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An exploratory study of the systems of support to help young males with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties to remain in post 16 Education

Submitted by Lorraine Mary O'Sullivan to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational, Child and Community Psychology, September, 2011.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

(Signature) ……………………………………………………………
Lorraine O'Sullivan

Acronyms:

Children and Young People	CYP
Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	EBD
Education, Employment and/or training	EET
Educational Psychologist	EP
Further Education	FE
Local Authority	LA
Not in Education, Employment and/or Training	NEET
Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	SEBD
Social Exclusion	SE
Young People	YP
Young People's	YPs

Acknowledgements page

Thank you to all those participants for taking part in this piece of research and for giving up their time. I valued their honesty, reflection and willingness to their share their perceptions on the education system.
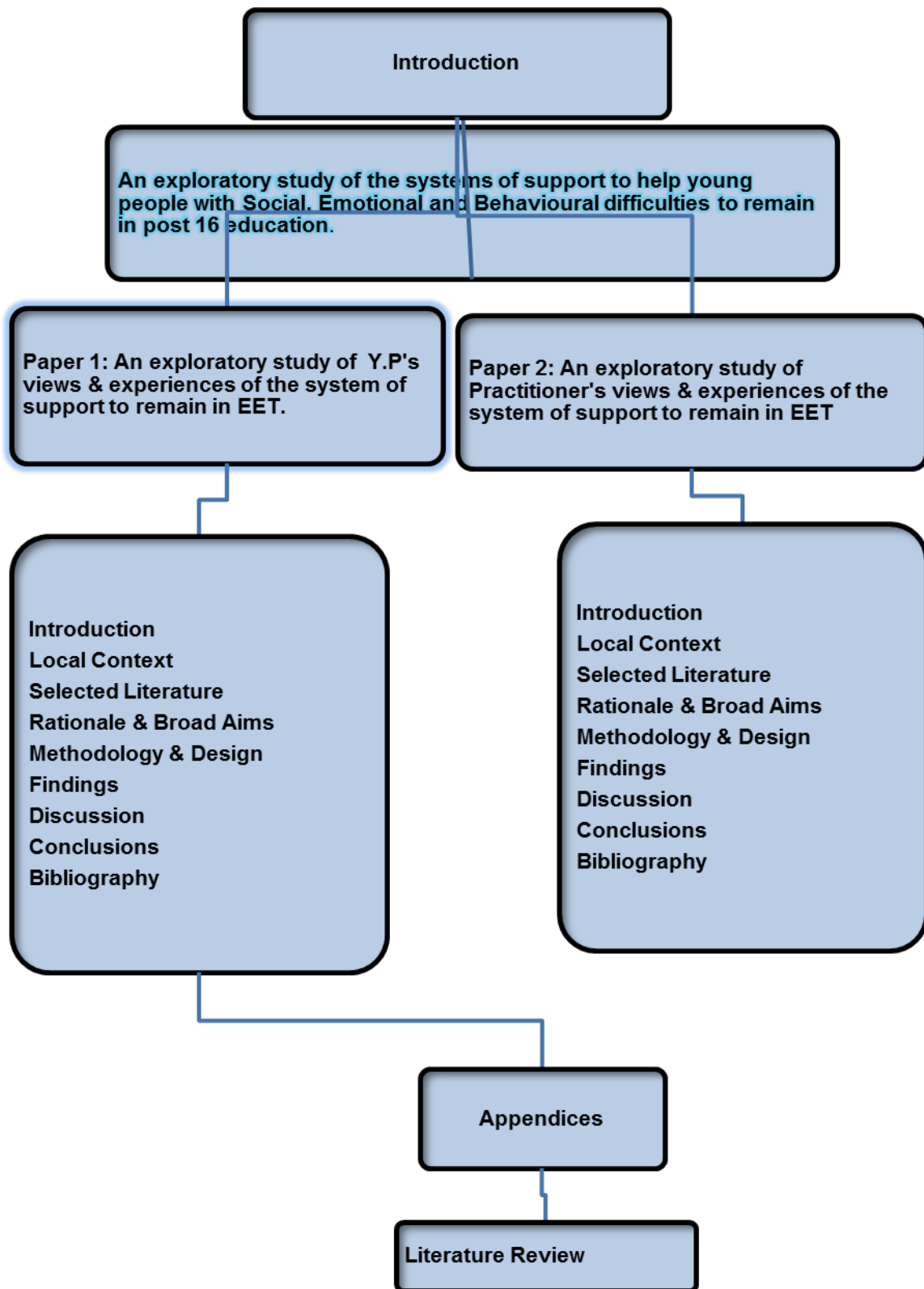
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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │    Introduction     │
                        └─────────────────────┘

┌───────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│  An exploratory study of the systems of support to    │
│  help young people with Social. Emotional and         │
│  Behavioural difficulties to remain in post 16        │
│  education.                                            │
└───────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ Paper 1: An exploratory      │   │ Paper 2: An exploratory      │
│ study of  Y.P's views &      │   │ study of Practitioner's      │
│ experiences of the system of │   │ views & experiences of the   │
│ support to remain in EET.    │   │ system of support to remain  │
│                              │   │ in EET                       │
└──────────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────────────────┐   ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│                              │   │                              │
│ Introduction                 │   │ Introduction                 │
│ Local Context                │   │ Local Context                │
│ Selected Literature          │   │ Selected Literature          │
│ Rationale & Broad Aims       │   │ Rationale & Broad Aims       │
│ Methodology & Design         │   │ Methodology & Design         │
│ Findings                     │   │ Findings                     │
│ Discussion                   │   │ Discussion                   │
│ Conclusions                  │   │ Conclusions                  │
│ Bibliography                 │   │ Bibliography                 │
│                              │   │                              │
└──────────────────────────────┘   └──────────────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │     Appendices      │
                        └─────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │  Literature Review  │
                        └─────────────────────┘
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Overview of two papers

Since 1997, there has been an on-going commitment to reducing Social Exclusion (SE). Within this has been a goal of reducing the number of young people (YP) identified as Not in Education, Employment and/or Training (NEET). Within this group YP with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) present as a having worst post-school outcomes of all YP identified as having Special Educational Needs (SEN) (Wood and Cronin, 1999).

This study is a timely response within the current political context of reducing the budget deficit and cuts to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). Alongside the current political context the Education and Skills Act (2008) has been implemented which means all YP will have to remain in some form of Education, Employment and/or training (EET), up until the age of eighteen.

The area of research emerged from a personal interest in supporting the needs of YP identified as having SEBD. During my time as I trainee I had the opportunity to work in the local SEBD school and became aware of the precarious position YP with SEBD face making the transition from specialist to mainstream post-16 EET. In the local area there is no post-16 specialist provision for YP with SEBD. Thus, YP have to make the transition into mainstream post-16 settings. Data from a local report '*The 14-19 year olds: Vulnerable Groups Project*' (Learning Skills Council, 2007) which focused on what supports YP with SEBD to access post-16 EET, found that in later years more students were entering Further Education (FE) or work-based training. However, the Connexions data collected annually highlighted low retention

rates. The project found in some years 20 to 30% of school leavers from the local SEBD school were deemed NEET by November.

This was a two part study, paper one was concerned with the YP's views and experiences of what supports them to remain in post-16 EET. Paper two was concerned with exploring the views and experiences of a range of practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in post-16 EET. This small scale study was informed by Co-operative Inquiry (CI) (Paper one) and Illuminative Enquiry (IE) (Paper two). It was carried out in the unitary authority where I completed my training in Doctorate of educational, child and community Psychology.

In paper one focus groups, semi-structured interviews and member checking were used to elicit the views of the YP with SEBD. Paper two was informed by paper one as the themes which emerged from paper one created the semi-structured interview schedule in paper two. In both papers views were elicited through individual semi-structured interviews which were analysed qualitatively using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006).

Findings from papers one and two were assimilated and the implications for improving future policy and practice were considered. Consideration was also given to the role Educational Psychologists could have to inform future ways of partnership working to secure positive outcomes for YP with SEBD.

The following research aims were addressed:

1) What can we learn from the YP's experiences of the education system and their views on what supports them to remain in EET?

2) What are the YP's views and experiences of leaving specialist EBD provision and entering mainstream EET?

3) What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET?

4) What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on the transition for YP with SEBD into mainstream EET?

5) How can this inform future policy and practice?

Summary of findings

The key finding from paper one was the value YP placed on relationships they formed with practitioners who supported them. For many of the YP Grovehill (SEBD) was their first positive experience of the education system. The findings suggested the YP making the transition into mainstream EET expressed the view that there was no support in place once they left Grovehill. Additionally, the lack of practitioners in post-16 that knew and understood their needs, coupled with feelings of a lack of belonging and acceptance in their new environment were identified as particularly challenging. YP's people's difficulty articulating if they needed help emerged as significant risk factor when entering a large and unfamiliar EET setting. This coupled with the YP's perceptions that practitioners in post-16 EET did not understand their needs resulted in the YP experiencing significant challenges in the first eighteen months post-Grovehill. In this particular study three out of the five participants became NEET before the end of their second year of post-16 EET. Often the YP's disengagement from EET emerged as a rational response to small challenges which they did not feel equipped or supported to solve. This resulted in the YP reverting back to familiar patterns of negative behaviour and experiencing exclusion from the EET setting.

The YP identified the presence of Erica, a learning mentor as the most important source of support. However, when the YP were unable to access Erica it was evident that the lack of a wider system of pastoral support presented as a significant challenge for this vulnerable group. This study highlighted the challenges of including YP with SEBD within mainstream settings and illustrated that YP's experiences were contrary to the intentions of the current inclusion policy.

Paper 2 explored the views of the practitioners, key findings which emerged included a disparity between settings which related to between settings value and beliefs systems, the expectation in FE college to behave like an adult and conform to an existing system, as well as the lack of support practitioners receive to understand and meet the needs of YP with SEBD. The dilemma of inclusion versus attainment was found to be a significant challenge for practitioners when trying to meet the needs of the YP. Practitioners discussed the importance placed on academic progress within post-16 settings and how for this group of YP often their emotional and behavioural difficulties presented as significant barriers to them experiencing success. Key areas highlighted included: practitioners own competencies in meeting the YP's social, emotional and behavioural difficulties alongside the challenges the YP's faced trying to meeting academic targets within mainstream settings. Findings which related specifically to transition identified; across settings that there was a lack of a formal transition plan and limited access to resources and funding in post-16 settings. Within FE settings the lack of accessible pastoral support was identified as a key area for development. Finally, all participants identified the need for a clear strategic vision to inform future practice.

Significance and contribution

Through a design informed by CI and IE the participants authentic voices have been heard and can deepen our understanding of the complex system of post-16 EET and inform future practice. Prior research has identified there are a limited number of studies exploring the views of pupils with SEBD (Haydn and Dunne, 2001, Olser *et al,* 2002). Research on transition into post-16 EET is an under-developed area, a position supported in the literature on post-school outcomes. Therefore this study is a timely response to illuminate the key issues which can support, or hinder YP with SEBD successful inclusion in post-16 EET.

Additionally the use of eco-systemic theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) as a conceptual framework to shape the study and provided a useful lens to explore and recognise how all the elements of the system interact. Eco-systemic theory argues that change in one part of the system can affect other elements. The use of eco-systemic promotes recognition of how the development of co-operative relationships within the system could reveal solutions to existing challenges and is suggested as a useful conceptual framework to understand current and inform future practice.

As a result of the findings the need to develop improved partnership working to ensure positive pathways for all YP is recommended. EPs are well placed to support the individual, operational and strategic development of such plans. Additionally the study highlighted the importance of early interventions approaches to support YP to feel adequately 'psychologically resourced' to navigate post-16 EET. The findings also suggest the simple solution of YP with SEBD making the move into mainstream post-16 EET is more complex and

requires a more carefully considered transition plan which is informed by all stakeholders in the process. This is a key element to securing more positive outcomes for YP with SEBD.

Table of contents

Paper 1

Sections of paper 1	Page number
Abstract	16
Introduction	18
Selected literature	20
Methodology	30
Findings	47
Discussion	67
Bibliography	85

Paper two

Sections of paper 2	Page number
Abstract	100
Introduction	102
Selected literature	103
Methodology	115
Findings	125
Discussion	143
Bibliography	165

List of tables

Paper 1

Table number	Title	Page No.
1	Thematic analysis: Codes	44

Paper 2

Table Number	Title	Page No.
1	Practitioner's roles	119
2	Thematic analysis: Codes	122

List of figures

Paper 1

Paper 2

List of Appendices

Abstract

This paper is positioned within a co-operative Inquiry interpretative paradigm. This paper is one of two. This study focused on YP with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) and their views and experiences of the system of support to help them remain in EET. An adapted co-operative inquiry (CI) methodologies was employed which emphasise participation

This research aimed to address this gap by giving voice to the YP and their views of the education system. Additionally, the views of the YP were sought to deepen our understanding of YP's needs and level of support they require to remain in EET.

The research took place in a unitary authority in the South West of England. The participants in paper one were five male students who had left specialist provision for YP with SEBD following completion of year 11. Ages ranged from 16.5-17 years. Their views were elicited through individual semi-structured interviews which were analysed using a thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke 2006).

The key finding from paper one was the value YP placed on relationships they formed with practitioners who supported them. For many of the YP Grovehill (SEBD) was their first positive experience of the education system. The YP making the transition into mainstream EET expressed the view that there was no support in place once they left Grovehill. Additionally, the lack of practitioners in post-16 that knew and understood their needs, coupled with feelings of a lack of belonging and acceptance in their new environment, were identified as particularly challenging.

Three out of the five participants became NEET before the end of their second year of post-16 EET. The YP identified the presence of Erica, a learning mentor as the most important source of support. However when the YP were unable to access Erica it was evident that the lack of a wider system of pastoral support presented as a significant challenge for this vulnerable group.

Findings from papers one and two were assimilated and the implications for improving future policy and practice were considered in the final section of paper two. Consideration was also given to the role Educational Psychologists could have to inform future ways of partnership working to secure positive outcomes for YP with SEBD.

Section One: Introduction

This is the first of two papers which explore the systems of support available for Young People (YP) with Social Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD), to remain in Education, Employment and/or Training (EET). The focus of paper one is to listen to, and consider, the YP's views on what supports them to remain in EET. I have explored this area with YP with SEBD who recently made the transition from specialist provision into mainstream post-16 education.

My interest in working with YP with SEBD has been with me since working as Special Needs Assistant (SNA) in a Special School. I became interested in the principles of an eco-systemic approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) and Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1969, 1970, 1980) to help me understand the behaviour I witnessed. This led to me pursuing a career in educational psychology .During my training experience discussions I had with staff at a special school for children and young people (CYP) with SEBD led to an interest in the long term outcomes for these pupils.

The present chapter intends to set out the context for the research and addresses the rationale for the study, which was conducted in an urban unitary authority. This includes:

- Examining the national and local context

- A consideration of selected literature which forms part of the overall literature review

- Identification of the broad aims and research questions

1.1 Policy and Practice

Since 1997, there has been an on-going commitment to reducing Social Exclusion (SE). Successive Labour Governments aimed for the full participation of all CYP to improve outcomes and life chances (*Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 year olds Not In Education, Employment and/or Training* (NEET) SEU Unit, 1999; Every Child Matters; 2001; Education and Skills Act, 2008). A particular focus was placed on reducing the number of students classed as NEET. The BTG report claimed that every year 161,000 young people between 16 and 18 are NEET; roughly 9% of 16-18 year olds. For a more detailed discussion of NEET and its terminology please see Appendix 1 p180.

More recently the coalition Government has pledged a commitment to securing positive outcomes for post-16 education. Following the comprehensive spending review in November 2010, changes to the 14-19 curriculums and the closure of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) scheme were announced. This is despite EMA have being shown to be a strong incentive for 'disengaged' students to remain in EET (Maguire and Rennison, 2005). These cuts are being implemented alongside the Education and Skills Act (2008) which raised the statutory school-leaving age to 18. This suggests a strong need for research that explores what supports those YP most at risk of becoming NEET.

1.2 Local Context

This study is particularly relevant to the LA where I work as there are no post-16 specialist provisions for YP with SEBD. An unpublished local report, '*The 14-19*

year olds: Vulnerable Groups Project' (Learning Skills Council, 2007) focused on what supports YP with SEBD to access post-16 EET. It found that in later years more students were entering Further Education (FE) or work-based training. However, the Connexions data collected annually highlighted low retention rates (see Appendix 2).

The report identified transition as a significant time of risk. In the following section I will consider relevant literature, starting with that related to transitions.

1.3 Selected literature

The following section is a selection of literature which pertains to the study. To review relevant literature a number of resources were accessed. These included 'Ebsco EJS' and 'Psychinfo' which are 'host' services providing access to a large number of online journals. The most recent editions of the most relevant journals were accessed. A number of relevant journals were accessed, including, 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties', 'Educational and Child Psychology' and 'Educational Psychology in Practice'. The internet search engine 'Google' was also used to access relevant websites, along with accessing government and local government publications. Key words were used within these searches in combination with 'Social emotional and Behavioural Difficulties' and included, 'inclusion', 'experience/perspectives', 'post-school outcomes' and 'mainstream/specialist school', 'social exclusion' 'participation' 'transition' , voice of the YP, NEET.

1.3.1 Transitions

Within the literature on students with SEBD, accounts can be found which considered pupil's perspectives on the effects of residential schooling (Cooper, 1989, 1993), as well as retrospective accounts of experiences of attending an EBD School (Polat & Farrell, 2002; Jahnukainen, 2001). However, there appears to be a gap in the literature which considers YP's perspectives of transition from specialist to mainstream post-16 provisions. It is here that my research can make a contribution to our current understanding.

The Green Paper *'Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs* asked: how can YP with SEN make a successful transition and remain in EET? (DfEE, 1999). This concern was echoed elsewhere in the BTG report (SEU, 1999) and key messages in NEET research (Tunnard *et al.*, 2007). Additionally, '*More Choices, More Chances*' (Scottish Executive, 2006) emphasised the need for tracking and providing support, especially at transition. Current education policies reflect the need to develop good practice around transition points in order to maintain curricular continuity and progression. Boyd (2005) found effective transition programmes should contain four main elements:

- Comprehensive and early exchange of academic information,
- Cross sector work,
- Tracking pupils,
- Targeted transition projects.

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Furthermore, Polat *et al*'s (2001) overview of post-16 transitions suggested YP with SEBD were the least likely to remember attending a transition planning review and found the process the least satisfactory. YP without a statement and those with SEBD were more likely than students with other types of SEN to have been unemployed at the time of the survey (Polat *et al.*, 2001). Pratt (2007) discussed the need to ensure YP's social and emotional needs are considered and not focussed solely on sharing academic information.

There are a variety of studies that have highlighted the difficulties associated with post-16 transitions, yet post-16 retention rates for YP with SEBD are not favourable. The 14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project found in some years 20 to 30% of school leavers from the local EBD school were deemed NEET by November. It is for this reason that research such as the present study is so important.

Criticisms of many of the studies which examine transition are the reliance on questionnaire responses, which often have a low response rate and may alienate participants with low literacy levels, thus highlighting the importance of considering how to hear the voice of the YP.

1.3.2 Voice of the YP

The literature review indicates a lack of studies focusing on YP's experiences of what supports them to remain in post-16 EET. In addition the LA's CYP's Trust Plan 2008-2011 identified a commitment to reducing YP who are identified as NEET (and pledged to include the voice of YP). NEET is of particular significance to CYP with SEBD, as previous studies have demonstrated the often dismal outcomes for this group, (D'Amico & Marder, 1991; Wagner *et al.*,

1992; Boreson 2003, Charlton *et al.*, 2004; Eber and Kennon 2004). Involving CYP in planning and decision making is linked to the idea of increased participation, an area of increasing importance. It is argued that encouraging pupils to be partners in their own learning will promote participation, confidence and self-efficacy (Morris & Pullan, 2007). They also demonstrated that YP disengage from a system in which education is done to them.

CYP with SEN are identified as most likely to disengage from education. The Children's Plan placed a greater priority to raise expectations for CYP with SEN and emphasises the need for research driven by the YP's voices.

Haydn & Dunne (2001) and Olser *et al.* (2002) highlight how despite article 12 of the United Nations Conventions there are a limited number of studies exploring the views of pupils with SEBD. Cruddas's (2007) suggested YP with SEBD voices often are silenced because their voices are deemed unacceptable. This is in spite of statutory guidance (DFES, 2004) which requires head teachers, governors and LAs to give CYP a say in the development of plans which affect them. This research aimed to address the narrowly defined boundaries highlighted in Colley (2001) by giving voice to the YP and their views of the education system. It ensured their voice was heard when identifying what supported them to remain in EET. In the next section I explore the poor-school outcomes for individuals with SEBD.

