for the children to have positive supportive relationships with staff in school and trained staff that can understand and meet the child's individual needs, and therefore school also need to have capacity to provide these types of resources to facilitate successful reintegration (Thavarajah, 2010; Wood, 2011; Lally, 2013).

Table five explicates the middle range programme theory: enhancing the mainstream school environment and support, identified from the RS, which is supported by the evidence from the literature summarised above.

Table 5: Programme theory two: Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School willingly and have capacity to access and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them	School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building a relationship with a child	School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school, and develop a more supportive environment

4.2.3 Developing child/young person's resources/skills

The literature identifies the importance of developing children's/young people's resilience and skills in enabling them to be successful in a mainstream school environment (Lown, 2005; Lochhead, 2011; Wilhite and Bullock, 2012; Jones, 2013; Thomas, 2013). This section explores what contexts the AEP provides to enable mechanisms which support this outcome.

4.2.3.1 Building social skills

Research has identified that there is a role for AEPs supporting children with behavioural difficulties in developing social skills/social competence (Tobin & Sprague, 2000; Wilson, 2010; Schifano, 2011). Much research has made the link between the need for social skills and academic progress and managing behaviour (McCellend et al, 2000) and in relation to social skills and children's behaviour in school (Sugai & Lewis, 1996; Sullivan & Strang, 2003; Schifano, 2011). As Schifano (2011) highlights, schools have not historically been encouraged to support/assess children's social competence, so those experiencing difficulties may not be easily identified. There is a strong argument for a role of the AEP in identifying these difficulties and supporting children to develop coping skills in preparation for their return to mainstream school (Lochhead, 2011).

Many highlight that the role of the AEPs is to focus upon developing children/ young people's social skills (Wilson, 2010; Lochhead, 2011; Ofsted, 2011; Schifano, 2011; Hart, 2012). One American programme that Schifano (2011) evaluated identified that the activities offered by the programme primarily

focused on promoting social competence and developing social information-processing skills intended to improve behavioural and academic outcomes. The activities included focused social skills lessons and particularly focused upon developing not only social skills (learned behaviours demonstrated in situation-specific social situations and promote interpersonal relationships, but also social competence (social skills are being used competently in a range of contexts (Schifano, 2011)).

American AEPs have identified supporting social skill development through counselling activities (Lochhead, 2011; Schifano, 2011). Lochhead (2011) identified that one American programme supported the development of social skills such as anger management, impulse control, peer interaction through the use of a psycho-educational group counselling activity. Provisions support social skill development through play, modelling and providing opportunity to practice these skills (Ofsted, 2011). Michael and Frederickson (2013) found when exploring the views of young people who attended a PRU, that positive relationships was the most widely identified enabling factor in promoting successful outcomes in the PRU.

4.2.3.2 Developing resiliency and academic skills

One of the key elements identified in the literature is the need for the young person/child to be supported to develop skills to enable them to be resilient in the mainstream school environment (Ofsted, 1999; Ofsted, 2007; Wilson, 2010). A range of child/ young person characteristics have been identified as important

for promoting reintegration, such as resiliency, confidence and motivation to enable successful reintegration (Senti, 1991; Lindsay, 2001; Allen-Hardy, 2009; Thavarajah, 2010; Lawrence, 2011; Lochhead, 2011; Lally, 2013; Mills, 2013; Thomas, 2013).

Waxman (et al., 2003) suggests that resiliency for the educational improvement of at risk students is critical in their success. Research has identified a range of characteristics associated with resilient children which can, in an effective environment be supported and strengthened (Brooks, 2006). Allen-Hardy (2009) found a range of resiliency factors that were developed from attending an AEP including: academic efficacy, behaviour self-control and academic self-determination.

Other skills have also been identified that promote successful reintegration. Factors such as the child/young person's positive self-efficacy (Allen-Hardy, 2009: Lally, 2013), self-awareness (Lally, 2013) and self-control (Lally, 2013; Allen-Hardy, 2009) have been identified in the literature. Lown (2005) found academic ability was raised as a supporting factor for successful reintegration, alongside intrinsic motivation for education of the young person and its links to self-efficacy. Lochhead (2011) found skills such as self-management i.e. time management, anger management were important skills. Research has also identified children's motivation to be key in supporting children to remain in mainstream (Lindsay et al, 2001; Lally, 2013).

Environmental factors that have been viewed as important in supporting the promotion of these skills/characteristics include the opportunity for a flexible response in supporting children that is individualised (Lindsay, 2001; Killian, 2002; Wood, 2011; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). This means an opportunity to work with children based on their needs – a child centred approach building the child's self-confidence (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wood, 2011). Mills (2013) found that stakeholders suggested that academic performance improved due to the small class sizes available in the AEP, resulting in more individualised support. It has been identified that the young person experiencing success in the AEP is an essential experience and can lead to increased motivation levels (Wilson, 2010; Lally, 2013; Mills, 2013). Other context factors thought to be required for the child to develop were highlighted as a safe environment that includes consistency and structure (Lochhead, 2011), and consequently sufficient resources and access to a mainstream curriculum (Agar, 1998; Ofsted, 1999; Mills, 2013).

Wilson (2010) found that the ethos of the AEP and skilled staff were identified as key features in promoting the children's success. Relationships with intervention staff have often been viewed as essential in enabling children/ young people to develop skills. (Lindsay, 2001; Owens and Konkol, 2004; Allen-Hardy, 2009; Lochhead, 2011; Wood, 2011; Hart, 2013; Michael and Frederickson, 2013). Research has also found that positive staff to student relationships, high expectations of the young people from staff and individual attention enabled success and resulted in changes in motivation levels in the

alternative programme (Lindsay, 2001; McCall, 2003; Wilson, 2010; Lally, 2013; Mills, 2013). Lindsay (2001) emphasises the importance of mentoring relationships with staff in supporting children to make wiser decisions. Wilson (2010) highlighted the importance of a small teacher to child ratio being important for not only developing relations, putting in place child centred support but also in the role of identifying additional needs.

Table six explicates the middle range programme theory: developing the child's resources/skills, identified from the RS, which is supported by the evidence from the literature summarised above.

Table 6: Programme theory three: Developing the child's resources/skills

Context	Mechanism	Outcomes
Programme provides effective environment that promotes learning where motivated children receive support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school	Children develop and learn skills, confidence, and motivation to remain in mainstream school	Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment – "Students who succeed in school despite adverse conditions" (Waxman et al (2003)

4.2.4 Role of the programme in the education system

This programme theory is reported separately as it looks at the role of the AEP at a wider system level than in previous sections of the synthesis.

In order to understand the role of the AEP in the wider education system, a review of relevant historical changes/systemic development in the education arena were explored.

Over the past two decades there has been a reform in the education system particularly argued to be stemming from the 1988 Education Reform Act (Hallam and Castle, 2001). It has led to an increase in central government control of the education system; leading to an unprecedented emphasis on academic outcomes in order to address some of the concerns with regards to academic performance. There has been a shift to the marketization of schools through the introduction of factors such as parental choice and changes in funding (Hayden, 1997; Hallam and Castle, 2001).

Due to the Education Reform Act 1988 moving delegated budgets to schools; meant funding was now being linked to the number of children in a school, requiring schools to produce marketable good results in order to retain high numbers of children (Hayden, 1997). In addition the Education Reform Act 1988 increased central government control through the introduction of the national curriculum. This enabled across school comparisons and the introduction of league tables (Hayden, 1997) and allowed parents to make preferences of school choices. This was in addition to the introduction of the newly formed

Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), increasing financial independence and autonomy for schools (Arnold et al, 2009). This has meant schools have had to focus their efforts on academic progress in order to gain parental preferences and consequently funding.

This has created many difficulties for children with behavioural difficulties, none-the-less because of their impact on the achievement of other children. As highlighted by Jenkins and Miller (1995) children with emotional and behavioural difficulties are a particularly vulnerable group, with both the market ethos and a system reliant on academic results and public image, resulting in schools being less willing to admit/ retain them. A sharp increase in school exclusions was seen (Parsons, 1996). Many factors have been suggested to have influenced this increase including the Education Act (1988) and better recording of school exclusions. The core factor is that this system is not optimal for children with behavioural difficulties as it not only disrupts their own learning but also the learning of others (GHK consulting et al, 2004).

Hayden (1997) however suggests that changes in education policy and the introduction of a quasi-market into education system are only part of the explanation for the rise in records of primary school exclusion. As Arnold et al (2009) highlight there was an inclusion era from 1981 – where economic cuts meant there was a drive to both close residential provisions supporting children with SEN and instead support children with SEN in mainstream school. A shift in focus occurred that required the education system to change in order to meet

these children's needs. Limited funding for those with SEN but no statement, as well as requirements from the National Curriculum, creates practical pressures and restrictions from schools trying to cater for them. Added to these issues is the pressure from parents and public opinion more generally, in relation to both standards of behaviour and academic standards which make it difficult for schools to show the tolerance needed to work with the most challenging children (Hallam and Castle, 2001).

All of this is, however, one side of the coin. There is undoubtedly a pressure within the education system to respond to these children. There is pressure for schools to be seen to be 'dealing with' these children effectively. There is a need to maintain parental confidence and ensure that academic performance is not affected. As Meo and Parker (2004) highlight, AEPs such as Pupil Referral Programmes have become "escape valves" which allows for the removal of children that may risk the achievement of other children/ young people while being seen to "support" them as well. Seen in this light there is a clear mechanism offered by an AEP in that it enables all of these requirements to be fulfilled; AEPs enable schools to respond.

In considering why an AEP is preferable to a permanent exclusion, initial literature on the impact of exclusion may suffice. The AEPs' aim is to prevent the permanent exclusion and its impact. Arnold et al (2009) offers a theoretical benefit to short-term intervention as opposed to permanent exclusion in the light of chaos theory. He proposes that reasons for school exclusions are most often

a consequence of child's behaviour being unacceptable for others. He suggests that one key element of the challenge of this is the unpredictability of a child's behaviour, i.e. the child's behaviour is unstable. He goes on to suggest possible sources of instability in children's behaviour and these include: death of a parents, unstable housing, illness/injury, new family members, change in school, change in routines. As highlighted here children at-risk of permanent exclusion are likely to be experiencing a range of these factors as highlighted in the literature (Arnold et al, 2009) and by choosing a permanent exclusion we are likely to be introducing an extra factor i.e. a change of school. A supported temporary move to an AEP, although not ideal, if handled sensitively can reduce this factor as the change of provision will hopefully only be temporary. There is a role, as highlighted by Wilson (2010), with using the AEP in this way in that it allows for early intervention to support this group of children/young people.

Additionally, in light of the increasing exclusions in 1995-1996 the Labour government in 1997 made reducing school exclusions a priority (Vullimey and Webb, 2003). The Circulars No 10/99 and 11/99 on Social Inclusion: Pupil Support (DfEE, 1999a, 1999b) revealed the governments' concern in relation to the number of school exclusions. The DfE have continued research and publications evidencing approaches schools should use to reduce school exclusions (SEU, 1999; Hallam and Castle, 2001; Webb and Vulliamy, 2004; DfE, 2014c) developing increasing pressure for schools to reduce the number of school exclusions.

These contrasting environmental factors lead to a situation where schools need to respond to children's behaviour but need to find alternative ways to respond as they try to reduce the number of exclusions that their school delivers. This may explain the wider role of the AEP in providing an alternative way to respond to children identified as at risk of exclusion while at the same time not excluding a child.

Table seven explicates the middle range programme theory: role of the programme in the education system, identified from the RS, which is supported by the evidence from the literature summarised above.

Table 7: Programme theory four: Role of the programme in the education system

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions - supported to reduce additional risks for the children	School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion	School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school - and also intervening to prevent permanent exclusion

4.3 *Table 8: Summary of programme theories derived from the RS*

Programme theory	Contexts	Mechanisms	Outcomes
Increasing parental engagement	Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities and accessible support, advice and education provided to willing/motivated parents	Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education	Increased positive parental engagement in child's education
Enhancing the school environment and support	School willingly and have capacity to access and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them	School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building a relationship with a child	School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school, and develop a more supportive environment
Developing the child's skills/resources	Programme provides effective environment that promotes learning where motivated children receive support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school	Children develop and learn skills, confidence, and motivation to remain in mainstream school	Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment – "Students who succeed in school despite adverse conditions" (Waxman et al (2003)
Role of the programme in the education system	Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions supported to reduce additional risks for the children	School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion	School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school - and also intervening to prevent permanent exclusion

4.4 Reliability and Validity of the Realist Synthesis

The RS was reviewed for quality using the RAMESES quality standards criteria. The table in Appendix H contains the criteria and explains how I aimed to meet these criteria throughout the review process.

As noted by Davies (2011), the abstraction of context, mechanisms and outcomes (CMOs) from the literature entails a subjective process. Timmins and Miller (2007) and Rycroft-Malone et al (2010) particularly highlight the challenge across researchers in differentiating between Contexts and Mechanisms. Consequently the CMOs identified in the literature were shared with my supervisor who is well versed with the RE approach to support me to check that elements were being consistently identified as context, mechanisms or outcomes.

It is also noted in the current research that my bias may have influenced the decisions made in the RS and consequently the outcomes identified in the literature.

I chose to include AEPs that supported both primary and secondary school age children due to the limited literature on either, and as I found the four programme outcomes identified were common across both age ranges. I also made the decision in the RS to only explore programmes in the literature that supported children that were removed on a full-time basis from their mainstream school i.e. they did not attend a mainstream school provision for the duration of the intervention programme (excluding the reintegration phase). I chose to do this as

my initial scoping of the literature suggested contexts for programmes (e.g. social care programmes, in-school interagency support programmes) that support children who are at-risk of exclusion while they remain in school either part-time or full-time appear to work in a significantly different way (Bagley and Pritchard, 1998; Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick, 2001) and therefore may have significantly different CMOCs. It needs to be noted that these decisions may have influenced the CMOCs discovered in the RS (this is discussed further in 9.4.2). Sharing the early outcomes, identified in the RS, with intervention staff (appendix E) was used as a strategy to reduce this potential bias.

Consequently it is important to highlight that the programme theories abstracted from the literature identified do not aim to be fully inclusive or fully representative of all the possible CMOCs underpinning the AEPs; what they represent are embryonic programme theories which are as highlighted by Timmins and Miller (2007) as a "good enough' starting point for inquiry" (p12).

CHAPTER FIVE: EMPIRICAL DATA COLLECTION

RE Stage 3 (chapter 5): Describing the empirical data used to refine the programme theories. This chapter explains how empirical data was collected in this research study to begin to refine the programme theories identified. Realist Interviews were completed with a range of participants that had experience of how one LA primary AEP supported children who were at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. Programme theories were shared with participants and their feedback was used to begin to refine them.

Figure 5.1: Overview of RE stage 3 (taken from figure 2.3 pg. 18)

As Pawson and Tilley (1997) state the aim of the empirical data collection in RE is configuration-focusing. What is referred to here as the empirical element is a case study evaluation where the function of the case study is theory-testing: to continue to refine the understanding of the range of CMOCs that appear to apply to this programme.

The process that occurs throughout the empirical data collection is the movement between empirical data and abstraction of ideas (as seen in figure 5.2) (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). Empirical data collected were used to begin to make refinements to the programme theories identified from the RS. Data is likely to reveal variability in the way in which the programme works. As a result, transferrable lessons may be learnt, if abstractions can be made from the empirical data collected (Pawson, 2006). As with the previous research, this current research contributes some information to specific elements of specific CMOCs, which was dependent on the

experience of the participants, and consequently this research did not aim to refine all elements of each CMOC in this single case study.
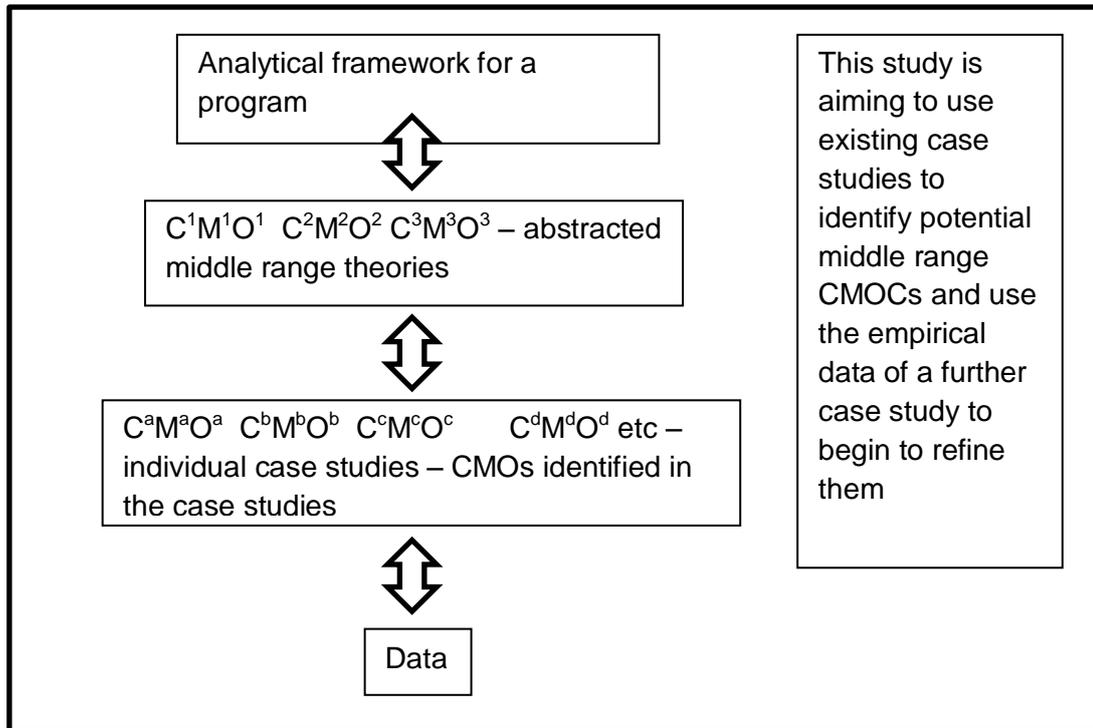
Figure 5.2: Overview of relationship between data and theory Adapted from Pawson and Tilley (1997) pg.121

The RE approach is method-neutral, in that it does not specify the method used to refine the hypothesised programme theories (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). It is suggested that the method should be selected purposefully and driven by the data available/needed to aid in refining and evaluating the embryonic theories previously identified in the RS process (Pawson and Tilley, 2004). Pawson and Tilley (1997) encourage the purposive use of either quantitative or qualitative approaches. The data collection approach is theory-driven (as opposed to data-driven); the subject of the refinement/evaluation is the programme theories (as developed from the synthesis), and the stakeholder data is there to confirm, falsify

and overall refine the hypothesised theory. Pawson and Tilley (1997) emphasises, the requirement for data collection from a realist perspective is concerned with

> *"asking questions about the reasoning and resources of those*
>
> *involved in the initiative, the social and cultural conditions*
>
> *necessary to sustain change, and the extent to which one*
>
> *behavioural regularity is exchanged for another" pg. 154.*

This requires the researcher to speak to stakeholders to uncover this information: the reasoning and resources accessed and the contexts believed to enable mechanisms to support outcomes i.e. changes in behaviour. The aim is to use the method to marshal stakeholders' views/beliefs about the programme that are relevant to the CMOCS being tested, in order to enable the stakeholders to contribute to theory-testing (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

5.1 Case study design

The empirical element of this research study uses a theory-testing, single case study design with multiple units of data. The unit of analysis is stakeholders' views about the identified programmes theories based on their experience of one LA AEP (de Vaus, 2011). The case study was used, as with other RE studies (Soni, 2010; Crowley, 2013) to build and test theory. The approach used a retrospective design where information was collected on one occasion, with regards to a previous extended period during which the stakeholder experienced the AEP support for a child's reintegration into mainstream school (de Vaus, 2011).

5.2 Recruiting participants

Programmes are viewed as complex social organisations and involve a division of labour which consequently results in a potential division of expertise across stakeholders involved (Pawson and Tilly, 1997). Participant selection therefore needs to include a range of stakeholders who may be able to offer differing insights to enable evaluation of the programme theories hypothesised from the synthesis. Consequently a range of stakeholders were invited to participate in the research.

Pawson and Tilly (1997) identify three potential types of stakeholder and offer a preliminary guide to the type of information they may hold in relation to the CMOCs being evaluated summarised in table 9 (next page).

Table 9: Stakeholders identified for Realist Interviews

Type of stakeholder	Possible information stakeholder's may be more sensitised to	Identified participants in this research	Participants included in this study
Subject (those that are directly affected by the programme)	Mechanisms	School practitioners, parents and children	1 x Special Educational Needs co-ordinator (SENCo of a school which had accessed the AEP for a child) 1 x parent (Parent whose child had attended the AEP) 2 x children (children who had attended the AEP)
Practitioners (translate programme theory into practice)	May have an awareness of all CMO	Support staff Programme developer	3 x Behaviour support staff (who support a number of children who have accessed the AEP) 1 x programme developer (LA exclusions officer who is in involved in developing the AEP)
Evaluators	Hypothesised CMOCs from literature	Researcher	1 x Researcher

As Pawson (2006) highlights a key point of design is that the subgroup analysis is able to "demonstrate prodigious differences in levels of success achieved with the programme". Identifying subgroups where the programme is successful in achieving effective outcomes (or not) gives the researcher an opportunity to begin to explore why the initiative works. Consequently the purposive sample of cases tried to include both cases where children had successfully returned to mainstream school and cases which had been unsuccessful, where children had returned to the AEP and asking stakeholders to explore those experiences to identify supportive elements and/or barriers. Many stakeholders; programme developer, BSS and a SENCo had experiences of both successful and unsuccessful cases to draw upon when refining the programme theory.

Parents – the sample of parent participants invited to be involved in the research was chosen purposively. All parents whose children had attended/were accessing the intervention programme and had returned (successfully or unsuccessfully)/ were planning to return to mainstream school were contacted. The parents were recruited through an information letter and consent form (Appendix K) distributed through the school SENCo or through the AEP head teacher.

Children- once parents had given consent for their child to participate, then I arranged to meet with the child and school practitioner to ask the child whether they would be happy to consent to be involved in the research (see consent forms- appendix J and K).

School behaviour support staff - all behaviour support staff were invited to be part of the research if they had supported a child who had accessed the intervention programme. Participants were invited to be involved via an information form that was emailed to them.

School SENCos/head teachers – all school SENCo's/head teachers were invited to be involved in the research if they had used the intervention programme for at least one child. Information forms and consent forms were disseminated through each school's allocated Educational Psychologist. School staff who demonstrated an interest were followed up via a phone call/email.

5.2.1 Ethical consideration

5.2.1.1 Ethical Approval

Ethical considerations were guided in this research study by the British Psychological Society (BPS) Code of Ethics and Conduct (2009) and the British Educational Research Association (2011). The research study was given full ethical approval by the University of Birmingham.

5.2.1.2 Informed consent

Informed consent was gained from all participants via a written consent form and was confirmed prior to the interview. In the case of child participants, parental consent was gained first then the child's consent was gained through written consent forms (appendix J) and orally confirmed prior to the interview. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any point in the interview process.

5.2.1.3 Confidentiality

Participants were made aware that any data collected remained confidential and would be presented anonymously. The research process complied with the Data Protection Act (1998).

5.2.2 Challenges

In order to carry out the research with the children and parents, initial consent was required from the parent; unfortunately there was a low response rate from parents and no positive responses were received agreeing to participate in the research. As a result the ethics was amended to offer parents a ten pound gift voucher to thank them for their time taken to complete the interview. The non-responders were chased up and two parents agreed to be interviewed and dates were set to interview the parents. One parent did not attend the interview and withdrew from agreeing to be interviewed, but was happy for me to meet with their child. Limited participant engagement meant it was not possible to select case studies purposively and left the potential for bias in the stakeholder views sampled (discussed later) (Healy and Perry, 2000; De Vaus, 2001).

5.3 Interviews

5.3.1 Realist interview approach

One qualitative approach that can be used to evaluate the programme theories, developed through the RS, is identified and defined by Pawson and Tilly (1997) as the realist(ic) interview.

The approach uses a semi-structured interview process that is underpinned by two specific features identified by Pawson and Tilly (1997) as the 'teacher-learner function' and the 'conceptual refinement process'.