1.3.3 SEBD, SE and NEET

There appears to be a lack of research around post-school outcomes which focus solely on YP with SEBD. Wood and Cronin (1999) summarised the current

literature and found 22 studies in which EBD students were a subset of other students with disabilities, but only eight that focused solely on EBD students. Key findings were that:

- students with EBD have lower results,

- experience more course failures and have a higher drop-out rate than other populations

Numerous studies have identified the poor outcomes for students with SEBD include secondary school dropout, unemployment and low post-secondary school attendance (Bartusch *et al.*, 1997; Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Bullis & Cheney, 1998; Magg & Kaysiannis, 1998: Murray, 2003; Stevenson & Goodman, 2001). This provides a strong rationale for research which identifies what YP view as important in supporting them to remain in EET. This study focussed on a sample of students with SEBD, and acknowledged that the population itself has a range of challenges associated with definition and the diversity of the population (Avramidis & Bayliss, 1998).

1.3.4 SEBD

There is continuing debate over terminology, definition, causation and treatment of YP described as SEBD (Bennett &der Aalsvoort, 2005). I have chosen to use the term SEBD as it contributes to our understanding of the interactional nature of SEBD. An interactionist view is highlighted by Faupel (1990) who asserts in order to understand 'problem behaviour' we must study the interactions between individual and their environment. This study recognises the significance of the quality and context of the individual's environment, and how, as the child develops, the interactions become more complex (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Although the term 'vulnerable young people' is widely used in the literature it does not have an official definition. This, I suggest can be understood when one considers the range of CYP to which the term 'vulnerable' could be applied. Government guidance such as the Youth Matters Green Paper (DCSF, 2005) defines vulnerability as factors that put YP at risk of Social Exclusion including those of: NEET:

- teenage pregnancy,

- antisocial behaviour and

- crime

For the purposes of this research all YP were defined as vulnerable on the grounds of their SEBD and their relationship with the education system. I would argue that this relationship places them at life-long risk of SE.

In the following section, I briefly consider the role of the EP in supporting YP at risk of becoming NEET.

1.4 Role of the EP

MacKay (2002) emphasises the role EPs have in raising educational achievement and promoting social inclusion. He identified the area of post-school psychological services as a "new field of practice" (Mackay, 2009; p. 5). The majority of research from the UK originates in Scotland, which has a clear commitment to the development of post-school psychological services. This, MacKay (2009) asserts, has not been evident in the wider UK EP services. Hellier (2009) identified that experiencing negative outcomes in the three years

following compulsory school is a powerful predictor for negative life-long outcomes. He argues for EPs to become actively involved in strategic developments to enable sustained change for YP at risk of life-long SE. EPs have an understanding of the psychological and social factors which can impact upon YP's successful engagement with EET. Therefore research from a psychological perspective can, and should, contribute to the growing evidence base on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET. The next section will consider some psychological perspectives relevant to this field.

1.5 Theoretical Aspects

Cooper (1994) asserts historical attempts to understand SEBD have tended to focus on the pupil as being, and having, the problem. The behaviour problems constitute a threat to the order and discipline in the classroom which can result in this group of YP being particularly difficult to include (Visser *et al*., 2002). CYP with SEBD are a special case within SEN as it actually increases their risk of exclusion (Jull, 2008).

Teachers face a difficult task, trying to create an effective learning environment, and at the same time recognising and meeting needs that are particularly challenging. Recognition of these difficulties led to The Elton Report, which highlighted the need for orderly atmospheres in classrooms in order for effective learning to take place (DES, 1989). It is clear that discipline is a vital element of effective teaching and learning. However, it remains important to recognise the complex nature of SEBD which, as Cooper (1993) suggests below, results in simple attributions of blame being inadequate.

Cooper (1993) demonstrates how YP with SEBD are embedded in the ways an individual perceives themselves and their environment. Exploring the views of YP, and their interactions with school and social environments, may help us better understand how to support them in the future. This is particularly pertinent to this study where consideration is given to how schools and FE settings, as institutions, develop structures which foster certain types of relationships between students and staff. A systemic approach is not about being objective; rather it allows for the importance of context and personal frames of reference (Bateson, 2004).

Systemic theories recognise the interactive nature of behavioural patterns, (Cooper and Upton, 1990a). Cooper, (1994) suggests the origins of an ecosystemic approach are founded in the view that the purpose of all human behaviour is interactional. Human beings are social beings dependent on their social environment for emotional well-being:

> Human beings exist within a social web rather like a biological ecosystem, in which the individual's behaviour is both constrained by, and a constraining force upon, the behaviour and development of others with whom h/she interacts. From an ecosystemic viewpoint human behaviour is the product of on-going interaction between influences in the social environment and internal motivations which derive from prior (mainly social) experience.
>
> (Cooper, 1994; p 88)

Such an approach emphasises the way in which changes in any one part of the system influence the whole system (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). So, behaviour is not seen as originating from within the CYP, but from the interaction between CYP and adults. Such an approach shifts the locus of responsibility away from the

27

individual towards understanding the behaviour in the context of the schools and wider community.

1.6   Rationale and broad aims

Since September 2010, LAs have assumed full responsibility for post-16 education. As a result of this change, I believe there is now a greater need to understand the systems of support in place for this group, to ensure they remain included within education up until the age of 18. This study is designed to inform and improve future practice and contribute to our understanding of what YP need to help them remain in EET.

Research on transition into post-16 EET is an under-developed area, a position supported in the literature on post-school outcomes. MacKay (2009) highlights that EP involvement and understanding of the processes involved in transition is poor in England and Wales. Finally the lack of representations of YP's voice within the literature on entering post-16 EET has been discussed. This study will enable us to hear the authentic voice of YP to deepen our understanding of their experiences. YP's voices were sought at a significant point within the YP's journey. Finally the lack of research which considers the experience of transition from specialist to mainstream EET is addressed.

1.7   Research Questions (RQ)

I have identified in my review of the literature the importance of including CYP's views when considering how best to support their needs. However, there is limited research which represents their voice (Haydn & Dunne, 2001; Olser *et al.*, 2002). It is important then to ask:

1) What can we learn from the YP's experiences of the education system and their views on what supports them to remain in EET?

I also wished to explore their experiences on the support they received in the special school for SEBD and post-16 education.

2) What are the YP's views and experiences of leaving specialist EBD provision and entering mainstream EET?

The following chapter details the methodology adopted for the purpose of this research and consideration of the methods of analysis.

Section Two:

Introduction

The focus of paper one is on exploring YP's views and experiences to help inform practitioners working with them, and contribute to the evidence base on what supports YP to remain in EET. The literature highlighted the lack of research which takes into account the YP's perspectives and it is for this reason I chose the methodology and design I will discuss in this chapter.

2.1   Methodology

The starting point of my study emerged from an interest in understanding how YP feel leaving a specialist provision and re-entering mainstream education. The research questions were formed around a desire to understand the YP's experiences rather than explaining it. This, I would argue places it within the world of interpretivism, which is described by Bryman (2001) as:

…a strategy…that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social interaction.

(2001; p. 13)

The research questions were formed around a desire to understand, in detail, the YP's experiences and perceptions. Qualitative methods lend themselves more readily, although I recognise not exclusively, to this endeavour than quantitative methods (Bryman, 2001; Robson, 2002).

I needed to choose a methodology which illuminated key themes experienced by the YP, in order to identify how we can improve the current system of

support. In order to achieve this I needed a methodology which emphasised the contribution of the participants. Co-operative inquiry is about improving knowledge about existing situations. As each situation is unique to the people or situation, the knowledge cannot be generalised or applied, but can be shared (McNiff & Whitehead, 2009). Therefore the aim of this study was not to develop a theory or generalizable truth, rather it sought to illuminate the current experiences YP had to inform and improve future practice.

Within this participatory approach it is argued that, traditionally, society and professionals can hold the power and influence when decisions are made. This was particularly pertinent to the participants in paper one who had rarely been consulted about their views (Lown, 2005). This study sought to address this gap in the research and as a result the methodology adopted was chosen to emphasise my active commitment to the participation and involvement of the participants in the research process as a whole. I acknowledge that the chosen methodology is an adapted form of co-operative inquiry, which was constrained by the realities of real world research.

When considering my choice of methodology and subsequent analysis there were two other approaches that I felt were appropriate; an ethnographic approach and a social constructionism approach. The main reason for not choosing an ethnographic approach was guided by Creswell (2007), who suggested that in order to complete an ethnographic study the focus should include frequent interaction over time. Whilst my study did include involvement over a period of time, I was mindful that within my role as a Trainee Educational

Psychologist (TEP) I had a limited amount of time due to work obligations within the local authority. Additional to this it was impractical for me to be immersed in the day to day lives of the participants, all of whom attended different post-16 establishments. Additionally, traditional ethnographic studies are conducted over a number of years (Robson, 2002). While the option of conducting a micro-ethnographic study would have been a practical solution, it would have meant tightly defining the area of research, whereas I preferred for participants to be able to guide my understanding.

The second option would have been social constructionism with a grounded theory as a method of analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). However, following further reading about qualitative approaches I decided against this. Whilst grounded theory provides a detailed picture of evidence it was not appropriate for the level of initial exploration I was engaged in. Furthermore I was not concerned with building a definable theory of the YP's experiences; rather I was interested in illuminating their experiences to inform a possible agenda of change to improve outcomes. Grounded theory as described by Strauss & Corbin (1990, 1998) identifies prescribed categories and did not have the desired flexibility required in my study. I therefore I identified Co-operative inquiry with a thematic analysis as the most appropriate method of data analysis.

A participatory stance, which reflects my epistemological position as a researcher, is taken in this study. It is a practical and collaborative approach and a number of factors have influenced this stance. Firstly, the research was

committed to exploring the YPs' views. I therefore chose a methodology which moves away from 'researching on' towards 'exploring with' service users and shapers (Fulcher, 1995). Secondly, as mentioned in the values and beliefs section (see Appendix 3), I was interested in an approach that could contain an action agenda for reform. Such an approach could inform and change the current system for future students who make the transition. I have also considered my role as a researcher in detail in Appendix section 4 p. 189

Thirdly, the research was also influenced by hermeneutics (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009), the theory of interpretation. Interpretive approaches aim to understand a particular topic or, concern. The interpretative design was used to understand the meanings of the YP who made the transition into post-16 education.

Following consideration of research methods used by other researchers, the merits and limits of quantitative and qualitative methods and ethical issues, I concluded that using a qualitative method would be most appropriate. A qualitative method enables the research problem to understand in context and within this type of research ideas emerge from the data. Additionally this type of research is committed to the idea of multiple realties and subjective as seen by the participants in the study.

2.2 Characteristics of YP and research design

The design of the study had to enable participants to engage with the research. The characteristics of YP with SEBD have already been discussed. One salient characteristic of YP was the difficulty this group of individuals had talking to unfamiliar professionals. As a result prolonged involvement (Robson, 2000 p 172) was a key part of the research design. Please see Appendix 5, for a discussion of use of prolonged involvement.

A co-operative inquiry (CI) is one of several methodologies which emphasise participation (Reason, 1988, Reason, 1994 a). Co-operative inquiry has similarities with Participatory Action Research which confronts the way "established elements of society hold power through a monopoly on the definition of and use of knowledge" (Reason and Heron, as cited in Smith et al, 1995; p 123).

I was interested in hearing first-hand the participants' lived experiences and asking them what they felt would best support YP with their needs to remain in EET. This contrasts to more 'traditional' research in which the roles of the researcher and the participants are mutually exclusive. In CI these roles are replaced by a co-operative relationship (Reason and Heron, p 125 as cited in Smith et al, 1995).

I acknowledge that this study is an adapted form of CI due to a number of factors. Firstly, due to time constraints I was unable to feed back the themes I picked out from the focus groups. Secondly, CI should contain an action for reform for the participants (Creswell, 2007; p.21). It was beyond the capacity of

this study to put in place an agenda of change, but it is hoped that across the two phases of the study a model of future practice can be suggested to inform future policy and practice.

The RQ were formed following the focus group to elicit their views on what were the important questions. After this I created a list of questions which emerged from reading the transcript of the focus group. A semi-structured interview was created from the list of emerging themes. The final part of the research design was the use of mind maps to feedback the initial themes identified in each participant's semi-structured interviews. The second interview was digitally recorded and transcribed to identify the final themes for the study.

2.3 Participants and sampling

This research took place in a unitary authority in the South West of England. The participants in paper one were five male students (the cohort did not have any female participants) who had left specialist provision for YP with SEBD following completion of year 11. Their ages ranged from 16.5-17 at the time of interview. There were five participants recruited out of a possible six who left the EBD School. The sixth decided not to participate. I was introduced to the students following my work in the EBD School and discussions with staff.

Initial contact was made with the participants though Erica, a learning mentor employed to provide support to students during the transition period. The participants were invited to the study as all had experience of making the

transition into mainstream education and were willing to share their opinions on their experiences. Furthermore, they had all experienced exclusion from a range of mainstream schools. I will now discuss the methods I used to collect my data for the study.

2.4   Data Collection

The following section discusses the various methods employed to gather the data for the study and how this was achieved. Various methods such as focus groups, prolonged involvement and member checking were used to ensure the YP were actively and meaningfully involved in the whole research process. I will now discuss each method in greater detail.Consistent with this methodological approach, I sought methods that would allow me to explore the perspectives of participants and to examine their experiences in the contexts in which they occurred. As such, semi-structured interviews were utilised for data generation (Please see section 2.4.2)

2.4.1 Focus Groups

In this section I will discuss how I used an adapted version of focus groups. Robson (2000) suggests "a focus group interview is a group interview on a specific topic, which is where the focus comes from" (p. 285). Therefore focus groups were chosen as the most appropriate method to gather the YP's views. The purpose of this meeting was to:

- gain informed verbal consent (written consent was also obtained, please see Appendix 14) from all participants

- identify experiences they felt shaped their educational experience

- co-construct the questions to be used in the individual semi-structured interviews.

Fundamental to this study, was the need to build relationships with the participants so they felt supported in sharing their views and experiences of the education system. In order to achieve this, three approaches were considered; focus groups, pro-longed involvement and member checking. The initial meeting was digitally recorded and a transcript produced.

The focus group was an open ended discussion lasting approximately one hour. The presence of the learning mentor supported this process as she adopted a "second researcher role" (Robson, 2000; p 287), meaning she was able to note non-verbal interactions and probe for further information when needed. The participants reported that they found it reassuring to have Erica present at the initial meeting and felt more comfortable meeting with me, as they no longer viewed me as an unfamiliar adult. (Please see Appendix 9)

Following the focus group I identified common themes from the transcript to create the interview schedule. At the beginning of each interview I read through the questions with the participants and allowed opportunities for them to add any further questions they believed were important to explore together. Please see Appendix 11 for a copy of the SSI.

2.4.2 Semi-structured interviews (SSI)

In this section I will discuss the purpose of using SSI as a means of gathering data for the study. SSI's allow the flexibility necessary to elicit the views and experiences of each participant. I was guided by the schedule rather than dictated by it; this was particularly relevant to the participants who have rarely been consulted about their views (Lown, 2005). This method also supports my ontological stance which recognises the need to privilege young people's views as a means to offer insight into their lived experience. In this relationship the participant is the expert. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed for data analysis. Figure 1 below demonstrates the different stages involved in the data collection and analysis.

Figure 1; details each stage of the data analysis.
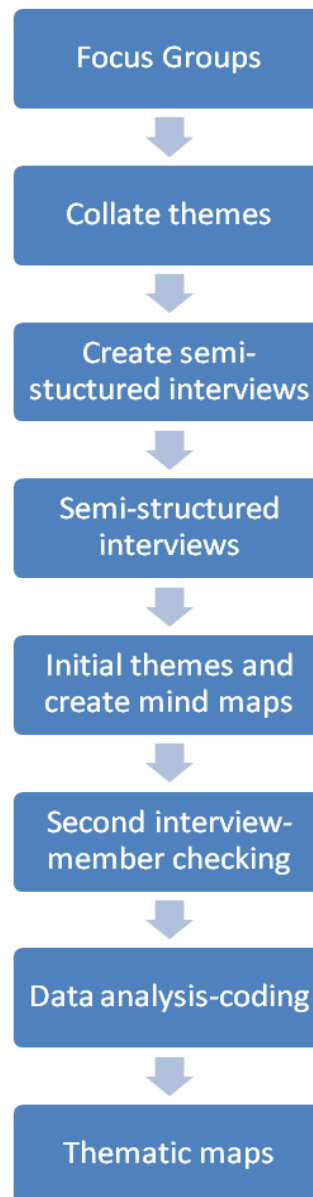
I will now discuss the ethical considerations and data analysis.

2.4.3 Ethical Considerations

The British Psychological Society (2009) Code of Ethics and Guidelines on issues regarding respect, confidentiality, informed consent and safeguarding which were carefully considered and adhered to during the research. Participants completed consent forms and due to the age of the participants their parents/carers also completed consent forms. All participants gave verbal as well as written consent prior to completing the focus group. The nature of their participation was explained fully prior to the focus groups. At all times the participants were aware of their right to withdraw from the research. Please refer to Appendix 13 p.220 for the completed University of Exeter research ethics form. Any quotes taken from the data collection set remained anonymised and confidential to protect the identity of individual participants.

2.5   Data analysis

The first stage of the analysis took place after the focus groups. The transcript from the focus group was read and particular events which the YP discussed as significant were identified and noted in the margins. From these notes I created an interview schedule. The questions covered a range of topics such as:

- Experiences of school pre-EBD school

- Experience of attending EBD school

- Post-16 experiences

- Qualities of an ideal course/teacher

- Examples of help they received to remain in post-16 EET

The interviews took place in a confidential room at either Grovehill or the Psychology service. The participants were given a choice of where they would feel most comfortable to have the interview. After transcribing the first round of interviews, I read and re-read the data and made notes on comments of particular interest and those that required further exploration. I then created mind maps to explore initial ideas with the participants to ensure I had understood what they had said. Please see Appendix 15, for two examples of mind-maps.

Following the second round of interviews I began the in-depth analysis of the data set. The data was analysed following a six phase model of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006) to identify the final themes. The analysis was inductive which meant the codes and subsequent themes were strongly linked to the data itself (Patton, 1990)

Figures two and three outline the process and quality criteria of thematic analysis

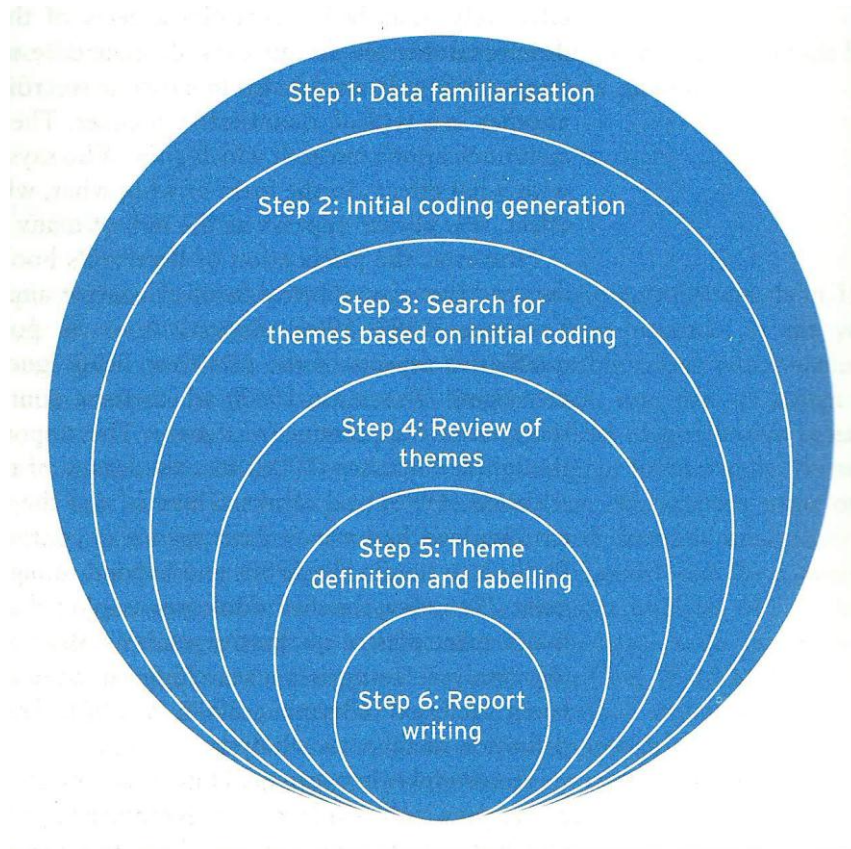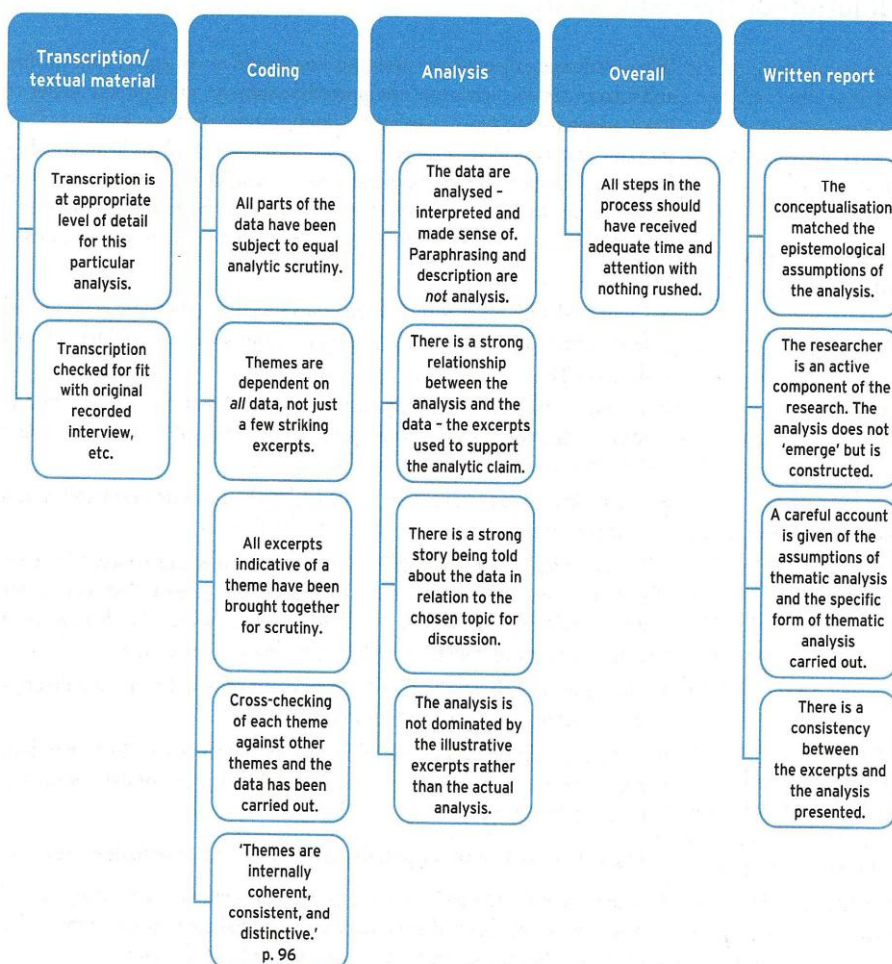*Figure 2: Braun and Clarkes (2006) model of thematic analysis (Howitt, 2010)*

Step 1: Data familiarisation

Step 2: Initial coding generation

Step 3: Search for themes based on initial coding

Step 4: Review of themes

Step 5: Theme definition and labelling

Step 6: Report writing

Figure 3: The quality criteria for thematic analysis (Braun & Clark, sited in Howitt, 2010)

Transcription/ textual material	Coding	Analysis	Overall	Written report
Transcription is at appropriate level of detail for this particular analysis.	All parts of the data have been subject to equal analytic scrutiny.	The data are analysed – interpreted and made sense of. Paraphrasing and description are *not* analysis.	All steps in the process should have received adequate time and attention with nothing rushed.	The conceptualisation matched the epistemological assumptions of the analysis.
Transcription checked for fit with original recorded interview, etc.	Themes are dependent on *all* data, not just a few striking excerpts.	There is a strong relationship between the analysis and the data – the excerpts used to support the analytic claim.		The researcher is an active component of the research. The analysis does not 'emerge' but is constructed.
	All excerpts indicative of a theme have been brought together for scrutiny.	There is a strong story being told about the data in relation to the chosen topic for discussion.		A careful account is given of the assumptions of thematic analysis and the specific form of thematic analysis carried out.
	Cross-checking of each theme against other themes and the data has been carried out.	The analysis is not dominated by the illustrative excerpts rather than the actual analysis.		There is a consistency between the excerpts and the analysis presented.
	'Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive.' p. 96			

Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest inductive coding as "a process of coding the data without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions". This was important as the final themes identified were strongly linked to the data itself. Please see Appendix 8 & 9 for examples of the coding. I began with a systematic initial line by line coding which I then re-examined as initial categories began to emerge. Throughout this process I

wrote down thoughts and ideas which continued throughout the analysis process.

Following initial identification of codes, I looked at each interview and identified similar meaningful data extracts which illustrated the same code. This also allowed for new codes to emerge upon each reading of the transcripts.

After all data was coded, different codes were sorted into potential themes and analysed to identify overarching themes. This involved finding relationships between the codes and if necessary, merging them.

Table 1: Thematic Analysis – Details of Codes for the theme Transition and change

Theme	Sub Theme	Code Number	Code Name
Transition and change	Affective Factors	17	Fear starting a new place
		27	Stressed in new environment
		32	Isolated
		39	I don't fit in
		40	Unfamiliar Students
		74	Fear of change
		124	Overwhelmed by size of group
		164	Sacred I'll get something wrong
		166	I did feel like I belonged in FE
		168	Lack of confidence talking to people who don't know you
	Systems of support during transition	44	Unable to identify who can help in post-16 settings
		69	FE Staff don't care
		104	Unable to identify who could talk to about

			career advice
		85	Connexions not viewed as agency he would talk to
		62	Lack of help with learning in post-16
		78	Lack of plan if placement broke down
		83	Positive experience of help
		41	Influence of school environment on how I behave
		87	Familiarity of environment important
		98	I need to know my way around the building
		120	YP find it difficult to start in a new place
		157	Important to get to know and trust people
		162	Recognise need to have a plan but don't what it is
		167	No plan if placement breaks down
		170	I need to know my teachers

This resulted in an initial thematic map, see figure 4.

Figure 4 Initial thematic list, showing five main themes

Identity	Relationships	Locus of control

Affective factors	Experience of the eduction system
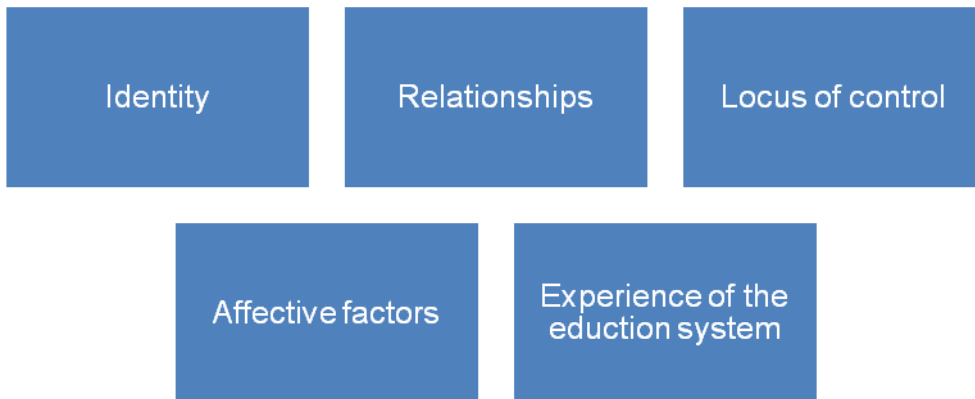
Following the initial creation of figure 4 a refinement of themes began. At this time it was evident that some themes could collapse into one theme and/or became sub-themes of the three final themes which became the conceptual model presented in section 5. Final themes were identified and named to create a conceptual model of the system of support.

I will now consider the findings of the research which emerged from the data analysis.
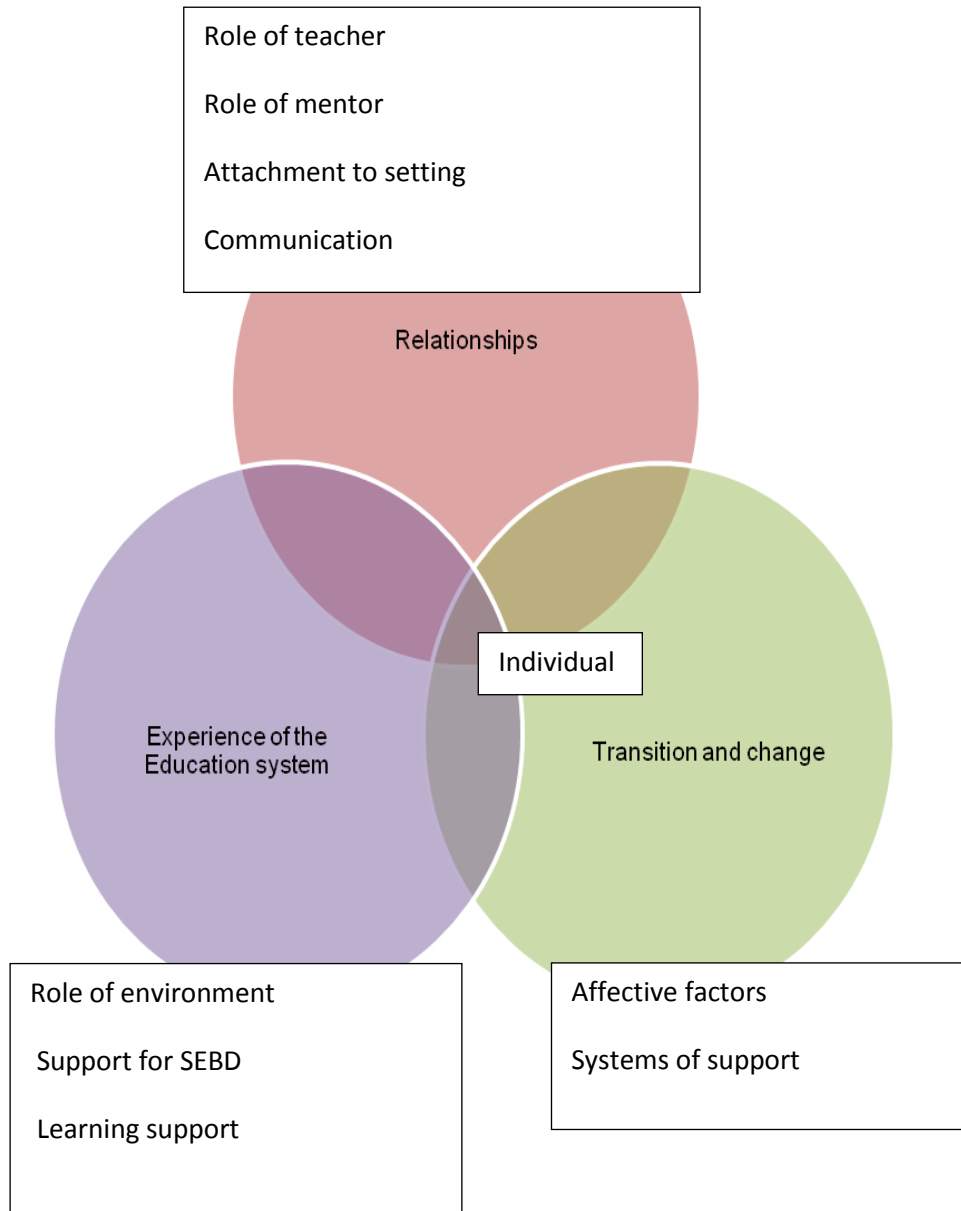
Section 3   Findings

3.1   Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings which emerged from the data generated by the study which sought to address the research questions identified in section 3.2 and 3.3.

The goal of this study was to explore the perceptions of the five participants on what supports them to remain in EET and give authentic voice to their experiences. A further aim of the research was to critically address issues that impact on the YP's ability to feel included in post-16 EET. Furthermore it aimed to identify implications for future practice to support the successful inclusion of students with SEBD in post-16 mainstream EET.

Over the course of the analysis a model emerged which I will present to offer a clearer conceptual picture of the focus of this study. Please see Figure 5.

Figure 5: A model of the systems of support

Role of teacher

Role of mentor

Attachment to setting

Communication

Relationships

Individual

Experience of the
Education system

Transition and change

Role of environment

Support for SEBD

Learning support

Affective factors

Systems of support

This model is shaped by the theoretical approaches which underpin this study, namely a systemic approach to understanding SEBD. It aims to provide a conceptual model where the individual is central to the model and the three themes interlink to represent key factors elicited from the participants on what supports them to remain in EET. It has been informed by the themes which

emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The themes reflect the nature of the interview questions which were constructed to elicit information to inform the research questions. These themes were 'relationships', 'experience of the education system' and 'transition and change'.

The findings are formed from the findings from the focus groups, semi-structured interviews and the second interview to feedback the themes. In order to ensure that anonymity is maintained the participants names are not their real names.

3.2   RQ1: What can we learn from the YP's experiences of the education system and their views on what supports them to remain in EET?

Throughout the semi-structured interviews the importance of an established relationship was identified by all participants as a significant factor in supporting the YP to remain in EET. The importance of relationships in the educational context has long been recognised and this study demonstrated that for this group of YP relationships with adults emerged as a significant supportive factor to help them remain in EET.   Positive adult relationships often act as protective and remedial factors in the lives of YP with SEBD (Cooper, 1993).   In the conceptual model presented key factors identified are:

- Relationships with adults
- Relationship to setting
- Relationship with mentor
- Communication

.

3.2.1 Relationships with adults

Throughout the interviews the YP underlined their need for a caring, understanding and flexible system. The importance of caring relationships and the power of such positive relationships was a dominant theme which appeared to support their development towards more positive pathways.

> Like they talk to you have a laugh with you and get to you know really …. I don't how to put it really sort of like letting them into your life really, how you get on with them, having a laugh and stuff." (Rick)

However, once the YP entered post-16 mainstream education the lack of such established relationships was a predominant factor which led to them feeling excluded and alienated in a system marked by uncaring relationships and, in their opinion, oppressive teaching practices.

> "Yeah but it's just me in situations like I mean I'm easy to get along with once you get to know me but they just judge a book by the cover don't they... if a teacher knows what you're like and they know how you have to be treated and then they'd know how you like to be treated wouldn't they?...Erica told them I was statemented and all that shit but they didn't care did they?" (Rick)

My interpretation of the interviews highlighted relationships with staff to be a significant factor. The students that participated frequently reported their impression that teachers failed to understand their needs or have high expectations of them in mainstream settings. With this in mind I will now consider what the students' told me about their relationship with the setting.

3.2.2 Relationship with setting

The findings suggest Grovehill was the first time this group of YP experienced a sense of belonging in an educational setting. However, when they moved into post-16 the YP described how the combination of unfamiliar staff, large groups and a lack of a safe space contributed to their feelings that they did not belong.

> "I only liked this school really of the schools I've gone to, I mean I liked the PRU, that was alright but Grovehill was ace…It's not like most schools, they're so big, they're like, he aint gonna do nothing, he aint going to do well in life, they look down, they don't make you feel positive. I think they cared about you, they gave a shit here. It was different really." (Rick)

When the YP were asked to discuss post-16 settings the YPs' feelings of a lack of belonging became evident:

> "I wouldn't say nervous, I'd say more like out of place really…like you don't belong there really" (Reece)

For the YP this sense of not belonging emerged as a risk factor for dropping out. The YP identified Grovehill as school where they felt accepted and understood. This contrasted sharply with descriptions of post-16 school environments, which the YP described as unwelcoming and unfamiliar. Attachment to school (Smith, 2006) has been identified as helpful to identify school environments which are inclusive. The YP's views suggest the low levels of felt security impacted on their ability to successfully engage in the classroom.

3.2.3 Relationship with mentor

All five identified Erica, the learning mentor, as the most significant individual who supported them to remain in EET. Key characteristics of this relationship included:

- being listened to,

- being understood and

- advocacy

The interviews emphasized a lack of a wider system of support for the YP and an over-reliance on Erica for support. This was particularly evident when all five participants identified Erica as the only adult to help them if they needed it.

> "Because you had quite a lot of support in here at Grovehill. And when I left I had none, had hardly nothing. It was scary. J said the same cos when I was like before I left that I couldn't wait to leave but I'd come back here if I had the choice" (Alan)

> "There was just Erica really. "Cos I would have quit if Erica weren't there….I actually did listen to her, I was like, yea, that's true. So if Erica weren't there, I wouldn't have got the qualifications… Yea I think I probably would have been chucked out if it wasn't for Erica. Because I got chucked out quite a lot of times in there" (Rick)

The YPs' experiences illustrate how when Erica was not available the YP felt they could not cope and began to disengage from education. These experiences demonstrate the isolation the YP experienced once they left the familiar environment of Grovehill. It suggests that for this group of YP there has been a lack of consideration given to the emotional impact of leaving a school environment where this group of young males experienced their first experience of adults understand and accepting their needs.

> "Someone I could get on with really. Someone there, that would do me, happy days. That it'd do me well, someone I know or someone I could meet, that I could have a laugh with. (Rick)

> *"Most people they just can't sit down and talk to you there is no point telling them cos they can't listen to you. They just think he can't be bothered, you say I'm not going to do it I can't be bothered doing it today I'm just going home, Yeah she tries to help you out and stuff"* (Jake)

For three out of the five participants, their placements broke down in the first 15 months. When we discussed where they could have sought support after the placement broke down, the participants were unable to identify any options other than their learning mentor.

Erica was also identified as an advocate for the YP, providing a voice when they felt unable to get their point of view of across.

> "She sort of like put it in a better way than me I don't really it's hard to describe but she'd say it better than me I think" (Reece)

Rick and Alan also discussed how he felt staff in his new setting did not understand his difficulties and once again highlighted how Erica supported talked with the staff to make them aware of his emotional and behavioural difficulties.

> "I don't think he did (understand), but Erica, I think when Erica explained it all to him, I think he did get better... Yea having Erica there to explain was good for that." (Rick)

> Well yeah I think they did (understand me) after awhile but not straight away and that's why I found it hard to try and talk to them but when Erica explained it to them I could explain it as well, I found it a bit easier after that" (Alan)

> "Yes, she'll sort of build bridges sort of thing, whatever you call it like, 'cos I wouldn't be doing it else. Like she knows all the, loads of people in education and stuff like that, so I wouldn't be doing it if it wasn't for Erica. Not a chance. I think I would've left the engineering college like a long time ago, if she weren't there "(Reece).

> "Yea, Erica sort of, well all the way through really she helped, like when I was at, when I was in the college, they like pulled me out of all the things….like sometimes I was like not turning up and just

stuff like that. And I think I would have left if Erica weren't there, because she sort of like spoke to them….she sort of like eased it all out sort of. (Reece)

Evidently Erica was a significant person for all five participants and her core characteristics contributed to the YP's positive views of her role. However, the study also highlights the vulnerabilities this group of YP have entering into an unfamiliar mainstream environment. The study demonstrates the importance of the staff in post-16 establishments understanding and recognising the impact the change of school environment has on this vulnerable group. The findings illustrate that the current system is not addressing the YP's needs and interventions need to be considered which recognise and value the interactional nature of social relations within which problematic behaviour can occur. The lack of consideration given to the YP's emotions, feeling and motivations appears to contribute the YP experiencing a repeated pattern of social exclusion from the educational environment.

This study puts forward a strong argument for greater consideration to be given to building a wider system of support to ensure the YP feel supported and included in mainstream post-16 education. All of the participants reported that without Erica they would have dropped out.

My interpretation identified two key areas of concern. Firstly, lack of a wider system of pastoral support that the YP can access as and when it is needed. Secondly, the support YP need to articulate the difficulties they experience. It is this second point that I will now explore in section 3.2.4.

3.2.4 Communication

Throughout the interviews the YP found it difficult to ask for help when they needed it. In addition it was evident the YP felt more comfortable communicating with familiar adults and this presented as a significant barrier to accessing support in post-16 education:

> "…well like with assignments and stuff and I didn't know who could help and there were all teaching and that. Cos they said you can go to the library but I didn't want to go to people up there. I don't know them and if it's easy and I might find it hard then they might think you could have done that on your own." (Alan)

> "A few of them but not really, but Erica was always there and she sort of like, she could sort of get my point across better than me could to them. I mean 'cos like I could say something like it wouldn't come out right or whatever. You know what I mean, but she I could sort of tell her" (Reece)

> "Well like I'm sorry I'm not very good really at being creative, that's the hardest bit really for me is getting it out. I just wish I could get it out really" (Reece)

> "Yeah like you get to know people more I mean there are smaller classes and they get to spend more time with you and get to understand you more I suppose but it's different when you leave you are sort of on your own again" (Jake)

Participants felt experiences such as these were a significant factor in them dropping out of post-16 education. When the YP were placed in situations which require them to ask for help, their rational response was to become disruptive and/or drop out.

> "Yeah totally I'm not great at that. It's just knowing what to next really, knowing who to contact and speak to certain people and people like Erica know what to do really" (Reece)

> "I had a blip for a couple of weeks, didn't come for a couple of weeks and got I used to go down Rick , I used to tell my Nan I'm going to college now, dump my stuff in the bush…"Erica. She told me to come back. *She* helped us to come to college I think….I never wanted to do

the till. Cos you have to do the till and I never wanted to do it, Yeah, loads of reading on that till… so I just didn't want to do it and I stopped going" (Tim)

While it would be simplistic to think one of these problems is the cause of the YP dropping out of education it seems that for these pupils the cumulative effect of having one or more of these problems is debilitating and with this particular cohort resulted in three out of the five participants becoming NEET. This evidences a need for settings to engage in a dialogue with the students on what is helping, or hindering, them to feel included within the new system.