Figure 5.3: Realist Interview development/process (adapted from Pawson and Tilley, 1997 pg. 165)
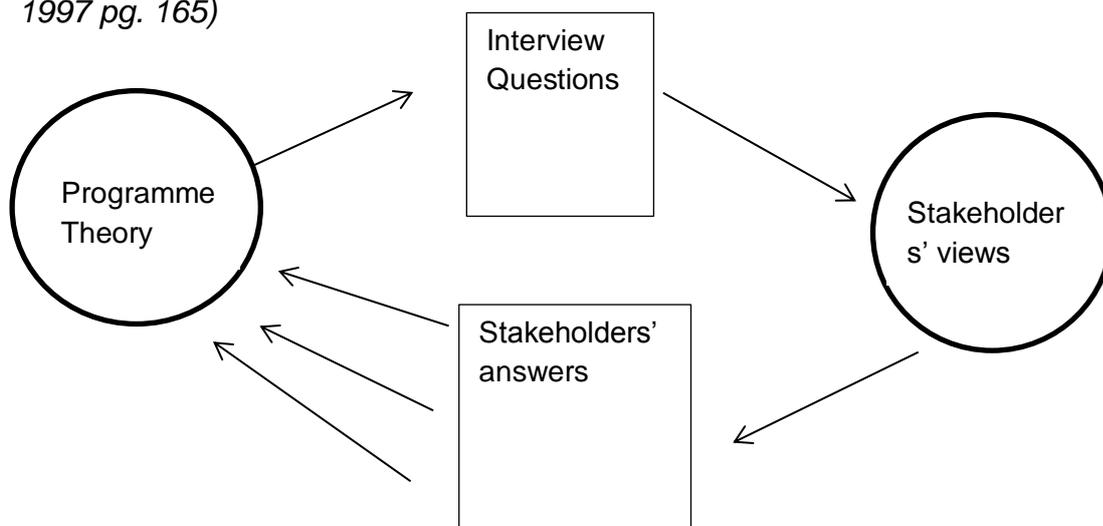
5.3.1.1 Teacher Learner function

This element of the interview relies on the researcher teaching the interviewee the programme theory that has been developed through the RS of the literature. The CMOCs are explained to the interviewee (appendix I) as ideas developed from the literature and the researcher would like to learn from stakeholders' experience of the AEP to support refinement of the theory.

5.3.1.2 Conceptual Refinement

This element of the interview is to enable stakeholders the opportunity throughout the interview to explain and clarify their thinking about the programme theories being presented to them. The aim is to use their experience to refine the CMOCs.

5.3.2 Interview development

5.3.2.1 Interview format for parents and practitioners

According to Pawson and Tilley (1997) the data collection process should be theory driven with the content of the interview being the programme theories identified and the aim of the interview to be for the interviewee to "confirm, falsify and, above all, refine that (programme) theory" pg. 155.

A semi-structured interview (Robson, 2002) format which was structured by the theories being shared and open questions regarding participants' views of each element of each theory was utilised. Questions were left open so the participants could contribute any thoughts and so I could use follow up questions to clarify understanding/ gather more information. As Silverman (2006) states open ended

questions allows interviewees to share their understanding of their world and enables unanticipated issues to be discussed. The time spent discussing each theory varied dependent on the participant's experience of each area.

In developing the interview format (appendix M and N), the aim was to share the programme theories with participants. This information sharing process was carried out both before and during the interview using a visual and verbal format (see appendix M). The process was used to ensure the participant understood the theory and their experiences were used to critique and develop the programme theories identified.

5.3.2.2 Interview format developed for child participants

As the child participants in this study are classed as 'subjects' of the intervention (see above) Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest that they are likely to be more sensitive to the mechanisms of the programme and as result the child interviews focused upon this element of the programme theory. In order to support the child's understanding of the mechanisms they were worded in a child friendly way with visual aids used, and I checked out their understanding during the interview about each of the ideas (see appendix N). This was to try and address any language barriers (Cohen et al, 2011).

A combination of open and closed interview questions were used. Closed questions were used where children were asked to decide whether they felt a mechanism was true or not. Open questions are suggested to provide more

accurate answers with children (Wright and Powell, 2006). Open questions were used to explore the answers provided by the children to the closed questions, with hope to reduce the chance of response bias (Wright and Powell, 2006).

The ideas were presented to children as guesses about how the intervention programme might help them. I spent time explaining to the children that I had not been to the centre and didn't know what it was like but was interested to find out about how it helped/ didn't help them. Time was spent explaining to the children that I did not work for school or the centre but was learning at university so didn't mind whether they said positive or negative things about the centre. The aim here was to support children to say what they really thought rather than what the children thought I wanted to hear (Cohen et al, 2011).

5.3.2.3 Pilot interview

The interview was piloted by one parent participant and minor modifications were made based on the parents' feedback to ensure I clarified unfamiliar terms. The data gathered from this pilot was included in the final data. It was not possible to carry out a pilot interview for the children due to the small sample size.

5.3.3 Interview process

5.3.3.1 Adult interviews

Interviews took place in the participants' chosen location (home, school, office base). Efforts were made to ensure the interviews could not be overheard. Time was spent building up rapport with participants. The information forms and consent forms (see appendix K and L) were discussed and it was confirmed that

participants were happy to participate. Interviews were recorded by a Dictaphone with the participant's permission.

5.3.3.2 Children's interview

The location for the children's interview was chosen by parents/child. Both children were interviewed at school. Time was spent building rapport with the children. The information form and consent forms were discussed and consent confirmed.

Each of the mechanisms were discussed with the children to check their understanding before and during the interview. The children were asked to decide whether the programme supported these mechanisms and they were then asked to elaborate on the answers they had offered. Children were given an option of ways to respond to questions (including verbally or pen and paper) as suggested by Cohen et al (2011).

5.3.4 Threats to reliability and validity

5.3.4.1 Adult interviews

One threat of reliability arises through the use of semi-structured interviews as this may allow the introduction of researcher bias into the interview process (Cohen et al, 2011). One approach to try and reduce this was to use a standard format in which to explain the theories to the interviewees. As I was the only interviewer it was the same construction of the programme theories that were shared with all participants. I developed the interview by asking questions that may add to the understanding of the programme theory and attempted to check back with the interviewee that their meaning had been understood. Early data analysis was

carried out at this point with the interviewee to identify context, mechanisms and outcomes they identified in their constructions of their experience.

Consideration of bias/leading questions where "the question can influence the answer" (Cohen et al, 2011, pg. 205) is highlighted as the interviewee may feel that the presented theory is accurate and may feel uncomfortable in challenging it. In order to reduce this, the theories were presented as ideas from other similar programmes which may or may not relate to this programme. I clarified to participants that I had had no experience of the programme and was relying on their experiences to help explain how the programme worked. Participants were encouraged to challenge the theories offered.

5.3.4.2 Child interviews

Although "children are regarded as the best sources of information about themselves" (Docherty and Sandelowski, 1999, pg.177) I am aware of the many challenges involved in interviewing children (Cohen et al, 2011). I used my professional skills as a trainee educational psychologist to counteract as many of the potential barriers as possible by building trust with the child, putting the child at ease and supporting the child to feel confident. I attempted to spend time building rapport with the child before starting the interview. Time was spent clearly explaining my role as a researcher, using child friendly language (see process above) and time was spent before and during the interview to check the child's understanding. The interview was kept short and focused and lasted around 15 minutes.

CHAPTER SIX: DATA ANALYSIS

RE Stage 4 (chapter 6 and 7): Explaining how the data was used to refine the programme theories. These chapters explain how the empirical data was used to refine the programme theory derived from the realist synthesis. It describes how the process of thematic analysis of the data was used to test and refine the embryonic hypothesised programme theories. It clarifies how a system theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) was used to identify a potential analytic framework.

Figure 6.1: overview of RE stage 4 (taken from figure 2.3, pg. 18)

6.1 Method(s) of data analysis

Pawson and Tilley (1997) do not specify a particular method of analysis but previous researchers that have utilised a realist interview method have used two main qualitative approaches to analyse the data including thematic analysis (Thompson, 2012; Crowley, 2013) and a qualitative analysis approach identified by Miles and Huberman (1994) which included a range of techniques used selectively by the researchers to analyse the data (Soni, 2010; Davies, 2011). The purpose of the analysis is to identify whether the participants' own constructions of the programme falsifies or refines the programme theories. This study required an approach that would enable me to identify whether the theories presented to the participants were supported by their constructions of the programme or whether modification of the programme theory was required. Consequently I was looking for a theory-driven approach that would enable the data to test the theory but that remained flexible enough to enable the data to modify the theory. As a result I used a hybrid thematic analysis approach which is described below.

6.1.1 Interview transcription

All interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone and I transcribed them verbatim as soon as possible.

6.1.1.1 Threats to reliability and validity due to transcription

Cohen et al (2011) highlight written transcriptions inevitably lose data from the original verbal and interpersonal interview. As this interview was audio-recorded and was transcribed, it misses out on non-verbal and/or visual information. Kvale (1996) also emphasise that it is important to recognise that transcripts are already interpreted data which will be influenced by my constructions.

In order to reduce threats to reliability I checked the transcripts for accuracy.

6.1.2 Hybrid Thematic Analysis approach

The approach used to analyse the data was based on a hybrid thematic analysis approach (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006). The approach is suggested to be suitable for analysis of data collated through a range of philosophically driven research processes including a realist philosophy as followed by this study (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is suggested it offers both clear and concise guidelines to enable the approach to be methodologically sound but also allows for flexibility in its use. The approach is defined as a method for "identifying, analysing and reporting patterns in what people say" (Braun and Clarke, 2006 pg. 6). Following a realist philosophy as characterised by Maxwell (2012a), the thematic analysis used in this case uses a contextualist method, as the participants are thought to be

making meaning of/constructing their experience constrained by an objective reality and their prior experiences (Braun and Clarke, 2006; Maxwell, 2012a). The realist belief here is that the data can help to develop an understanding of how a programme works because the existence of a real world constrains stakeholder's interpretations and thematic analysis can be used to find an imperfect but accrued understanding of the programme in order to refine programme theories. It is not thought that this data will refine all elements of every theory.

A hybrid approach of deductive and inductive analysis was used to analyse the data (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

6.1.2.1 Deductive analysis approach

A template analysis approach (King, 2012) was used to structure the deductive analysis of the data, as has been used with RE research previously (Kazi, 2003). King (2012) suggests this approach can be used to analyse textual data from a range of qualitative sources including transcribed interviews and was consequently used in this study. The core element of the process is the use of a coding template which King (2012) suggests can be, and was in this research, developed using a-priori theories. The apriori theories used to develop the template, in this research, were the programme CMOCs identified following the RS (summarised in figure 6.2 below (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; King, 2012)). The template was then used to guide the deductive analysis of each transcript. The transcripts were examined for evidence that supported or not the presence of each of the context, mechanism or

outcome features, listed in the template, in each stakeholder's experience of the LA AEP.

As stated by Selvam and Collicutt (2013) whilst theorists encourage researchers to lay out their prejudices in a reflexive process, this research process took this a step further and arrived at the data with an explicit theoretically and a-priori driven framework identified by the synthesis of the literature. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlight the data is to be used to clarify, falsify and refine the programme theory so in this case the template was used to analyse all the data but did not constrain the data analysis.

Template 1 – apriori themes identified from the RS

Programme theory one: Increasing parental engagement

Need for Increased positive parental engagement in child's education (*outcome*)
- Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities (*context*)
- Programme provides accessible support, advice and education provided to willing/motivated parents (*context*)
  o Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child (*mechanism*)
  o Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education (*mechanism*)

Programme theory two: Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support

School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school (outcome)

School develop a more supportive environment (outcome)
- School willingly and have capacity to accesses and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school (*context*)
- Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them (*context*)
  o School feel skilled and confident about being to be able to support a child (*mechanism*)
  o School develops positive attitude about supporting/building relationship with a child to remain in mainstream school (*mechanism*)

Programme theory three: Developing the child's resources/skills

Child is more skilled and resilient in the mainstream school environment (outcome)
- Programme provides an effective environment for learning (*context*)
- motivated children (*context*)
- children access support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school (*context*)
  o Children develop and learn skills to remain in mainstream school (*mechanism*)
  o Children develop confidence to remain in mainstream school (*mechanism*)
  o Children develop motivation to remain in mainstream school (*mechanism*)

Programme theory four: Role of the programme in the education system

School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school (outcome)

School able to be seen as intervening to prevent permanent exclusion (outcome)
- Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system (*context*)
- Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions (*context*)
    School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion (*mechanism*)

Figure 6.2: Initial Template analysis Template

6.1.2.2 Inductive Analysis approach

Pawson and Tilley (1997) note that key CMOCs may not have been identified by the researcher during theory generation (in this study through the RS) and so it is essential for the researcher to be willing and open to other CMOCs that may arise during the interviews. An inductive analysis was guided by Braun and Clarke (2006) and was used to identify additional codes in the transcripts which were then used to modify the hypothesised programme theories (see table 10).

Table 10: Thematic Analysis steps adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) pg. 35

Phase	Phase Description of the process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	All interviews were transcribed, reading and rereading the transcripts to familiarise myself, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting elements of the transcript (not already identified by the template analysis) that appear to relate to unidentified programme elements (e.g. programme contexts, programme mechanisms or programme outcomes) in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating/grouping transcript extracts relevant to each code.
3. Searching for new programme elements	Collating codes into potential abstracted shared programme elements (e.g. shared programme context, mechanism or outcomes), gathering all data relevant to each potential programme element using the matrix format – placing data with a common abstracted programme element together in a column of the matrix table.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking the programme elements identified relate to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), seeing if the new elements identified relate to the existing programme theories or not.
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each programme element identified, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each programme element identified.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

6.1.3 Summary of hybrid thematic analysis approach

The analysis consequently involved a five step process:

Table 11: Thematic Analysis process used in this study (adapted from Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006 and Thompson, 2012)

Steps	Application in this study
Developing the template	Template was developed for the template analysis (King, 2012). Using the theories derived from the literature to develop a theoretical and aprior research driven template (see template)
Applying the template codes to the data set (transcribed interviews)	Each interview transcript was read on several occasions (at least three times) with the template in mind. Each context, mechanism and outcome feature of the template was given a code. The transcripts were then coded using the template codes; when a section of the transcript was found to provide evidence for or against a particular context, mechanism or outcome feature, the transcript was coded with the relevant code.
Examining the emerging/new themes (Corroborating or challenging the coded themes)	Once the interview transcripts had been analysed using the template, the inductive approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) was then used to identify any additional themes not included in the template.
Use the coded data to find 'how far the research data support[ed] or challeng[ed] [or modified] the predictions [the individual theory]'	Next the coded transcripts were organised; the transcript extracts were placed in a matrix format where each matrix heading was a context, mechanism or outcome features previously identified in the RS (Miles and Huberman, 2014), and associated transcript extracts were placed under the relevant headings. New themes were identified and grouped under a new heading in the matrix format (Miles and Huberman, 2014)
Present adapted template/ theoretical framework	Present adapted framework

6.1.3.1 Themes

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the importance of the researcher being clear of the themes used. As Braun and Clarke (2006) state "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" pg.10. Themes from the deductive element of the analysis consist of the themes identified in the literature and are identified individually and given codes in the template above (King, 2012). All themes that were identified in the textual data that appeared to be relevant to uncovering the programme theory CMOCs but not already coded by the deductive approach were coded.

The aim of this analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), is to provide the reader with a version of the data that focuses on the themes identified earlier and include any new themes that are relevant to explaining how the programme works to support children to remain in mainstream school.

6.1.3.2 Semantic or Latent level of analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) highlight the importance of stating your epistemological view point as it influences what can be interpreted from the data. This research follows a constructivist and relativist epistemology, the analysis aims to identify themes at the latent level as the research philosophy assumes that there exists underlying programme theories that shape or inform the semantic content of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). The analysis carried out through the thematic

process results in more than description but rather theoretical themes evidenced by the semantic content.

6.1.3.3 Matrix Format

Miles and Huberman (2014) suggest a matrix display can be used as a systematic way to further develop a researcher's understanding of their data. They suggest that there is no 'correct way' to format the matrix only a helpful way that enables the researcher to make progress with analysing their data that is driven by the research questions. In this case the column headings of the matrix were the apriori programme context, mechanisms or outcome features identified by the RS and the extracts from the transcripts which supported or challenged each context, mechanism or outcome feature were placed in the appropriate column. A review of the column data was then used to modify the a-priori theory. New suggested theories were clustered into abstracted themes and new columns created which were then added to the overall CMOC matrix.

6.1.4 Quality of thematic analysis

6.1.4.1 Researcher's involvement in thematic analysis

The philosophical position taken here is realist (Maxwell, 2012a) and in light of this there is a need to recognise my influence in the thematic analysis process. As highlighted by Braun and Clark, (2006), the researcher is viewed to have an active role in identifying themes in the interviews rather than the themes just "emerging" from the data. I acknowledge that my own constructions and prior experience may

have influenced the themes identified in the interviews and is a threat to the validity of the data.

Although suggested by King (2012), a second independent researcher was not used in this research study. The logic for a second researcher is underpinned by a 'naive realism' described by Madill et al (2000) as "Naive realism asserts a correspondence theory of truth in which the world is largely knowable and just as it appears to be." (Pg. 3.). The epistemological position of this research study asserts that experiences are constructed and influenced by an individual's experiences and beliefs. This also applies to the researcher and so the coding is inescapably influenced by the researcher. Consequently it is viewed that there is no one accurate way to code the data and therefore inter-rater reliability would only demonstrate researchers know how to code the same way rather than demonstrate 'accurate' coding (Boyatzis, 1998). However the approach does allow for an audit trail specifying the process used to identify the themes.

6.2 Reliability and validity

Healy and Perry (2000) suggest that the quality of qualitative research that follows a realist paradigm (as this study does) can be judged using six comprehensive criteria (table 12):

Table 12: Quality criteria for qualitative research

Criteria (adapted from Healy and Perry (2000) and Thompson, 2012)	How this study aims to meet this criteria
Ontological appropriateness (the investigation of a world of complex social phenomena involving reflective people)	The aim of this research is to begin to develop an understanding of a complex social programme by engaging stakeholders in theory refinement with regards to how and in what circumstances the intervention programme can support children to remain in mainstream school. It is acknowledged that each participant's interview data describes their own construction of their experience of the programme.
Contingent validity (validity about generative mechanisms and contexts that make them contingent)	The study shares hypothesised CMO configurations with stakeholders and asks stakeholders to comment on the validity of these configurations; whether certain outcomes are a result in their experience of the generative mechanisms occurring in the context or not
Multiple perceptions of participants and of peer researchers (the multiple perceptions of a single reality)	Multiple participants were interviewed to provide multiple perspectives; broad questions were used in the semi-structured process before probes or follow up questions were offered. Single researcher a limitation of the study.
Methodological trustworthiness "extent to which the research can be audited by developing a case	A semi-structured approach was used for interviewing where theories were presented to participants in a structured way to enable consistency (appendix M and N). The method section explicitly states how the research was undertaken with consideration of ethical,

study database and by the use of quotations in the written report." Healy and Perry (2000)	reliability and validity elements considered. As Auerbach and Silverstien (2003) highlight it is inevitable that different researchers may develop their own individual interpretation of the interview data and therefore it is imperative that where possible the researcher can demonstrate how the data and codes are linked. I placed interview data in a matrix format where extracts and explanations can be linked to each coded theme C,M or O
Analytic generalisation	Programme theory was developed initially from the literature and refined through the process of data collection and analysis. The analysis of the data collection resulted in a further refined programme theory which aimed to explain how the intervention programme works to support children to remain in mainstream school.
Construct validity "refers to how well information about the constructs in the theory being built are measured in the research" (Healy and Perry, 2000,p.124)	The constructs were initially developed through a realist synthesis process and shared consistently with all stakeholders. Data was analysed using template analysis and inductive analysis used to capture any themes not recorded in the initial template (Boyatzis, 1998).

The inductive thematic analysis was reviewed using Braun and Clarke's 15 point scale (see appendix P) throughout the process to attempt to ensure a high quality process.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS

This section summarises the findings of the current research. These findings include a summary of the embryonic programme theories identified from the realist synthesis and the findings of the empirical data collection obtained through the realist interview process.

7.1 Amendments to template

The first element of the RE approach was to begin to explicate embryonic programme theories that were identifiable in the existing research literature. In order to develop the embryonic programme theories they were shared with stakeholders through the realist interview process. Stakeholders' reviews of the programme theories were transcribed and the data was used to begin to refine the programme theories identified. The tables below show both the original programme theories hypothesised through the RS in Version 1 on the left side and on the right-hand side version 2 which is the amended version based on the interview transcript data.

Themes that were supported by the interviewee's constructions of their experience of the AEP are typed in bold, due to the small sample size the theme was made bold if it was supported by at least one stakeholder. New middle range themes that arose from stakeholder's interview data are highlighted. All new themes are discussed below. For the remaining themes no evidence was found relating to these themes in the interviews; due to the limited participant size these themes are not removed from the overall theory.

7.1.1 Increasing parental engagement

Table 13: Summary of amendments to Increasing parental engagement CMOC

Key:

(o) = programme outcome

(c) = programme context

(m) = programme mechanism

Version 1	Version 2

Increased positive parental engagement in their child's education (o)
- Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities (c)
- Programme provides support/advice/education (c)
- Parents willing/motivated to accept support (c)
    o Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child (m)
    o Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education (m)
	Increased positive parental engagement in their child's education (o)
	- **Programme builds trusting relationship with parents (c)**
	- **Programme provide a range of accessible and relevant communication opportunities with open and honest communication (c)**
	- **Programme provides support/advice/education (includes practical support/emotional support) (c)**
	- **Parents willing to accept support (c)**
	    o **Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child (m)**
	    o **Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education (m)**

This programme outcome was both evident in the RS and the interview data where stakeholders agreed active parental engagement was key to enabling children at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. References were made to the need for parental engagement to enable consistency of support for a child across both home and school environments.

"If you can't get a parent on board; …. you could be having quite a successful time at school with the support but then you know, it's all gone (when they go home)" participant extract

"If everyone is involved the pupil will have more chance of staying in mainstream school" participant extract

"Children need consistency from everyone involved" participant extract

Parental disengagement was identified as a potential contributing factor of children experiencing exclusion from school. It was recognised that parents disengaging meant it was challenging to work together with them to support their child and consequently enable them to change their behaviour in the school context.

> "*half the problem is that they're sent to the centre to start with because you can't get parents to engage*" participant extract

> "*If you can't get a parent on board; I know if I go, … if I got in to work with a child and we have the initial setup meeting and the parent doesn't come or you know couldn't make it. You know, if it's not important to you to come to a meeting that's about your child's wellbeing then you know it's a massive, massive hurdle. That's where our frustration comes sometimes because you could be having quite a successful time at school with the support but then you know, it's all gone.*" participant extract

In terms of the role of the AEP in supporting parents', participants referred to the programme providing direct support to parents, both practical and emotional, as being a facilitative factor in supporting a child's reintegration into a mainstream school environment. It was identified that it was important to support parents and ensure that they felt able to be positively engaged in their child's education; that they felt they had the skills, resources and support to make a positive contribution in supporting their child.

Child participant A reflected on how much the programme staff supported his Mom: to support her to make referrals, to have someone to talk to and to be there for her if she was stuck with anything. Child A rated support for his parent as just as important as support for himself and school.

> *"….do you know the centre have got me soo much help, do you know like with (access to) CAMHS… The head teacher, is brilliant, she really really is, anyway she can help, she really really will"* participant extract
>
> *"…anything that they need help with, forms, anything…"* participant extract
>
> *"helped my mom with a lot of things as well, like support her to get me to see CAMHS and to help her to understand everything like forms and stuff"* child A participant extract
>
> *"mum found it understandably like a weight lifted off her mind because she was having difficulty in getting her child to school anyway… he was taxied there (to the AEP) and because he was happy to go and because she didn't have to physically take him to school that helped her as well"* participant extract

However, participants suggested that they felt that the support provided by the programme was only effective if parents are in a position where they are motivated/willing to receive this support- so this was recognised as a key context factor and a potential barrier.

> *"I think its whether parents are willing to engage (with the support)"* participant extract

> *"but it's if the parents say they want the support that's the thing, and obviously a lot of the parents will say you know, they're fine at home"* participant extract

> *"… and there were other things that she (Child's Mom) put into place at home as well, but she was trying to do it (make changes at home to support her child), so yes I think, in her case accessing support from the programme did make a difference. The other little boy, his mom is no different, but she didn't accept help from school or the centre in the first place"* participant extract

It was noted that parents recognising that the support being offered could be useful in supporting their child was necessary to encourage parents to access the support. It was felt sometimes time needed to be spent with parents to help them to see the value of the support being offered and to see why accessing this support might be helpful in supporting their child to return to school.

Two further middle range context factors were emphasised and developed in the interview data that were thought to support/hinder parental engagement with the programme. The first was the need for programme staff to establish quality trusting relationships with parents and second the need for regular communication between programme staff and parents.

7.1.1.1. Increased variety of communication opportunities

The interview data highlights that although AEPs are not often able to offer the same communication options as mainstream schools e.g. parents evening, due to the programmes' transient nature, the participants emphasised the need for the programme to engage parents using a broader range of communication approaches e.g. home visits, coffee mornings and parent groups instead to offer parents support. It was felt that creating a variety of communication opportunities that parents could participate in, was key in enabling parental engagement.

> "*it can't diarise the same sort of events that a mainstream school does because the parents change so often*" participant extract
>
> "*even if they opened up and had coffee mornings, where they can get together, even if it's like the realisation it's not just us because sometimes you just think it's just you in that situation*" participant extract
>
> "*.. (programme staff are)…constantly in contact, keeping me informed*" participant extract
>
> "*It's even if he has had a really really good day, it's not all bad, she will phone even if he has had a brilliant day*" *parent* participant extract

The interview data suggests that keeping in contact with parents requires a range of approaches that vary in their nature e.g. home visits, coffee mornings etc. depending on the circumstances and the needs of the parents e.g. location etc. but which all have the same them aim of maintaining consistent contact with parents. For example participants made reference to the challenges of holding coffee

mornings at the AEP in this case as the location of the AEP was not convenient for parents, and this sometimes meant there was a barrier for parents in being able to travel to the AEP location.