3.3 YP's experience of the education system

Throughout the focus group and semi-structured interviews the YP's experience of the education, both within mainstream and specialist provision emerged as a significant theme when discussing support or lack of support received to remain in EET. Key sub-themes which emerged as significant for this group of participants included:

- Role of environment
- Wider systems of support
- Transition plan

3.3.1 Role of the environment

Key concepts which emerged from the impact of the school environment included:

- access to a 'safe space',

- size of class

- need for structure and familiarity

The YP described how access to a space to calm down at Grovehill helped them better managing their emotional needs and reduced the number of emotional outbursts.

> "Well you had a place to go and calm down and like the teachers and that they wouldn't just stop and stay aghhhhh...They'd stop and say it in a calm way…" (Jake)

However, in post-16 education it was evident the lack of access to a safe space, in the YP opinion, contributed to YP engaging in disruptive behaviour when they felt overwhelmed.

> To be honest I'd treat the same as I'd like to be treated not different… but then if like John (FE teacher) had a problem I'd be like yeah go on, cool off for five minutes, but he wouldn't do that to me. He'd say sit there or you loose the EMA...(Rick)

Participants' accounts also highlighted the size of the class was a factor which appeared to contribute to their feelings of a lack of security in a new environment:

> "The group size, like the teachers, they're more understanding…they more adapt around you rather than trying to make you fit in with a huge group…obviously in a huge school, they can't just stop and then help you, because there's like, there's like forty other people trying to work… like the teachers have a go at you for not keeping up and you get cross and then it just goes downhill from there really." (Reece)

The EBD setting was described as a learning environment where teachers got to know the students and understand their behavioural reactions.

> **"**At Grovehill it seems like they do it for more than a job it 'cos they enjoy doing it whereas some teachers are doing it for a job if you know what I mean. It just feels different in other environments and schools"(Reece)

3.3.2 Understanding SEBD

Throughout the interviews it was evident the YP's experiences of the education system and receiving support to manage their SEBD varied across educational settings. Frequently the participants described the return to post-16 education as re-entering a system where their needs were not understood or accepted.

> "When I told them I had ADHD they said well I hope you know, one little thing and you'll be kicked right out. I was like yeah I've learnt to control it I'm going to really try to behave… she said you've got to have your temper under control and I'm not going to say no am I because they won't take me on the course. " (Rick)

Three out of the five participants described how they were asked to leave classes because of their behaviour and eventually either excluded, or asked to find an alternative placement.

However, the YP reported at Grovehill support was put in place for both their behavioural and learning needs.

> "In Grovehill you can do what you want, well not do what you want but you get help. They know how to help you help you really with ADHD and stuff like that like in normal schools they don't have a clue" (Alan)

> "I don't know really they treat everyone the same, if you're statemented or not they treat you the same. They could have given more help and tried to understand like they did at the other school. Not treat me like a kid but

it's like be more lenient instead of being like a dick. At college I didn't get any help at school I did" (Rick)

My interpretation of these findings suggests the need for creating more inclusive environments in post-16 education with a particular focus on raising awareness of the needs of students with SEBD.

3.3.3 Experience of support for learning difficulties

The YP discussed the help they received with their learning. While this predominantly related to pre-Grovehill, it appeared to shape their views of education and their life-long view on the value of education:

> "I felt really left behind, everyone else was getting the help and I wasn't. I mean you'd be scared to put your hand up because you don't want people knowing do you? When I came to Grovehill the classes were much smaller" (Jake)

> "No, it hard to learn, I didn't have no one to one and they took me out of class instead, they wasn't helping me or nothing. So instead of working, I used to just get in trouble. It was the reading and writing was the hardest I'd say and they weren't helping" (Tim)

The YP described the lack of help they received with learning and explained how this resulted in frustration, the emergence of behavioural difficulties and the beginning of a lack of engagement with learning. Instead, in the YP's opinion, their challenging behaviour becomes the predominant focus which contributed to the YP's eventual removal from mainstream education.

The participants' accounts illuminated the genuine difficulties they experience asking for help and the need for a wider system of support.

Section 3.4 RQ 2 What are the YPs views and experiences of leaving specialist EBD provision and entering mainstream EET?

Throughout the literature on NEET transitions are highlighted as a critical period for 'vulnerable' groups such as YP with SEBD. The semi-structured interviews elicited a range of views on key factors which YP identified as significant in their experience of making the move from specialist to mainstream post-16 EET.

3.4.1 Affective factors

The YP described feeling overwhelmed by the number of unfamiliar people and the new environment. This provoked feelings of stress and anxiety alongside a lack of confidence interacting with other students.

> "I don't know really it was scary full on, I think Rick helped me a lot. He just like he doesn't care. Yeah it was a full on daunting task….. I walked through the long corridor, started walking up the stairs, seen the queue, so I walked straight back out and went home…It was a big step .A big step. No, I don't like being in big crowds…well I used to have about 6 and it like jammed up to like 50 and I was like wow. It was like bad at times" (Alan)

The YP explained how their lack of confidence building relationships with unfamiliar staff/students resulted in them feeling like they did not 'belong' in the new setting.

> ". So I had to go to ***** and it's so big and you don't really know people unless you know them outside of school and stuff and it's hard. I just get wound up with all of that…Well you sort of fit in then I mean you don't want to stand out really do you. It feels easier if you know people isn't it then you feel like you can talk to them better and stuff. Otherwise you are on your own and everyone else knows their way around and stuff and I can't deal with that." (Reece)

> "Well you sort of fit in then I mean you don't want to stand out really do you. It feels easier if you know people isn't it then you feel like you can talk to them better and stuff. Otherwise you are on your own and everyone else knows their way around and stuff and I can't deal with that." (Reece) "Well like I missed a few sessions a week I didn't go and I was like crap so I didn't go the next day or the next and I didn't want to ring them up and speak to them so I talked to Eirica and she rang them

and she said they'll take me back. I was worried 'cause I've missed a few days i thought I was going to be in trouble."

"I think so you get to know someone you can feel more comfortable around them speak to them better and stuff… well like communicate with them they'll understand you more, you and you'll understand them better and everyone just seemed happier there (Grovehill) it's different when you leave, scary... (Tim)

"Because I had new teachers I didn't know how they were going to be. I never really knew how they were going to be and I can't handle that. 'Cos some of them there, some of them were a bit hard to tell how I would get along with" (Alan)

"For me it's meeting new people, that is the hardest thing and going from a little class to a bigger class it's scary. You're used to a little class where you get more help and when you go to college there is going to be way more people around… So it mostly makes people go into this nervous box and you've got to try and stop yourself and try you best, give it a go." (Jake)

"Well like I missed a few sessions a week I didn't go and I was like crap so I didn't go the next day or the next and I didn't want to ring them up and speak to them, I was just freaked out… Erica was always there and she sort of like, she could sort of get my point across better than me could to them. I mean 'cos like I couldn't say something like that it wouldn't come out right or whatever. You know what I mean … so I talked to Erica and she rang them and she said they'll take me back. I was worried 'cause I've missed a few days I thought I was going to be in trouble." (Reece)

The findings illustrate the YP's emotional vulnerability as a significant risk factor which appear to contribute to their feelings of alienation and their lack of belonging within post-16 education. Throughout the individual and collective data sets references were made to the YP's emotional experiences of leaving specialist and entering mainstream EET which suggest it is an area which requires further exploration. This finding is also supported in the writings of

Maras & Knutwick who suggested the 'emotional' element of EBD is not given the same consideration as the 'behavioural' element (Maras & Knutnick, 1999).

Conversely the YP identified the role friends from Grovehill can have in supporting them during the move to a new setting. Friendships with peers were identified as a protective factor for the participants and contributed to their need for continuity and familiarity during this uncertain time. This was demonstrated in the YP's accounts Alan joined his new course with a peer from Grovehill and this supported him when he felt like leaving. Conversely Tim discussed the difficulty of leaving a familiar group of peers and the difficulty he had joining a new social group.

> "I was well scared Erica helped me like come to college though and probably Rick my mate he told me to stay here, because I was going to leave but he told me to stick at it as well" (Alan)

> "Well like everyone knows you at Grovehill and then you leave and it's nothing. Yeah I mean it's fine when you get to know people and that. Like when I did the engineering thing it was big but it wasn't that big so you got to get to know people and stuff but then you go to ***** and it's so big and you don't really know people unless you know them outside of there and stuff and it's hard" (Tim)

The ability to make and sustain intimate friendships, and the availability of support networks of friends, siblings and other important social ties have been associated with resilience, both in childhood and later life (Newman and Blackburn, 2002). These findings indicate the need for thought to be given to establishing links with peers entering post-16 to build a support network.

3.4.2 Systems of support

A key finding within the study was the participant's inability to identify adults within post-16 they could ask for help if they were experiencing any difficulties.

Key areas which the participants identified included; support with learning, careers advice as well as someone to talk to when they needed help.

> "Yea, because you had quite a lot of support in here at Grovehill and when I left I had none, hardly nothing. It was scary. Jake said the same…. I couldn't wait to leave but I'd come back here (Grovehill) if I had the choice" (Alan)

> "Yeah, I was going to quit half way through. I was in it like that, but then I was like, I've done half of it, no point in quitting it. Rick got kicked off it. Well about two months after I was like, I was on, but then it was like my mate *****, he was brilliant, he said, there's no point in quitting it, you've just got like get the qualification….So I did the course, me and M are still in touch" (Tim)

Factors such as; an unfamiliar post-16 education system, difficulties articulating when they needed help and low confidence emerged as significant barriers for the YP.

> "Erica was good, proper and like the bad help was when I needed help and no one was there and I tried to ring Erica but I couldn't get hold of her and I can't speak on the phone properly so I didn't leave a message and then you are on your own really..." (Alan)

> "There was no-one really just Erica otherwise I was on my own. Erica she sort of like rings you up checks you in college, has a chat she almost nags you to go so you end up doing it …." (Reece)

The participants did not access other support agencies such as Connexions. Outside agencies were viewed as unhelpful and pointless:

> "They such bullshitters [Connexions] like nothing helped me … it was stupid, it was pointless. I didn't want a lesson plan….I got a letter from them the other day, just saying how I'd like to check up on you, and I was like, no way (laughing)" (Alan)

However, two participants explained support from their family was a key factor which helped in the first year of making the transition:

> "…I could go home and talk to my parents and that when I had a bad day and they could ring up and make sure I get more help." (Jake)

A key issue which emerged from the interviews was the YP's lack of engagement in planning for their future education. During the semi-structured interviews, a range of questions focused on exploring why they choose particular post-16 courses. The YP's responses were brief and throughout all five interviews I found it a particular challenge to ascertain their level of engagement in choosing post-16 courses.

> "I never ever knew what I wanted to do. I still don't really know what I'm going to do now. I only did stuff because they sort of put me in it" (Alan)

> I don't know really, you end up where you are. No, you make your plans as you go that's the way I am. (Jake)

For this group of YP, their educational future was not something they considered important. The YP people responses demonstrated their reliance on adults at Grovehill to choose their courses and plan for their future EET. Their failure to engage with choosing post-16 courses was further complicated by the YP's reluctance to leave Grovehill.

> "No I didn't think, I didn't care, I didn't give a shit about that stuff I would have just stayed here". (Rick)

When we discussed who supported them to make their decisions about post-16 all five participants identified staff in Grovehill. Connexions were not viewed as an agency the YP would engage with while planning their next steps:

Not at all, no, waste of space, not at all, waste of space. (Rick)

The lack of a plan about the future was also evident when the YP were asked to consider what they would be doing in six months and five months' time

> "Don't know really, you end up where you are. No, you make your plans as you go" (Jake)

This finding highlights the need for greater consideration to be given at an earlier stage of ways to meaningfully engage YP in the decision making process.

One example illustrated the level of engagement the students had in setting goals and planning for their future, often decisions were based on friends choosing a similar course or the adults at school directing them towards a particular course:

> "I only did it because my mates were going on it because Rick went on it. That's why I did it… I can't do stuff where I'm on my own. I know I sound stupid…. I got to like do something that I know people. I don't know, I think that's a confidence thing or something" (Alan)

The YP were unable to recall any transition meetings they attended. During the interviews they all expressed the view that they felt involved in the transition process, however, they found it difficult to give examples of why they choose a particular course or their plans for their future education.

The findings suggest for this group of YP they relied on a small circle of support, namely Grovehill School and Erica. Once the YP left a familiar environment it is evident they were ill-equipped to access support in a new school system.

I will now discuss the findings in detail and consider implications for future

practice

Section 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The initial aim of this study was to acquire a better understanding of the YP's experience of support to remain in EET, to listen to, and learn from their views on what supports them to remain in EET. As such the aims of my study were met by the voice of the participants which allowed for a greater understanding of their experiences of support to remain in EET.

As already discussed, numerous follow up studies have identified the poor outcomes for students with SEBD, which include high rate of school dropout, low employment and low post-secondary school attendance (Bartusch *et al.*, 1997; Blackorby and Wagner, 1996; Bullis & Cheney; 1998; Magg and Katysiannis; 1988, Murray, 2003, Stevenson and Goodman 2001.

The findings discussed in this paper should be interpreted with caution and are not presented as applicable to all students with SEBD. This study is a small but detailed exploration of YP's perspectives and addresses the gap within the literature of considering the 'voice' of the student. McNaughton (1997) and Morrow and Chappell (1999) argued that support and services for individuals with SEBD must be based on their concerns and experiences. This study has illuminated what the YP consider as important, which in turn will inform local policy and practice.

The following sections will draw on the main findings from the thematic analysis to identify key areas which can support successful social inclusion of students with SEBD.

4.1.1 Relationships

A key area was the importance of established relationships with staff. Participants discussed the need to develop and maintain relationships that provide a motivation for them to participate in post-16 education. Mihalas *et al.*, (2011) noted that the extent to which students perceive support from others appears to be an important indicator of internalizing and externalising behaviour difficulties. As students perceive less social support they engage in increased problem behaviours. The YP in this study gave examples of returning to previous patterns of behaviour when overwhelmed by the demands of an unfamiliar environment:

> "I got in a stress, and then he [other student] went like that, on his chest, and he went, sir, he just hit me…He didn't ask me what happened. I lost it then and started throwing chairs around…And that was it. I got kicked out didn't I" (Rick)

Student's perception of emotional support has been demonstrated as the greatest predictor of students' social skills and academic competence (Mihalas *et al.*, 2011). The implication of these findings is the importance of cultivating caring relationships with receiving staff as a protective factor for this vulnerable group of YP. I will discuss the implications for practice in the final section of this paper.

4.1.2 Understanding SEBD

None of the participants could identify staff in their post-16 setting whom they believed understood their individual needs. This led to reluctance to seek out support when required:

> "I think so you get to know someone you can feel more comfortable around them speak to them better and stuff" (Reece)

There is a need for wider consideration of staff in post-16 settings awareness of the needs of YP with SEBD. The need to create more inclusive environments which are shaped to meet the needs of all YP is paramount.

> "They don't accept it they don't understand that's the way I am. It's like throwing someone who has Down Syndrome and someone who is brainy in the same class and treating you all the same..." (Alan)

The participants shared a view that students with SEBD are not wanted in mainstream education and staffare unable to meet their needs. Participants' accounts revealed the perception that Grovehill provided a social and emotional climate which addressed their need to feel understood and valued. This is a foundation upon which adults could then begin to support the YP to make positive choices about their behaviour and learning. However, in post-16 EET the lack of this nurturing climate was a significant barrier to the YP accessing support.

Farrell and Tskalidou's (1999) review of mainstream teacher's attitudes indicated that they tend to have limited tolerance and negative views towards the re-integration of pupils with SEBD. Lloyd and Padfield (1996) smaller study

had similar findings. A recent factor is the influence of Government responses to 'managing' CYP with SEBD (DES, 2010). It could be argued that this 'hard-line' view and the increasing tensions between inclusion and school standards places this group of YP at risk of further social exclusion.

4.1.3 A role for Educational Psychology

The most recent Government publication contained few preventative approaches to support YP (DES, 2010). This suggests there is a need for professionals such as EPs, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services and other relevant agencies to provide insight into the YP's social and psychological world and have involvement in informing and influencing policy that is shaped by our knowledge and understanding of YP's need.

MacKay (2002) emphasised the role EPs have in raising educational achievement and promoting social inclusion. This "new field of practice" (Mackay, 2005, p.9) offers opportunities for EPs to become involved at a systemic level providing training and insight into the psychological world of students with SEBD. It would appear that the lack of involvement of EPs in England and Wales in post-16 EET prevents the profession becoming more actively in engaging in work at a preventative level. This has been supported by MacKay (2009) who identified limited involvement in post-16 services as a key factor to the lack of established post-school psychological services on an international level.

Prior to this, I believe it is necessary to explore of views of post-16 practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET. This would identify gaps

within the current provision to ensure tailored support can be provided to all elements of the system of support, which I will now explore in more detail.

Section 4.1.4 Systems of support

The findings suggest it is not one particular factor that results in YP dropping out of education but a combination, as identified in Figure 2.

An eco-systemic perspective, which includes the social and interpersonal experiences and social and emotional development of individuals, could acts as a framework to plan support for YP with SEBD. A systems approach recognises the organisation of the system and how the parts communicate, their independence, define the system (Souter, 2001). The model proposed in this study highlighted the importance of YP's:

- communication with the education system,

- relationships with staff and

- personal experiences of the transition to mainstream education

It demonstrates how they interact to impact on their successful inclusion within post-16 EET. According to this perspective the pupil is part of a web of interconnecting systems which include:

- the internal physical and mental systems of the pupil, which interact with the classroom system;

- the school system;

- the neighbourhood system and

  the family system

(Cole, 1998).

Within this study I focused on the YP's interaction with the school system. Further research could build on the findings of this study by exploring family and wider community systems.

4.1.5 Formal and informal relationships

Participants' accounts suggested that consideration needs to be given to the types of relationships formed with students. The most valued identified source of support was Erica, the learning mentor. Participants valued both the formal (when Erica attended meetings and acted as an advocate) and informal (for example, meeting for coffee, telephone conversations, etc.) opportunities. The quality of the relationship contributed to the effectiveness for the participants. The evidence-base for mentoring relationships is inconclusive, partly due to the difficulty in defining what mentoring is (Hall, 2003).Dubois (2002) found mentoring programmes offer the greatest positive benefit to young people considered at risk of SE.

Key characteristics of the relationship between Erica and the participants included:

- trust
- mutual respect
- promotion of self-worth
- positive self- image

Cooper *et al.* (2000) found that where such positive relationships are provided, YP are less likely to challenge those who they perceive as a figure of authority. Erica, as source of support, served to reduce the anxiety and provided a sense of familiarity for the students that facilitated growth.

> "Erica was good, proper and like the bad help was when I needed help and no one was there…Well I find it hard explaining stuff and its worse on phones and stuff…I guess it's a confidence thing isn't it?" (Alan)

Research into practices using attachment-based approaches has identified the relationship is not the medium for intervention but"…is a significant intervention itself" (Gaskell, 2008; p. 28). The study demonstrates the positive effect of the relationship between YP and Erica. This appears to provide a supportive and empowering approach which the YP highly value in the vulnerable point of transition in their lives.

In spite of the positive impact Erica had for participants, two important findings emerged linked to systems of support. This included the YP's own social resources, alongside the lack of a wider system of support in post-16 education. I will explore the implications of this in section 4.2.

4.1.6 Value of a systemic approach

Copper (1993) argued that emotional and behavioural difficulties are embedded in the ways the individual perceives themselves and their environment. Jackson and Panyan (2002) suggest social ecology could serve as a basis for developing

a broad range of interventions for environmental and social factors that may affect the behaviour of students with SEBD. This study has taken a contextual stance and identified a number of environmental and social factors which require further consideration these include:

- the classroom context

- teaching practices

- lack of wider systems of support

Consideration needs to be given to developing an environment which is inclusive for all CYP and recognises the effect environment and context has on YP's feelings of inclusion. Educational approaches which recognise the importance of broad multifactorial nature of learning differ significantly from traditional approaches to teaching (Cefai and Cooper, 2009). They argue the remedy is to utilise educational practices that encourage YP's feeling of emotional security and the development trusting and supportive educational relationships.

Paper two will address the need to support practitioners to understand the social and emotional influences of learning and consideration of how modifying teaching practices, alongside how practitioners relate YP can support them to feel secure on their new and unfamiliar educational setting.

4.1.7 Preparation and transition planning

The study demonstrated that for this group of participants' greater consideration should be taken to adequately prepare YP to navigate the post-16 education

system. YP's experience of transition planning suggested that, while the settings were successful in securing a place for the students, there were a number of key areas which require greater consideration. For instance:

- preparing YP to deal with challenging situations,

- collaboratively setting long term goals and

- actively engaging students in the transition plan.

The study demonstrates the importance of collaboratively putting in place a personalised programme, which is focused on building on the YP's strengths and needs. A person centred planning approach (Holburn, 2002) is one tool which could be utilised to address the challenge of engaging YP in setting and identifying what could support them to remain in EET. This study has demonstrated unless we begin to work with YP to plan for a positive future we are at risk of a number of YP with SEBD becoming NEET and experiencing lifelong social exclusion. This is a key area for development to ensure solutions are found if we are to truly enable YP to access education in a way that is meaningful for them.

Section 4.1.8 Emotional/Affective Factors

Frequently within the literature on EBD it has been suggested the 'emotional' element of EBD is not given the same consideration as the 'behavioural' element (Maras & Knutnick, 1999). Maras and Knutnick (1999) suggested a social interactional approach which takes into account the emotional and social relational context of each individual's experiences. Throughout the participants'

accounts references were made to the YP's emotional experiences of leaving specialist and entering mainstream EET, suggesting it is an area which requires further exploration.

The importance of preparing the YP to enter into a new and unfamiliar environment is paramount. I would suggest that preparing the YP at an earlier, actively involving them in goal setting and consideration of lifelong aspirations are fundamental for the transition into mainstream EET.

Several authors have reported that teacher attitudes, adult and peer relationships, parental involvement, as well as the student's sense of belonging were important factors toward the successful inclusion of students with SEBD (Cooper, 1993). Strong social support networks, positive school experiences and not being sheltered from challenging situations should provide the YP with resilience skills to navigate what is often a complicated post-16 system.

The implications of involving a wider network of support requires further research, to fully understand and ensure we can adequately provide for this group of YP. Throughout the study the YP relied on their well-established relationship with Erica and without this support where unable to identify who could support them when needed. The implications of a lack of a wider system of support became more pronounced when students encounter situations they find challenging

> "I had a blip for a couple of weeks, didn't come for a couple of weeks.... I was nearly a year into the course I'd say...I never wanted to do the till, cos you have to do the till and I never wanted to do it. Yeah, it's loads of reading on that, they used to help you but, when it gets too packed, they can't always be everywhere can they? So I just didn't want to do it and I stopped going...." (Tim)

Next I will consider the value of listening to the voice of the YP a primary aim of this study.

4.1.9 Voice of the student

The accounts of the students described underline the benefits of listening to what the participants feel would benefit them to stay in EET. The YP have provided evidence of their experience of making the move from specialist to mainstream EET and identified what can support or prevent them remaining in post-16 EET. This study suggests students with SEBD need to be given more opportunities to express their views on various facets of their educational experience, and provided with the skills to enable them to do so effectively. This can then be utilised to inform and improve future practice for YP making the transition.

Cooper (1993) highlighted the importance of schools and teachers supporting students to articulate their views clearly and effectively as possible. Throughout this study participants valued the opportunity to share their experiences but often lacked the confidence and competence in expressing views:

> "I don't know, I can't really describe it really…I don't know, it's hard when like people ask you, it's like it's hard to just think and say what you think." (Reece)

It is evident that schools and post-16 settings need to work together to support YP to feel supported and empowered to articulate their views. This will enable adults to help YP positively problem solve any concerns they may be experiencing about moving to a new setting. Finally, I will consider two key

areas which I feel have direct implications for future practice in supporting YP with SEBD.

Section 4.2 Implications for future practice:

Throughout the discussion a number of key areas were identified which have implications for future practice. I will now consider suggestions for the development of a wider system of support and secondly how we can ensure YP feel psychologically resourced

4.2.1 Systems of support

Firstly, I will consider the need for a wider system of support to ensure these YP don't fall through the gaps in a complex post-16 education. The importance of YP's need for emotional support cannot be underestimated. Subsequently the significance of role such as Erica's, is viewed as valuable in supporting this group. Erica's role as a single contact remaining alongside the wider system is recommended. However, as the participants reported, navigating the post-16 system is complex, therefore, the allocation of a key worker whose specific function is to bridge the gap between providers of services and YP who need services, is suggested as a way of ensuring this group of vulnerable YP have every opportunity of successful inclusion in mainstream post-16 EET (Beattie, 1999).

The Beattie report recommended the allocation of a key worker whom operates as a link to co-ordinating the range of agencies. The main purpose of this key worker could be to act as a single point of contact for all partnership agencies supporting the YP. Their report outlined the need for the roles of key worker and mentor to be clearly defined. Future work in this area should focus on the development of a steering group to take a strategic lead in supporting the needs and development of provision for this group. It is recommended that all efforts are made to ensure the YP's views are actively sought and participation is not tokenistic but instead YP and adults share the decision-making (Hart, 1992)

Consideration should also be given to drawing on wider community resources, such as youth workers to build on the YP's networks of social support outside of Grovehill. Practitioners such as Youth workers are well placed to form genuine relationships which the YP value, while providing them with opportunities to engage with their wider social community. Engagement with YP is the cornerstone of any intervention, recent attachment based applications with youth offenders has provided a way forward for the successful engagement process for professionals (Geddes, 2005, Youell, 2006, Hughes, 2006 and 2009).

In all of these approaches the relationship is paramount. This study recognises the invaluable role Erica has in the YP's lives particularly with respect to building relationships between settings. However, the study demonstrated the over-reliance the YP had on Erica and as such raises the need for consideration to be given to building relationships with staff in receiving educational establishments. It is evident that for this group of YP Erica was felt to be their only source of

support and there is a clear need to identify a wider system of support which is tailored to each individual's needs.

It is important however to identify some of the key characteristics Erica which the YP found so supportive. Most resilient youth will cite the supportive adult and caring role of at least one adult who made a difference in their lives. For this particular group who have experienced numerous academic and/or social failures Erica was identified as someone a constant positive adult in their lives. Four out of the five participants cited without Erica they would not have attended FE for any period of time.

> "Thing is I met her and I liked that she just sat down and explained what she could do and she works with secondary schools so she is a person you can get on with and she gets on with kids…. She can sit down and talk to you if there is anything you need she can just sit there and just listen. Most people they just can't sit down and talk to you… they can't listen to you…Yeah she tries to help you out and stuff (Jake)"

When each YP was asked to identify what supported them in post-16, Erica was the consistent response from all five participants

> "Erica without a doubt, is definitely the main thing for me that's helped, she just sits and listens to you and it's great" (Alan)

> Erica is definitely the main thing, she just sits and listens to you and it's great. It's hard to explain really it just helps you like you just get along with her and you can have a laugh but you know she will help you" (Rick)

The characteristics of Erica described by the YP mirror the principles described by Rogers, (1980) establishing relationships based upon mutual respect in order promote feelings of self-worth and a positive self-image.

Erica was identified as a person who listened to the YP's points of views and tried to identify ways of working together to solve any difficulties they were experiencing.

> "Yeah but it fell apart because there was no apprentices so I just got stuck in *** which was crap"
>
> "Right and at that time who could help you?"
>
> "Just Erica really…It's just knowing what to next really, knowing who to contact and speak to certain people and people like Erica know what to do…No just Erica otherwise I was on my own…to be honest I wouldn't be doing anything if wasn't for Erica. Not a chance. I think I would've left like a long time ago, if she weren't there" (Reece)

The findings demonstrated the difficulties the YP experienced when adults did not understand their needs and/or recognise they needed help. Erica was acknowledged as an adult who could advocate for their needs in post-16.

> "*…So do you think the staff understood that you found it difficult*?
>
> "Well yeah I think they did after a while but not straight away and that's why I found it hard to try and talk to them but when Erica explained it to them and then I could explain it as well, I found it a bit easier after that...I don't really know but like it's just Erica helps because she explains to them better than I could I think" (Reece)

The above section illustrates the significant role Erica had in supporting this vulnerable group of YP. This supports previous research which demonstrates the significant role a key adult can have in building YP's resilience and coping strategies. However, as the findings section demonstrates the lack of a wider system of support remains a significant barrier to the YP remaining in post-16 EET. Paper two will address the role of partnership working to ensure there is a

wider network of support which practitioners such as, Erica, could support YP to access for advice and support to meet their needs.

As discussed in the findings section 5.3.1 the ability to make and sustain friendships has been strongly associated with resilience. Youth workers could be play a clear role in building the YP's links with peers in their own communities and building up their friendship groups outside of Grovehill.

Youth workers also would be suitably placed to work with groups of YP to actively seek their views and consult on ways of moving forward to ensure YP are successfully included in post-16 EET. It is important to recognise YP will make their own decisions; therefore it is imperative that there is flexibility within the system which ensures we can listen to and guide the YP towards positive pathways.

4.2.2   Psychological resources

Secondly I will consider the YP's own social resources; the findings indicated the need for a preventative approach which is grounded in the principles of early intervention. The study demonstrates approaches need to be taken to ensure YP feel 'psychologically resourced' to participate in post-16 EET. Kurtz, 1996 Mental Health foundation report' Treating Children Well' explored the nature and incidence of SEBD and emphasised the need to break the cycle that can lead to mental health difficulties and lifelong social exclusion. Furthermore Morris, M. & Pullan, C., (2007) emphasised the significance of key stage 3 as a time when YP become less engaged with education. This study provides further evidence

for the value of preventative, early intervention approaches. It would be beneficial to ensure YP are actively involved in the transition annual review process, alongside putting in place personalised and group interventions to target the YP's areas of need.

The study demonstrated the value the YP placed on the staff at Grovehill. However, their over-reliance on familiar adults and a lack of psychological resources to draw on highlighted this as an area which merits further consideration. A focus is needed on ensuring the YP feel psychologically resourced to remain in EET. It is advised that work on this begins at an early stage (KS3) and is given consideration at the YP's year 9 annual review.

Gormley (2008) in her study on attachment-theoretical approach to understanding mentoring relationship identified the benefits of an established relationship to support YP's development of key social, emotional and behavioural needs. She identified a number of key areas including development of; skills for self-management (stress management, goal setting, organisational skills) as well as motivation to learn skills related to social interaction (communication, conflict resolution, developing friendships). The need to focus on the above areas at an earlier stage is recommended. It is recommended that key adults actively involve the YP in the development of any interventions. This could help to prepare YP to deal with potential challenges in post-16. EPs would be well placed to support the development of such interventions and build capacity within the school system to work more preventatively. However, it is important to bear in mind that no single approach will work. Research

demonstrates support appears most effective when it is built on the individual circumstances and views of the YP (Lloyd *et al*, 2003)

Section 4.3 Conclusion

The study highlighted these YP have intense needs and they will not be addressed in short-term transition plans. Too many assumptions are made about what YP need and I believe this study demonstrates the most effective approaches should be informed by client views of the service. For a successful transition into EET, the programme of support should be driven by the needs and interests of the YP rather than the expectations of adults

This research elicited the views of the YP on what supports them to remain in EET. It is evident that considerable research has focused on improving 'individual' and social implications of YP's needs within mainstream education, thereby neglecting the relationship element. Moving forward it is recommended that consideration is given to positive and preventative approaches to ensure we break the cycle of YP with SEBD becoming NEET.

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Paper Two: An exploration of practitioner's view of the current system of support for YP with SEBD making the transition into post-16 mainstream education, employment and/or training

Abstract

The aim of this paper was to explore practitioner's views and experiences of the system of support in place to meet the need of YP with SEBD making the transition from specialist to mainstream post-16 EET.

This small scale study was conducted in a unitary authority in the South West of England. A total of eleven participants took part in the semi structured interviews (six males and five females). The participants were selected to represent the range of provisions offered to YP with SEBD in post-16 EET. Semi-structured interviews were used to elicit their views. A thematic analysis approach to analysis was adopted.

Findings were that practitioners identified the importance of cultivating caring relationships, however, a distinction emerged in the FE setting were the focus was on behaving like an adult and conforming to an existing system. Disparities also emerged between settings value and beliefs systems, which appeared to shape the teaching practice and interaction with YP. The lack of support practitioners receive from outside agencies to understand and support YP with SEBD emerged as important factor. Additionally, issues such as the impact of the change of environment from specialist to mainstream EET and school culture emerged as salient features. The dilemma of inclusion versus attainment was found to be a significant challenge for practitioners when trying to meet the needs of the YP. Findings which related specifically to transition identified; across settings that there was a lack of a formal

transition plan and limited access to resources and funding in post-16 settings. Within FE settings the lack of accessible pastoral support was identified as a key area for development. Finally, all participants identified the need for a clear strategic vision to inform future practice.

Systems theory provided a useful conceptual framework to understand the complexity of the interlinked factors which impact on YP access, or lack of access to support to help them remain in EET. Shared themes were identified across the phases of the study which identified that it is not one single factor, but rather a combination of interlinked factors which contribute to YP becoming NEET. The information gathered showed participants across the settings recognised the need for greater partnership working and help for practitioners to help them understand and support YP with SEBD. The study also illuminated the need for better communication between practitioners and the wider system of support. Additionally, the study identified a clear role for EPs in supporting YP and practitioners and implications for EP role are discussed. The study has provided a timely insight into the current system of support for YP with SEBD in light of the move for YP to remain in EET up until the age of 18.

Section 1: Introduction

This is the second paper of an exploratory study of the systems of support for YP with SEBD to remain in EET. The first paper explored the YP's views on the system of support and detailed the reliance of the YP on personal relationships with staff in college and school.

These findings together with literature discussed in the following sections combined to form the rationale for paper 2; namely exploring the perceptions of practitioner's involved in the educational lives of YP with SEBD.

It is hoped that listening to the practitioner's accounts will advance our understanding on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET. Additionally, I hope to provide a conceptual model of the current system of support, drawn from the findings of paper one and two and identify definable features for future practice.

This study is shaped by a systems psychology and the view that one must not understand entities in isolation but understand the relationship of all elements of the system. Systems Psychology recognises that human beings do not develop in isolation they develop in a variety of contexts. Therefore, through listening to the wider system of support it is hoped that I will gain a holistic understanding of the current systems of support for YP with SEBD.

The present chapter intends to set out the context for the research and address the rationale for the study. This includes:

- A consideration of selected literature which forms part of the overall literature review

- Identification of the broad aims and research questions

1.1 Selected Literature

The following section is a selection of literature which relates to the study. To review relevant literature a number of resources were accessed. These included 'Ebsco EJS' and 'Psychinfo' which are 'host' services providing access to a large number of online journals. The most recent editions of the most relevant journals were accessed. A number of relevant journals were accessed, including, 'Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties', 'Educational and Child Psychology' and 'Educational Psychology in Practice'. The internet search engine 'Google' was also used to access relevant websites, along with accessing government and local government publications. Key words were used within these searches in combination with 'Social, Emotional and Behavioural difficulties' 'Teacher Support' 'Attitudes towards inclusion', 'Further Education and SEBD', 'NEET and SEBD'

1.1.1 Policy and Guidance on SEBD

Prior to the Education Act (1981), CYP were seen as maladjusted and attitudes towards CYP with SEBD located the 'problem' within the child (Cooper, 1993).The Education Act 1981 defined Special Educational Needs (SEN) and the SEN Code of Practice (2001) provided guidance on how SEBD may be a SEN. More recently, DfES (2008) defined

SEBD (see section 1.2.2) and provided guidance on the education of children with these difficulties.

The guidance also recognised SEBD as a disability under the Special Educational Needs Disability Act (SENDA, 2001) and emphasised the need for 'reasonable adjustments' to be made to meet the needs of CYP with SEBD. This has arisen from the international culture of inclusion created by key policies (UNESCO 1994, UNICEF, 1989) which argued that all forms of segregation were 'ethically unacceptable' (O'Hanlon, 2003). Since 'The Warnock Report' (DES, 1978) there has been a move towards acceptance and tolerance of diversity in mainstream settings (DfEE, 1997: Education Act: DES, 1981: SENDA 2001: DfEE, 2001).

However, CYP with SEBD face the worst outcomes for students with SEBD. This includes secondary school dropout and the poorest educational, behavioural and social outcomes of any disability group, with little improvement seen over time (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996; Bullis & Cheney, 1998; Kern *et al*., 2009). Additionally, The Lamb Inquiry (Lamb, 2009) found that the most common type of need among CYP aged 12-17 is SEBD, totalling 38% of students at school action plus. Kelly and Norwich (2008) posit that while the legislation puts forward an increasing commitment to inclusion, there remains a 'dilemma': achievement (measured by school league tables) versus inclusion of YP with SEBD.

Cole, (2010) also identified the pressures schools felt to restrict their curriculum and focus on attainment rather than creative flexible

approaches to learning which could support YP's re-engagement with learning. He emphasised the increased pressure practitioners in mainstream and special education experienced as a result of revised framework which guides inspections of schools (OFSTED, 2009).

Due to the Governments 'raising standards' agenda, some schools may be dissuaded from the idea of full social inclusion (Thomas & Vaughan, 2004, Norwich, 2008). YP with SEBD are viewed as more problematic when it comes to inclusion (Visser, Cole and Daniels, 2002). YP's challenging behaviour has always presented a challenge to teachers and schools systems. This is perhaps best indicated by SEBD being the only SEN where the uses of punitive approaches such as school exclusion are viewed as acceptable (Jull, 2008).

Evidently the literature above demonstrates the need for a clearer understanding of how we can best support this vulnerable group. I will now consider the literature which has looked at definitions of SEBD and its implications for interventions with YP with SEBD.

1.2. Definition of SEBD

This paper is concerned with practitioners understanding of SEBD and their views on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET. As discussed in paper one there is continuing debate over terminology, definition, causation and treatment of YP described as SEBD (Bennett

&Der Aalsvoort, 2005) it is pertinent to explore the literature on the definition of SEBD prior to exploring practitioner's views.

The term 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' first appeared in the early 1980's (Jones, 2003) and over the past 30 years there have been various constructions across policy and practice. Each construction of SEBD has been informed by competing discourses from the medical versus social model of disability (Oliver, 1996; Thomas & Vaughan, 2004).

DfES (2008) suggests BESD:

"…covers a wide range of SEN. It can include children and young people with conduct disorders, hyperkinetic disorders and less obvious disorders such as anxiety, school phobia or depression. There need not be a medical diagnosis for a child or young person to be identified as having BESD, though a diagnosis may provide pointers for the appropriate strategies to manage and minimize the impact of the condition"

(2008, pg. 4)

However, Farrell and Polat (2003) report CYP with SEBD characteristically come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds and have often suffered from long term difficulties at home and family breakdown. This illustrates the need to consider a definition which recognises the possible social influences on the development of SEBD.

The intention of The Warnock Report (DfE, 1978), within education was to move away from a psychiatric model to an educational model. The report suggested they found it undesirable to draw a distinction between psychiatric and other EBD. However, I would concur with Maras and Knutwick (1999) who argued this has added to the confusion around terminology.

For the purpose of this study I have chosen to use the term SEBD rather than BESD or EBD. The term SEBD, I believe, contributes to our understanding of the interactional nature of SEBD and emphasises the 'social' element. Additionally, as discussed in paper 1 it has been suggested the 'emotional' element of EBD is not given the same consideration as the 'behavioural' element (Maras & Knutnick, 1999). As I have explained, a systemic view of these difficulties requires them to be sited in an interactional model that recognises the importance of social factors, hence my choice of SEBD. With this in mind, I will now turn my attention to the theoretical approach which underpins the study.

1.2.1 Theoretical approaches

There has been a growing incidence and level of concern about SEBD evidenced at both a national and international level. Copper (1998; cited by Maras and Knutwick, 1999) acknowledged that despite some differences between approaches in the UK and USA, both located the problem within the individual.

Subsequently, theoretical approaches to understanding SEBD have tended to be individualistic in nature (for example, social behavioural

approaches (Bandura, 1977), medical illness (Kanner, 1962) or social cognitive approaches (Dodge, 1993).

Maras and Knutwick (1999) posit SEBD is generally identified within school and teachers tend to focus on behavioural aspects. This, they argued, does not account for social occurrences or emotional aspects of SEBD. The idea that behaviour is best understood in context was advanced by systemic theorists (Cooper and Upton 1990a). Within this approach, behaviour results not from 'within', but from the interaction between the students and either teaching staff, school and/or family situation (Cooper, 1994). Cooper (1999) argues contextual factors refer centrally to the persons with whom YP interact. Maras and Knutwick (1999) call for a social relational approach which views SEBD as founded in interpersonal principles and the development of social relationships.

This study argues that the diverse needs of YP with SEBD need to be viewed holistically. Therefore YP's needs should be considered alongside contextual factors. It is for this reason exploration of practitioner's views on SEBD is important to the overall rationale of this study. Educational settings are complex behavioural ecologies which are often resistant to change (Noell and Gresham, 1993). I considered YP's views of the educational system in paper one. In this paper; I advance our understanding of what supports YP to remain in EET by exploring practitioner's perceptions. I will now consider what the literature reveals about practitioners supporting CYP with SEBD.

1.2.2 School inclusion

School inclusion figures of SEBD demonstrate that CYP with SEBD are as likely to be placed in exclusionary provision as they were 30 years ago (Cooper, 2004). In fact, Jull (2008) argues SEBD as the SEN which justifies exclusion. He discusses how SEBD is the one type of SEN where the use of punitive approaches such as school exclusion is deemed appropriate. He states for this reason we must consider alternative rather than punitive approaches to supporting CYP. Cooper (2001) referred to the prolonged feelings of concern CYP with SEBD provoke in staff. This was further explored by Shearman (2003) who described staff in the primary classroom as "feeling outraged at their skills being rubbished by students with SEBD". Mayer (2001) remarked students with SEN encountered disapproving statements from the teachers at a ratio of 15:1.

Additionally, Van Acker and Talbot (1999) noted that teachers are seven times more likely to interact negatively with students identified as disruptive. So what does research tell us about support given to teachers and other practitioners to support CYP with SEBD?