7.1.1.2 Building a positive trusting relationship

A second emphasised context factor that was evident in the interview data was the importance of programme staff building trusting relationships with parents if the programme is to be successful in promoting increased involvement.

"it takes a while to build trust with parents. I think if there was a general expectation of 'your child is at the PRU, there's a surgery open every afternoon and every morning these are things you can engage with we'd really like you to come, then the parents would have that option of coming" participant extract

The theme identified that there is the need for a positive trusting relationship with parents both to enable parents to feel that they can ask for advice and support, and to encourage them to accept the support they are being offered. The parent participant identified how important it was to feel that school understood her child and that the good relationship between school staff and parents was key to moving the situation forward. It was suggested the programme may be able to support the development of this trusting relationship through the regular communication that they have with the parents.

> *"It also would mean then that when a parent trusts you they're more likely to ask for help, and there might be issues in the home that we are unaware of because the parents don't feel like they can say because they think they might be deemed 'bad parents'"* example excerpt from interview.
>
> *"I just think like, we have a good bond really"* participant extract
>
> *", you know, she gets him like I get him, you can really see that she really does think a lot of him, but she is strict as well"* parent participant extract
>
> *"But they wouldn't have told us that had they not already had a brilliant relationship"* participant extract

The parent participant spent a lot of time focusing on the communication that she received from the programme staff. She reflected that the communication was not always negative but that she was informed often when her child had done well in school, and sometimes contacted just to check how she was getting on. She explained at school she often only heard negative news and this meant she was reluctant to maintain contact with school staff. She talked positively about the AEP head teacher and reflected on how caring and helpful she had been in supporting her and her son through some challenging times.

However, child participant B felt that the AEP had not supported his Mom and felt that his Mom felt the programme wasn't helping him and wanted to take him out of the programme as soon as possible. Child B suggested that neither he or his mom was sure how the programme was to help him to return to school. The data suggests the importance of parents having positive trusting relationships with

programme staff and possibly trust/belief in the effectiveness of the programme as being important in encouraging parents to access support.

7.1.2 Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support

Table 14: summary of amendments to enhancing the mainstream school environment and support CMOC

Version 1	Version 2

School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school (o)
School develop a more supportive environment (o)
  - School willing and have capacity to access and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school (c)
  - Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them (c)
    ○ School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child (m)
    ○ School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building a relationship with a child (m)
	School is able to meet child's needs effectively (o)
	School develop a more supportive environment (o)
	  - **School are willing and have the resources/capacities to make changes to support the child/young person (c)**
	  - **Programme has the capacity to provide accurate and useful information using a range of effective approaches about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them** in **mainstream school (c)**
	    ○ **School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child (m)**
	    ○ School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building relationship with a child (m)

The data from the RS and the interviews supported the idea that a contributing factor preventing a child from remaining in mainstream school was the mainstream school's capacity to meet a child's needs effectively and therefore a programme outcome required was to change this context and to enable school to access the necessary support and advice from the AEP.

"You just haven't got the space, you haven't got the bodies, you haven't got the people who are trained to that depth to be able to do it" participant extract

"sometimes is a case of situations deteriorating quite rapidly and schools not having had enough time to get skilled up to deal with what.... what they are being presented with so some schools will use it as a training opportunity" participant extract

"…so what have they (AEP staff) done differently that you could do in school to make it different for that child, so to me, its vitally important (to have support and advice), and that's the way it's going to work, far more effectively" participant extract

"Some schools will use it (the programme) genuinely, erm, because they just can't cope and their not entirely sure what next" participant extract

Child participant B highlighted that in his experience before attending the AEP he felt that he had not been providing the additional support in school that he had been offered by school. He explained that school had requested support from external agencies but felt that this support was not really enough and consequently he ended up at the AEP. In comparison to when he came back to school after

attending the AEP, he had an extra Teaching Assistant supporting him all day, he felt the support he received from school in the first place was too limited. He suggested this additional support in school was very important in helping him to remain in mainstream school.

"all I had is people like come in and visit me sometimes" child B extract

Researcher: "You said that you think the teachers help you more now, how do you think your teachers help you more now you're back at school?"

C: "'cause I've got a teacher who works with me all the time" child B extract

Another participant highlighted one of the reasons schools may place a child temporarily at the AEP is to allow them time to put together resources to meet a child's needs including extra staff, extra resources or training to up-skill current staff to meet a young person's needs.

Participants also focused upon context factors that enabled the support offered by the AEP to be most effective and identified the importance of the school having the resources and capacity needed to make the changes required to effectively support a young person. They highlighted the importance of the programme also having the capacity to deliver support and share information about the child's needs.

> *"it's probably difficult for them (to offer training to schools) because they must have so many schools feeding into them"* participant extract
>
> *"the (AEP) certainly wouldn't be able to offer training at the moment due to the staff changes… there was no capacity"* participant extract

7.1.2.1 Effective approaches to share information/support

In the current research a context feature highlighted through the interviews was that although the participants recognised the importance of sharing information and gaining support to change the school environment/capacities, a key focus was about *how* this information and support needed to be delivered to schools/ school staff.

> *"they (AEP) send a very detailed report with recommendations of what he's been doing at the AEP and what he needs to carry on doing when he's back in mainstream school for example of the safe quiet area for if he needs to go and have 5 minutes time out or a particular person to go to so that is put into place"* participant extract
>
> *"list of strategies and interventions used and those that they have found most useful, so that's shared with the school through meetings and a report"* participant extract

Participants talked about the importance of the AEP having capacity to provide information and advice. A combination of a high level of demand for the AEP staff expertise and a recent loss of staff at the AEP unfortunately meant that the AEP were recently lacking in trained staff to offer the additional training and support to

schools. This recent change seemed to highlight the importance to participants of the programme having the capacity to provide this support when needed.

Many participants suggested that there needed to be more practical hands-on advice from the programme staff to support the school staff. Participants identified features such as: programme staff coming into the school and suggesting changes in the school environment, modelling ways of working with a child with staff, consultations to share ideas and discussions about potential strategies with specialist staff, provided a more effective way of providing support to school staff.

> *"I wonder whether if that teacher was allowed release time, perhaps the last 3 weeks of a child's placement, to spend three mornings in three weeks to go to the PRU and learn teacher skills to work with that child, how's this going to work in your classroom?"* participant extract
>
> *"Perhaps if there was a body, you know a physical person that could support the transition from the AEP to mainstream because it's a huge hurdle for the child and for the staff as well because they have got 30 other children to teach as well"* participant extract
>
> *"if they (the children) had people attached to them, that could actually come into school, to actually see these children, and perhaps between you be able to develop, erm, more of these strategies and ways that they use at the centre because there its perfect, well not perfect but they have got the surroundings they have got everything set up, they could actually come in and look at ours and say right well perhaps, that's not a very good idea but you could try this there, so they come in because they are the ones that are doing it day in day out, and if there doing it properly, then surely it makes sense for them to show other people, how they are doing it"* participant extract

> *"So the sharing of resources and sharing of strategies and ideals but not just in a meeting room with a cup of coffee but going into each others' environment would be really really positive, and it might help those teachers to engage a bit more with understanding the reasons behind the child's behaviour"* participant extract

> *"whoever it is that's working with him when he comes back to mainstream school has had chance to go and see him or her at the AEP, to see what they have done, to see what progress they have made, to see what strategies they could use with them when they come back, which would make them more confident about the child coming back"* participant extract

There was recognition in the interviews that more practical support would be preferable because it would enable school staff to practice their new strategies, to check they had correctly understood the advice and ultimately build their confidence with supporting a child.

There was also recognition that in order for the support process to be effective there needed to be an expectation/ commitment from school and additional resources available in school that would enable schools to engage in this process and make the necessary changes to support the child.

> *"… what we try to do is, get a commitment from them, so the whole applying for a placement, erm they are asked from the off- set, how do you intend to skill up to have this child back? erm, so the conversations are from the off-set"* participant extract

"I don't think there was enough staff to deal with him ….. yeh he needed someone with him 24 7, yeh to keep him calm" parent participant extract

"yeh 'cause I've got a teacher now who works with me (did you have a teacher with you before?) (shakes head) all I had is people like come in and visit me" child participant extract

"sometimes you just can't a) you haven't got the money b) you haven't got the people c) you haven't got the space." Participant extract

Participants noted the importance of schools not only having the resources needed to make changes but also the motivation and willingness to make changes in the mainstream school environment. It was felt that this motivation and willingness to change from the school was essential in resulting in a child being able to make a successful return to school.

7.1.3 Developing the child/young person's resources/skills

Table 15: Summary of amendments to Increasing children's resilience/skills CMOC

Version 1	Version 2

Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment (o)
- Programme provides effective environment that promotes learning (c)
- Motivated children (c)
- children access support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school (c)
   o Children develop and learn skills to remain in mainstream school (m)
   o Children develop confidence to remain in mainstream school (m)
   o Children develop motivation to remain in mainstream school (m)
	Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment (o)
	- **Programme provides an effective environment that promotes learning (c)**
	- Motivated children (c)
	- **Children access support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school (c)**
	- **Need for gradual transitions between school and programme (c)**
	   o **Children develop and learn skills based on their individual needs to remain in mainstream school (m)**
	   o Children develop confidence to remain in mainstream school (m)
	   o **Children develop motivation to remain in mainstream school (m)**

There was much recognition in the interviews that one key role of the programme ideally is to provide specialist support directly to the children to support them to gain the skills/resilience to return to mainstream school.

"trying to support xxxx (son) by sending him to the centre for some support to help him to stay in school and change his behaviour " parent participant extract

"can support children to develop their skills to help them to get ready to go back to school" participant extract

"if they can think of anything that xxxx (son) does need that will help him, they do it" parent extract

"So the idea was his behaviour had slipped to a certain degree, they would put him in the AEP where he would improve" participant extract

"helps you like anger management, like, help me calm down and stuff like that" child participant

"He is making progress with his academic skills, definitely, erm he is, yeh he is probably more confident, than what he was," participant extract

Many participants highlighted the environment of the programme being a key context factor contributing to how successful the AEP support was in developing a child's skills. Environmental factors such as: consistent and specialist programme staff, small child to adult ratio, positive relationships and the need for an individualised programme and a flexible curriculum were identified as essential features of the AEP by a range of stakeholders.

The parent participant particularly identified one important environmental feature that they felt impacted upon how effective the programme was, as the importance of the relationship between the children and AEP staff. She explained that during one period in the AEP that there were a high number of temporary staff and this made it difficult for her child to build relationships and seemed to impact upon how effective the programme was in supporting her child.

> *"I get the feeling that most of the staff at the AEP do have good relationships with the kids they work with because they're so challenging and because you have to have a relationship with a child in order to reason with them or help them through what they're struggling with. So I think that's a real positive"* participant extract
>
> *"I think it was the fact that it was smaller groups to start with, again we come back to the specialist teachers that's their job, they have got more space, a lot of children can't stand the noise and confusion of the classroom"* participant extract
>
> *"they have got to have that constant routine, and know where the boundaries are, so I think it is very important, the centre being small and more personal, and the people with more skills"* participant extract
>
> *"they can be in a small group, they have got specialist teachers, who can develop special programs of work for them"* participant extract
>
> *"they are all (AEP staff) temporary a lot of them, so he does try and get a bond an then they go"* parent participant

Child participants also reflected on the importance of having funding and resources in the AEP.

> *"we only get a small amount of money so not even, not even enough to hire a mini bus, that why we haven't got equipment and stuff"* child participant A extract
>
> *"yep but schools have to have it (money/resources) all 'cause we are naughty and we don't get hardly anything, they just offer to everybody any other school"* Child participant B extract

For the children, the amount of funding and resources available at the AEP seemed to, for them, reflect their value and contributed to them believing they did not have resources/funding because they were too naughty. They appear to suggest that having resources is important for them to feel valued and supported rather than feel as though they are being punished by the programme.

An additional context factor that was highlighted through the interviews was the need for an environment where children's behaviour was supported and well managed. Many stakeholders raised concerns that if children attending the programme witnessed other children behaving in an inappropriate way that the other children would copy this if it was not responded too in an effective way. It was identified that the programme needed to have a consistent and effective approach to responding to children's behaviour/ needs. The programme needed to support children to give them the skills to manage their behaviour so that these skills could be transferred back to the mainstream school.

> *"He saw some behaviours at the AEP that he wouldn't have seen at mainstream school and he did begin to bring those into mainstream school which was obviously giving a huge problem for staff, children,* parents" participant extract
>
> *"I think everything is quite helpful here but sometimes it just blows out and you just kick off and stuff"* child extract
>
> *"if they don't sort their behaviour, I just think it's a recipe for disaster, I just think it's going to go one of two ways either (my son) is going to get bullied, or he is going to be the big I am"* parent extract

7.1.3.1 Gradual transitions between the school and programme

A key theme stressed in the interviews was the support needed to enable a child to prepare for reintegration. A number of interviews made reference to the need for a gradual transition between the programme and mainstream school.

> *"so that is going to be quite scary for anybody, get to the PRU (AEP) and suddenly realise they are not top dog anymore"* extract from interview
>
> *"gradually lessen the time in the PRU and increase the time in mainstream so there is that link. That's in an ideal world with the capacity but I think we might have a better success rate if that kind of thing happened"* participant extract

> *"yeh it's really important, when xxxx (son) starts his new school, it will be done gradually with the centre, he will go like for a couple of lessons, he will choose like a favourite lesson and it will be done like gradually, they (staff from centre), will go with him for an hour, and then it will be like for a couple of hours, they do it really gradually, and they keep seeing how he is doing"* parent participant

> *"Where you're going to spend a third of your day everyday for the next eight weeks is a big change and I think that more could be done to support children in that"* participants view about transition to AEP

For some stakeholders they felt the transition to the programme was important, supporting both the children and parents in preparing for the transition to the AEP. Some felt that parents and children found the process of going to the programme quite scary and concerning and benefitted from being supported and settled in to the programme. Other stakeholders highlighted the importance of the transition back to school from the AEP, in preparing the children and hopefully enabling the children to return back to mainstream school. It was felt in order for the return to mainstream to be more successful the transition needed to be supported and gradual to support both the child and the school to adjust.

The parent participant highlighted the importance of a planned and supported transition back into mainstream in supporting her child to return successfully back to mainstream school. She felt they AEP supported her child well making the transition gradual and supporting her child to see his new mainstream school as a positive and safe place to be.

A further context factor identified as supporting children to return to school was building and maintaining children's motivation to return to school. The interview data particularly made reference to the need for connection/relationships to be maintained with the mainstream school environment as a contributing factor to increasing children's motivation to return to mainstream school. Both child participants made reference to the importance of their relationships with school staff/children in terms of motivating them to return to mainstream school.

One of the children who had attended the programme for quite a while was aware of the lack of friendships they might have if they went back to school, whereas the other child focused on the relationship with a school teacher as a motivating factor encouraging him to return to school. Participants highlighted the importance of the child knowing that they are being kept in mind and that school are waiting for them to return as supportive factor in increasing a child's motivation for returning to schools and enabling a more positive transition.

> *"and the reason I didn't want to stop (at the AEP) was because I missed Ms x(teacher at mainstream school),*
>
> *I: what did you like about her?*
> *C: that she is funny and plus she used to be my teacher and I wanted to go back to her"* child A extract

> *"well I do feel happy about going back to school but, I wanna go back to school but I don't because I've got loads of friends here, and I won't know anyone at school"* child B extract
>
> *" (school staff) ha(ve) got to have that bond with them, otherwise you're not going to get anywhere with him"* parent extract

In addition to developing/ maintaining a child's motivation to return to school through supporting relationships/connection with the mainstream school other participants highlighted that the programme promoted children's' motivation in other ways too. They reflected on the importance of the programme building a child's self-esteem, self-confidence and a belief in their ability to be successful in the school environment and consequently increase the child's motivation in preparation for their return to mainstream school.

> "and what's nice about him now having one on one support (at the AEP) with [name] is that he's beginning to build up some self-confidence and self-esteem. From what I understand, that's where your internal motivation comes from is having a bit of self-esteem and wanting to do something for yourself because you're good enough to do it"

7.1.4 Role of the programme in the education system

Table 16: Summary of amendments of role of the programme in the education system CMOC

Version 1	Version 2

School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school (o) School able to be seen as intervening to prevent permanent exclusion (o)
 	
- Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system (c)
- Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions (c)
    o School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion (m)
	School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school (o)
	School able to be seen as intervening to prevent permanent exclusion (o)
	
	- Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system (c)
	- Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions (c)
	- **School feel they do not have the resources to meet a child's needs (c)**
	- **Programme provides a short term effective intervention to prevent school exclusion (c)**
	    o **School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion (m)**

The interviews suggested that participants had begun to identify that the programme had a role in allowing school to respond to challenging behaviour and to intervene with the hope of preventing permanent exclusion. The interview data also contributed to further refining the context features that appeared to promoting the use of the AEP to prevent school exclusion.

> *"the school did try everything they could to keep him at the school including trying to support xxxx (son) by sending him to the centre for some support"* parent participant extract
>
> *"They access the programme for support.. with the hope of them coming back at the end of the respite"* participant extract
>
> *so you do have schools that want to genuinely prevent permanent exclusions so they will use it (the programme) as an opportunity to respond to behaviour, erm, secure other things in school such as another member of staff, and recruitment can take time"* participant extract

7.1.4.1 School lack resources

One additional context factor that was identified in the interviews that seem to encourage schools to the use the programme was the schools feeling that they did not currently have the resources to meet a child's needs and recognising that the programme can support them to change this.

> *"You just haven't got the space, you haven't got the bodies, you haven't got the people who are trained to that depth to be able to do it, without the centre we have got nothing"* participant excerpt.

Participants identified that schools feeling under resourced to meet a child's need and recognising this could be changed was often a key context factor in schools deciding to request support from the programme for a child. Lack of capacity in school to quickly respond to a child's escalating behaviour often resulted in the need to remove a child from school, as this was felt to be the only option to support the child and the wider school stakeholders e.g. teachers, other children.

> *"so you do have schools that want to genuinely prevent permanent exclusions so they will use it as an opportunity to erm secure other things in school such as another member of staff, and recruitment can take time"* participant extract

The schools recognising this challenge and identifying that the AEP provides an effective support mechanisms to enable them to support this child was identified to be key in promoting schools to use the AEP as an alternative to permanent excluding a child.

7.1.4.2 Short term intervention

Although interviewees did not identify with some of the wider systemic context factors in the literature, they did identify one context factor that was felt to be important in the programme working to prevent permanent exclusion. The context factor identified was the need for the programme to have a clear and well established supporting role in the education system. Participants made reference to the lack of knowledge/understanding schools had in terms of the role of the programme, and the idea that the programme was outside of the system and

working independently rather than interdependently as part of supporting children to remain in the education system.

It was felt that there was a need to identify the programme in the LA as an embedded short-term intervention programme that works with schools to support children to remain in mainstream school. The hope was that this would help create a systemic process where the AEP was part of the solution and provided a support to schools who were trying to make changes to enable a child to remain in school rather than the programme being a separate entity that was disconnected from the schools excluding the children.

> *I think maybe schools and the (AEP) need to liaise more even if they've not got a child you know even if there's not any involvement because we're all working together at the end of the day aren't we?* participant extract
>
> *"Really need to open up; they need to have more of a presence I think. Make themselves (the program) a bit more known; come out, liaise more."* participant extract
>
> *"I've never been to the AEP, and I've been SEN-Co for 25years, and I've never been to the AEP, so it would be nice to go to see how it is set up, not just for me, for the teachers, the support staff who have got to have these children when they come back"* participant extract
>
> *"and that's the way it's going to work (successful reintegration) far more effectively, if there is a closer link (between school and AEP)"* participant extract
>
> *"I think that they (AEP) need to be brought into the fold a little bit, and there seems that there was a definite mood of we're being forgotten about, not just from the kids but from the staff at the AEP"* participant extract

7.1.5 Integrative themes

King (2012) suggests that when reviewing the data themes may appear that cut across many other themes in the data which he called integrative themes. In this data one integrative theme was identified which appeared across the other themes. This theme is identified as time out.

7.1.5.1 Time out

The theme identified seems to suggest one of the roles of the programme (context condition) was to provide time away from the current (often negative) situation for the child, parent and school.

"sometimes (schools) feel quite bad that they are almost sending the child off while they sort themselves out ready to have them back, erm its just about getting that training in place and being ready" participant excerpt

"he did need time out from mainstream really, because we had a lot going on" participant extract

"There may be a case that things are going to change in school and there is likely to be erm change in staff which is going to be upsetting for a child, sometimes is a case of situations deteriorating quite rapidly and schools not having had enough time to get skilled up to deal with what's, what they are being presented with" participant extract

"so in the end it was becoming quite a battle so, we decided that maybe, time away from the situation would hopefully calm it down" participant extract

> *"everything was sort of really fast, emergency sort of thing because he was that bad, erm so we really hadn't got time to get a statement or anything, and that was why he went on respite"* participant extract

> *".. mum found it understandably like a weight lifted off her mind because she was having difficulty in getting her child to school anyway"* participant extract

> *"..so the children have gone for a respite, erm, which gives them a break from the situation, gives the other children in the class a break from the situation"* participant extract

> *"I think often children that go to the PRU, it is often at a point where er, things have got that bad in school that they are often at the point where staff are refusing to work with this child, we are often at a point where parents are complaining about the child, often at a point when governors are involved with the child so they need some breathing space to thin about the next step and manage the situation"* participant extract

> *"we don't have the first review for at least two and a half weeks we try to push it to the three week mark just to give everybody a bit of a breather, give them a bit of a break"* participant extract

This time out is seen as a chance for schools to get in place the resources, training and additional staff needed in order to meet a child's needs. Also it was suggested by a parent that one role of the programme for their child was time out for their child while they were not feeling as resilient to manage in the mainstream environment. For the parents it is seen as time away from the challenging situation at school while receiving some support to enable them to move forward with a

situation while preventing it from deteriorating further. Time out appeared to be an integrative theme apparent for all three stakeholders: school, parent and children.

7.2 Identifying an analytic framework

This sections explains how the analytic framework was identified and the findings of this analysis.

7.2.1 Method

Pawson (2013) argues that due to the complexity of programmes it is not possible for a research project to conduct inquiry into the entirety of a programme system in a meaningful way. Pawson (2013) acknowledges that systems level knowledge can add to the evaluation landscape and a broader application of system theory can develop understanding once a researcher has begun to develop a working knowledge of the system parts. Consequently this RE research has so far focused on identifying the middle range programme theories underpinning the activities of stakeholders. This section aims to apply system knowledge to further analyse these programme theories in order to advance our understanding about how the programme works.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, 2005) is used in previous literature to explore the social problem of school exclusion (Sellman et al, 2002; Rouse, 2011; Lally, 2013; Collins, 2013) as it is seen to offer a view about how the wider system can influence human behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest in order to develop the understanding of how the AEP begins to work towards addressing the social problem of school exclusion,

theories such as the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) can be used to further explain how a programme works and how the programme theories are connected. Pawson (2013) states the programme theories identified may have a common thread running through them traceable to a more abstract analytic framework/schema (see figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1 box contents:

Analytical framework for a program

$C^1M^1O^1$ $C^2M^2O^2$ $C^3M^3O^3$ – abstracted middle range theories

$C^aM^aO^a$ $C^bM^bO^b$ $C^cM^cO^c$ $C^dM^dO^d$ etc – individual case studies – CMOs identified in the case studies

Data

This study is aiming to use existing case studies to identify potential middle range CMOCs and use the empirical data of a further case study to begin to refine them

Figure 7.1: Overview of relationship between data and theory Adapted from Pawson and Tilley (1997) pg.121

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model is an evolving theoretical system model used to explain human development and behaviour. The most recent model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005 - version used in this study) has four key elements: process, context, people and time (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). Proximal processes (interaction between organism and their environment) are hypothesised to be the primary mechanisms producing human

development and behaviour (Bronfrenbrenner, 2005; Tudge et al, 2009). It is stated

that the developing person, the environmental context (near and far) and time

periods in which these interactions take place has a significant impact upon the

quality of the proximal processes and consequently human development and

behaviour (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).

Bronfenbrenner (2005) suggests the contexts involve five interrelated systems that

can influence this interaction (described below table 17).This section aims to

provide a review of the programme theories using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological

model (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) as a framework.

Table 17: Description of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model context systems

Context systems	Description
Individual	Bio-psychological characteristics of the person: dispositions can set proximal processes in motion in a particular developmental domain and continue to sustain their operation. Next, bio-ecological resources of ability, experience, knowledge, and skill are required for the effective functioning of proximal processes at a given stage of development. Finally, demand characteristics invite or discourage reactions from the social environment that can foster or disrupt the operation of proximal processes. (Taken from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006).
Microsystem	"A microsystem is a pattern of activities, social roles and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face to face setting with particular physical, social and symbolic features that invite, permit or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment e.g. settings including family, school" (Taken from Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pg.39)
Mesosystem	"The system comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g. the relations between home and school). The mesosystem is a system of microsystems." (Taken from Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pg. 40)
Exosystem	"The exosystem comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings, at least one of which does not contain the developing person, but in which events occur that indirectly influence processes within the immediate setting in which the developing person lives (e.g. for a child, the relationship between the home and the parent's work place)" (Taken from Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pg.40).