1.2.2.1 Support for practitioners

Cooper (2006) argues that while it is positive that teaching of CYP with SEBD does not remain the province of 'experts', there is a need for training and dissemination of skills to ensure YP feel included within the education system. Male and May's (1997) study considered stress and

burnout for teachers of CYP with SEN. They found SEBD teachers experienced a high level of emotional exhaustion and challenging behaviour was the source of the most intense stress experienced. This study relied on quantitative data, using a questionnaire to gather responses. My small scale study will add depth to this through the use of semi-structured interviews to elicit a more detailed understanding of the views of practitioners.

1.3 Systems theory

There is debate throughout the literature on what constitutes a system. Sadovski (1974) listed thirty-five different definitions of a system. Bertalanffy (1968) provides a simplistic definition: "Sets of elements standing in interaction" (p. 38). General Systems Theory (GST) highlights the relationship between biological organisms and the environment (Von Bertalanffy, 1968). One of its basic tenets is the emphasis on the context in which phenomena occur (Dowling and Osborne, 1995). This is particularly concerned with the shift from intrapsychic to the interpersonal level and from an individual to an interactional view of behaviour. GST uses assumptions and rules from systems theory to study living things and their relationships (Barker, 1999).

Eco-systemic psychology originated from cybernetics - the feedback and transfer of communication and information (Weiner, 1967) and GST. It looks at an individual's development within the context of relationships and environmental factors. Cooper and Upton (1992a) posit that

systems are continuously interacting with other systems within the environment and change in any one part of the ecosystem will result in an overall change in the ecosystem as a whole. This study is concerned with the interaction between the YP and post-16 environment

This theory conceptualises individuals within a series of embedded systems (Paquette & Ryan, 2001):

- Microsystem - The level closest to the individual and those structures the individual has direct contact with. For example, family or school.

- Mesosystem - This level connects the structures of the individual's microsystem. For example, family and school interactions, the local community.

- Exosystem – This level is the larger social system that the individual does not interact directly with, but that may impact on the individual's development by interacting with some structure in the microsystem. For example, parents work hours

- Macrosystem (the outer layer in the individual's development. E.g. societal and cultural norms/values). For example, Government policies on inclusion (Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs DfEE, 1997, The Education Act, DES, 1981) and the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act DfEE, 2001)

Figure 1 below provides a visual representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory.

Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory.
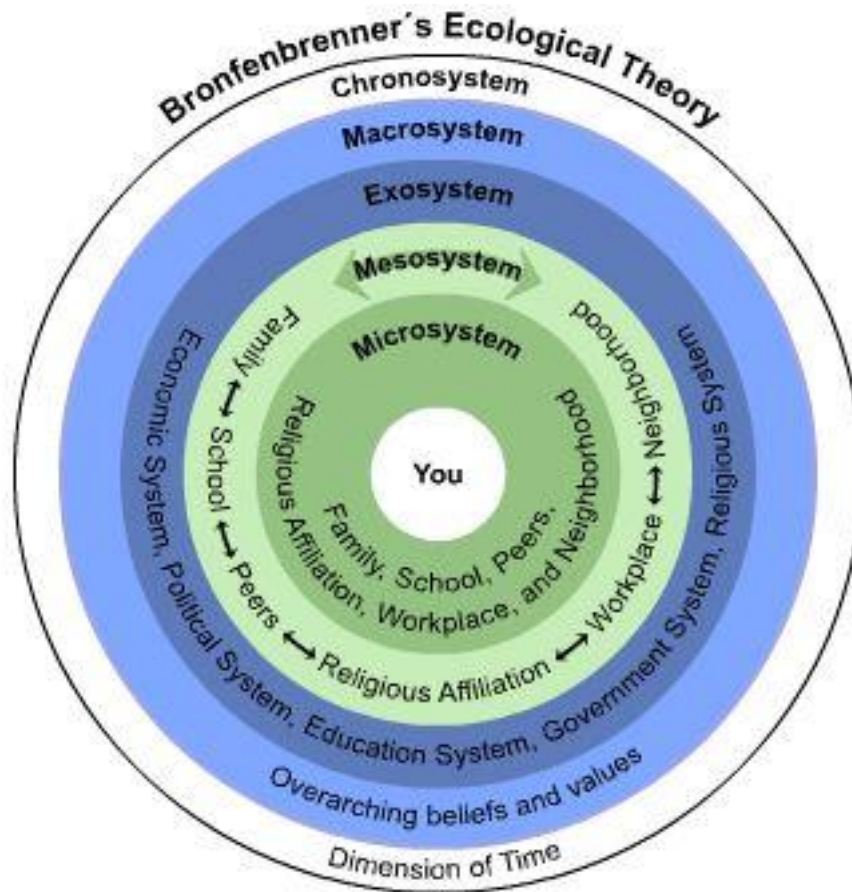
I have chosen ecological systems theory to frame this paper as it provides a conceptual framework to understand the interactions and views of different levels within a complex system.

1.4 Rationale for the study

The study was concerned with gaining an understanding of the current system of support for YP with SEBD to remain in post-16 EET. Paper one focused on exploring the views of the YP who are central to the

system. Paper 2 is concerned with the views of practitioners (meso level) of the system to gain a holistic overview of the present system of support in place.

Within the literature on post-school outcomes there has been retrospective accounts of attending specialist provision (Polat and Farrell, 2002) and consideration of the poor lifelong outcomes for YP with SEBD. However, there is an absence of research which looks at YP and practitioner's views within one study. Additionally this research will consider the experience of leaving specialist and entering mainstream provision, from the viewpoint of the YP and practitioners, as it happens

1.5 Research Questions (RQ)

I have identified in paper one of the study and in my review of the literature the need to explore the views of practitioner's on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET. It is important then to ask:

1) What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET?

Secondly, I aim to explore practitioner's views on the transition from specialist to mainstream EET?

2) What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on the transition for YP with SEBD into mainstream EET?

Finally, I will identify definable features of future practice to support YP and practitioners by asking:

3) How can this inform future policy and practice?

The following chapter details the methodology adopted for the purpose of this research and consideration of the methods of analysis

Section 2 Methodology and Design

2.1 Epistemological stance

In this paper, I adhere to a social constructionist (SC) philosophy, which emphasises that perspective, meaning and experience are socially produced rather than stemming from the individual (Burr, 1995). Therefore, meaning is constructed by human beings as they engage in the world they are interpreting (Crotty, 2009). An interpretivist paradigm is concerned with how meanings are made, focusing on perspectives and personal and social meanings (Norwich, 1998). I adopt this position in this study as I am seeking multiple perspectives on the current system of support. I aim to gain a deeper understanding and consider ways of moving forward to ensure the development of positive pathways for YP with SEBD.

This is appropriate for paper two of this study which recognises that often psychology operates at the individual level and his/her mental life (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008). The position adopted in this paper puts in place an argument for the need for research which acknowledges that we are social beings, parts of networks, organisations (such as EET environment) and groups, all of which shape and influence our perceptions and thoughts.

Human beings are complex organisms and this paper strongly argues for the importance of considering context when interpreting people's perceptions and views. Research has found schools can contribute to CYP's well-being and having well trained motivated practitioners who

can relate to YP is of particular importance (Mazano, Mazano and Pickering, 2003). This puts in place the argument for research which focuses on the meanings practitioners ascribe to their perceptions, as well as the context (relationships and environmental factors) the study considers.

2.2 Methodology

A flexible design consistent with an interpretative methodology is used in paper two of this study. An interpretative methodology was chosen as the study is concerned with individual's perceptions and meaning of their social world. This I would argue places it within the tradition of interpretivism which is described by Bryman (2001) as:

> A strategy that requires the social scientist to grasp the subjective meaning of social interaction, (p. 13 2001).

Interpretative research allows for a detailed understanding of a complex situation. As a qualitative approach, it enables the research problem to be understood in context, which is fundamental to the core premise of this study. Such an approach differs from positivist approach which adopts an objective view that "things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience" (Crotty, 1998, p5,). This study was concerned with a particular context: exploring the perceptions of YP and practitioners making the transition from specialist to mainstream EET. Within this type of research ideas emerge from the data gathered.

An illuminative enquiry (IE) methodology was adopted for this paper. The primary aim of IE is description and interpretation (Partlett and Hamilton, 1972). Burden (1997) argued for a need for an alternative approach to be developed more suited to real world research, which addresses real world issues in the context of which they are occurring. Such an approach aims to "throw light on the actions of ordinary people in their everyday lives" (Burden, p.13 as cited in Norwich, 1998). An IE approach is suited to understanding how education systems and practices work (Norwich, 1998). Therefore I felt this methodology suited the aims and rationale of paper two.

Burden (1998) identifies three key characteristics of IE. Firstly, he suggests IE places an emphasis on the broader context in which any research is taking place, thus supporting the ecosystemic perspective I have argued. Secondly, it recognises that the actions of the participants, their norms and expectations are all inextricably linked to the particular context or situation. Finally, it recognises the political nature of such of contexts and the roles that people play in such political contexts (Burden, 1998).

These points are pertinent to this research which is concerned with the system of support for YP with SEBD, from the perspective of the YP, and practitioners who support them. I have acknowledged the political nature of inclusion of YP with SEBD. Within this study I will consider the implications at a strategic level. IE aims to shed light on a particular situation in a manner that clarifies it and is helpful to the participants. This supports the core purpose of this study: to identify definable

features and practice and consider future ways of ensuring YP are supported to remain in EET. As a result an IE approach was adopted for paper two of this study.

2.3 My role as a researcher

I have considered my values and beliefs and role as a researcher in detail in the appendix section of paper one (see Appendix 3 and section 4).

2.4 Participants

A total of eleven participants took part in the semi structured interviews (six males and five females). This section of the study was concerned with gaining an understanding of the wider system of support in place for YP with SEBD. The participants were selected to represent the range of provisions offered to YP with SEBD in post-16 EET. Table 1 below depicts the roles of practitioners within the education system.

Initial contact was made with 14 settings involved in post-16 education. Due to practitioners' time constraints, and a low rate of responses from organisations, practitioners from seven different organisations were represented. All participants had experience of supporting YP with SEBD in pre- or post-16 EET. Names have been changed to protect the anonymity of the participants

Table 1: Practitioner's roles

Name	Role	Institution
Bob	Head teacher at Grovehill	Grovehill EBD school
Ellen	Transition co-ordinator	Grovehill
Daniel	KS4 co-ordinator and teacher	Grovehill
Paul	Lecturer and member of senior management team	Farleigh Further Education College
Lloyd	Lecturer in sports studies and public services	Farleigh Further Education College
Tom	Mechanic and tutor	South Hill Garage project (Charitable organisation)
Tina	Teaching assistant	Butterleigh Sixth form
Mary	Pastoral care team	Butterleigh Sixth form
Erica	Learning mentor	Employed by the Cluster (a local initiative that is part of Excellence in cities)

Annemaria	Educational Psychologist	Local Authority
John	Operations manager for work based learning and post-16 Entry to employment (E2E) courses	Entry to employment, part of Farleigh FE college (a course for disengaged YP)

2.5 Data collection

Data was collected through a semi-structured interview schedule (See appendix 17). The rationale for using a semi-structured interview (SSI) schedule has been discussed in paper 1 (please see section 2.4.2). The interview questions were generated from the areas YP in paper one identified as important, or absent, in the current system of support. Additionally, views were sought from a range of practitioners (including teachers and educational psychologists) who currently work within the education system. To achieve this I emailed a pilot version of the SSI to seven colleagues who worked across England and asked them to comment or make suggestions for improvement. Replies were returned from all seven colleagues and a copy of suggested alterations is included in Appendix 18.

2.6 Ethical considerations

The British Psychological Society (2009) Code of Ethics and Guidelines were carefully considered and adhered to during the research. Participants completed consent forms and the nature of their participation was explained fully prior to the SSI. When I met each participant I spent time explaining the aims and purposes of the research verbally and provided a typed consent form. This included describing the nature of the research and clarifying that I would be exploring the views of a range of different practitioners to consider the common and divergent views within the system. I felt it was important to make clear to the participants that I would be considering a range of perspectives within the system. One participant stated a concern he had about expressing his views of the educational establishment he worked in. Therefore, I ensured that all information would be anonymised and it would not be possible to identify each EET establishment. Additionally, I explained all information would be held in a password protected secure computer. I felt it was important that all participants felt safe sharing their perspectives on the system of support. At all times I clearly communicated that participants had the right to withdraw from the research at any time. Please see Appendix 19 for a typed copy of the consent form.

2.7 Data analysis

The SSI were analysed using the Braun and Clarke (2006) method of thematic analysis. Data was analysed inductively without fitting into a

pre-existing coding framework. After transcribing the first round of interviews, I read, and re-read the data and made notes on comments of particular interest. After all data was coded, different codes were sorted into potential patterns and analysed to identify overarching themes. This involved finding relationships between the codes and if necessary, merging them.

Table 2:Thematic Analysis – Details of Codes

Theme	Sub Theme	Code Number	Code Name
Transition	Gaps within system	48	Someone to be aware of attendance
		52	Lack of flexibility from adults
		57	Lack of a transition plan
		58	No next step for YP who are not ready
		81	Continue to need support tailored to their needs
		84	Access to EP training was helpful in past, none now.
		94	No knowledge of 140 form
		99	Fragmented practice-needs to be joined up
		104	Need a well-defined pastoral system in post-16
		107	Lack of continued support when YP leave Grovehill
		110	Low independence skills a barrier
		111	Lack of therapeutic support
		122	YP need someone who is responsive immediately
		126	Size of organisation is a barrier
		155	Lack of training re: SEBD
		158	Need to build wider system of support

122

		162	Role of preparing YP is in early stages
		206	Lack of pastoral support in FE
		208	Need to more preventative in transition
		210	FE lack knowledge of YP's needs
		222	Hard to access support in placement breaks down
		231	Training required to help practitioners
			Practitioners need specialist help
			Contrast between Grovehill and post-16 is a big gap for YP to manage

Throughout the process I kept a reflective diary to record my own thoughts and perspectives on the analysis process. I have included an excerpt in appendix 3**.**

In order to ensure that anonymity was maintained the participant's names and names of the settings have been changed. At the initial stage, 262 codes were identified, this followed Braun and Clarkes (2006) six stage model of analysis. Please see Appendix 7 (Paper one) for a more detailed consideration of the stages of analysis. At this time Braun and Clarke's advice is to code for as many potential patterns as possible. Some individual extracts of data were coded once where as others were coded many times to capture the final over-arching themes. Figure 2 below demonstrates initial themes that emerged within the data.

Fig 2: Initial themes within data

Support Systems	Communication	Strategic	Transition
Family/social	Friends	A need to fit in	School environment
Affective factors	Practice and beliefs	Choice of course	Relationship
	Individual needs		
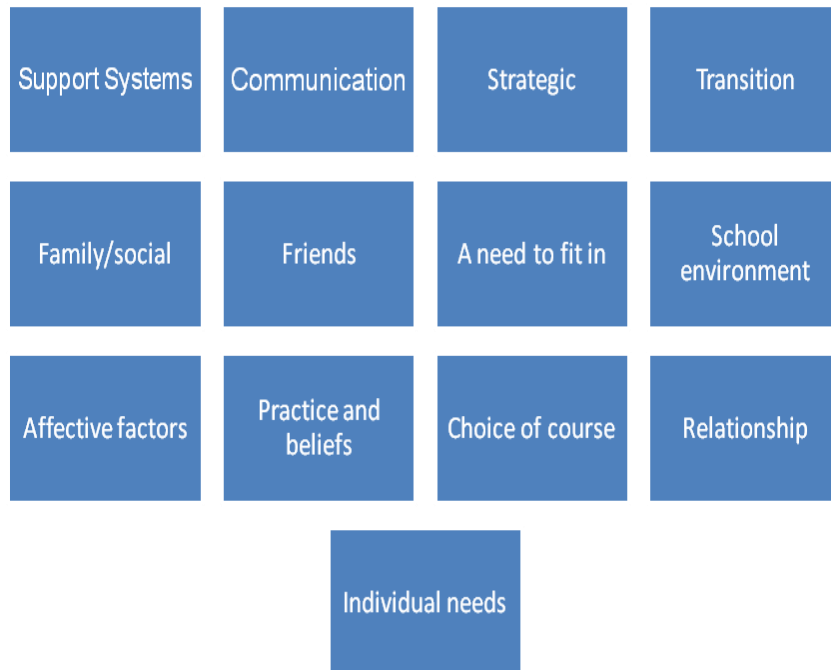
Following the refinement of the initial themes, four overarching themes were identified which have been presented as a conceptual model in Figure 3 in section 3.1.

I will now consider the findings of the research which emerged from the data analysis.

Section 3 Findings

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the themes that emerged from the data. The goal of this paper was to explore the practitioner's views on the system of support for YP with SEBD to remain in EET. Over the course of analysis, different codes were sorted into potential themes and analysed to identify possible patterns (see Figure 2). Through a process of refinement some themes were merged with others, or became sub-themes of explanatory themes. For example, the final theme 'Support' and sub themes emerged from the combination of individual needs, relationships, affective factors, outside/social and friends.

Following the refinement of the initial themes, three overarching themes were identified which have been presented as a conceptual model in Figure 3. This model represents the interacting systems which can act as a risk and protective factors in the current system of support for YP with SEBD.

Figure 3: Conceptual model of current system of support
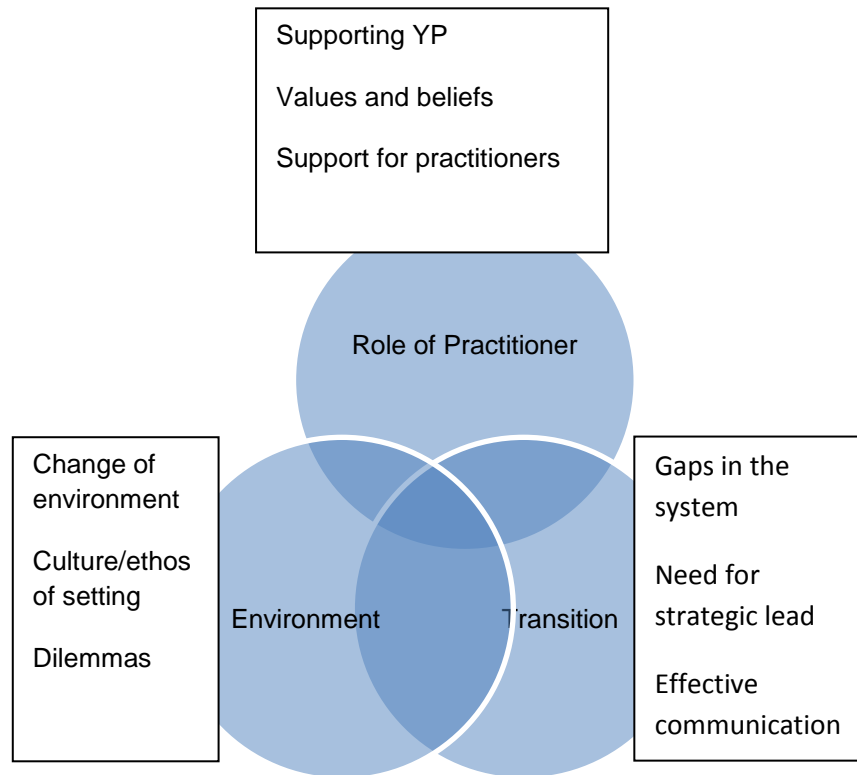
This model is shaped by the theoretical approaches which underpin this study, namely a systemic approach to understanding SEBD. It aims to provide a conceptual model where the three themes interlink to represent key factors elicited from the participants on what supports YP to remain in EET. Systems theory emphasises the interactive features of social systems, subsequently no single factor can be identified as the cause. The systemic approach focuses on the ways in which SEBD can be understood as the product of interactions between individuals and groups. While it is often used in conjunction with other approaches, in this study it has been applied as a useful conceptual framework for understanding complex systems such as the education system.

The school is one of several systems in the YP's world which may serve as a protective context for his/her healthy development (Wang *et al*, 1995, Benard, 2004). The ecosystemic approach is particularly suited to understanding situations when 'linear' approaches fail. It enables the researcher to look beyond the obvious cause and effect explanations and apply a 'systemic' analysis to the apparent need. (Cooper, 2011) This is particularly evident with these findings where each theme is not seen as separate and distinct, rather it is presented as a set of findings presented to illuminate a snapshot of a complex system.

The model has been informed by the themes which emerged from the semi-structured interviews. The themes reflect the nature of the interview questions which were constructed to elicit information to inform the research questions. It does not encompass all the identified themes but is presented to include those most supported by accounts and relevant to my exploration on the practitioner's views. I will consider the findings with reference to each RQ 1 and 2. I will address RQ3 in the discussion section.

3.2 RQ1: What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET?

The practitioners identified a number of ways YP received or lacked support to remain in EET. This support was defined on a number of different levels including individual, practitioner, family and strategic level

of the system. Additionally the practitioners reflected on the current system and identified strengths and areas for development.

3.2.1 Practitioner's role

The practitioners recognised the influence they could have on the YP's experiences of support. They identified areas across the data set as important to their role in ensuring the YP received support to remain in EET. These included consideration of:

- Practitioners' view of their role supporting YP
- Values and beliefs
- Support practitioners require to meet YP's needs

3.2.2 Role supporting YP

The practitioners identified the importance of relating to the YP and building a relationship which is grounded in the principles of listening to, understanding and facilitating the YP's sense of belonging and acceptance.

> "I think one of the things that worked very well here is the fact that we are very open here…I think that's a lot of it because it gave them confidence that no matter what they had a base and we were here…" (Tina, Butterleigh sixth form)

Most participants' accounts revealed their perception of the importance of cultivating caring relationships and establishing a secure base for the YP. However, participants from Farleigh FE College indicated an expectation that YP will behave like adults and conform to a different system:

"They are still in adult environment, they need to deal with consequences…you're in the real world, the adult world not a kids world, you're in an FE college you have to conform to the rules and regulations…" (Lloyd FE College)

The findings suggest a distinction between practices of staff within FE and other post-16 settings. Although the views expressed only represent a small sample from one setting, they do highlight the need for further consideration to be given to establishing relationships with YP with SEBD who enter a large FE college. In FE the adults appear to define their role in a traditional sense of lecturer and learner and have a within-child perspective, whilst other post-16 settings note the importance of the pastoral element of their role.

3.2.3 Values and beliefs

This sub theme relates to the practitioner's own values and belief system. This appeared to affect teaching practice and how the practitioners related to YP. Participants spoke about relating to the YP because of their own life experiences, which they felt enabled them to interact positively with the YP:

"I mean I love it, I relate a lot from my own personal experiences. You know I only learnt to manage that for myself because my parents did the groundwork…I think the real challenge is working with kids like this, they deserve the best society can give them and often they get the worst" (Daniel)

Within the FE setting, practitioners identified that for some lecturers working with YP with SEBD was a significant challenge and not viewed as within their teaching remit.

"I've had experience of working with disengaged YP but some staff if their expectations aren't matched and they don't have the mechanisms, they take it personally rather than professionally. Sometimes you have members of staff who feel they have to win and that doesn't work…" (Phil, Farleigh FE College)

These findings suggest a disparity between value and belief systems between different educational environments which shape the teaching practice and interaction with YP with SEBD.

3.2.4 Support for practitioners

The SSI elicited a range of views on support practitioners receive to meet YP's with SEBD needs. The findings suggested that for the majority of settings they receive little or no outside support from agencies:

"We don't get anything at the moment; it comes back to money again. EPs and agencies like that aren't budgeted for in FE".(Paul, FE College)

This contrasted with practitioners from the 6th form setting who described receiving support from senior management team (SMT) and a well-established network of support within the secondary school. However, they felt this mainly related to support for YP:

"I was going to say on that point too, about the support, *****, our principal provides. She is very much for support and she has brought it, we've got learning mentors, we've got a mental health worker now in the school, fulltime…there are all people we can refer on to if we feel we need to…" (Mary, sixth form)

However, they spoke about a need for focused support for adults:

"The other thing that I find is that we are dealing with very vulnerable students at times and it can be a bit scary as well and you think of the responsibility that you've got… So just support for us in that sense would be really helpful". (Tina, sixth from)

Conversely, staff within FE College and the Garage Project expressed the view that they did not feel training and/or support was helpful, or there was not the time and resources to access it:

"I've had enough of courses at 50 years of age. I just want to do my job, I'm a mechanic but *** is the focal point. I'm not a counsellor sometimes we will contact the 6th form but I'm not going to get involved" (Tom, mechanic, South Hill garage project)

"There are staff who can provide support but I don't think there is enough, we provide training on behaviour management but it's optional, managing behaviour can be a big issue here maybe we need to do more…" (Paul, FE College)

My interpretation of these findings suggests a resistance to outside support alongside the view that pastoral support is not part of their remit. Previous literature has highlighted how educational settings are complex behavioural ecologies in which well-established behavioural patterns usually achieve a state of equilibrium and subsequently are resistant to change (Noell and Gansle, 2009). This may partly explain the resistance to outside support which could affect the overall homeostasis of the system. However, the data highlights opportunities for systemic change which could be supported by a professional such as an EP, who could remain meta to the system and retain the role of 'critical friend'.

3.3 EET Environment

The practitioners identified different elements of the EET environment which they perceived as having an influence on the YP experience of support. These addressed two broad areas:

- Change of environment
- School Culture

3.3.1 Change of environment

All participants identified the challenge of leaving a small familiar environment and entering unfamiliar environments as particularly challenging. Additionally, practitioners from Grovehill and post-16 settings recognised that at Grovehill, YP receive intensive support and are given many chances with their behaviour. This it was felt contrasted with entering mainstream post-16 environment where there is an expectation that YP will behave like an adult and conform to the system which exists. There appeared to be scant evidence of the system being flexible to meet YP's needs. The YP's social challenges adapting to a different school environment was also identified as an area that the setting required further support:

> "…I think it's a combination making sure they feel safe and happy and that they can adjust from being a big fish in a small pond to the other, sometimes you get a lot of "tree marking"…I think they are not clear about how to negotiate those hierarchies and they find it harder to adjust their behaviour to a new set of circumstances…" (Paul, Farleigh FE).

Practitioners also identified the contrast the YP experience moving from a specialist provision where they receive a high level of support and entering a system where often there is little or no support in place. The practitioners identified challenges of entering an unfamiliar classroom environment and funding issues.

> "So they come from a school where they have a lot of support to having limited or none at all…the LSA criteria are different often with a background of SEBD it's harder to justify, its more linked to score's they get on initial assessments, support here is more linked to academic and again that's where you have the culture conflict" (Phil, FE College)

> "They leave school, there's nothing. It's almost like you wrap them up in cotton wool and then all of a sudden it's taken off and they just rebound and fall out of the system" (Ellen, Grovehill)

Firstly, the issue of the lack of formal support for YP was raised by all participants as a particular challenge within the current system. In the case of sixth form entry YP's statements of SEN are continued. However, entering FE settings the YP no longer receive additional funding. As previously discussed there is a lack of an accessible pastoral support in place in the FE system. The data suggests the predominant means to YP accessing support is directly linked to funding within FE system.

Secondly, all practitioners identified the expectation that YP with SEBD will access a mainstream setting without additional support, as a key reason for the high level of drop out in post-16 settings. The practitioners also alluded to SEBD not being viewed as a SEN in the same way cognition and learning difficulties are:

> "if you speak to 80% of people all they will think is that person has behaviour problems, you stereotype Grovehill, people don't see Grovehill as a special school, 'you're [YP] just a bit naughty then', they won't think they have learning needs just presume it's about behaviour management" (Lloyd, FE College)

These findings suggest the lack of understanding in parts of the post-16 system of the needs of YP with SEBD and emphasise a greater need for accessible pastoral support for YP. This lack of understanding and established supportive systems was also attributed to the culture and ethos of post-16 settings.

3.3.2 Culture/ethos of school

EET settings are complex organisations which have embedded practice which becomes part of the school culture. There has been considerable debate about how to define school climate due to it being a multi-dimensional concept. There is still no consistent agreement as to the components and importance of what constitutes it (Marshall, 2004).However, a number of researchers (Marshall, 2004; Tableman and Herron, 2004; Haynes and Comer, 1993) have found that a positive, supportive and culturally conscious school climate is likely to increase the likelihood of academic success and achievement and better socio-emotional health, particularly for urban students. Throughout the interviews key issues emerged around school culture and ethos of the school.

> "Teachers are afraid of losing power so they don't adapt to learner's needs. Learners have changed and the culture of teaching has changed, we need to move on. The culture needs to

change for teachers in post-16, they need to be multi-skilled"
(John, E2E, FE College)

This highlights the perception that post-16 teachers experience challenges in meeting the needs of YP with SEBD. Moreover, it sheds light on the perception of a culture of teaching, which promotes the power imbalance between lecturers and learners that exists within post-16 setting.

Many of the participants spoke about the ethos of FE College which was frequently referred to as a business.

"…it's a business, all our vice principals are not from the world of education, they are from business, we are a business…the big difference is it's not compulsory…if you don't want to be here there's the door… Lecturers don't want to teach YP like that"
(Lloyd, FE College)

These views contrasted with the culture and ethos described at Grovehill and 6th forms, where reference was made to accepting the YP and allowing them to have second chances.

"We call ourselves the family of love and once you're in, you're in. We do not want to lose you; we want you to be successful…"
(Tina, Sixth Form)

As previously identified within the current literature there is not a consistent position on the definition of school climate/culture. For the purpose of this study my interpretation of the term relates to a combination of values and beliefs of practitioner, ethos and current

practice within setting (which specifically relates to inclusion of YP with SEN) and policy and guidance as shaped by senior leadership within post-16 settings. These findings suggest a difference in the school culture which influences the level of support YP may receive in post-16 settings and is an area worthy of further exploration.

3.3.3 Dilemmas

All practitioners identified the dilemma of inclusion versus attainment, the challenge of meeting educational targets whilst supporting those with challenging behaviour. This was seen as a significant barrier to successful inclusion of YP with SEBD:

> "…unfortunately this place like most FE is more driven by numbers than schools, there is a genuine conflict between what we should be doing and how we are accountable for our numbers and results…it's uncomfortable" (Phil, FE College)

> "You're not going to kick a blind kid out of school for being blind are you? But the reality is once you leave here they don't get second chances. I think there is a lot of ignorance in schools and in society, they face a lot of prejudice from people" (Daniel, Grovehill)

The findings highlight a theme on the dilemma of successfully including YP with SEBD and the expectations on educational settings to achieve targets and be accountable for their achievements. Additionally the lack of flexibility and understanding of SEBD within the current system was highlighted as a persistent challenge for YP.

Evidently this has links with the range of provision which varies across providers. This was raised as a particular concern; practitioners spoke about recent moves at a Governmental level to move away from programmes such as the 'Entry to Employment' (which is for many YP a pre-cursor to the qualification route) to more qualification-led funded courses.

> "Provision is changing now. But what's going to happen to those people who can't initially engage in a qualification route… it won't be accessible anymore to them they'll become super NEETS…we are going to have a major drop out. (John E2E)

The above quote highlights the difficulties envisaged in the future as a result of the recent change in Government. It is unclear at the point of completing this research what the direct implications could be for students such as the participants in this study. I will now consider the findings which relate to the practitioner's views and experiences of the transition process from specialist to post-16 mainstream EET.

3.4 RQ2: What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on the transition for YP with SEBD into mainstream EET?

In paper one; key issues emerged on the experience of transition. Transition was also discussed by practitioners, the key elements of which included:

- Gaps within the current system

- A lack of a strategic vision

- Communication between different systems

3.4.1 Gaps within the current system

It was evident as the study evolved that for many of the interviewees there were a number of gaps which need to be addressed to ensure a smooth transition into post-16 EET. A frequently raised concern was the lack of a formal transition plan for YP:

> "I think Grovehill suss out who can attend where…but you almost need to build a new structure. We don't know how it works over there [Grovehill]…it's as if they are left to cope on their own when they leave, bye, bye…we are trying to set something up that's more formal we haven't had that" (Mary, 6th form)

The participants described how much of the information sharing is completed on an informal basis, through established relationships with the KS4 co-ordinator:

> " I know Daniel quite well so we see one another and you kind of build a relationship with them, the thing is candidates who come here don't tend to come to open days" (Tom, Garage project)

Tom also believed in the idea of a fresh start for YP once they begin post-16 EET:

> "No, I just accept them Daniel will come and calm the waters a bit he might spell out the issues the lads have but whatever they have done in the past it's a clean slate they can start afresh here again. I like to draw a line in the sand, no baggage we don't pre-judge people that's what the project is about" (Tom)

Conversely, practitioners such as Erica and Annemaria strongly argued for the need for early intervention and sharing of information to promote a better understanding of needs:

> "It needs to start earlier…we need to be helping them to be positive about what they can do and then at the point of transition be able to share this information. I think this idea stems from the perspective that YP with behavioural problems need fresh starts and that's not what is good for them because they can't just go to another place and be a completely new person. They need people to understand their needs…co-ordinated transition by a person at both ends and shared with lots of tutors, lecturers...it's not just a time to forget them (Annemaria, EP)

The findings illuminated a number of conflicting views on what YP need and this appeared to be further confused by a current lack of a formal transition system. Alongside this many practitioners identified a lack of a strategic (macro level) lead within the system, which will be discussed in section 3.4.2.

Another interesting element which emerged from the data was the lack of established relationships with Connexions, in pre- and post-16 settings.

> "Connexions are a world of its own we don't know what's going on over there" (Phil, E2E)

Throughout the interviews the practitioners highlighted a lack of joined-up practice with agencies such as Connexions and identified this as an area which required further development.

3.4.2 Strategic Lead

Throughout the interviews the participants identified the lack of a strategic

lead as a barrier to providing support for YP. Once again highlighting that

it is not only YP who require support and direction, but also the

practitioners identified a need for clarity and direction informed at a

strategic level. The practitioners felt a lack of a strategic lead (at a local

and Governmental level) led to inconsistencies in how YP accessed and

received support.

> "There is no coherent city wide strategy for managing the transition
> of vulnerable kids from KS4 into KS5…I think honestly probably we
> need a more coherent structure in place and that's led I suppose
> from a the high level local authority. I mean there is a 14-19
> strategy but there is no mention of YP with SEBD in that" (Daniel,
> KS4 Grovehill)

> "It's all down to finances at the end of the day the Government
> don't have a clue about NEET" (Phil, E2E)

The lack of a strategic plan for YP was also evident when practitioner's

reflected on multi-agency support for YP, alongside awareness of Erica's

role:

> "Well we only recently found out about Erica's role, it's not really
> publicised…but that's become more valuable" (Mary, Butterleigh
> sixth from)

This was also echoed by Erica who found navigating through an

unfamiliar, un-coordinated system particularly challenging:

> "It's about enhancing the chances of survival with the systems that
> are in place. Things can be done in lots of areas …oh the
> frustrations I felt like I had to challenge the system for them, you

have to passionate about it. I mean there was nothing in place when I started. I had to meet all these people and at times I didn't feel welcome… If I was a student I would have dropped out long ago" (Erica)

Despite the important role Erica has in the YP's lives the lack of awareness of her role within the wider system was apparent. All practitioners believed there is a need for a coherent transition plan for vulnerable YP as well as improved communication between different systems.

3.4.3 Communication

The SSI's elicited a need to establish stronger, formal communications systems between pre and post-16 settings. This need will become more prevalent following the implementation of The Education Skills Act, (2008) where it will be compulsory for all learners to remain in EET up until the age of 13 by 2013. Therefore this research is a timely response which sheds lights on the areas of development to support YP with SEBD. Issues arose such as:

- a lack of clarity about funding,

- concerns about sharing confidential information

- a lack of established relationships with pre and post-16 settings (this was partly due to a low number of school leavers attending provisions). However, if a coherent plan was in place formal communication would be expected and established :

"…we need to look at provision nationally and partnerships on a citywide basis, we need to involve community organisation, Youth Offending teams and move this on" (Phil, E2E)

However, it was also recognised that YP with SEBD do not necessarily benefit from involvement with a range of agencies. Therefore, it was felt that there needed to be a key worker who could act as a link for the YP. Additionally, practitioners identified the need for a clear strategic lead and clarity about MA roles:

"You don't want a YP walking into a room of professionals, that's too much…I think having someone attached to the learner while they are in school to build a relationship that manages the transition but has their finger on, you know do they need… then being able to draw on that expertise. Someone who knows that YP's needs…but it's about time and resources" (Daniel, KS4)

Frequently participants made references to time and resources as a significant barrier to establishing co-ordinated support. My interpretation of the findings demonstrates how the lack of a coherent strategic lead, within what is already a complex post-16 system presents a significant challenge for this group of vulnerable YP.

I will now discuss the findings in detail and consider implications for future practice

Section 4 Discussion

The findings of this exploratory study illuminated a number of key issues. A model emerged which represents the interacting elements which can act as risk or protective factors in the system of support (see figure 3). A key aspect to understanding the model presented is its integrated nature. It is not possible to identify a single key factor; rather it is presented as those factors that supported, or did not, YP to remain in EET.

I will now consider the findings in relation to each RQ and conclude with the implications for future practice. While it is important to acknowledge that this study is a small scale study the findings do concur with previous research in this area. They also highlight key areas for development within the local context and the current move towards compulsory education until the age of eighteen (DfES, 2008).

4.1 RQ1: What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on what supports YP with SEBD to remain in EET?

The importance of cultivating caring relationships is established throughout the literature on SEBD (Weber, 1982; Visser, 2000, Cooper *et al.*, 2000; Mihalas *et al.*, 2011; Cooper, 2011). Practitioners in this study identified the importance of building trust and empathy. However, variations occurred across the settings which appeared to impact on the ability to make and sustain genuine relationships with the YP. Within this study, the FE College emerged as a setting where the expectation for YP to act like adults and fit the system presented itself as a risk factor for YP. This emphasises that the foundation for addressing YP's social, emotional

and behavioural needs is a genuine relationship with key staff (Daniels *et al.*, 2003).

There is an identified need for the YP to establish a connection with settings prior to post-16 entry. This would enable the YP to identify key people in their new settings, with whom they can begin to develop that powerful protective relationship.

4.1.1 Values and Beliefs

Practitioners' values and beliefs emerged as an important factor when exploring their perceptions of their role in supporting YP. Poulou (2001) acknowledged the methodological difficulties posed with the empirical study of values, attitudes and beliefs. However, unless we look at these factors we can never know what needs to be addressed to ensure YP receive the support they need. Further consideration needs to be given to practitioners' views and experience of supporting YP with SEBD.

There a number of factors which may shape practitioners' values and beliefs and the differences in practices which exist in relation to SEBD:

- Disciplinary and professional cultures
- Practitioners being receptive to the demands of inclusion
- Staff who are driven by empathetic attitudes, values and principles of understanding SEBD

(Copper, 1999, Cole *et al,* 2003, Avramidis and Norwich, 2003)

Prior studies found the nature of staff towards 'disaffected' YP in FE was negative and evidence of a reluctance to teach CYP viewed as

'disengaged' (Daniels *et al.,* 2003; MacNab, Visser and Daniels 2008). This study supported these findings and suggests there is a distance to be travelled if we are to ensure YP are fully supported and included in post-16 EET. Implications and suggestions for practice will be discussed in section below.

4.1.2 Ethos and Culture

The findings revealed the differences between settings' ethos and culture, and how, at times, this presented as a barrier to support for this group of vulnerable YP. Practitioners in FE identified the dilemma of existing as a business which needs to generate income and achieve certain results. The dilemma of difference which exists within the current education system (Norwich, 2008) remains a challenge for practitioners.

Practitioners reflected on the reluctance of others within post-16 EET to attend INSET provided on SEBD and work more flexibly with YP. Developing a more collaborative culture and support for YP emerged as a key area for development and could be an area that EPs could work with post-16 settings to develop inclusive practice.

I would suggest that finding solutions to overcome these barriers needs to include YP's and practitioners' views. There is a need for a clear strategic plan driven by the views of all the stakeholders in the system. I will return to the need for a strategic lead when considering practitioner's views on the transition process from specialist to mainstream post-16 EET.

4.1.3 Inclusion and the hidden 'disability' of SEBD

Within this study YP's and practitioners' reported experiences varied and were shaped by numerous factors within the system. It was evident that there are practices, values and attitudes which exist that are contrary to current inclusion policy. This could be related to the idea of SEBD being an unseen disability which evokes different reactions and approaches. Cook (2001) argues CYP with SEBD are often blamed for 'aberrant behaviour' when their behaviour is a product of their needs. This study has shed light on a lack of understanding from a range of practitioners within post-16 EET of the complexity of SEBD and different approaches which could be used to support YP.

The predominant strategies practitioners applied, particularly within the FE setting, related to behavioural approaches to managing behaviour and often they neglected the emotional element of YP's needs

The findings of this study emphasise the need for ensuring YP enter a setting that understands how to support YP's needs so they can thrive and succeed. It recognises the transactional nature of the education system and strongly argues for the recognition that while a YP influences the environment they are in, the environment (and practitioners working in that environment) duly influence the YP (Sameroff, 1987).

The predominant strategies practitioners applied, particularly within the FE setting, related to behavioural approaches to managing behaviour and often they neglected the emotional element of YP's needs

4.2 RQ 2: What are the views and experiences of the practitioners on the transition for YP with SEBD into mainstream EET?

The findings of the study highlighted an understanding of best practice in transition, yet practitioners' reflections illuminated a number of gaps which need to be addressed. A key issue which emerged was the lack of joined up formalised systems between pre and post-16 settings. This appeared to contribute to a lack of understanding and preventative approaches being utilised to prevent YP's needs being unrecognised and YP not accessing the support they require.