Macrosystem	"This consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, resources, customs, life-styles, opportunity structures, hazards and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems." (Taken from Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pg.40)
Chronosystem	"This system encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives (e.g. changes over the life course in family structure…)" (Taken from Bronfenbrenner, 1994, pg.40)

7.2.2 Findings

The bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) suggests there are three person characteristics at the individual level that can influence the direction and power of proximal process, a person's disposition, (e.g. impulsiveness, explosiveness, curiosity) bioecological resources of ability (e.g. skills, experience, knowledge) and thirdly a person's demand characteristic which promote or discourage interaction with the social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 2005; Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). In the current study one aim of the AEP is to develop children's/young person's skills (e.g. social skills) and resilience to enable them to have better control over their behaviour and emotions. Consequentially the programme attempts to support the development of a promotive disposition (control over emotions and behaviour), increase bioecological resources of ability (increase skills) and consequential increase the young person's demand characteristics directly through the supportive environmental context provided by the programme. Applying the bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) the programme appears to be trying to support context changes at the individual level of the child.

Another key influence on the quality of proximal processes and consequently human development and behaviour, is the environmental context in which this interaction between the child and cultural other occurs (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006). In reference to this study, change at this microsystem-level is apparent in respect of improving the environment in the mainstream school setting and increasing parental engagement in their child's education as these are both supportive changes in context features of the child's immediate microsystems. The

analysis through the bioecological model suggests the programme may be making changes at the microsystem level to create more supportive environments for the child/young person that aim to impact upon the child's behaviour.

At the exosystem level is the role of the programme for the schools in the LA education system. The role of the AEP is to provide an alternative to permanent exclusion for the schools by providing an alternative way to respond to a child/young person. Here the AEP is making a contribution at the exosystem level by enabling a change in the way schools and the programme interact together to support children who display challenging behaviour in the education setting. This relationship between the AEP and schools has an indirect impact on the way schools respond to children's challenging behaviour as the schools are able to use the AEP to intervene rather than permanently exclude a child.

Using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory the researcher can begin to locate a potential analytic framework that may underpin how the programme works to prevent school exclusion, it is to see:

AEPs as facilitating context change in the child's ecological systems which promotes positive human development and behaviour and consequently re-engagement in the mainstream school environment.

These changes are apparent at many levels of the model: individual: changing child's characteristics, microsystem: change to school environment and parental

engagement, exosystem: role of the programme in the education system in changing the way schools can respond to children's challenging behaviour. The middle range programme theories identified provide support for the use of Bronfenbrenner's system theory as a model that can be used to help develop an understanding of how the AEP works.

CHAPTER EIGHT: FINAL VERSION OF PROGRAMME THEORIES

> **RE Stage 5 (Chapter 8): Presenting the refined programme theories**. This chapter presents the final version of the refined programme theories and a potential analytic framework identified through this current research.

Figure 8.1: Overview of RE stage 5 (taken from figure 2.5, pg. 22)

Presented below are the final versions of the embryonic programme theories developed through this research for AEPs that support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school.

8.1 Programme theory one: Increasing parental engagement
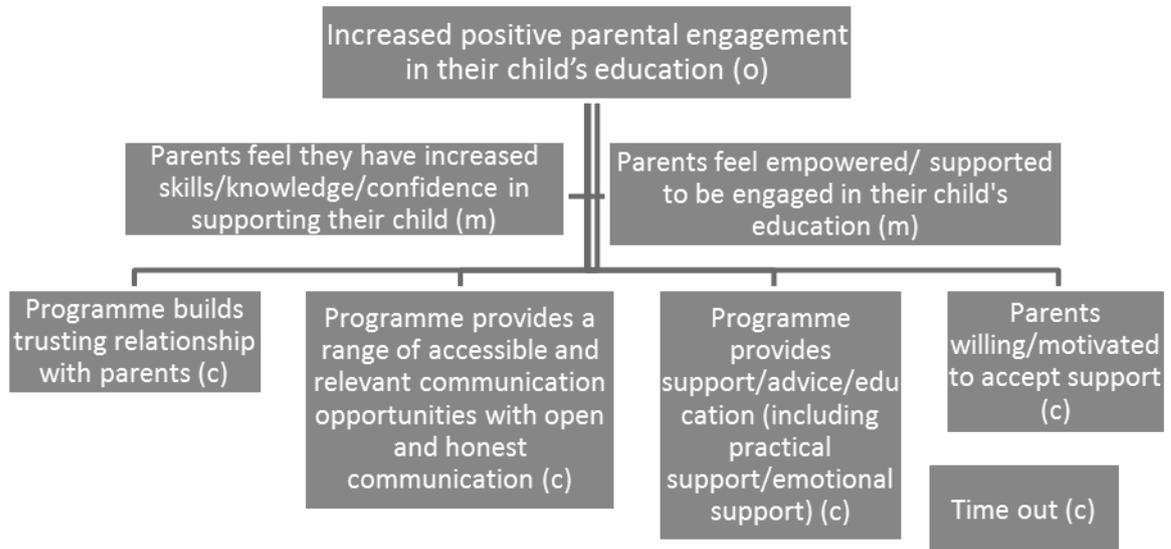
Figure 8.2: Increasing parental engagement programme theory

8.2 Programme theory two: Enhancing the mainstream school environment and support
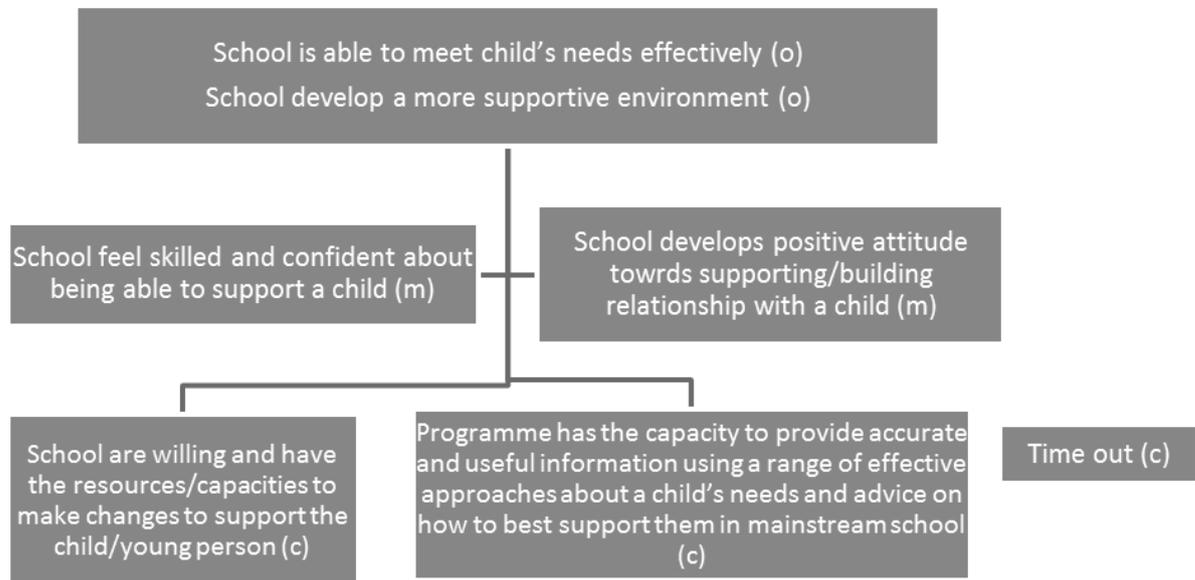
Figure 8.3: Enhancing the school environment and support programme theory

8.3 Programme theory three: developing the child's skills/resources
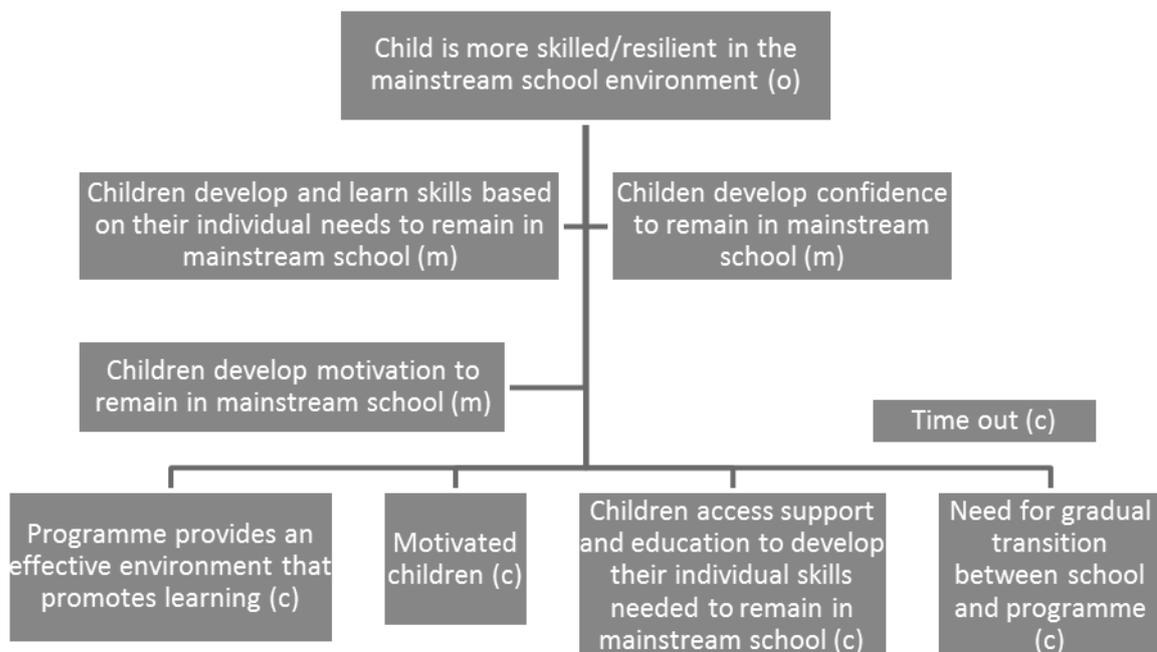
Figure 8.4: Developing child's skills/resources programme theory

8.4 Programme theory four: Role of the programme in the education system
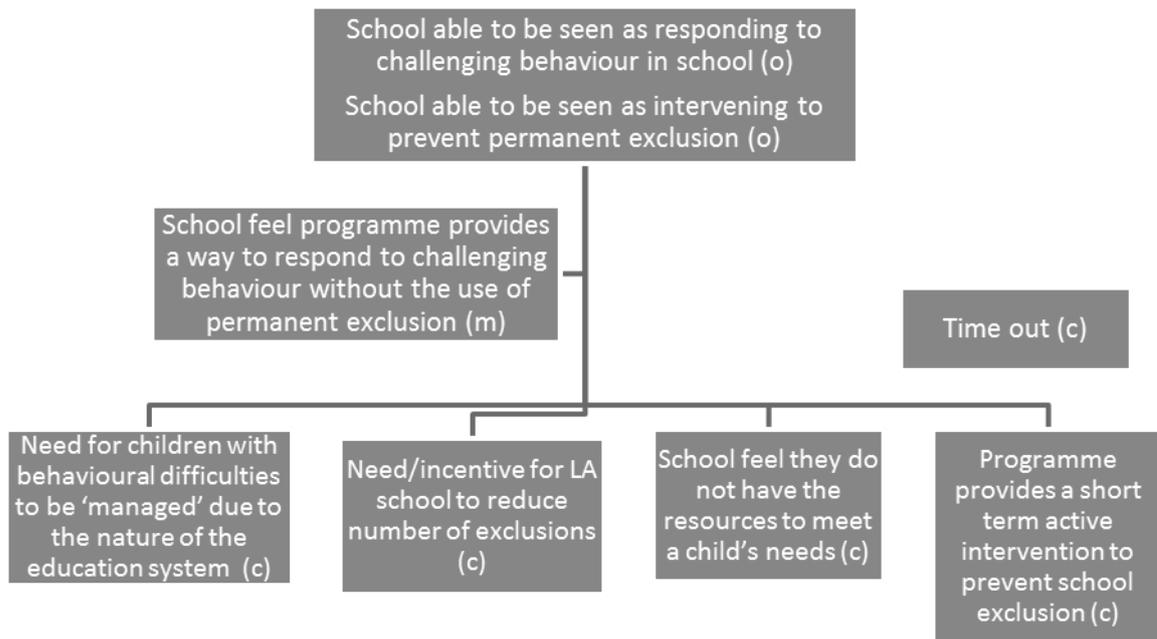
Figure 8.5: Programme theory four: Role of the programme in the education system

8.5 Analytic framework

Analytic framework: AEPs as facilitators of ecological context change to support positive change in child's/ young person's behaviour to enable reintegration into the mainstream school environment.

Figure 8.6: Analytic framework

CHAPTER NINE: DISCUSSION

This section will discuss the findings outlined in the previous section and draw conclusions about what is suggested by the results in relation to the aim of this study.

9.1 Aim of the research study

The aim of this research was to begin to explicate the underpinning shared programme theories of AEPs which aim to support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school, in order to advance the understanding about how the programme works (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

9.2 Summary of the findings

The results section presented the shared embryonic programme theories thought to be underpinning successful AEP experiences that support children who are at–risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. These theories were identified and refined following a RS and realist interviews with key stakeholders who have experienced a case study AEP.

The study identified and began to identify four shared programme theories derived from a review of the literature and interviews with stakeholders who have experience of one case study AEP. The study suggests that there are a range of promotive context conditions AEPs can provide in order to enable mechanisms that facilitate supportive programme outcomes that include increasing parental engagement, developing the school environment, promoting the child's skills to

remain in the mainstream school and to provide an effective alternative way to for schools to support those children at risk of permanent exclusion.

9.2.1 Programme theory 1: Increasing parental engagement

Both the literature and interview data suggest the importance of increasing parental engagement in preventing permanent exclusion. Evidence in the literature and interviews highlighted that lack of parental engagement was associated with those experiencing school exclusion. Parental engagement in their child's education was identified as a protective factor against school exclusion and a supportive factor in facilitating a child's successful reintegration back into mainstream school.

The data gathered through this research begins to suggest that the AEP facilitates the outcome through the mechanisms of increasing positive parental engagement by beginning to increase parents' skills and confidence in supporting their child. It is also identified that a further way the programme may increase parental engagement is through ensuring parents feel supported and empowered to be engaged in their child's education.

A range of context factors provided by AEPs have been identified as supportive in achieving this outcome. The literature highlighted that context factors being the need for the programme to provide support, advice, education to the parents, the need for the programme to provide regular communication with parents and the need for parents to be willing to accept the support offered by the programme.

A key context factor emphasised in the interviews was the importance of parents establishing positive trusting relationships with programme staff. It was suggested this positive relationship was the basis for engaging parents in activities that enabled sharing knowledge and providing support. It was identified that this trusting relationship was important in encouraging parents to request and accept the support offered by the AEP.

Additionally the interviewees emphasised the importance of parental access to varying communication opportunities e.g. home visits, coffee mornings, in order to enable parents to participate in opportunities to develop their knowledge, skills and to empower parents to be involved in their child's education. The emphasis was on the need for variety in opportunities as it was felt more traditional approaches of communication e.g. parents evening, were not always possible or appropriate. The literature supports this emphasis as a range of communication opportunities are promoted by programmes to engage parents including counselling, parent groups and key workers that support at home (Foley and Pang, 2006; Wilson, 2010; Schifano, 2011; Mills, 2013).

9.2.2 Programme theory 2: Enhancing mainstream school environment and support

The literature and interview data suggested that the schools both providing a supportive environment and practitioners having the skills to meet the needs of children/young people at-risk of school exclusion is key in enabling them to remain in mainstream school. The literature identifies that children who experience or are

at risk of experiencing school exclusion have an increased likelihood of having additional needs which are not being met effectively by the school environment. The current research identifies factors associated with children's attendance at the AEP is due to schools not yet having the capacity to meet the child's needs within the school environment, and role of the AEP therefore needing to building this capacity in order to facilitate a successful return.

The AEP's role is viewed as offering support and advice to schools in order to build their capacity to meet these needs. The current research supports the view that the AEP works to achieve the outcome of developing the school provision through building the skills and confidence of the mainstream school staff to enable them to more effectively meet children's needs. The research also suggests that the programme supports the school staff to develop a positive attitude towards supporting children who are at risk of exclusion and to enable them to build positive relationships with those children who are at risk of school exclusion.

In order to enable these mechanisms the literature highlighted the need for supportive context factors, which included the AEP providing support to schools and accurate information about how to support a child's needs to enable them to remain in mainstream school. Key context factors supported by this research were identified as both schools having the capacity and resources to act upon these recommended changes and the programmes having the capacity to provide this level of support to schools.

A key emphasis in the interviews was the importance of the way in which the AEP delivers this advice. It was identified that written advice alone was not as effective as practical hands-on guidance provided directly to practitioners working with the children in the mainstream school. It was felt programme staff working directly with school staff to model good practice and providing practical advice in the school, were more effective ways of changing school practice. The literature also makes reference to AEPs providing training and modelling practice to support mainstream school staff (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Wolf and Wolf, 2008; Wilson, 2010) supporting this finding.

However, the interview data made reference to the importance of the AEP having the capacity to deliver this level of support to the school. In this case study AEP participants identified that, due to staff changes, at times the programme didn't have capacity to deliver this level of support and this was considered a barrier to how effectively the support from the programme was delivered.

The interview data also made reference to the importance of schools both having the capacity to make the suggested changes but also schools being willing and motivated to make these changes in order to support a child to remain in mainstream school. It was felt that the willingness and motivation of schools' to act on the support and advice given was an essential factor contributing to the success of a child's reintegration.

9.2.3 Programme theory 3: Developing the child/young person's resources/skills

The RS and data from the interviews recognised one important role of the AEP is being to develop the child's/young person's characteristics/skills particularly regarding their social skills, learning skills and resilience in aiding their return to school. The interview data identified one key reason that schools access the AEP is to enable the child/young person to access intensive support from specialised staff in a supportive environment.

The interview data particularly made reference for the need for the young person to experience a graduated transition between the AEP and school to enable the young person to be supported in this transition process.

The research supports the view that the programme aims to enable children to have more skills to enable them to be resilient in the mainstream school programme. The current research indicates the programme facilitates this outcome through developing children's skills, motivation and confidence to remain in the mainstream school environment.

The interviews emphasised the view that it was essential that each individual's needs are met to enable them to successfully remain in mainstream school. An individualised approach to meeting these needs is required and developing skills to support children to meet their needs in a mainstream school is key. The literature particularly focuses on developing children's social skills (Wilson, 2010; Lochhead, 2011; Ofsted, 2011; Schifano, 2011; Hart, 2012) and person characteristics such

as confidence, motivation and resilience (Allen-Hardy, 2009; Lawrence, 2011; Lochhead, 2011; Lally, 2013; Mills, 2013).

Both the literature and interviews emphasised the importance of the AEP providing an effective learning environment and individualised support to promote these skills. The interview data and literature made reference to environmental context factors such as access to: specialised staff, an individualised curriculum, small staff to pupil ratio; they were identified as supportive features in enabling children to develop skills, motivation and confidence. Some participants also made reference to the need for positive relationships with consistent programme staff as being supportive in helping children achieve these desired outcomes.

One particular environmental factor identified by staff was the importance of the AEP having a consistent and effective behaviour strategy, that both created a safe environment in school but that also developed children's skills to enable them to begin to learn how to manage their own behaviour when they returned to school.

In terms of supporting children to develop/maintain their motivation and confidence to return to school, interview participants highlighted a connection remaining with mainstream school being a supportive context factor. Particularly the child participants made reference to the importance of those relationships in school influencing their motivation to return to mainstream school.

9.2.4 Programme theory 4: The role of the AEP in the education system

The current research identifies a potential key role of the unit, in reducing permanent exclusion, being to provide an alternative way for schools to respond to children's/young people's challenging behaviour in school without the use of permanent exclusion.

The review of the literature and the interviews carried out through this research begins to suggest that the programme works to reduce school exclusion by enabling schools to feel that the AEP provides an effective alternative way for schools to respond to a child's challenging behaviour, without the use of permanent exclusion.

One context factor identified in the interviews that was thought to encourage schools to use the AEP as an alternative to permanent exclusion was schools recognising that although they may not have the resources (e.g. skilled staff, understanding of the child's needs) currently to meet this child's needs that this could be changed by accessing an effective AEP. Participants identified that schools feeling under resourced to meet a child's need and recognising this could be changed was often a key context factor in schools deciding to request support from the programme for a child.

A key context factor emphasised in the interviews that promotes the prevention of permanent school exclusion is the AEP being seen as a short term intervention programme that has a supportive purpose in enabling the child/young person to

remain in mainstream school. It was felt the programme needed to be part of the wider education system and the aim to be to return children to mainstream school rather than be seen as an alternative way to remove children from the mainstream system. The literature makes reference to the need for schools to remain responsible for the reintegration of the child/young person back into mainstream school and to see the programme as part of the intervention to enable this reintegration (GHK consulting et al, 2004; Lawrence, 2011).

9.2.5 Integrative theme: Time out

In addition to the programme theories identified, the analysis revealed an integrative theory which cut across the programme theories (King, 2012). Time out was identified as a key context factor for the school, parent and child in enabling successful reintegration. Time away from the current situation was viewed as supportive in enabling reintegration for all stakeholders. For school it provided time to skill-up staff put in place additional resources to meet a child/young person's needs more effectively. For the child, interviews suggests it provided time away from the situation to prevent it from deteriorating further while the young person was feeling less resilient in the school environment. For parents it was identified as a time to reflect and have some release from an intense situation.

9.2.6 Analytic framework: Changing contexts

Further analysis exploring the middle range programme theories using the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006) identified one potential analytic framework that may be helpful in beginning to connect the middle range

programme theories identified. The programme theories appear to be connected by their common aim to facilitate ecological context change across many of the context systems surrounding the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; 2005).

The programme aims to promote changes at the individual level, that enhance children's skills/resources and the development of a promotive disposition (control over emotions and behaviour) through counselling or developing social skills. The programme also attempts to promote supportive environments that promote proximal processes which enhance human development and behaviour at the microsystem level. In particular these included creating a more supportive mainstream school environment by up-skilling staff and increasing parents' knowledge and confidence to increase parental engagement in their child's education. Finally the programme provides an alternative way for schools to respond to challenging behaviour in school, changing the way school programmes act with regard to exclusion in the wider ecosystem.

This hypothesised analytic framework may begin to provide an indication of how AEPs are supposed to work effectively to enable children who display challenging behaviour to remain in mainstream school. The programme theories identified provide support for the use of Bronfenbrenner's system theory as a model that can be used to develop a broader understanding of how the AEP works. This theoretical knowledge may begin to challenge how AEPs that support children who are at-risk of exclusion are conceptualised in the education system and challenge

stakeholders' thinking about the role that they should play in preventing school exclusion.

9.3 What does this means for the development of the AEP?

The aim of this research project was to begin to develop our understanding about how AEPs work to support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. It is hoped as this research area develops that this understanding will eventually be sufficient to be able to support those practitioners developing AEPs. to have a clearer understanding about the role of the programme, the context features that appear to support the achievement of the programmes desired outcomes and the mechanisms that explain these interactions. It is hoped that this knowledge and its application will eventually begin to result in an increased number of effective programmes that achieve more of the desired outcomes and increasingly reduce the number of school exclusions.

Findings of this early research begins to indicate that one potential underpinning role of AEPs is to support change in a number of the at-risk child's context systems e.g. through supporting change in the mainstream school, helping to re-engage parents in the child's education, supporting children to develop new skills. It appears from this research that AEPs aim to support children to remain in mainstream school both through directly and indirectly supporting the at-risk child. The research suggests that the programme aims to make changes in a number of the child's ecological systems that appear to be supportive in enabling the child to make a successful return to mainstream school.

The development of this knowledge base has the potential to support those creating and designing AEPs to access a deeper understanding about what supportive outcomes they should be aiming to achieve. It enables the developers to have an understanding of how the programme works and therefore how it could be designed and what its focus should be.

In addition to identifying potential supportive programme outcomes the research should also continue to identify middle range context features. This information will support developers to begin to understand and therefore identify and create contexts that will promote these supportive programme outcomes. This early research is beginning to suggest that there may be some key context factors that AEPs could consider when reviewing how a programme is progressing with achieving these outcomes.

The research also begins to identify potential explanatory mechanisms that provide suggestions as to how the programme appears to work to achieve these outcomes in this context and consequently enables us to begin to understand how the AEPs may have the potential to achieve these supportive outcomes and ultimately work to begin to prevent children's permanent exclusions.

Although it is acknowledged that this current research is only beginning to provide embryonic programme theories about how this programme works it is hoped that as further research continues to add to this knowledge base we will become more aware and have a deeper understanding about not just whether this type of programme can lead to a reduction in the number of children permanently

excluded from school but how the programme works to achieve this aim. It is this knowledge that will support us to create effective change.

9.4 Limitations of the research

9.4.1 Challenges of operationalising Realistic Evaluation

As Rycroft-Malone et al. (2010 pg11) highlight, although Pawson and Tilley (1997) provide a clear philosophical underpinning and rules and guidelines offering flexibility in the RE approach for the researcher, they do not offer a methodological recipe, and consequently operationalisation of the approach is a significant challenge for the researcher. While Pawson and Tilley (1997) provide guidelines and specific examples in criminology research, it is up to the researcher to apply theory to create appropriate practice in their own study/field. Although there is currently a limited number of practical examples of RE in the education arena, it has already highlighted the variety in practice derived from theory of the RE approach (Soni, 2010; Davies, 2011; Bozic and Crossland, 2012). As Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlight it is only through practice that we will be able to develop practical approaches that represent the underpinning RE methodology. As a consequence the research contains a range of limitations where it has not yet addressed some of the guidelines of the RE approach. Key limitations of this study are discussed below.

9.4.2 Limitations of the Realist Synthesis

One of the identified potential limitations of the research was the limitations of what the RS could contribute to the data. The empirical data was based on the programme theories identified in the RS so the quality of the programme theories identified influenced the quality of the research.

It is noted particularly in this case that my bias may have influenced the outcomes identified in the literature due to my prior experience of working in an AEP/prior knowledge of the AEP literature. I made decisions about the inclusion criteria of studies chosen to be included in the synthesis. I chose to include AEPs that supported both primary and secondary school age children due to the limited literature on either and as I found the four programme outcomes identified were common across both age ranges. However it is important to note that there is likely to be both apparent differences and similarities between how these programmes work dependent on the age range being supported. Further research which attempts to enhance our understanding of how AEPs support children would benefit from a focus on each age range separately allowing for comparisons between both age ranges and furthering our knowledge how each programme type in theory attempts to support reintegration.

I also made the decision in the RS to only explore programmes in the literature that supported children that were removed on a full-time basis from their mainstream school i.e. they did not attend a mainstream school provision for the duration of the intervention programme (excluding the reintegration phase). I chose to do this as my initial scoping of the literature suggested contexts for programmes (e.g. social

care programmes, in-school interagency support programmes) that support children, who are at-risk of exclusion, while they remain in school either part-time or full-time may work significantly differently (Bagley and Pritchard, 1998; Lloyd, Stead and Kendrick, 2001) and therefore have significantly different CMOCs.

It is however possible by making this decision that I may have missed, in this research, other programme theories that explain how children at risk of school exclusion can be supported to remain in mainstream school which could potentially aid in the development of our understanding of these types of programmes. However this current research was constrained in its scope to identify how this specific type of AEP (where children do not attend mainstream school for the duration of the programme), that is most relatable to the case study LA AEP, is thought to work to support children to return to mainstream school. It is hoped further research could address this limitation and may continue to research commonalities in programme theories between the various types of programme that may further our understanding of AEPS.

The limits of cumulability also need to be acknowledged (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) as there is a need to be realistic about what the literature data can actually offer. For each programme reviewed in the literature there will be unidentified social context factors having unknown impacts on how the programme works, the synthesis is not exhaustive and we cannot be sure that programme contexts and mechanisms in different wider social contexts will lead to the same desirable outcomes (Pawson, 2013). It therefore needs to be recognised that the culmination of the research only just begins to enhance our understanding of a programme and

is working towards an unobtainable truth to identify how a programme works (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

9.4.3 Limitations of the Realist Interview approach

Critique of the Realist Interview approach

The aim of the realist interview is to share the identified programme theories with stakeholders and ask them to refine and develop them. This approach both contains the research focus but arguably also constrains the research as it potentially encourages the stakeholders to focus only on the programme theories identified and may bias them from thinking more widely to identify other significant programme theories that may be, in their view, more important in explaining how the AEP causes the desired outcomes. A more open question designed interview schedule may have resulted in a broader identification of programme theories which may have been useful at this exploratory stage of the research area. However in this research study the realist interview approach was chosen as it contained the research focus which meant a more in-depth focus could be given to the four programme theories identified. Nevertheless it is important to acknowledge there is likely to be other programme theories underpinning the programme that have not been identified in this research and it is possible the RI method may have contributed to this limitation.

9.4.4 Low participant engagement

Participant engagement in this research was particularly low and several attempts were made to engage participants. These attempts involved asking EPs, school staff, behaviour support workers to invite parents they worked with to engage in the research process. Gaining parental engagement was challenging and impacted on both the research design and the quantity of data available introducing possible biases in the data.

One challenge related to low participant engagement was the potential for bias in the data due to low representation of those participants in the sample. As Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlight programmes are viewed as complex social organisations and involve a division of labour and consequently results in a potential division of expertise across stakeholders involved (Pawson and Tilly, 1997). Participant selection therefore ideally needs to include a range of stakeholders who may be able to offer differing insights to enable evaluation of the programme theories hypothesised from the synthesis. A low participant engagement meant that many participant groups were underrepresented in the sample and therefore informative data will have been missed.

Secondly the low participant engagement meant that it was not possible for me to purposively select cases to ensure there were cases where children had both been successful in returning to school and unsuccessful. Pawson (2006) emphasises a key point of design is that the subgroup analysis is able to "demonstrate prodigious differences in levels of success achieved with the programme". Identifying

subgroups where the programme is successful in achieving effective outcomes (or not) gives us an opportunity to begin to explore why the initiative works. The low participant engagement meant it was not possible to ensure both successful and unsuccessful cases were included in the research. However many stakeholders; programme developer, BSS and SENCo had experiences of both successful and unsuccessful cases to draw upon when refining the programme theory.

A further challenge related to low participant engagement was the ability to check back with interviewees after the data analysis to confirm the context, mechanisms and outcomes identified were in line with their experiences. The level of required engagement was kept to a minimum to attempt to increase participant engagement so I attempted to check that I had a shared understanding of the interviewee's constructions and attempted to identify context, mechanisms and outcomes during the interview, however this was a complex process for a somewhat novice researcher. Preferably I would have shared the identified context, mechanism and outcomes after complete data analysis rather than during the interview.

Unfortunately due to lack of engagement and time constraints it was not possible to go back and share CMOCs with participants for a second time.

9.4.5 Less CMOC more O= F (M,C)??

Pawson (2013) raises concerns that realist researchers need to develop specific CMOCs where specific contexts and specific mechanisms result in specific outcomes. Although throughout this study I was aiming to work towards to

150

identifying clear and specific $O^1 = C^1 + M^1$ configurations, I acknowledge at this point in the programme theory development the CMOCs are not as clear and specific as Pawson (2013) would have preferred and more so represent Feinstein's (1998) formulae of outcome occurs as a function of context and mechanism interactions (O= F(M,C) (Astbury, 2013). The research was not able to completely tie specific CMOs together, only merely able to loosely tie programme theory components together. This may reflect the early stages of the research process this case study represents.

9.4.6 Single method rather than multi-method approach

A significant limitation of this research is highlighted by Pawson (2013) is the reliance in this study on qualitative data. Pawson (2013) notes this is a flaw in RE research as the aim of the realist evaluation is to explain outcome patterns which Pawson (2013) states "cannot be done through anecdotal information alone" pg. 21. Pawson (2013) suggest that outcomes need to be conceptualised and tested pre and post the programme intervention.

In this research study only qualitative data was collected at the empirical stage; although outcomes were conceptualised in the RS the data in this study was not able to confirm the existence of these outcomes quantitatively. Initial designs of the research study including quantitative elements to gather information about changes in parents' attendance at school meetings and change in number of behaviour incidents recorded for each child, however low participant engagement meant there was insufficient information available (e.g. no pre-post data, small size) for quantitative data collection/analysis.

Both cases, where parents agreed for their children to be involved, the intervention programme had already taken place and no pre and post data was available to use.

Outcomes identified in the literature synthesis were based on primarily qualitative data although some quantitative data was available for assessing impact of programmes on children's behaviour. There is recognition here that supplementary longitudinal research will be needed to further test the embryonic outcomes identified in this study and caution will need to be taken when using these results alone as they are based on qualitative data. I have acknowledged this throughout the study in that these theories are early embryonic programme theories to begin to structure the existing data using the realist framework, but recognise much more research is needed to test and refine these programme theories.

9.5 Reflections on the use of the RE approach

The aim of this research was to further develop our collective understanding about *how* AEPs work to support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. I believe the RE framework provided a specific approach to allow me, the researcher, to begin to further our understanding of *how* this type of programme works at a theoretical level. The approach allowed for the evaluation of a small number of programme theories which were identified in the literature for their apparent contribution in explaining how the programme works. The approach allows for the identification, evaluation and refinement of programme theories which in turn helps us to identify the outcomes of a programme but also the

mechanisms which enable these outcomes to occur and the context features that appear to promote these mechanisms. Hence the research develops our understanding of the programme at a theoretical level.

Nevertheless I must acknowledge also that the study remained quite constrained as it was only able to explore four key programme theories. This was a choice made in the research process to limit the number of programme theories explored to ensure the research allowed for a more thorough evaluation of these theories. On reflection, a broader study identifying a wider range of potential programme theories may have also been of use. However it would not have been possible within the confines of this research to explore and evaluate a much larger number of programme theories to the same level to which the current programme theories have been evaluated. However it does mean that this study is only the beginning of the exploration at the theoretical level into *how* these programmes work and much more research using both similar and varied approaches is needed to continue to evaluate many other potential programme theories not discussed in this study.

9.6 Implications for future research and professional practice

9.6.1 Developing our understanding of AEPs

In order to begin this section it is important to heed Pawson's (2013) warning about the information gathered through this realist research "end result will be partial knowledge about partial improvements we can make in the delivery and targeting of social interventions" pg. 112. This research has begun to use a realist evaluation framework to pull together and begin to organise our joint knowledge about AEPs in the hope that it can be used as a starting point to begin to make improvements in our understanding of how AEPs work and how we can improve them to work more effectively.

Further research is needed to continue to refine and develop our understanding of effective AEPs. As Pawson (2013) summarises RE is an unending pursuit of "unobtainable truth" (pg xvi), as discussed earlier the aim is to bring research closer to helping us understanding how AEPs work effectively.

The eventual aim is to be able to use this understanding of the programme, through the underpinning programme theory, to guide how we continue to promote and develop AEPs that support children at risk of exclusion to remain in mainstream education. The analytic framework identified may begin to encourage further critical thinking regarding the way in which AEPs may be conceptualised in the education system, as a programme that promotes ecological context change in the systems surrounding the child. Much more research is needed to continue to identify middle range programme theories underpinning these AEPs.

9.6.2 Using RE for education intervention programmes

One of the implications of the research is in regards to the use of RE approach in the education field. This research project has added to the limited research studies (e.g. Davies, 2011; Bozic and Crossland, 2012; Thompson, 2012) that have explored the use of RE to evaluate education intervention programmes. The approach offers an alternative way to support practitioners to begin to develop a clearer understanding about not just *whether* an intervention programme work but *how* the programmes work and what context conditions and mechanisms can support desired outcomes. The research study begins to explain and explore how RE could be used to evaluate one complex intervention programme and how methods can be used to begin to work towards these aims. Although this study contains limitations it is hoped the reflections made may support other practitioners to use these thoughts and ideas to continue to develop and improve the way the RE approach is used to evaluate education intervention programmes.

9.6.2.1 Application of the realist interview

This research project applied a realist interview approach to gain data to begin to refine, develop and evaluate the embryonic programme theories developed by the synthesis. The research describes one way in which realist interviews can be developed, used and analysed in an education setting.

The research demonstrates how realist interviews can be developed using a RS approach as opposed to from folk theories alone. The approach identifies how the

realist interview can be used to gather information from a range of stakeholders in the education arena including children.

The research adapted the realist interview approach so that children could be included as stakeholders in the research process. The realist interview was modified to focus upon the mechanisms of the programme, which Pawson and Tilley (1997) suggest they may be most aware of as subjects of the programme. The presentation of the realist interview was adapted to use simplified language and visual supports to aid the children's understanding (see appendix N).

The research project also suggests a potential data analysis approach using a hybrid thematic analysis which provides a succinct approach to analysing the data from the realist interviews and using this to develop the programme theory identified in the RS. The data analysis included both a deductive thematic analysis using template analysis (King, 2012) and inductive analysis using Braun and Clarke (2001) approach.

9.7 Conclusion

The aim of this was study was to use research to begin to develop a clearer understanding about how AEPs support children who are at risk of school exclusion to remain in mainstream school. It was thought an RE framework could be used to develop upon the existing literature and empirical data from a case study AEP utilised to begin to identify and refine the middle range programme theories underpinning the AEPs.

A realist synthesis of the literature was used to identify embryonic shared programme theories evident in the existing literature and realist interviews with stakeholders who had experience of one LA AEP were used to begin to test and refine the programme theories identified in the literature.

The results revealed early embryonic shared programme theories thought to be underpinning the AEPs. It was identified that the desirable programme outcomes of AEPs included increasing parental engagement, developing the child/young person's skills and resilience, to develop the mainstream school environment and to provide an effective alternative way to support those children who presented with challenging behaviour in school. The programme theories begun to identify abstracted programme context factors and programme mechanisms that seem to facilitate these programme outcomes. Analysis of the programme theories using Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory (Bronfenbrenner, 2005) located an analytic framework that identifies a potential overarching aim of the programme to be to change ecological context conditions for the child/young person to support their

return to the mainstream school environment. The findings may begin to allow practitioners to consider and begin to challenge their conceptualisations of how they view AEPs and their roles in preventing children's permanent exclusion from mainstream schools.

Although the research using RE to develop our understanding of AEPs remains in its infancy the study hopes to begin to open up an alternative way of researching these and other types of programmes. More research is needed to continue to develop these programme theories in order for us to begin to gain a clearer understanding of how these programmes work. It is hoped that as we do this we will be able to use this theoretical understanding to develop and improve the way these programmes support children/young people that are at risk of school exclusion.

References

Agar, S. (1998) Teaching science in pupil referral units. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties.** 3 (3): 19- 24

Allen-Hardy, B. (2009) **A Study of the Impact of the Alternative Intervention Programme on Improving Student Achievement, Attendance, and Discipline**. Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, Virginia Common wealth University.

Amato, P. R., and Rivera, F. (1999). Paternal involvement and children's behavior problems. **Journal of Marriage and the Family**. 61 (2): 375-384.

Arnold, C., Yeomans, J., Simpson, S., and Solomon, M. (2009). **Excluded from School: Complex Discourse and Psychological Perspectives.** Institute of Education Press.

Astbury, B. (2013) Some reflections on Pawson's Science of Evaluation: A Realist Manifesto. **Evaluation**. 19 (4): 383– 401.

Auerbach, C. F. and Silverstein, L. B. (2003) **Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis**. New York: NYU press

Avery-Sterud, B. (2009). **Reintegrating Elementary Students with EBD from Alternative Placement to Public School**. Doctor of Education dissertation, The University of South Dakota.

Bagley, C. and Pritchard, C. (1998) The reduction of problem behaviours and school exclusion in at-risk youth: an experimental study of school social work with cost benefit analyses. **Child and Family Social Work.** 3: 219-226.

Ball, S.J. (2003) **Class strategies and the educational market: the middle classes and social advantage**. London: Routledge Falmer

Bandura, A. (1977) "Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavior change". **Psychological Review**. 84:191–215.

Berridge, D., Brodie, I., Pitts, J., Porteous, D., and Tarling, R. (2001). **The independent effects of permanent exclusion from school on the offending careers of young people.** Great Britain, Home Office, Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.

Bevington, S. (2013) **Home-school relationships: the communication and engagement practices of schools and the role of the community educational psychologist.** Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter**.**

Bourne, J, Bridges, L & Searle, C (1994) **Outcast England: How Schools Exclude Black Children.** London: Institute of Race Relations.

Bhaskar, R. (1975) **A Realist Theory of Science**. Brighton. Harvester

Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). **Transforming qualitative information. Thematic analysis and code development**. London: Sage Publications Inc.

Bozic, N. and Crossland, R. (2012) Using Realistic Evaluation to evaluate a pilot local authority common induction programme. **DECP Debate**. 145, pp.7-12.

Braun, V. & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. **Qualitative research in psychology**. 3 (2):77-101.

British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2011**) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research**. [online] Available from www.bera.ac.uk/publications/ethical-guidelines (Accessed 3rd November 2013).

British Psychological Society (BPS) (2010) **Code of Human Research Ethics**. Leicester: BPS

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). **The ecology of human development: Experiments in nature and design**. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1994). Ecological models of human development. **Readings on the development of children**. 2: 37-43.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (2005) The bioecological theory of human development. In U. Bronfenbrenner (Ed.) **Making human beings human: Bioecological perspectives on human development** (pp. 3 – 15). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Bronfenbrenner, U. and Ceci, S. J. (1994) Nature-nuture reconceptualized in developmental perspective: A bioecological model. **Psychological review**. 101 (4): 568-586.

Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (2006). The bioecological model of human development. **Handbook of child psychology. Vol. 1: Theoretical models of human development** (6th ed). New York: Wiley.

Brooks, J. E. (2006). Strengthening resilience in children and youths: Maximizing opportunities through the schools. **Children and Schools**. 28(2): 69-76.

Brookes, M., Goodall, E. and Heady, L. (2007) Misspent Youth. **The costs of truancy and exclusion. A guide for donors and funders**. New Philanthropy Capital. London.

The Centre for Social Justice (2007) **Breakthrough Britain: Ending the cost of social breakdown. Volume 3: Education failure**. The Centre for Social Justice. London.

The Centre for Social Justice **(2011) No excuses: A review of educational exclusions**. The Centre for Social Justice. London

Chen, H. (1990) **Theory-Driven Evaluation**. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Chen, H. T. (2012). Theory-driven evaluation: Conceptual framework, application and advancement. **In Evaluation von Programmen und Projekten für eine demokratische Kultur** (pp. 17-40). Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden. [online] Available at: http://www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda_downloaddocument/97835311 83060-c1.pdf?SGWID=0-0-45-1354104-p174293379. Accessed: 18th November 2014

Children's Commissioner (2013). **"Always Someone Else's Problem" Office of the Children's Commissioner's Report on illegal exclusions.** London: Office of the Children's Commissioner [online]. Available from: http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/content/publications/content_662. Accessed 14th November 2014

Clegg, J., Stackhouse, J., Finch, K., Murphy, C., & Nicholls, S. (2009) Language abilities of secondary age pupils at risk of school exclusion: A preliminary report. **Child Language Teaching and Therapy**, 25(1): 123-139.
Cobb, A. B. (2008). **Assessing the effectiveness of disciplinary alternative education programmes for secondary students in the Dallas independent school district**. Doctor of Philosophy, University of Texas.

Cohen, R., Hughes, M. with Ashworth, L. and Blair, M. (1994) **School's Out**. Ilford: Family Service Unit/Barnardo's

Cohen, L., Manion, L., and Morrison, K (2011) **Research Methods in Education**. 7th edition. London: Routledge.

Collins, C. S. (2013). **Applying an ecological perspective to variations in school exclusion levels**. Unpublished thesis. University of Leeds.

Cooper, H. (2009). **Research synthesis and meta-analysis: A step-by-step approach** (Vol. 2). Sage Publications.

Crabtree, B.F. and Miller, W.L. (Eds.). (1999). **Doing qualitative research** (Vol. 3). Sage Publications.

Crowley, J. E. (2013) **Using a whole school restorative approach: a realistic evaluation of practice in a city-based primary school**. Doctoral dissertation: University of Birmingham.

Daniels, H., Cole, T., Sellman, E., Sutton, J., Visser, J. with Bedward, J. (2003) **Study of Young People Permanently Excluded from School.** Research Report RR405. London:DfES.

Daniels, H. & Cole, T. (2010) Exclusion from school: short-term setback or a long term of difficulties? **European Journal of Special Needs Education**, 25 (2): 115-130.

Data Protection Act (1998) HMSO. London

Davies, O. (2011) **Evidence Based Practice in Nurture Groups: Using a Realistic Evaluation framework to explore factors affecting practice and suggest future training directions** [online] Available from http://etheses.bham.ac.uk/3219/6/Davies_11_AppedChildPsyD.pdf (Accessed 30th October 2014).

De Vaus, D. (2011). **Research design in social research**. London: Sage publications.

Department for Children, schools and families (2008) Back on Track: **A strategy for modernising alternative provision for young people**. DCSF. The stationary office.

Department for Education (2011) **Statistical First Release: Permanent and Fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England, 2009/10**. National Statistics. London

Department for Education (2012a) **A profile of pupil exclusions in England**. DfE

Department for Education (2012b) **Statistical First Release: Permanent and Fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England, 2010/11**. National Statistics. London

Department for Education (2012c) **Exclusion from maintained schools, Academies and pupil referral units in England. A guide for those with legal responsibilities in relation to exclusion.** DfE. London.

Department for Education (2013) **Statistical First Release: Permanent and Fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England, 2011/12**. National Statistics. London: DfE

Department for Education (2014a) **Permanent and Fixed Period Exclusions in England**: 2012 to 2013. London: DfE

Department for Education (2014b) **Statistical First Release: Schools, pupils and their characteristics: January 2014**. London: DfE

Department for Education (2014c) **Behaviour and discipline in schools. Advice for head teachers and school staff. London:** DfE.

Department for Education/Department of Health (2014) **Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years. Statutory guidance for organisations who work with and support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities**. DfE/DoH.

Department for Education (2015) **Statistical First Release: Permanent and Fixed period exclusions from schools and exclusion appeals in England 2012/2013.** DfE. London.

Department for Education and Employment (1999a). **Circular 10/99: Social Inclusion: Pupil Support** [online]. London: DfEE. Available (10/09/99) at 5http:www.dfee.gov.uk/circulars/10-99/10-99.htm.

Department for Education and Employment (1999b) **Circular 11/99: Social Inclusion: the LEA role in Pupil Support**. [online] London: DfEE. Available: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20050301192907/dfes.gov.uk/behaviour andattendance/guidance/socialinclusion/letter.cfm Accessed: January 2015.

Desforges, C., and Abouchaar, A. (2003). **The impact of parental engagement, parental support and family education on pupil achievements and adjustment: A literature review**. DfES. London

Docherty, S., & Sandelowski, M. (1999). Focus on qualitative methods: Interviewing children. **Research in Nursing & Health**, 22(2): 177-185.

Eastwood, C. (2000). Who is' out of school'?. **Child Care in Practice**, 6(1), 9-26.

Education Act 1944. (7&8 Geo. 6, c. 31). London, HMSO

Education (No 2) Act 1986 (C. 61). London. The Stationary Office.

Education Reform Act 1988 (C. 40). London. HMSO

Elliott, J. G. (1999). Practitioner review: School refusal: Issues of conceptualisation, assessment, and treatment**. Journal of child psychology and psychiatry**, 40(7): 1001-1012.

Evans, J., Meyer, D., Pinney, D., & Robinson, B. (2009**) Second chances: Reengaging young people in education and training**. Barnardos: Essex

Feathers, T. N. (1999). **The use of alternative school placements for disciplinary interventions with at-risk students**. Doctoral dissertation, East Tennessee State University.

Fereday, J. (2006) Demonstrating Rigor Using Thematic Analysis: A Hybrid Approach of Inductive and Deductive Coding and Theme Development. **International Journal of Qualitative Methods.** 5 (1): 80 – 92.

Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2008). Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. **International journal of qualitative methods**, 5(1): 80-92.

Foley, M. and Pang, L. (2006) Alternative Education Programmes: Programme and Student Characteristics. **The High School Journal**. 89 (3): 10-21.

Gazeley, L. (2010) The Role of School Exclusion Processes in the Re-Production of Social and Educational Disadvantage. **British Journal of Educational Studies**, 58 (3): 293-309.

GHK Consulting, Holden McAllister Partnership and IPSOS Public Affairs (2004) **The Reintegration of Children Absent, Excluded or Missing from School.** London: DfES.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2009). **The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.** Transaction Publishers.

Gold, M. (1995) Charting a course: Promise and prospects for alternative schools. **Journal of emotional and behavioural disorders**, 3(4): 8-11.

Gough, D. (2007) Weight of Evidence: A framework for the appraisal of the quality and relevance of evidence. Research Papers in Education. 22 (2) p. 213 – 228.

Greig, A.D. and Taylor, J. (1999) **Doing research with children**. London. Sage.

Gwynedd Lloyd & Anne O'Regan (1999) Education for social exclusion? Issues to do with the effectiveness of educational provision for young women with 'social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 4 (2): 38-46

Hallam, S. & Castle, F. (2001). Exclusion from School: What can help prevent it? **Educational Review**, 53(2): 169 - 179.

Harris, B., Vincent, K., Thomson, P and Toalster, R. (2006) Does Every Child Know They Matter? Pupils' Views of One Alternative to Exclusion. **Pastoral Care**. 28-38

Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2007**). Engaging parents in raising achievement: do parents know they matter?**: a research project commissioned by the Specialist Schools and Academies Trust.

Hart, N. (2013) What helps children in a pupil referral unit (PRU)? An exploration into the potential protective factors of a PRU as identified by children and staff, **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 18(2): 196-212.

Hawkins, B. (2011). **A Study of Pupils at Risk of Exclusion and their Attitudes to School**. Masters in Education thesis. The University of York

Hayden, C. (1997). **Children excluded from primary school: debates, evidence, responses.** Open University Press.

Hayden, C (2001) Social Exclusion and exclusion from school In England In Visser, J., Daniels, H. and Cole, T. (eds) **Emotional and Behavioural difficulties in mainstream schools. International perspectives on Inclusive education**. Elsevier Science. London

Hayden, Carol and Dunne, S. (2001) **Outside, looking in: children's and families' experiences of exclusion from school**. In: The Children's Society, London.

Healy, M., & Perry, C. (2000). Comprehensive criteria to judge validity and reliability of qualitative research within the realism paradigm. **Qualitative market research: An international journal**, 3(3): 118-126.

Henderson, N., and M. Milstein. 2003. **Resiliency in schools. Making it happen for students and educators**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Hill, R. (1997) Pupil Referral Programmes: Are they effective in helping schools work with children who have emotional and behavioural difficulties**?" Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 2 (1): 28-36

Hill, N. E., & Taylor, L. C. (2004). Parental school involvement and children's academic achievement pragmatics and issues. **Current directions in psychological science**, 13(4), 161-164.

Hill, N. E., Castellino, D. R., Lansford, J. E., Nowlin, P., Dodge, K. A., Bates, J. E., & Pettit, G. S. (2004) Parent academic involvement as related to school behavior, achievement, and aspirations: Demographic variations across adolescence. **Child development**, 75(5): 1491-1509.

Hoover-Dempsey, K., & Sander, H. (1995) Parental engagement in children's education: Why does it make a difference. **The Teachers College Record**, 97(2), 310-331.

Hirschi, T. (1969). **Causes of delinquency**. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Jenkins, S. M. and Miller, (1995) 'The Re-integration of Pupils with Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties from Special Schools and Units Into Mainstream Schools', **Educational Psychology in Practice**. 11(2): 45–52.

Jones, M. O. (2013). **Programme Evaluation of Alternative Schools in North Carolina**: A Companion Dissertation. Gardner-Webb University.

Kazi, M. A. (2003). Realist evaluation in practice: Health and social work. Sage.

Kennedy, E. (2013) **Children and Young People in Custody 2012–13**. HM Inspectorate of Prisons Youth Justice Board. Norwich. The Stationary Office.

Killian, D. W. (2002). **Effective Components of Disciplinary Alternative Programmes as Perceived by Superintendents and Disciplinary Alternative Directors in Education Service Center, Region 20, Texas**. Doctoral dissertation. Texas A & M University.

Kinder, K., Wakefield, A. and Wilkin, A. (1996) **Talking Back: Pupils' Views on Disaffection.** Slough: NFER

King, N. (2012). Doing template analysis. In **Qualitative organizational research: Core methods and current challenges.** 426- 435.

Kvale, S. (1996). **Interviews: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing**. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Lally, S (2013) **School Exclusion and Reintegration: An Exploration of Pupils', Parents' and Teachers' Experiences**. Unpublished Professional doctorate thesis, University of East London.

Lawrence, B and Hadyen, C. (1997) Primary School Exclusions. **Educational Research and Evaluation: An International Journal on Theory and Practice**, 3(1): 54-78.

Lawrence (2011) What makes for a successful re-integration from a pupil referral unit to mainstream education? An applied research project. **Educational Psychology in Practice: theory, research and practice in educational psychology**, 27(3): 213-226.

Lindsay R. (2001) **Factors that Contribute to a Successful Transition from an Alternative Placement to a Traditional School Setting.** Unpublished thesis. The George Washington University

Lindsay, G., & Dockrell, J. (2000). The behaviour and self-esteem of children with specific speech and language difficulties. **British Journal of Educational Psychology**, 70(4): 583-601.

Lindsay, G., Dockrell, J. E., & Strand, S. (2007). Longitudinal patterns of behaviour problems in children with specific speech and language difficulties: Child and contextual factors. **British Journal of Educational Psychology**, 77(4): 811-828.

Lloyd, G. and O'Regan, A. (1999) Education for social exclusion? Issues to do with the effectiveness of educational provision for young women with' social, emotional and behavioural difficulties'. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 4(2): 38-46.

Lloyd, G., Stead, J., & Kendrick, A. (2001). **Hanging on in there: A study of inter-agency work to prevent school exclusion in three local authorities.** Jessica Kingsley Publishers. London.

Lochhead, D. H. (2011) **Altered selves: Re-entry into a traditional high school following an alternative programme placement.** Doctor of Education dissertation. Boston University.

Lown, J. (2005) Including the excluded: Participant perceptions. **Educational and Child Psychology.** 22 (3) pp.45-57.

Macrae, S., Maguire, M. and Milbourne, L. (2003) Social exclusion: exclusion from school. **International Journal of Inclusive Education**, 7 (2): 89-101

Madill, A., Jordan, A., & Shirley, C. (2000) Objectivity and reliability in qualitative analysis: Realist, contextualist and radical constructionist epistemologies. **British journal of psychology**. 91 (1): 1-20.

Mattis, D. I. (2002). **A Study of the Socio-demographic, Psychological, and School Factors that Influence the Behavior of Students Assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Programme**. Doctoral dissertation, Texas Southern University.

Maxwell, J.A. (2012a) **A Realist Approach for Qualitative Research**. Sage Publication. London

Maxwell, J. A. (2012b). The importance of qualitative research for causal explanation in education. **Qualitative Inquiry**, 18 (8): 655-661.

McCall, H.J. (2003) When Successful Alternative Students "Disengage" From Regular School. **Reclaiming Children and Youth**, 12 (2): 113 – 117.

McCrystal, P., Higgins, K., Percy, A., & Thornton, M. (2005). Substance Abuse among 12 and 13-year old Young People in Belfast at a High of Developing Problem Drug Use. **Child Care in Practice**, 11 (3): 313-322.

McCrystal, P., Percy, A., & Higgins, K. (2007). **Exclusion and marginalisation in adolescence: The experience of school exclusion on drug use and antisocial behaviour.** Journal of youth studies, 10(1): 35-54.

McDonald, T. and Thomas, G. (2003) Parents' reflections on their children being excluded, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties, 8: (2): 108-119

McGrath, H., & Noble, T. (2010). Supporting positive pupil relationships: Research to practice. **Educational and Child Psychology**, 27(1): 79 - 90.

McNeal, R. B. (1999). Parental engagement as social capital: Differential effectiveness on science achievement, truancy, and dropping out. **Social forces**, 78(1): 117-144.

Meo, A. and Parker, A. (2004) Teachers, teaching and educational exclusion: Pupil Referral Units and pedagogic practice. **International Journal of Inclusive Education**, 8(1): 103-120

Merton, R. (1968) **Social Theory and Social Structure**. New York: Free Press

Michael, S. and Frederickson, N. (2013) Improving pupil referral unit outcomes: pupil perspectives. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 18(4): 407-422

Miles, M., Huberman, M. and Saldana, J. (2013) **Qualitative Data Analysis**. Sage Publications. LA

Mills Sr, P. D. (2013). **Evaluation of Alternative Schools in South Carolina**: A Companion Dissertation. Gardner-Webb University.

Munn, P, Lloyd, G. and Cullen, M.A. (2000) **Alternatives to Exclusion from School**. Paul Chapman Publishing.

Office for Standards in Education (1999a) **Principles into Practice: Effective Education for Pupils with EBD**. HMI report. London:Ofsted.

Office for Standards in Education (2007) **Pupil referral units. Establishing successful practice in pupil referral units and local authorities**. London: Ofsted

Office for Standards in Education (2009) **The exclusion from school of children aged four to seven.** London: Ofsted.

Office for Standards in Education (2010) **School Inspection Report**. London: OfSTED

Office for Standards in Education (2011) **Supporting children with challenging behaviour through a nurture group approach**. Ofsted. London.

Office for Standards in Education (2013) **School Inspection Report**. London: OfSTED

Osler, A., Street, C., Lall, M., & Vincent, K. (2002). **NOT A PROBLEM? Girls and exclusion from school.** Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Owens, L., & Konkol, L. (2004). Transitioning from alternative to traditional school settings: A student perspective. **Reclaiming children and youth**, 13: 173-176.

Parsons, C., Berne, L., Hailes, J. and Howlett, K. (1994) **Excluding Primary School Children.** London: Family Policies Study Centre.

Parsons, C. (1996) Permanent exclusions from schools in England in the 1990s: trends, causes and responses. **Children and Society**, 10 (3): 177-186.

Parsons, C. (1999) **Education, Exclusion and Citizenship**. London: Routledge.

Parsons, C. and Castle, F. (1998). The cost of school exclusion in England. **International Journal of Inclusive Education**, 2(4): 277-294.

Parsons, C., Godfrey, R., Howlett, K., Hayden, C., & Martin, T. (2001). Excluding primary school children–the outcomes six years on. **Pastoral Care in Education**, 19 (4): 4-15.

Parsons, C. (2005) School exclusion: the will to punish. **British Journal of Educational Studies**, 53 (2):187-211.

Pawson, R. (2001) **Evidence-based Policy II: The Promise of Realist Synthesis** [online]. ESRC UK Centre for Evidence Based Policy and Practice: Working Paper 4. Available from: http://evidencenetwork.org/index.html [Accessed 4 June 2010].

Pawson, R. (2006) **Evidence-based Policy: A Realist Perspective.** London: SAGE publications.

Pawson, R. (2009) Middle range theory and program theory evaluation: from provenance to practice. In Vaessen, J. and Leeuw, F.L., editors. **Mind the gap: Perspectives on policy evaluation and the social sciences.** Transaction Publishers, 171–202.

Pawson, R. (2013) **The science of evaluation: a realist manifesto**. London. Sage.

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1994) What works in Evaluation Research? **British Journal of Criminology**, 34 (3): 291-306.

Pawson, R., Greenhalgh, T., Harvey, G., and Walshe, K. (2005). Realist review–a new method of systematic review designed for complex policy interventions**. Journal of health services research & policy**, 10(suppl 1): 21-34.

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (1997) **Realistic Evaluation**. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications.

Pawson, R. and Tilley, N. (2004) **Realist Evaluation** [online]. Available from: http://www.commprogrammeymatters.com.au/RE_chapter.pdf [Accessed 4 March 2010].

Peterson, C.G. (2005). **Students at risk: making the transition from alternative middle schools to regular middle schools**. Doctor of Philosophy dissertation. Capella University.

Petrides, K. V., Frederickson, N., & Furnham, A. (2004). The role of trait emotional intelligence in academic performance and deviant behavior at school. **Personality and individual differences**, 36(2):, 277-293.

Phipps, S., & Curtis, L. (2001). **The social exclusion of children in North America**.   Dalhousie University, Halifax.

Pillay, J., Dunbar-Krige, H. and Mostert, J. (2013) Learners with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties' experiences of reintegration into mainstream education. Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties. 18 (3): 310-326

Pomeroy, E. (2000) **Experiencing Exclusion**. Trentham Books Ltd.

Pro, A. (1999) **Social and academic factors that influence the behavior of students Assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Programme.**. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Texas.

Robson, C (2002) **Real World Research**. Blackwell: Oxford

Rogers, L., Hallam, S. and Shaw, J. (2008) Do generalist parenting programmes improve children's behaviour and attendance at school: The parents' perspective. **British Journal of Special Education**, 35(1): 16-25.

Rouse, D. (2011) **Why do girls get excluded from school? A small- scale qualitative investigation of the educational experiences of key stage 3 and 4 girls who are 'at risk of exclusion**'. Unpublished thesis. University of Birmingham.

Rycroft-Malone, J., Fontenla, M., Bick, D., and Seers, K. (2010). A realistic evaluation: the case of protocol-based care. **Implementation Science**, 5(1): 38 - 52

Schifano, R.M. (2011)**. Outcome Evaluation of an Elementary-Level Disciplinary Alternative Education Placement**. Doctoral Dissertation, Ball State University, Muncie, IN

Senti, D.M. (1991) **The effectiveness of the Parkway Alternative Discipline Center for voluntary transfer students**. Doctor of Philosophy dissertation. Saint Louis University.

Sellman, E., Bedward, J., Cole, T. and Daniels, H. (2002) A sociocultural approach to exclusion. **British Educational Research Journal**. 28 (6): 889-900.

Selvam, S. G., & Collicutt, J. (2013). The ubiquity of the character strengths in African traditional religion: A thematic analysis. **In Well-Being and Cultures** (pp. 83-102). Springer Netherlands.

Silverman, D. (2006). **Interpreting qualitative data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction**. London. Sage.

Smith, D. (2006) **School experience and delinquency at ages 13 to 16**. Edinburgh: Centre for Law and Society, University of Edinburgh.

Sobh, R., & Perry, C. (2006) Research design and data analysis in realism research. **European Journal of marketing**. 40 (11/12): 1194-1209.

Social Exclusions Unit (1998) **Truancy and School Exclusion**. London: HMSO.

Soni, A. (2010) **Educational psychology work in children's centres: a realistic evaluation of group supervision with family support workers**. EdPsychD thesis, University of Birmingham.

Solomon, Y. and Rogers, C. (2001) Motivational patterns in disaffected school students: insights from pupil referral unit clients. **British Education Research Journal**, 27(3): 331-346

Spink, L. (2011). **Disciplinary exclusion: the impact of intervention and influence of school ethos**. Doc in App Ed Psy thesis. Newcastle University.

Stirling, M. (1996) Government policy and disadvantaged children. In E. Blyth and J. Milner (eds), **Exclusions from School: Inter-Professional Issues in Policy and Practice** (London: Routledge).

Sugai, G., & Lewis, T. J. (1996). Preferred and Promising Practices for Social Skills Instruction. **Focus on Exceptional Children**, 29(4): 1-16.

Sullivan, A. K., & Strang, H. R. (2002). Bibliotherapy in the Classroom Using Literature to Promote the Development of Emotional Intelligence. **Childhood Education**, 79(2), 74-80.

Thomas, S. E. (2011). **Impact of Alternative Placement on Subsequent Student Behavior in the Mainstream Setting**. Doctor of Education Thesis. Nova Southeastern University

Thomas, D. V. (2013). **An examination of educational practitioner perspectives towards reintegration in a rural Welsh local authority setting: from Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) to mainstream education** (Doctoral dissertation, Cardiff Metropolitan University).

Tilley, N. (2000) **Realistic Evaluation: An Overview** [online]. Presentation at the Founding Conference of the Danish Evaluation Society, September 2000. Available from: http://www.evidence-basedmanagement.com/research_practice/articles/nick_tilley.pdf [Accessed 7 July 2010].

Timmins, P. and Miller, C. (2007) Making evaluations realistic: the challenge of complexity. **Support for Learning**, 22 (1): 9-16.
Thavarajah, R. (2010). **An exploration of the factors supporting sustained reintegration following permanent exclusion or managed move through the young person's perspective**. EdPsychD thesis, University of Bristol.

Thistleton, L. (2008**) A realistic evaluation of the work of a speech and language therapy service in primary schools (the first schools project) using the perceptions of some of the important stakeholders** (teachers, SLTs and parents). EdPsychD thesis, University of Birmingham.

Thompson, S. (2012). **Using realistic evaluation as a tool to understand what enables and constrains parental engagement in a Midland Local Authority TAMHS project.** EdPsychD thesis, University of Birmingham.

Thornbery, E. (2010**) Using realistic evaluation principles to evaluate an intervention utilising a collaborative problem solving framework aimed at**

supporting the reflective practice of multi-professional groups of practitioners in two children's centres. EdPsychD thesis. University of Birmingham.

Tobin, T. and Sprague, J. (2000). Alternative Education Strategies Reducing Violence in School and the Community. **Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders**, 8 (3): 177-186.

Tudge, J. R., Mokrova, I., Hatfield, B. E., and Karnik, R. B. (2009) Uses and misuses of Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development. **Journal of Family Theory and Review**. 1 (4): 198-210.

Vincent, K., Harris, B., Thomson, P. and Toalster, R. (2007) Managed moves: schools collaborating for collective gain. **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 12(4): 283-298

Visser, J. (2003) **A study of children and young people who present challenging behaviour** [online] Ofsted. Available from: www.ofsted.gov.uk/content/download/568/4205/file/3849.doc [Accessed 10th July 2014].

Vulliamy, G. & Webb, R. (2000) Stemming the tide of rising school exclusions: problems and possibilities, **British Journal of Educational Studies**, 48 (2):119-133.

Vulliamy, G. and Webb, R. (2003) Reducing School Exclusions: An evaluation of a multi-site development project, **Oxford Review of Education**, 29(1): 33-49.

Vulliamy, G., & Webb, R. (2001). The social construction of school exclusion rates: implications for evaluation methodology. **Educational Studies**, 27 (3): 357-370.

Wang, M. C., Haertel, G. D., & Walberg, H. J. (1994). Educational resilience in inner cities. In M. C. Wang & E. W. Gordon (Eds.), **Educational resilience in inner-city America: Challenges and prospects** (pp. 45-72). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Waxman, H. C., Gray, J. P., & Padron, Y. N. (2003). **Review of Research on Educational Resilience**. Research Report.

Webb, H. (2011) **A Realistic Evaluation Exploring the Implementation of the Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) programme across a whole-school context.** Unpublished App.Ed. and Child Psych. D. thesis, University of Birmingham.

Webb, R. and Vulliamy, G. (2004) A Multi-Agency Approach to Reducing Disaffection and Exclusions from School. DfES. Nottingham
Wilhite, S. and Bullock, L.M. (2012) Effects of the Why Try social skills programme on students with emotional and/or behavioural problems in an alternative school, **Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties**, 17 (2): 175-194

Williamson, I. and Cullingford, C. (2003) 'Everybody's a nobody in school' Excluded student's perceptions of the threats to autonomy in the English secondary school. **Nordic Journal of Youth Research**, 11 (4): 309-321.

Wilson, D. (2004). The Interface of School Climate and School Connectedness and Relationships with Aggression and Victimization. **Journal of School Health**, 74(7): 293-299.

Wilson R. (2010) **An initial investigation into Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage One Pupil Referral Units: Who attends, what mechanisms do they use and what outcomes are associated with this intervention?** Unpublished Doctorate in Professional Educational, Child and Adolescent Psychology thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.

Wise, S. (2000) **Listen to Me! The voices of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties**. Lucky Duck, Paul Chapman Publishing.

Wolf, E. M., & Wolf, D. A. (2008). Mixed results in a transitional planning programme for alternative school students. **Evaluation Review**, 32(2), 187-215.

Wong G, Greenhalgh T, Westhorp G, Pawson R (2014) Development of methodological guidance, publication standards and training materials for realist and meta-narrative reviews: the RAMESES (Realist And Meta-narrative Evidence Syntheses - Evolving Standards) project. **Health Service and Delivery Research.** 2 (30): 1: 251.

Wood, N. J. (2011). **An interpretative analysis of parents' and pupils' experiences of permanent exclusion and placement in a pupil referral unit: implications for successful reintegration** (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield).

Wright, R., & Powell, M. B. (2006). Investigative interviewers' perceptions of their difficulty in adhering to open-ended questions with child witnesses. **International Journal of Police Science & Management**, 8(4): 316-325.

Yin, R. (2009) **Case Study Research: Design and Methods.** (4th edition) London: Sage Publications.

Appendices

Appendix A: Details of key features of RE

2.2 Realist philosophy

The philosophy underpinning the approach differs from the normative view of more modern critical realist definitions (Bhaskar 1975, cited in Pawson, 2006). It instead believes that there is no one 'correct' way of understanding the world, just many perceptions of it, which offer an incomplete or fallible view of the world (Maxwell, 2012a). The view taken is that it is still worth trying to adjudicate between alternative possible explanations of the world, even though it remains possible many other views exist, because the existence of a 'real world' constrains people's interpretations. By using these interpretations, while our knowledge will remain imperfect and partial, it can accrue over time to enable us to gain an increasingly accurate interpretation of the real world (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

2.3 Programme theory

As Astbury (2013) summarises, programmes are thought to be comprised of assumptions about how changes in programme participants' reasoning can be influenced by programme resources and activities. The aim of RE is therefore to uncover and articulate the theory (i.e. stakeholders' assumptions) underpinning the programme by enabling the development of clear hypotheses about how, and for whom, programmes might 'work', and using evaluation to test and refine these hypotheses.

2.4 Generative causation

The realist perspective proposes a generative view (Bhaskar, 1975 cited in Maxwell, 2012a) of causation about how social programmes work. This view

challenges the successionist view that a programme independently produces an outcome, and instead suggests that it is identifiable generative causal elements (identified as mechanisms) that create the regularities of outcomes inherent in social programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997). The generative mechanism is not seen as a variable but an account of the reasoning behind the outcome of a programme (Pawson, 2006).

Pawson and Tilley (1997) believe generative mechanisms also include stakeholders' beliefs, values, intentions and meanings, rather than just objects and events. It is suggested that these meanings and beliefs are part of the causal processes and are particularly relevant when evaluating social programmes (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Maxwell, 2012a).

The realist view considers contextual conditions as intrinsic to the causal process, and believes that the contextual conditions (including the social, historical, political contexts) are inextricably linked to the outcomes (change in behaviour) of the programme (Maxwell, 2012a). It also suggests that the relationship between outcomes and generative mechanisms is contingent upon contextual conditions. Rather than controlling context conditions in the research process, it is the realist belief that contextual conditions need to be identified as they enable the generative mechanism to create the outcome.

The aim of the RE approach is to begin to identify these embryonic CMOCs that underpin how this complex social programme works.

2.6 Analytic frameworks, middle range programme theories and abstracted CMOCs

Pawson (2006) states, there is a role for abstraction ("the thinking process that allows us to understand an event as an instance of a more general class of happenings" Pawson, 2013, pg 89) in realist research: and value in making cumulative use of relevant studies to begin to abstract and synthesise shared programme theories between the concrete studies explored (Sayer, 2009 in Pawson, 2006).

The aim of the realist research is, therefore, to begin to identify middle range theories defined by Merton (1968) as

> *"Theories that lie between the minor but necessary working*
> *hypothesis that evolve in abundance during day-to-day research*
> *and the all-inclusive systematic efforts to develop a unified theory*
> *that will explain all the observed uniformities of social behaviour,*
> *social organisation, and social change" p.39).*

Pawson (2009) explains that the realist perspective is that potentially there exists some shared explanatory threads running through all case study programmes/family of programmes that are traceable to a more abstract analytic framework underpinning how a programme/family of programmes works (Pawson and Tilley, 1997; Pawson, 2009).

As Pawson (2013) highlights, Merton identifies that middle range theories should, both traverse different spheres of social behaviour but not be so abstract as to encompass all forms of behaviour and therefore be unable to explain any of them. There remains a lack of clarity in exactly what Merton means by a 'sufficient level' of abstraction, but lateral thinking and explanation-building are what Pawson identifies as key elements of this process (Pawson, 2013).

The current research aims to identify the middle range programme theory(s), which can begin to be linked to these shared threads, evident in the empirical and theoretical literature available (see figure 2.3).
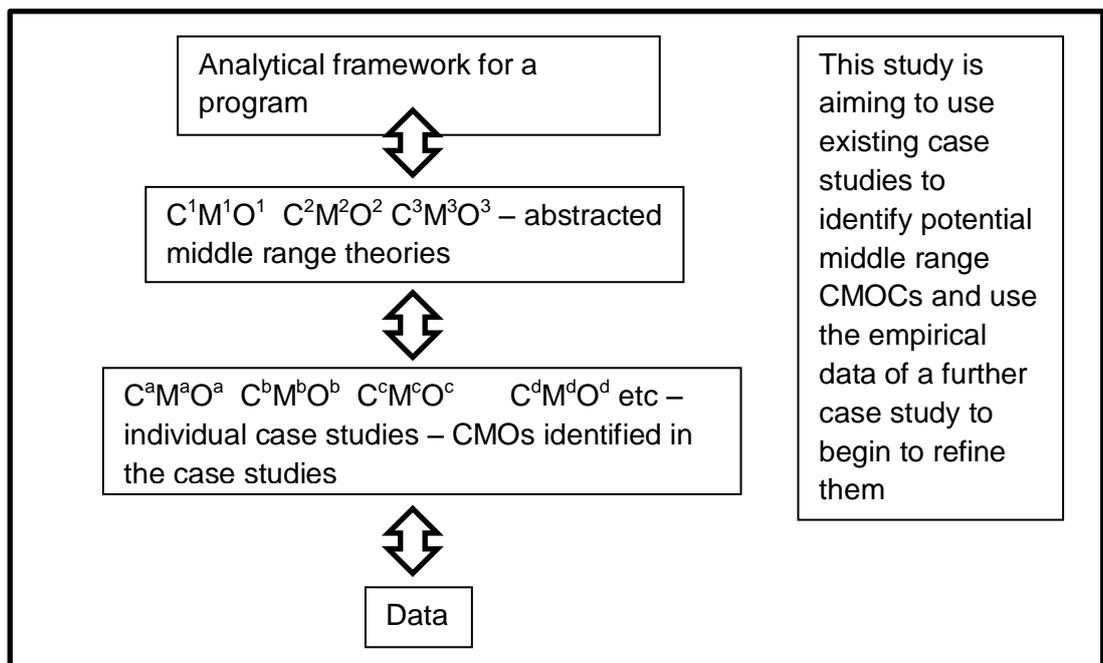
Figure 2.3: Overview of relationship between data and theory adapted from Pawson and Tilley (1997) pg.121

2.7 Programme complexity

Programmes are viewed as inherently complicated and complex and embedded in wider complicated and complex social environments (Pawson, 2013). Pawson suggests social programmes are *complex* because they have human subjects, and

that therefore there is a need to take account of the full range of human reasoning inherently influencing the programme. Programmes are *complicated* because they are implemented in different contexts, with different stakeholders, with different rules and traditions in different times influenced by different histories (Pawson, 2013). Pawson (2013) argues that due to this complexity it is not possible to conduct an inquiry into the entirety of a programme in a meaningful way.

However, he acknowledges that a broader application of system theory (eg. Bronfenbrenner, 2005) can develop understanding once a researcher has begun to develop a working knowledge of the system parts. "in order to generate any explanatory power in programme theory one has to have theories that link these wider interpretations of system dynamics to mundane activities of stakeholders" (Pawson, 2013 pg. 60). Consequently the current RE research aims to focus initially on identifying the programme theories underpinning the activities of stakeholders, then in addition use a bioecological theory framework (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), used in previous literature to explore the social problem of school exclusion (Sellman et al, 2002; Rouse, 2011; Collins, 2013; Lally, 2013), to develop upon the programme theories identified.

The aim of the culmination of the literature is to begin to use the realist synthesis to

enhance theory development of a programme: to enhance our knowledge of how a

programme works to prevent/ challenge social problems (Pawson and Tilley,

1997). As Pawson (2006) explains this process is not necessarily about exploring

the programmes per se but the theories underpinning its ideas.

The process followed is presented below:
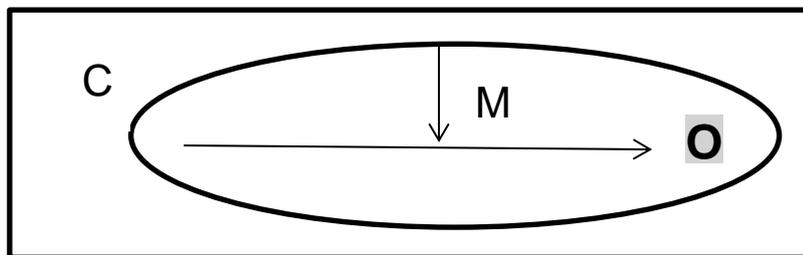
Figure 3.2: Initial programme theory development
The initial stage of the RS involves exploring relevant studies related to the class of

programmes to be explored. This literature is synthesised initially to identify

embryonic programme theories which then provide a lens through which the

relevant studies can be viewed.

In this current research, the initial stage focused on using the literature to identify

programme outcomes that appear to support children to remain in mainstream

school.
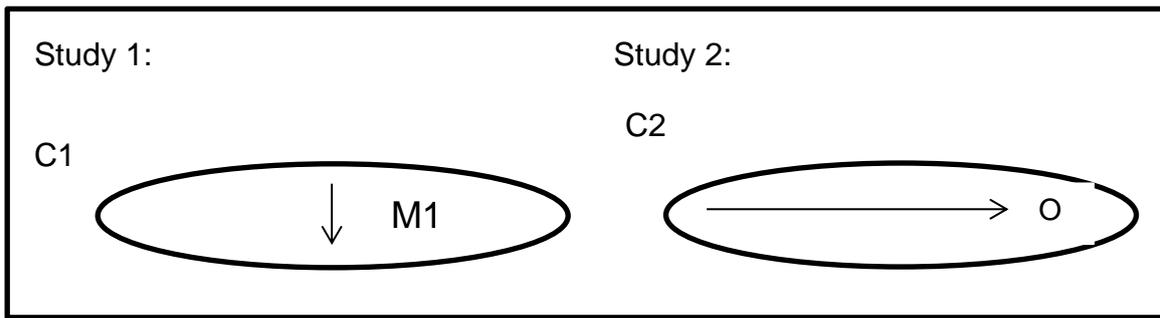
Figure 3.3: Continued synthesis of relevant literature that now begins to focus on refining the embryonic programme theories identified

The relevant literature is then used to begin to refine and develop the embryonic programme theories. Research studies are likely to provide evidence that develops various elements of the programme theory (Pawson, 2006). As in the diagram above study 1 provided an opportunity to explore context and mechanism factors, whereas study 2 enabled the exploration of context factors and outcomes (Pawson, 2006). The synthesis requires a process of "juxtaposing, adjudicating, reconciling, consolidating and situating the evidence" (Pawson, 2006 pg. 76) derived from a range of related studies in order to refine programme theories.

In this current research this stage was used to identify the context and mechanisms evident within AEPs to achieve the desired outcomes.

3.2.6 Approach for reviewing the studies

Due to the need for transparency about the conduct of the realist synthesis, an explanation is offered here (table 4) to explain how, once initial studies had been identified, the 'extracting data stage' (Pawson, 2006) was carried out. The process remained iterative, and once studies had gone through this process, further studies identified went through the same process before the data was synthesised.

Table 4: Process of extracting data from the existing literature

Annotation	This is identified by Pawson (2006) as the theory-tracking element of the synthesis. In this stage documents are reviewed to identify ideas about how the intervention is thought to work successfully. This process involves conceptualisation and abstraction of ideas to find commonalities in the literature.
Collation	This stage is identified by Pawson (2006) as the theory-testing stage. Initial review of the studies has begun to develop an idea of how the programme works, this stage uses studies that have passed the test of relevance. Studies are identified and organised for what element of the theory they test.

Appendix C: Comparison of realist synthesis search strategy with a traditional systemic literature review approach

Pawson (2006) highlights key differences in relation to a RS review as opposed to a traditional systemic literature review, following the process of searching using key terms of reference.

- As the synthesis is exploring inner workings of the programme it may make use of 'grey literature', rather than relying on purely academic literature from journals alone. The following review included unpublished theses exploring AEPs due to the depth of their evaluation and consequential detail in relation to findings linked to context, mechanism and outcomes

- Because the review is interested in programme theories rather than programmes per se, a wider breadth of studies may be included in the search from different bodies of literature/and or settings – but this also depends on the current level of understanding of programme theory. In this study, a range of literature areas and settings were explored including a range of AEPs. However as the synthesis was exploratory: literature reviewed remained within the education domain.

- Finally due to the need to identify mechanisms renders definitive identification of search terms more difficult; consequently a snowballing approach is often a more fruitful approach in identifying theories about how a programme may work.

Appendix D: Exemplar assessment of relevance and rigor of studies using Weight of Evidence (Gough, 2007)

Author	Summary	Relevance	Appropriateness	Method/technique	Type (published/ thesis)	Information gathered
Wilson (2010)	The study presents the findings of research into three Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) for children in the Early Years Foundation Stage and Key Stage One (EYFS/KS1). It explores the context factors of the children attending the PRU, features of the programme that supports reintegration into the mainstream school, used by the PRU placement and the outcomes of the programme for pupils, their families and schools.	Similar age range to case study, UK based, part-time provision offered to children at risk of school exclusion Explored the mechanisms and outcomes of off-site units	Qualitative data – context/ mechanisms Quantitative data – outcomes/ regularities	Mixed-method approach - Semi-structured interviews, SDQ, File trawl and database searches Reliability and validity of SDQ data threatened due to inconsistencies in approach Lack of pupil voice Used triangulation of data Challenges when recruiting parents and school staff/ most of participants were PRU staff – challenge regarding how representative the sample is – may result in bias in data Inter-rater used to identify themes in the literature Limited access to actual transcription extracts	Unpublished Thesis	Context/mechanism synthesis Outcome Synthesis
Wood (2011)	Exploring parent, PRU staff and pupil views of exclusion and ways of supporting	Exploring outcomes needed in order to support children at risk of exclusion to remain	Qualitative data exploring outcomes –	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis through semi-structured	Thesis	Outcome synthesis

	children to remain in a mainstream school	in mainstream school Children age 12-14years (older), UK study	study explores what outcomes needed to be achieved for child to be successful in mainstream School	interview and focus group Loss of data – difficulties in interpreting data from children - due to linguistic difficulties of children in expressing ideas Small sample size – 6 families		
Lochhead (2011)	Exploration of the experiences of 14 children who attended an off-site unit. Particularly the study explored the factors that supported the students to successfully return to mainstream school	US study, Students age range 16-20years old Full-time off-site unit	Qual data – programme context/mechanisms/outcomes Quan – outcomes changes in attendance/grades	Qualitative – interviews with students and review of documents Possible bias in self-selecting sample Potential bias in follow up questions identified for staff – as self-selected by researcher Triangulation of data/Audit check by independent doctoral level editor to check results represented data	Thesis	Context/mechanism synthesis Outcome Synthesis

Lally (2013)	Exploring pupils, parents and school staff perspective of school fixed- term exclusion and reintegration.	UK study, Secondary school age children Explores mechanisms and outcomes (changes in behaviour) identified as necessary for successful reintegration into mainstream school	Focus on outcomes – what needs to change in order to children to successfully remain in mainstream education	Qualitative - Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis following semi-structured interviews with all stakeholders Use of triangulation to enrich data – case study Discussing theme with supervisor to ensure themes were trustworthy 'made sense' Self-selection – parents difficult to engage – possible bias	Thesis	Outcomes, mechanisms
Lawrence (2011)	Explores the views of mainstream school staff and off-site unit staff about the process of reintegration back into mainstream school	UK, Secondary school Small sample size Study identified context and outcomes that were supportive of successful reintegration into mainstream school	Qualitative data – explored more concrete context and outcome factors involved – limited exploration of more abstract mechanisms	Qualitative – Focus group followed by thematic analysis Dynamics of Focus group may have created bias in contributions made Exploratory study Unsure of philosophical stance of thematic analysis – lack of clarity in process used	Published in EPiP	Outcomes, contexts

193

Lown (2005)	Exploring the views of pupils, parents, school staff and Local Authority staff about their experience of excluded children returning to mainstream school. The study explored the elements associated with successful reintegration	UK, Secondary school, biased sample due to low response rate Explored the outcomes associated with successful reintegration into the mainstream school for those children that had experienced school exclusion	Qualitative data – exploring outcomes required to enable children to remain in a mainstream school environment	Qualitative – solution focused individual interviews and focus group Potential bias due to limited engagement of parents Triangulation of data – to develop trustworthiness Themes shared with practitioners to further develop ideas – high level of stakeholder involvement in developing themes	Published	Outcomes
McDonald and Thomas (2003)	Study explores parents experiences of their child's exclusion for school	Secondary school age Highlights challenges of mainstream school environment as perceived by parents	Qualitative data - explore perceived challenging/supportive elements of the mainstream school environment (i.e. outcomes to be changed)	Interviews with Foucault analysis Small sample size 8 parents interviewed Lack of triangulation of data (secondary study) Potential bias in interview q's as developed through an iterative process	Published in emotional and behavioural difficulties journal	Outcomes

<u>Appendix E: Overview of RS empirical data collection: Sharing outcomes with intervention programme staff</u>

<u>Method -Stage 1: exploring abstracted shared outcomes with programme developers using a group Realist approach</u>
The first stage of the empirical data collection involved sharing the abstracted outcomes identified in the literature as supporting children to remain in mainstream school with practitioners. Example context and mechanisms were also discussed.

In addition due to the variation in the previous literature of contexts elements; e.g. some programmes being based in America, participants being secondary school children; it was felt to ensure the relevance of the remaining synthesis, checking the outcomes identified in the literature, agreed with staff perception of outcomes necessary for children to successfully remain in school based on their experiences.

<u>Participants</u>
Participants for this section of the research were selected through purposive sampling (Robson, 2002). Practitioners of the intervention programme were chosen as Pawson and Tilley (1997) highlight they are likely to have experienced both successes and failures of those accessing the programme and more likely to be aware of the outcomes necessary to support children to successful remain in mainstream school as opposed to other stakeholders e.g. school staff, parents, who may have experienced only one or two occasions of accessing the intervention programme.

Participants were recruited by the Head Teacher of the LA AEP by providing all staff with information forms and consent forms (see appendix F). 12 members of the programme staff agreed to participate in this initial stage of the research. The participants split into four self-selected small groups; with one person being the scribe to record the views of the group.

<u>Ethical consideration</u>
This research was approved by the University of Birmingham.

Although the focus group took place during staff meeting time it was made clear to staff both by the head teacher and I that the focus group was optional; to ensure participants did not feel obligated to participate.

<u>Focus group Interview</u>
Following a Realist Synthesis approach the initial programme outcomes identified in the literature were shared with staff at the programme using the principles from Pawson and Tilley's (1997) Realistic Interview. This stage represents Pawson and Tilley's (1997) 'formalising the model'. In this element of the research the literature is used to hypothesis how the programme works and then further primary studies are used to developing understanding of the programme.

A group realist interview approach (Davies, 2011) was used in a focus group discussion to share and explore the findings of the initial synthesis which aimed to identify shared outcomes of AEP intervention programmes. The group interview was designed to enable stakeholders to discuss the findings from the realist synthesis and to generate 'folk theory' data to enhance programme theory refinement (Pawson and Tilley, 1997).

<u>Development of focus group interview</u>
The hypothesised abstracted programme outcomes and example context, mechanisms were shared with programme staff using a PowerPoint presentation (appendix G) and through small group discussion were asked to edit/rank the outcomes factors where they felt they were incorrect or needed to be amended to explain how their intervention programme worked/didn't work to support children to remain in mainstream school. The staff were asked to reflect on their experiences of how the intervention programme worked to support children who had been on the intervention programme. The groups were asked to review the outcomes suggested and to add any other outcomes they felt supported children to remain in mainstream school.

<u>Teacher-Learner function of the focus group approach</u>
The aim during the group interview was underpinned by Pawson and Tilley's (1997) teacher- learner function, which suggest that the aims of the session was both about teaching and learning. The aim of the PowerPoint presentation (appendix G and linked discussion) was to begin to teach practitioners delivering the intervention programme the identified outcomes suggested in the literature that appeared to be supportive in enabling children to remain in mainstream school. The participants then begin to teach the researcher (so the researcher learns) practitioners working theories about how the programme works to support children to remain in mainstream school. In this case the aim was to learn whether the practitioners agreed the identified outcomes were supportive/or not of enabling children to remain in mainstream school in their experience or whether other outcomes were required. The practitioners were encouraged to provide initial thoughts about context factors, mechanisms that enabled/disabled this programme from achieving these outcomes.

Examples from the literature were provided to aid group discussion.

<u>Reliability and Validity</u>
On way Robson (2002) highlights a researcher can promote validity is through providing an audit trail. In this study the research has provided a step by step audit trail through stating the outcomes and the evidence for them in the literature with citations and below a summary of the responses made by the stakeholders.

The method used to gather the data attempts to address some reliability and validity concerns with regards to accessing participant views.

Participants were encouraged to discuss their views in small groups and to record their views by writing on the tables containing the theories. Each participant could record their own ideas or record them jointly as a group. Any ideas verbally discussed with me were also recorded (hand written). These enabled a range of formats from which the participants could contribute.

The theories were presented as general early ideas about how programmes **might** work; rather than expert ideas; and it was made clear to participants that I had no knowledge about how this particular intervention programme worked. The aim was to enable participants to feel comfortable challenging the outcomes suggested.

<u>Findings</u>
The groups felt that the following programme outcomes identified in the literature covered they key outcomes (changes in behaviour) required for children/young people to successfully remain mainstream school. The group also begun to comment upon embryonic mechanisms and context factors which related to and impacted upon how the intervention worked to support these aims in order to support children to remain in mainstream school.

Findings

Outcomes of intervention programmes supported by practitioners	Group Rating of importance of outcome in supporting children to remain in mainstream school	Context factors identified from focus group discussion	Mechanisms identified from focus group discussion
Positive Parental engagement	1, 1, 1, 2	Context barrier – children transported to school – so it is more difficult to see parents Short–time in which to build positive parent relationships Effectiveness dependent on parents willingness to engage Centre uses tools such as home-school book and other tools to communicate with home regularly	Need to increase parents skills

Developing the child's/young person's skills/abilities	1, 1, 2, 1	Difficulty with high turnover of staff to ensure effective environment Time/staff time required to build positive relationships with children Trained staff essential High expectation/consistency from staff	Children experience success in centre and can then be reluctant to return to mainstream school
Improving mainstream skills support	1, 1.5, 1, 2	Receiving mainstream school has an inclusive ethos/Positive attitude towards supporting children who find school difficult Accurate assessment of and sharing knowledge of individual needs and support strategies Children supported during timely reintegration School need to be willing to listen/access advice and support	Increased knowledge/skills in mainstream school Supportive for both child and school Sharing information through reintegration
Role of the centre: Centre provides a way in which schools can respond to challenging behaviour without permanent exclusion	1, 1, 2, 1	Mainstream school need to remain responsible for the children and willing to accept children back Needs to be a short- term (time- constrained) intervention otherwise children get settled and want to stay Parental preference impacts on school's behaviour i.e. if parent doesn't want a child's to return to a mainstream school to change its harder to change a child's behaviour	Some children realise their opportunities are limited and want to return to school Sometimes school still exclude children

The discussion highlighted that the above context, mechanism and outcome factors were generally important for the children to remain in mainstream school. Factors were abstracted using an inductive thematic approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006) from practitioner's discussion and verified by other practitioners or amended through discussion.

Embryonic CMOCs to be explored in the literature

Context (embryonic abstracted themes)	Mechanism (embryonic abstracted themes)	Outcome (identified in the literature and verified by intervention staff)
Accessible training/support offered to willing/able parents	Parents feel supported and involved Increase parents skills	Increased positive parental engagement
Effective environment for learning	Children feel confident they can change

Children receive individualised support | Developing child's/young person's skills |
| Pressure from parents/LA | School can respond to behaviour/ have a rest from challenging children

School can avoid permanent exclusion | Role of the centre: Centre provides a way in which schools can respond to challenging behaviour without permanent exclusion |
| School willing to access individualised support, retains responsibility of child, has a positive attitude/inclusive ethos | Centre assess child's needs and provides individualised support and advice | Improving mainstream school support |

These embryonic CMOCs were then used as a lens with which to explore the relevant literature and to guide the Realist Synthesis. The aim of the synthesis was to explore the mechanisms that the AEP facilitated to enable the identified outcomes and related context factors that support or prevent the mechanisms from triggering.

XXXX Centre Intervention programme – perspectives regarding what makes the XXXX Centre programme most effective?

Purpose and aim of this study

I have been working with the XXXX Centre to develop a research project to find out what factors support the programme in working most effectively. This research project aims to investigate how the XXXX Centre intervention programme supports the children who attend it and what factors associated with the programme support or inhibits its effectiveness.

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to participate in this research. I have highlighted the details of the study below so you can make an informed choice. Participation is completely voluntary.

What would participation involve?

The research would involve completion of a questionnaire following a group discussion in order to collect your perspectives about your experiences of the XXXX centre Programme. I will be asking you to reflect generally on your experiences of the how the XXXX centre has supported children to return to mainstream school.

The group discussion and time to complete the questionnaire will be around 45minutes and will be asking you to write about your experiences.

Confidentiality

Participants' names will not be recorded, stored or disclosed for any purpose. Any information gathered from the questionnaire will be kept confidentially. ID codes will be assigned to interviews to ensure that any information gathered cannot be linked to specific participants.

In order to ensure anonymity of any children/young people you reflect on during the questionnaire I request you do not state any of the child's details. If you do accidently mention any information relating to a specific child this will be omitted and not recorded in the analysis.

Only I will have access to the information gathered and I will only share anonymised information with my research sponsor; XXXX Local Authority my university supervisor. Any data reported will be anonymised. All Data will be securely stored.

Feedback

Feedback of the findings from the research will be reported back to the XXXX Centre and Primary School Head Teachers.

Participant Withdrawal

If you do decide to participate you can change your mind and are free to withdraw from the study before, during, after or up to two weeks after completing the interview. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study. If you choose to withdraw, after the interview or up to two weeks after completing the interview all responses will be discarded.

How will the research findings be used?

Gaining your views about your experience is a valuable part of the research. I hope that the research will support and continue to develop an understanding of how the XXXX centre programme supports the children/young people who attend it. This research forms part of my training to be an Educational Psychologist. It forms part of my PhD thesis and may therefore be published, and is being conducted on behalf of the University of Birmingham. The contact details of my supervisor at the University of Birmingham are:

Xxxx xxxxx
University of Birmingham
Phone: xxxx xxx xxxx
Email: x.x.xxx@bham.ac.uk

Thank you for considering my request for your participation in this research. If you would like further information or have any questions please contact me using the details below.

If you would be happy to participate in this research please complete the consent form below and place it in the provided envelope and return it to the school reception.

Kind regards
Jennifer Birch
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Phone number xxxxx xxx xxxxx
Email: xxxxxxxxxx@XXXX.gov.uk

Please read the statements below and tick the relevant box(es) if you consent

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw if I change my mind ☐

I consent to the information I provide to be used for research purposes ☐

I understand that any responses I give will be kept confidentially and I will not be identified in any publication of this research ☐

I agree to the researcher potentially quoting me anonymously in any publications of the research ☐

_____
(Please Sign Your Name)

_____
(Date)

Supporting children to remain in mainstream school

Jen Birch

Progress so far

- Review of the literature

- Next steps: talking to stakeholders

Next steps

- To share the new ideas with you and to gain your feedback through completing a questionnaire

- Consent form

Definitions

- **Outcome** – specific aim of the program e.g. promoting positive parental engagement
- **Context** – how the program supports this aim – what the program does to support the aim
- **Mechanism** — isn't necessarily the intervention itself but it is what the intervention aims to do e.g. supporting parent – parents feel listened to, supported, empowered

Outcomes

- Increasing parental engagement

- Developing the school environment

- Developing the child's skills and resources

- Role of the programme in the education system

Questionnaire

- Consent form

- Record your views about these ideas

Questionnaire

- Please add your views to the forms on your table

Outcome	Context	Mechanism
Increasing parental engagement		
Developing the school environment		
Developing the child's skills and resources		
Role of the programme in the education system		

Thank you!!

Appendix H: RAMESES criteria for RS

adapted from Wong et al (2014)

RAMESES quality standards	Consideration given in this study
The research topic is appropriate for a realist approach	Purpose of the research request was to identify how segregated intervention programmes work to support children who display challenging behaviour to remain in mainstream school in order to support the LA programme to become more effective RE approach enables researcher to identify how, in what circumstance the programme can be effective.
The review question is constructed in such a way as to be suitable for a realist synthesis	The review question focuses on key elements of the family of programmes: namely what outcomes, how and in what contexts: - What are the essential outcomes that need to be supported by the self-contained intervention programme to enable children to remain in mainstream school? - What are the mechanisms of the programme that facilitates these outcomes? - What are the context variables that enable these mechanisms to occur?
The review demonstrates understanding and application of realist philosophy and realist logic which underpins a realist analysis.	Researcher's understanding of the realist logic underpinning the review is explicitly stated
The review question is sufficiently and appropriately focussed.	The review question was progressively focused in negotiation with stakeholders.
An initial realist programme theory is identified and developed.	Development of the programme theories can be seen through a combination of reviews of the literature and discussions with programme staff to guide further review of the literature. Initial embryonic programme theory to be developed by the empirical elements of the research is developed and stated the end of the review of the literature, so the reader can see the data upon which the theories have been abstracted.
The search process is such that it would identify data to	The search process is purposive and identifies studies that explore segregated intervention

enable the review team to develop, refine and test programme theory or theories.	programmes that support children to remain in mainstream school Documents are sought from a wide range of sources which are likely to contain relevant data for theory development, refinement and testing. There is no restriction on the study or documentation type that is searched for.
The selection and appraisal process ensures that sources relevant to the review containing material of sufficient rigour to be included are identified. In particular, the sources identified allow the reviewers to make sense of the topic area; to develop, refine and test theories; and to support inferences about mechanisms.	All studies identified that review segregated intervention programmes are used to begin to identify embryonic programme theories. Studies are assessed for rigor and relevance using Gough's (2007) Weight of Evidence approach
The data extraction process captures the necessary data to enable a realist review.	Data extraction focuses on identification and elucidation of context-mechanism outcome configurations and refinement of programme theory. Conceptualisation of context-mechanism and outcomes were shared and discussed with supervisor to check understanding of terms

Introduction

I am just going to talk through some ideas about how the intervention programme might work to support children to remain in mainstream school. These ideas are just best guesses about how the programme might work, I have never experienced the programme so I don't know how it works but I have read about similar programmes so I have developed some ideas about how it might work but these ideas might be right or wrong. In the interview I will be asking you about these ideas and I would like you to help me to get a better understanding about how the programme works/doesn't work to support children to remain in mainstream education. I will go through the ideas now altogether and we will discuss them one by one in the interview.

The role of the XXXX Centre

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions	School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion	School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school - and also intervening to prevent permanent exclusion

This theory begins to guess the role the unit plays in the LA Education System in supporting children to remain in mainstream school. It suggests that there are both pressures on schools to need to respond/manage children displaying challenging behaviour in school due to the nature of the education system e.g. pressures from parents. It also suggests that there is pressure from the LA/Government for school to keep exclusion rates low.

The possible reasoning for schools in using this programme in that schools use it because they feel it allows them a way to respond to challenging behaviour without using permanent exclusion and this is why they use the unit.

It therefore suggests one of the roles of the unit is therefore to provide a way for schools to be seen to be responding to a child's challenging behaviour but also provides a way to prevent the child from being excluded by enabling access to further intervention for that child.

These ideas focus more upon the contribution on the intervention programme in relation to parents, children and schools more directly

Support for parents

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities and accessible support, advice and education provided to willing/motivated parents	Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education	Increased positive parental engagement in child's education

Here this idea is that in order to support children to remain in mainstream school one area that may be important is increasing parents engagement in their child's education.

The guess is that the unit may provide relevant and accessible support, advice and education to motivated parents. The idea then is that this may support parents by increasing their confidence, skills in supporting their child's education and have increasing aspirations for their child.

The idea is then that this increased confidence and skills will support parents to be increasingly engaged in supporting their child's education.

Support for school

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School willingly and have capacity to access and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them	School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building a relationship with a child	School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school, and develop a more supportive environment

The idea here is that the programme has a role in supporting schools to more effectively meet the child's needs and to develop a more supportive environment. It is thought that supporting the school to be able to meet the child's needs and developing a supportive environment in important in helping a child to remain in mainstream school.

211

One idea is that the unit could provide training and support to schools about helping a child to remain in mainstream school. It also suggests that this depends on the programme being able to provide this support and schools being willing to accept that support.

The idea then is that if the unit provides this support the school will become more confident about supporting the child, have more skills to support the child and a more positive attitude towards supporting this child to remain in mainstream school. It is thought then once this has occurred the school will be in a better position to meet the child's needs in school and to provide a supportive environment.

Developing children's skills

Context	Mechanism	Outcomes
Programme provides effective environment that promotes learning where motivated children receive support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school	Children develop and learn skills, confidence, and motivation to remain in mainstream school	Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment – "Students who succeed in school despite adverse conditions" (Waxman et al (2003)

The idea here is that for a child to successfully remain in mainstream school the child may also need to learn to manage their behaviour in mainstream school and to develop skills that enable them to become resilient in the mainstream school

One idea is that the unit may provide an effective environment for motivated children to learn these skills; to access support and education to develop their individual skills need to remain in mainstream school.

The idea is that by being in this environment children learn and develop skills, confidence and motivation to remain in mainstream school. Consequently they are better equipped to manage their behaviour and be resilient in the mainstream school environment

Other theories

In the interview you also be given the opportunities to discuss any other ways you think this centre supports children to remain in mainstream school

HELLO!

I'm Jen and I am a student at university

I am working with the XXXX centre and would like to find out about how going there has helped you. I would like to find out about what things you did at the XXXX centre and what thing are like now you are in school.

I would really like to meet with you at school to talk to you about it. I will ask you parent(s) and class teacher if this is ok with them too.

What you tell me will be kept anonymous, which means no-one will know what you have said.

What if I do want to take part?
If you are happy to meet with me please fill in the form on the next page with a parent or teacher and sign your name at the bottom. If you would like to take part you will receive a certificate and a small gift for taking part.

Do I have to take part? No it's up to you if you would like to meet with me. If you don't that is fine just let your parent(s) or teacher know.

Consent form
Please tick the box if you understand

I have read and understood the information sheet ☐

I understand that I can leave the study at any time ☐

I understand that my views will be shared with other people but no one apart from Jen will know that they are my views ☐

I would like to take part in the study ☐

XXXX Centre programme – parent/child and practitioner views about what makes the programme work?

What is the aim of this study?
I have been working with the XXXX centre to develop some research to find out how the programme supports children/young people who attend on a short term basis. As part of the research I would really like to find out about how you, your child and your child's school have experienced the programme. I am really interested in your child's/young person's views, your views and school views about the programme. I am hoping that the information will be used to help find out about factors that help the programme to work.

I am writing to ask for your informed consent to agree to be involved in the research. Below I will explain what the research involves so you can make an informed decision. Participation is completely voluntary

What does participation in the study involve?
It is important in this research that I find out about this programme by speaking to you, your child and through school staff and XXXX centre staff that have worked with them. The research would involve:
a) Individual interviews with you to gain your views about how the XXXX centre has helped – lasting a maximum of 45 minutes at a time/place convenient to you.
b) Meeting with your child at a time that is suitable to talk to them about how they think the XXXX programme has helped them,

Why has my child been selected?
Children who have experienced the XXXX Centre intervention programme have been invited to take part in the research. As part of this research I believe that it is really important to find out the views of the children who have experience from having attended the programme to find out what they think helped them when they went back to school. Your child has been randomly selected to be invited to this part in this project.

What will my child be doing?
I will be meeting with your child to talk about some of the things that have helped them when they went to the XXXX centre and since they have come back to school. This might include things that have changed such as any extra support put in place or things that are better because of the things they may have learnt at the XXXX Centre. Pictures and drawings can be used to help your child talk about what has most helped them most.

Your child will also have the option to have a member of staff from school to support them during the interview if they would like to. Nobody else will be present during the interview. Your child will also need to give their consent to agree to talk to me about their experiences. The interview will take a maximum of 30minutes and they will be able to withdraw at any point or I will stop the interview if I feel they have become distressed at all. I hope the meeting will be positive for your child as I'm hoping to find out what they found has helped them.

Does my child have to take part?
It is completely voluntary whether you and your child participate in this research. If you consent to participate in this research your child will also be asked whether they would be happy to talk to me. If your child does agree to take part they will receive a certificate and a set of coloured pencils to thank them for agreeing to participate.

What does your participation involve?
I would like to meet with you to talk about your experiences of the XXXX centre programme and how it has supported your child. The interview will last around 40minutes and will be asking you to talk about your experiences. If you are happy to participate in the interview you will receive a £10 love2shop gift voucher to compensate for the time taken to complete the interview.

Confidentiality
Every effort will be made to ensure you and your child's information will be kept confidentially. I will ask you to put your child's name at the end of the consent letter so that I can arrange to meet with them at school and so that I can identify them to staff at school and the XXXX centre so I can gain their experiences of how the programme has supported your child. Participant names or school names will not be used in any publication of this study. In order to ensure individual interviews remain anonymous I will use ID codes and will not record or store participant's names.

Interviews and discussions will be recorded if consented to and then typed up. The recordings will be used to ensure I don't miss any information and only I will be listening to the recordings. Once the interviews have been written up they will be kept on a secure university server for ten years and will then be destroyed. Data will be temporarily stored on an encrypted memory stick to allow the data to be transferred. No participant details will be stored with the interviews.

I may share the anonymised information gathered during the research process with my University tutor and my research sponsor, XXXX Local Authority.

Feedback

The information you, your child and school/centre staff provide will be used to help learn about how the XXXX Centre programme helps children who attend and what factors are important in helping it to work better. I will use this valuable information to share with schools and the XXXX Centre factors that are thought to help these children and what they could do to make it work better.

I will be writing a report for the XXXX Centre and Primary school Head teachers to explain what we found was helpful in supporting children/young person who attended the XXXX centre.

Participant Withdrawal

If you do decide to participate you can change your mind and are free to withdraw from the study before, during or immediately after the interview, or up to 2 weeks after the interview has taken place. Your child will also be able to withdraw at any point before, during, immediately after or up to two weeks after their interview by letting you or a member of staff at school know. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study. If you choose to withdraw, after the interview or up to two weeks after the interview all responses will be discarded. However once the data has been analysed data will remain confidential but can no longer be removed from the data set due to the nature of the analysis.

If you or your child decide(s) you would like to withdraw please contact me on the number or email below.

How will the findings be used?

Gaining your views about your experience is a valuable part of the research. I hope that the research will support and continue to develop understanding of how the XXXX centre programme supports the children/young people who attend it. This research also forms part of my training to be an Educational Psychologist.

It forms part of my PhD thesis and may therefore be published, and is being conducted on behalf of the University of Birmingham. The contact details of my supervisor at the University of Birmingham are:

Xxxx xxxxx
University of Birmingham
Phone: xxxx xxx xxxx
Email: x.x.xxxx@bham.ac.uk

Thank you for taking time to consider participation in this research project. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

If you are happy to participate in this research please complete the form on the next page and place in the provided envelope and return it to your schools reception.

Kind regards

Jennifer Birch
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Phone number xxxxx xxx xxxx
Email: xxxxxxxxxxx@XXXX.gov.uk

CONSENT FORM
Please read the statements below and tick the relevant box(es) if you consent

I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I can withdraw if I change my mind ☐

I give consent for the information I provide to be used for research purposes ☐

I understand that any information I provide will be kept confidentially and I will not be identified in any publication of this research ☐

I agree to the researcher potentially quoting me anonymously in any publications of the research ☐

I am happy for you to speak to my child about their views about the XXXX Centre ☐

I am happy for you to speak to a member of staff at school and the XXXX Centre about how the XXXX Centre Programme has helped my child ☐

My child's name is

_____

_____
(Please Print Your Full Name)

_____
(Please Sign Your Name)

_____
(Date)

Contact details for researcher to contact me

Name:

Phone number(s):

Letter Requesting Staff Participation and Consent Form

XXXX Centre Intervention programme – perspectives regarding what makes the XXXX Centre programme most effective?

Purpose and aim of this study

I have been working with the XXXX Centre to develop a research project to find out what factors support the programme in working most effectively. This research project aims to investigate how the XXXX Centre intervention programme supports the children who attend it and what factors associated with the programme support or inhibits its effectiveness.

I am writing to ask whether you would be willing to participate in this research. I have highlighted the details of the study below so you can make an informed choice. Participation is completely voluntary.

What would participation involve?

The research would involve completion of an interview in order to collect your perspectives about your experiences of the XXXX centre Programme. I will be asking you to reflect generally on your experiences of the how the XXXX centre has supported children to return to mainstream school.

The interview will last around 30minutes and will be asking you to talk about your experiences.

Confidentiality

Participants' names will not be recorded, stored or disclosed for any purpose. Any information gathered from the interview will be kept confidentially. ID codes will be assigned to interviews to ensure that any information gathered cannot be linked to specific participants.

Interviews and discussions will be recorded if consented to and then typed up. The recordings will be used to ensure I don't miss any information and only I will be listening to the recordings. Once the interviews have been written up they will be kept on a secure university server for ten years and will then be destroyed. Data will be temporarily stored on an encrypted memory stick to allow the data to be transferred. No participant details will be stored with the interviews.

In order to ensure anonymity of any children/young people you reflect on during the interview I request you do not state any of the child's details during the interview. If

you do accidently mention any information relating to a specific child this will be omitted from the interview and not recorded in the transcript.

Only I will have access to the information gathered and I will only share anonymised information with my research sponsor; Xl Local Authority my university supervisor. Any data reported will be anonymised. All Data will be securely stored.

Feedback
Feedback of the findings from the research will be reported back to the XXXX Centre and Primary School Head Teachers.

Participant Withdrawal
If you do decide to participate you can change your mind and are free to withdraw from the study before, during, after or up to two weeks after completing the interview. There are no consequences for withdrawing from the study. If you choose to withdraw, after the interview or up to two weeks after completing the interview all responses will be discarded.

How will the research findings be used?
Gaining your views about your experience is a valuable part of the research. I hope that the research will support and continue to develop an understanding of how the XXXX centre programme supports the children/young people who attend it. This research also forms part of my training to be an Educational Psychologist. It forms part of my PhD thesis and may therefore be published, and is being conducted on behalf of the University of Birmingham. The contact details of my supervisor at the University of Birmingham are:

Xxxx xxxxx
University of Birmingham
Phone: xxxx xxx xxxx
Email: x.x.xxxxx@bham.ac.uk

Thank you for considering my request for your participation in this research. If you would like further information or have any questions please contact me using the details below.

If you would be happy to participate in this research please complete the consent form below and place it in the provided envelope and return it to the school reception.

Kind regards

Jennifer Birch
Trainee Educational Psychologist
University of Birmingham

Phone number xxxxxxxxxxxxxx
Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxx@XXXX.gov.uk

Introductory script

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research

Firstly I just wanted to reassure you that anything you say during our meeting today will remain anonymous. I will not record, store or use your name in any report I write but I have used an ID code instead.

I will be making notes about what you say but I would also like to record the interview so that I do not miss anything that is said. Only I will listen to the recording as it is just to ensure that I do not miss anything. Once I have typed it up, a copy of the transcription will be kept on a secure university server for ten years as per University guidelines.

Are you happy for me to record this interview?

I will be using the views of everyone to help me to get a better understanding about how the XXXX programme is helpful. I will also be using the information for my thesis which is part of my University work.

Do you have any questions?

I may want to quote some of the things you say in my research but I will try my best to ensure that you cannot be identified by the quotes I use. If there is anything you say during this interview that you don't want me to record please just let me know.

I am interesting in gaining your views so there is no correct answer. If you have any questions at any point please feel free to ask me.

Are you happy to continue?

Background questions

When did your child attend the XXXX Centre?

How long did your child attend the XXXX centre for?

<u>Sharing the theories to be tested</u>

(The theories developed with the XXXX Centre, will be shared with parents visually and verbally. The theories will be explained to ensure they are understood and the parent(s) will be asked to rate the level of importance they feel they have in supporting their child during and after they attended the XXXX Centre programme. The parent(s) will then be asked to reflect on their own experience of each of the theories using questions to prompt.)

<u>Introduction</u>

I am doing some research to try and find out about how the XXXX Centre supports children to remain in mainstream school. This includes anything that was provided by the XXXX centre or any actions initiated by the XXXX centre e.g. involvement of other services i.e. Behaviour support, CAMHS, request for statutory assessment etc.

I am going to share with you some ideas about how units that are like XXXX Centre may work to support children to remain in mainstream school. These are just ideas that may or may not explain how the Centres like XXXX work. I would like you to help me understand what the XXXX centre did to support your child in your opinion and whether you experienced any of the following factors.

The role of the XXXX Centre

<u>Context</u>	<u>Mechanism</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Need for children with behavioural difficulties to be 'managed' due to the nature of the education system Need/incentive for LA school to reduce number of exclusions	School feel programme provides a way to respond to challenging behaviour without the use of permanent exclusion	School able to be seen as responding to challenging behaviour in school - and also intervening to prevent permanent exclusion

In your experience what do you think is the role of the XXXX centre for the schools? What is the purpose of the XXXX Centre intervention programme for the school? (o)

- Prompts – is it used as an alternative to school exclusion?
- Is it used to provide intensive temporary support to help children to successfully return to mainstream school?
- Are there other reasons you think the school used the XXXX centre?

How important do you think school being able to access a temporary off-site provision is in helping your child to remain in mainstream school?

Why? (M)

What do you think encourages/discourages school to use the intervention programme at the XXXX centre? (C)

- Do you think schools are discouraged from permanently excluding children? Does this encourage schools to use the centre?

Support for parents

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
Programme provides accessible and relevant communication opportunities and accessible support, advice and education provided to willing/motivated parents	Parents feel they have increased skills/knowledge/confidence in supporting their child Parents feel empowered/supported to be engaged in their child's education	Increased positive parental engagement in child's education

In your experience do you think the XXXX centre intervention programme supports parents to be able to be more involved in supporting their child in relation to their education? (E.g. able to attend more meetings, feel better able to support their child's needs?) (o)

How important do you think supporting parents to be more involved in their child's education is in supporting a child to return to mainstream school?

Why?

How does the XXXX centre intervention programme support parents to become more involved?

(classes? Support and advice? Support parents to attend school meeting etc?) (m)

How does this support impact upon parents? (m)

(e.g. increased confidence, skills, aspirations??)

What factors do you think caused this support to be effective/ineffective? (c)

(e.g. motivated parents, relevant advice, consistent support, accessibility of classes/ support??)

How does this impact on the child/young person? (o)

<u>Support for school</u>

Context	Mechanism	Outcome
School willingly and have capacity to access and respond to support about helping a child to remain in mainstream school Programme provides accurate and useful information about a child's needs and advice on how to best support them	School feel skilled and confident about being able to support a child School develops positive attitude towards supporting/building a relationship with a child	School is able to meet child's needs effectively in school, and develop a more supportive environment

Do you think the XXXX centre intervention programme supports mainstream school to meet your child's needs more effectively? (o)

How important do you think the school developing these skills is in supporting your child to return to mainstream school?

How did the XXXX centre intervention programme support the mainstream school? (m)

(e.g. involvement from behaviour support, training, advice, sharing information??)

How did the mainstream school change? (m)

(Change in attitude? Change in skills? Change in confidence? Change in relationship with child/parent?)

What factors do you think caused/helped this support for school to be effective/ineffective? (c)

(e.g. school motivated to learn, accessible support/advice)

Developing children's skills

Context	Mechanism	Outcomes
Programme provides effective environment that promotes learning where motivated children receive support and education to develop their individual skills needed to remain in mainstream school	Children develop and learn skills, confidence, and motivation to remain in mainstream school	Child is more skilled/resilient in the mainstream school environment – "Students who succeed in school despite adverse conditions" (Waxman et al (2003)

Do you think the XXXX centre intervention programme supported your child to develop skills to return to mainstream school? (o)

How important do you think your child developing these skills are, in supporting your child to return to mainstream school?

What skills did the XXXX centre support your child to develop? (m)

(e.g. academic skills, confidence, motivation to remain in mainstream school, social skills??)

What factors caused this support to be effective or ineffective? (c)

(e.g. environment at the XXXX centre, child's motivation, relevance of the skills taught etc?)

Did this support change your child's behaviour when they returned to school? If yes how? (o)

(e.g. Child was able to manage their behaviour, child was more resilient – able to cope better with challenging situations??)

Other theories

Are there other ways you think the XXXX centre intervention programme supported your child in preparing to return to mainstream school? (o)

How did the XXXX centre do this? (m)

How important do you think this is in supporting your child to return to mainstream school?

1   2   3   4   5

Are there others way you think the XXXX centre could support your child to successfully return to mainstream school? (o)

Are there any other factors you think support or prevent the XXXX centre intervention programme from supporting your child to return to mainstream school (e.g. willingness of mainstream school to have children back? Etc) (c)

What do you think are the main factors that made your child's/young person's return to mainstream school successful/unsuccessful? Why?

Successful/unsuccessful (delete as appropriate)

<u>Appendix N: Children's interview</u>

Introductory Script

Hi I'm Jen,

Thank you for coming to talk to me today

I wanted to come and talk to you about how you think the XXXX Centre has helped you.

Just so you remember anything you tell me today will be confidential; this means nobody apart from me will know what you have said. But if you tell me anything I think might put you or someone else at risk of harm I will need to tell your teachers.

I would like to record us using this recorder so I can remember what we talked about later on. I might also write some things down to help me remember. Only I will listen to the tape and write down what we say. Is that ok?

I am using the things you tell me to help me to do some work for my university.

Don't forget you can tell me at any time if you want to stop and I can take you back to class.

.

There is no right answer; I am just interested in what you think.
Don't forget to tell me if there is anything you don't understand or if you have any questions

Are you happy to start?

Participant Information
Identification number:
Year group:
Gender:

Rapport building questions:

What are your favourite lessons in school?

…..

Sharing and discussion of the theories being tested
The theories being tested by the research project will be individually presented to the children using pictures/simple words where possible to help them understand. The ideas will be discussed with the children to help ensure they understand what they mean..

The children will be asked to rate how important they think each statement is in supporting them at XXXX/or when they came back to school after the XXXX Centre.

Once the statements have been rated each one will be discussed with questions as prompts to find out their experiences of each theory and why they rated in that way?

Three boxes given to the children with the following labels; **Helps(ed) me a lot, Helps(ed) me a bit, Doesn't help/ didn't help me**

Once the children have posted the phrases I will be asking them why they think xxxxx is helpful/ not helpful for them and how the centre helped them more specifically

<u>Purpose of the XXXX centre – what things did you do at the XXXX centre that helped you at school?</u>

(Picture of programme building placed here)

Things that the XXXX centre did to help me to go back to school

Things that could help me to go back to school
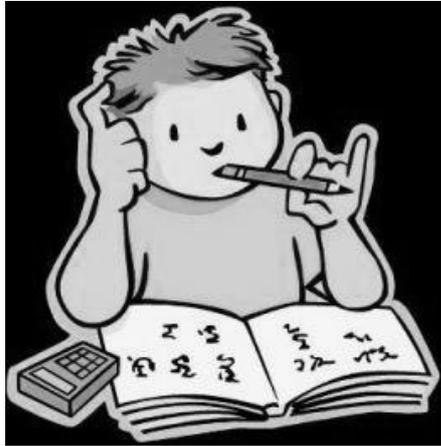
Learnt new skills to help me do my work in school

Learnt new skills to help me to change my behaviour in school

Helped me to make new friends at school

They helped my parents to help me

Home and school worked together to help me

Helped my teachers to help me at school

Helped me to feel happy about going back to school

I wanted to go back to school

I can do it!

Helped me to feel more confident

(blank spaces will be provided for their own ideas)

Closing Script
Thank you for talking to me today, are you happy to go back to class now or would you like to talk to your teacher first? If you are worried about anything we talked about today please tell your teacher.

Appendix O: Extract of analysed transcript

HT interview transcript

I: so the first question few questions are about, in your experience what is the role of the centre for the school? How does the school see the role of the centre?

HT: we've used it sometimes as respite, so the children have gone for a respite, erm, which gives them a break from the situation, gives the other children in the class a break from the situation, (timeout) where they can be in a small group, they have got specialist teachers, who can develop special programmes of work for them (3c1), with the hope of them coming back at the end of the respite (3o1), that's on reason.

Another reason is for pupils who are, without that (access to the centre) would be excluded because we've tried everything and anything and it hasn't worked (lack of 201). And that's basically the two reasons either they are at-risk of exclusion or for respite, which they overlap a little bit but, .. An one child that we have had the first day he was here absolutely wrecked the classrooms and he had been sent to us from another school but he was soo verbally aggressive and so dangerous, health and safety risk, that in a classroom full of thirty children with no support in there you couldn't do it, so he went to the PRU as well. So there are different reasons why, there is not just one- (timeout)-lack of resources to cope?

I: yeh, ok, so I guess it sounds like it is kind of an opportunity to, erm as you say to have that bit of time where they can be somewhere else with that specialist support

Ok well how important do you think having a programme like this centre is in enabling children to remain in mainstream school, I guess in preventing exclusion?

Ht: well it is very important because if their excluded where do they go, if the government were to put in enough resources into school (lack of resources to meet needs- 201), it would be much better for schools to do it themselves, which is what we would hope to do, but sometimes you just can't a) you haven't got the money b) you haven't got the people c) you haven't got the space. And trying to educate one child in a big class of thirty, when they need a class of perhaps four at the most, or six, with probably two adults at least. You just haven't got the space, you haven't got the bodies, you haven't got the people who are trained to that depth to be able to do it, without the centre we have got nothing (lack of resources to meet needs- 201),

I: ok, are there factors that you think, I mean you talked about some there actually, factors that encourage and discourage schools from using the centre programme, and I guess there you were talking about one of the factors that encourages is actually the lack of resources that are available in school at the time when you need it. Are there other factors you think that encourages/discourages schools to use the rest bite programme?

Ht: respite programme, we have used that with one little boy who, erm, was very challenging, he had gone through nurture, he was in the classroom and he was just kicking, screaming, shouting but mom would not agree that it wasn't him, at the end of the day ==there was nothing we could do Mom wouldn't, erm, really engage with us (lack of parental engagement),== didn't want to know about his behaviour at all, erm, Nan in the family was the strict disciplinarian but Mom wasn't, so in the end ==it was becoming quite a battle so, we decided that maybe, time away from the situation would hopefully calm it down== ==(timeout),== so he went into the PRU, he has come back, so he is back in class, erm , still has his tantrums but not as bad or not as frequent, as they were, so that is one of the success stories, I think having that respite place saved a lot of further action happening, if you hadn't have that (rest bite place) things might not have worked out as well,

I: yeh, so the factor as to whether parents are willing to get involved has an influence on encouraging you to use the centre
…………………………………….

I: how important do you think that support for school happening is?

HT: Its got to be vitally important because, ==because if they go from here to the PRU, without that support they are coming back into the same, exactly the same thing as they went from, well they didn't work in the first place,== ==so what have they (PRU staff) done differently that you could do in school to make it different for that child, so to me, its vitally important, and that's the way its going to work, far more effectively, if there is a closer link====, (2o2)==

I: so it sounds like, kind of bringing them back into the system a little bit, maybe?

HT: yes, because I mean it might be that maybe they are not ready to come back full-time, but they might be ready to come back for half a day or, but there doesn't seem to be any, they are there (centre), and then they are back, ok, well whats happened in between, and how do we make sure what they have been doing to a certain extent, carries on so that they (child) settles when they come back, ==(need for gradual transition)==

I: mm, yeh, I mean do you know of any things that kind of causes us to end up in that situation where we have got kind of that discontinuation?

HT: I think it is probably because, and again this is from how I see it, there isn't anywhere else for these children, so there is just not us sending children, there is not just three or four schools, there are lots of people sending these children to them, why haven't we got behavioural units, attached to schools, nurture we could call it, whatever, so you have got it, so that those children, can be back and forth or they can go back gradually, or they can go back full-time,

Appendix P: Braun and Clarke (2006) quality criteria for thematic analysis

Process	No.	Criteria	How met in this study
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for 'accuracy'.	All interviews were transcribed and checked by the researcher for accuracy
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.	Each transcript was analysed at least three times
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.	Both a deductive and inductive approach was used to analyse/code the data
	4	All relevant extracts for all each theme have been collated.	Transcripts were analysed at least three times to ensure no information had been missed
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.	Themes were reviewed and checked back with data – extracts used to highlight
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.	
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.	Latent level of analysis was carried out
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts	Extracts demonstrated in

		illustrate the analytic claims.	matrix table where possible
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic.	Audit trail tells the story of the analysis
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.	Demonstrated in results
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.	
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.	Approach taken to thematic analysis is stated
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.	Method and analysis presented for reader to see
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.	Approach consistent with a realist ontology and constructivist and relativist epistemology
	15	The researcher is positioned as *active* in the research process; themes do not just 'emerge'.	Researcher is aware of possible bias in analysis and used audit trail to counter this