4.2.1 Gaps identified within the system

Practitioners' perceived a lack of support for YP once they leave the familiar environment of Grovehill. This view was also supported by the YP in paper one. This was believed to be linked a number of issues:

- Lack of a formal transition plan
- Resources and funding in post-16 settings
- Lack of pastoral support and understanding of YP's needs in post-16 settings

The findings demonstrated that there continues to be a lack of consideration given to a formal process of transition and participants identified the need to establish one.

This study has found a systemic approach a powerful paradigm for understanding and supporting SEBD Cooper (2011) suggests such an approach supports lateral thinking and innovative action in situations that

can appear stuck. I would argue for the use of a systemic approach as a conceptual framework to identify the range of factors which support or hinder YP accessing support to remain in EET.

4.2.2 Strategic lead

The findings also illuminated the need for a clearly defined strategic lead to guide and shape future practice. One such example is establishing a requirement for more effective communication between pre and post 16

The results revealed, in this particular context, communication systems are at an embryonic stage, I will consider in greater detail a model of practice which includes effective communication in RQ3.

Similarly, the role of Erica was clearly identified as a positive support factor for YP but the purpose of the role had not been shared with settings. In this particular study, settings often only became aware of Erica when things went wrong, resulting in a reactive way of working. Key factors identified by participants included:

- Practitioner's lack of knowledge about Erica as a conduit to advocate for the YP and share positive ways of engaging with them
- The lack of communication between settings resulted in Erica and the YP describing an experience where they felt isolated and at times rejected within an unfamiliar post-16 setting.
- Lost opportunities for working in a collaborative and preventative way to develop a shared understanding of the needs of the YP

It is positive that all practitioners identified the need for an improved system which is informed by established communication systems and underpinned by a clear agreed strategic view. This study has identified key elements which inform a future agenda of change to ensure YP are positively supported to remain in EET.

4.3 RQ3: How can this inform future policy and practice?

A number of implications for policy and practice emerged across the two papers. They have illuminated the need to listen to, and consider, the needs of YP and practitioners to inform ways of improving the current system. I will now consider suggestions for future practice.

A number of shared themes emerged from the perspectives of the YP and practitioners across the two papers. I have reproduced the shared themes which emerged across the two papers in the model of the system below. See figure 4 below

Figure 4: Shared themes which emerged from YPs and Practitioners accounts
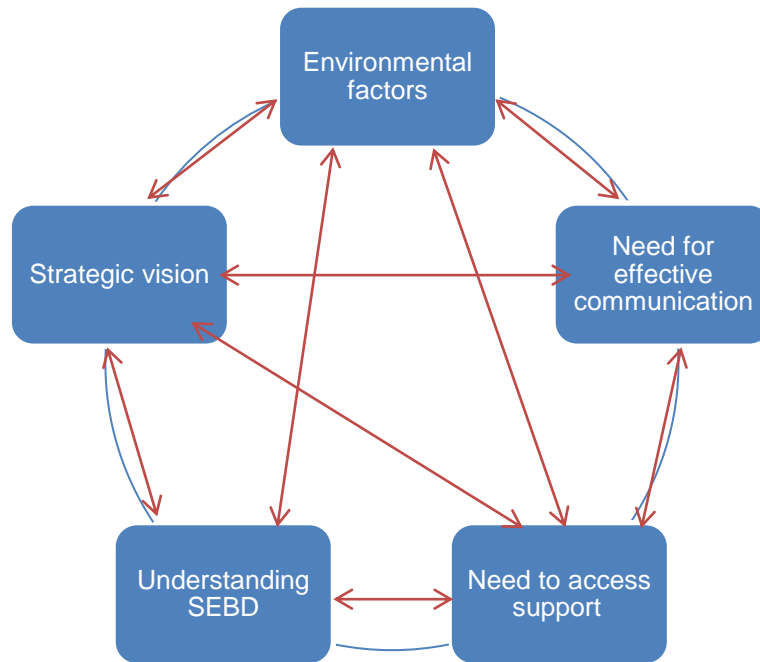
Figure 4 highlights the transactional nature of the system of support, namely that each element interacts with one another. Furthermore it reflects the complex interconnected web where each arrow points, and links with, all other elements within the system. This demonstrates that we cannot consider each element in isolation; rather we need to understand how each part can influence corresponding parts of the system. Therefore, the model is not presented in a linear approach and instead aims to demonstrate the range of factors which can act as a facilitator, or barrier, to YP remaining in post-16 EET.

4.3.1 Application of systems theory to support future practice

Systems theory argues that change in one part of the system can affect other elements. It is used in this study as a conceptual framework to try to understand the complex system of post-16 support. The model is

presented as a visual representation to illustrate how each part of the system interacts and relates to each other. Interventions based on systemic principles must recognise the contribution made to all interactional elements. It requires practitioners to recognise and analyse their own behaviour and its relation to a perceived problem (Cooper, 1999). It promotes recognition of how the development of co-operative relationships within the system could reveal solutions to existing challenges.

Such a model could inform an action research approach to develop the key issues which have emerged from this study. I would suggest if we are to consider the interventions and support that YP and practitioners require, consideration should be given to the key factors represented in the suggested model.

An eco-systemic approach suggests if we aim to alter one element of the system it may have a corresponding positive effect on another interacting element. For instance, across the two papers effective communication emerged as an area for development. Within this model communication relates to:

- Communication between YP and practitioners

- Communication between practitioners

- Communication of YP's needs

- Communication between YP and their social environment

Subsequently, if there is a clear focus on improving communication throughout the current structure, it could reverberate throughout the system. I would suggest the use of systems theory as a conceptual framework to consider areas of change and ways of moving forward may be useful approach to understanding the complexity of planning and ensuring YP access support to remain in EET.

4.3.2 Support for practitioners

One area which emerged was the influence post-16 practitioners' values and beliefs had on their practice. Metzger and Jia Wu (2009) found "best teachers hold a particular set of values about education". These include a commitment to helping all children learn, valuing diversity and caring and espousing patience and persistence (Cooper, 2011). This study acknowledges that YP disengage from an education system that they perceive as being 'done to them'. Within the field of SEBD there is a need to acknowledge practitioners' values and beliefs around teaching YP with SEBD, and the implications this may have for creating an inclusive environment.

Supporting YP with SEBD presents a significant challenge for some practitioners within the post-16 setting. Goodman and Burton (2010) identified that initial teacher training includes no specialist training on working with SEBD. Furthermore, once qualified there is no continuous professional development to up-skill teachers who support CYP with SEBD. The study identified the following clear practices which appeared to support YP's sense of belonging and acceptance:

- Empathy and aiming to understand the YP's perspective of a situation

- Recognition of the social influences on a YP's social and emotional well-being and the need to modify the environment to meet their needs

Evidently some practitioners do not feel qualified to adopt a pastoral role. However, I would suggest it is paramount that we aim to develop practitioners' awareness and understanding of the complex nature of SEBD. Moreover, it is imperative that we ensure YP are able to access pastoral support in larger post-16 settings.

There are a number of ways this could be addressed:

- Consultative support from external agencies to support and develop practitioner's understanding of SEBD

- Opportunities for action research which is driven by the stakeholders to explore opportunities to ensure it's not just YP who feel supported to succeed in post-16, but also the practitioners who are tasked with supporting them

- On-going training and advice opportunities. However, it is proposed the model of training should be informed and co-constructed by the participants to ensure it is meeting their learning needs.

4.3.3 Next steps: A role for educational psychologists

Most EPs are employed in LAs which concentrate on early years and statutory school age CYP. However, as previously discussed all CYP will remain in EET up until the age of eighteen. EPs work at a range of different levels, including individual, group, systemic and strategic levels. They also have a well-developed understanding of the application of psychological theory to support human behaviour and learning. Therefore, EPs would be well placed to work collaboratively with other key stakeholders to develop systems and environments to support effective teaching and learning, as well as the successful inclusion of YP with SEBD.

I would suggest EPs have a role in providing supportive challenge which is often referred to the role of being a critical friend. Such a role enables EPs to remain 'meta' to the system while still being able to provide insider and outsider viewpoints. This could provide stakeholders, within the system, with the opportunity for EPs to offer constructive advice to developing post-16 pathways for vulnerable groups such as YP with SEBD. (Winter, 1989 as cited in Woolfson et al, 2003). This study has identified the need for the development of partnership working to support positive outcomes for YP with SEBD and proposes consideration for the development of links between post-16 settings and their local Educational Psychology services. MacKay (2009) identified two key factors which point to lack of established post-school EP services:

- The structure of EP services even to school-age population only exists in a minority of countries

- Where such a service does exists the majority of work is overwhelmingly focused on school age group to the detriment of older populations

This study has illustrated an identified need to ensure this group of YP are offered the same opportunities and the opportunities to experience positive pathways towards lifelong learning.

Across the two papers the importance of relationships was found to be a significant factor in supporting YP with SEBD to remain in EET. However, from a practitioner standpoint much of the information shared happened on an informal basis. It is clear that there is a need to establish links between post-16 providers and the local SEBD School. EP services would be well placed to support the development of partnership working to meet the needs of YP with SEBD in post-16 EET. In order to achieve the next steps consideration should be given to:

- The development of a strategic working group to address the transition of students from specialist provision into mainstream EET. In order to achieve this I have proposed to senior management team at the Psychology Service that I will present my findings to the 14-19 steering group. The aim of this is to establish a clear role for EPs in supporting post-16 transitions and to find ways of working with post-16 settings.

- The development of person centred planning (Holburn, 2002) approaches to ensure YP are meaningfully engaged in the transition process is recommended. My research revealed that at the moment YP do not appear to meaningfully engage with the transition plan. As a result of this study the EPs service has begun to trial the use of person centred planning to support the transitions of vulnerable groups from specialist to mainstream settings.

- Additionally, EP's would be well placed to increase the quality of pupils' engagement and participation in transition planning. This could include individual work with YP to help them to explore their options, for instance through the application of solution-focussed approaches (Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995).   EPs could have a role advocating for and encouraging the attendance of pupils at their transition review meetings and supporting them in communicating their views.

- It is evident that the role of Erica is highly valued, however, in order for YP to succeed once they have left Grovehill relationships need to be established with key staff in post-16 settings. The EPS would be well placed to provide training and consultation on the development of a pastoral team in post-16 settings.

- There is no explicit framework articulating the purpose and role of outside agencies and professionals in the post-16 transition planning for young people with SEBD. There a number of constraints at a strategic level which impact on EP's current role within FE settings that are not under LA control. Primarily EPs only

work within LA controlled educational settings. The issues which emerged as significant barriers for YP's successful inclusion in this study pertained to a setting which is not under LA control. This would need to be addressed at a LA strategic level to establish clear working protocols for EPs within FE settings. Within the local authority that I work in there is already a clearly established protocol for transition from early years to primary and similarly from primary to secondary school. This research has illuminated the need for clear guidelines on future working practices for post-16 settings. The development of a working group which included all stakeholders in post-16 transition process could address this key area at a strategic level. EPs should be part of this strategic group to ensure there is an understanding of the social and emotional difficulties YP experience leaving a familiar environment.

- The issue of information sharing was highlighted as a key area of concern for practitioners in FE settings. Currently if students move into a FE setting which is independent of the LA their statement ceases at the age of 16. This issue is currently addressed via sharing information and the competition of Connexions Section 139 assessments. Despite the fact that information sharing is highlighted as a key aspect of any transition process recent research (Rowland-Crosby et al, 2002) has identified this does not always happen. This finding was also supported in this study and suggests that key information is not been shared at an early enough date to prepare settings to meet vulnerable young

student's needs. Subsequently within the study YP and practitioners spoke about the lack of understanding of SEBD, alongside the lack of a clear pastoral support plan. Within this study three out of the five participants became NEET within the first year. This highlights a key area for development which EPs would be well placed to support. EPs have expertise in understanding social, emotional and behavioural difficulties and as such could work to support post-16 settings to develop inclusive practices.

4.3.4 Communication systems

The study has illuminated the need for greater communication between YP and the practitioners tasked with supporting them and within the wider system of pre and post-16 settings. This needs to occur on:

- An individual level; supporting YP to articulate their needs
- At group level; develop supportive and collaborative systems of support for practitioners
- At a systemic level; development of flexible and responsive pastoral systems
- At a strategic level; a shared vision for the development of partnership working between pre and post-16 settings

To promote capacity, sustainability and assistance for YP and EET settings there is a need for the development of a shared understanding of the needs of YP and practitioners. Communication is a vital element of

ensuring a shared understanding is developed. This study has illuminated the shared concerns YP and practitioners have, as well as the strengths which exist within the system. To build on this study establishing models of partnership working amongst settings is one possible way of developing shared expertise and practice. While there may be obstacles to establishing such practices across the settings an established model of partnership working at an individual, practitioner, operational and strategic level could ensure more effective communication systems are formed leading to improved outcomes for vulnerable YP. A research methodology such Action Research is recommended to build on the existing knowledge and ensure active participation at levels within the system. This will support the development of co-operative relationships within the system to reveal solutions to existing challenges

4.4 Limitations of the study

The small scale of the study recognises the findings cannot be generalised. However, the paradigm which shapes this study recognises that everyone's reality is unique and that there is not one objective truth. This issue is addressed by Merriam (1998) who justifies and validates the use of a small scale study design:

> "To gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved...Insights…can directly influence policy, practice and future research."(p.19)

The range of participants interviewed in the study could also be considered a limitation of the study. Initial invites were sent to eleven

different providers across the city, however, only seven final participants responded from the post-16 sector. The number of participants were influenced by the time and resources I had, alongside the lack of established relationships with the range of practitioners offering support in post-16 EET. Although I recognise selection bias may be a concern, I believe the practitioners interviewed provided me with a number of illuminative findings on the current system of support.

The lack of representation from Connexions, a key stakeholder in supporting the information, advice and guidance given to YP entering post-16 EET, was unfortunate. At the time of data collection, the organisation was undergoing a period of organisational change which meant a time convenient to us both could not be found. I feel this is an area which requires further exploration to ensure all key stakeholders contribute to future practice.

4.5 Possible areas of future research:

This study recruited participants who work within post-16 settings. However, a more complete understanding of the current system of support could be obtained by also exploring the strategic level of the system, through a similar research design. If future research explored perceptions at a LA or strategic level we may discover different or additional factors which could be salient.

MacKay (2009) identified the area of post-school psychological services as a "new field of practice" (p. 5). This research is timely as it has illuminated a number of key areas that YP and practitioners think require

support to ensure YP feel supported to remain in EET. Further research could build on the current understanding and incorporate the perspectives of other stakeholders, such as Connexions and LA.

Finally, consideration should be given to listening to the views and experiences of parents and carers. They are a missing element in the systemic view I have proposed and further could add their voices to our understanding of supporting YP with SEBD.

4.7 Reflections on research:

Undertaking this doctoral research has been an illuminating experience. On a personal level I have felt privileged to hear first-hand the experiences of the YP who made the transition from specialist to mainstream education. When I began my research I was identified myself as a novice researcher whose predominant research experience had been using quantitative methodologies. Completing this small scale study enabled me to become familiar with creating and conducting semi-structured interviews and furthermore introduced me to participatory research methodologies. My views are shaped by a life-long commitment and interest to address the social and historical barriers which marginalised groups' experience. The experience of completing a doctoral level of research trialling an adapted participatory methodology has taught me about the rigor and commitment needed to complete qualitative research. Undertaking this research has enabled me to become familiar with a research methodology that provides a framework

for empowerment, professional collaboration and can contribute towards evidence-based knowledge and understanding (Carr & Kemmis, 1986).

When I began this research my aim was to highlight the strengths and weaknesses in the current system, as experienced by the participants. I believe as a result of the study I have been able to highlight the 'lived reality' for this vulnerable group. Furthermore the findings of this study have demonstrated to the EP service where I work the gaps which currently exist in the system of support. As a result of my findings a trainee Educational Psychologist has begun a piece of doctoral research adopting an action research methodology. This will trial the use of person centred planning for vulnerable YP transiting from specialist to mainstream education.

In order to make change within a system we need to recognise who is within the system and while inclusive practice at an individual level may be positive this study has highlighted for this group of YP there is much improvement needed within the wider system of support, namely within FE education. At a time of significant change within education there is a need for research which reflects the reality experienced by YP, and practitioners tasked with working them. Completing this research has further strengthened my commitment to research approaches which can inform an agenda for change to ensure we can work towards social inclusion for all vulnerable groups. McKay (2002) highlighted the role EPs have in raising educational achievement and promoting social inclusion. Furthermore, a review of the literature highlights the lack of research completed within the field of educational psychology which pertains to

post-16 EET. By concluding this research I believe I have highlighted a key area for development in EP practice across England and Wales.

My intention is to use the knowledge and experience I have gained throughout this study to promote the use of 'participatory' approaches within the EP service that I work in. Additionally, I intend to publish the findings of my study to raise awareness within the profession, of the expertise and knowledge our profession could contribute to post-16 system to improve future outcomes for YP with SEBD.

Section 5 Conclusion

The initial aim of this study was to explore a relatively under researched area, namely, the system of support for YP with SEBD leaving specialist provision and entering post-16 mainstream EET. As such it offers a greater understanding of the issues to guide future practice and support. Furthermore, this study has attempted to enter into and understand the social and psychological world of YP with SEBD. It presents a cogent argument for the need to utilise early intervention and preventative approaches when working with YP and practitioners tasked with supporting them.

It is evident from this study that there are a range of interlinked factors which can support, or prevent a YP's successful inclusion within post-16 EET. The study has identified the need for a holistic approach to be taken to ensure YP's needs are fully understood and planned for. Challenges may occur, however, with a planned approach which is needs led but

outcome based we may able to break the cycle of YP with SEBD experiencing the poorest outcomes in post-16 EET.

Throughout this study I have been privileged to listen and share YPs and practitioners experiences of navigating a system often without any clear map to guide them on their educational journey. In terms of my own professional practice and development as an Educational Psychologist, this study has strengthened my values and beliefs of the need to listen to, and value, YP and practitioners experiences in the context of real world research.

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Appendix 1

Throughout the literature on NEET it has been identified that there are a number of difficulties with the terminology. Yates & Payne (2006) argue that NEET is a problematic concept which defines individuals by what they are not and places concerns wholly within a deficit model. They suggest NEET stands as a negatively perceived label which fails to identify that this group of individuals are a heterogeneous mix of young people, with varied situations and difficulties which often are not fully conceptualised. The study hopes to address this 'deficit model' by listening, without judgement, to the experiences of YP and using their views to begin to consider how the system of support can be improved to ensure positive outcomes for all YP.

Further difficulties arise when sub groups of NEET are considered, such as who they are and how they are defined. Yates & Payne (2006) discussed three distinct subgroups of NEET that Connexions use:

- young people, those in temporary transition states that involve a period of being NEET

- young parents who make a conscious decision to become NEET to look after children

- YP who are NEET and face a range of different 'risks' in their lives, for example being looked after, homelessness and emotional and behavioural difficulties

(Yates & Payne, 2006).

This presents a difficulty when critiquing the literature, as findings are often dependent on how the authors operationalised the term. However, certain risk

factors are noted and in the following section I will address these and the lifelong implications associated with being NEET.

Risk factors associated with NEET

Although there are conceptual difficulties associated with the term NEET, it is possible to identify associated themes or risk factors. In this section I will briefly focus on those that appear most frequently in the literature Research has also considered the lifelong risk factors linked to YP who are NEET, including:

- unemployment,

- poor health,

- and criminal activity (Pearce & Hilman, 1998).

Furthermore, BTG found:

- three quarters of young men coming before the courts were not in formal education.

- young women who were NEET were four times more likely to become parents before the age of 21.

The themes which appear to be most prevalent in the literature are

- deprivation,

- financial exclusion,

- low attainment,

- weak family and other support networks,

- stigma and attitudes of others and debt adversity.

   (Employability framework for Scotland, 2005).

The SEU task force also suggested

- poor parenting,

- truancy,

- living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods,

- and exclusion from school.

 as key factors linked to NEET status.

 Such statistics highlight the need for a greater understanding of how we can support YP to remain in EET and secure positive outcomes. Yates & Payne (2006) suggested initial research exploring factors linked to NEET and SE took a holistic view. However, they argue there appears to have been a shift towards a more reductionist view, which fails to account for the social and structural barriers many of these YP face in modern day society. My research will address this criticism by taking into account the YPs' life-long experiences of the education system and their views on what supports them to remain in EET.

2003 Leavers

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
FE College	42	27	27	6	56%	36%	36%	8%
Unemployed	14	6	6	2	19%	8%	8%	3%
Employed with Training	2	1	1	-	3%	1%	1%	-
WBL	10	7	7	-	13%	9%	9%	-
Staying in School	2	3	1	-	3%	4%	1%	-
Moved away				4	4%	7%	9%	5%
Job without training	1	5	5	5	1%	7%	7%	7%
Not Available	1	8	7	3	1%	11%	9%	4%
Not Known	-	4	4	4	-	5%	5%	5%
PDO	-	4	4	-	-	5%	5%	-
Part-time Employment	-	1	1	1	-	1%	1%	1%
No Results	-	3	3	-	-	4%	4%	-
Specialist Provisions	-	1	1	1	-	1%	1%	1%
Ex-connexions	-	-	-	47	-	-	-	63%
Refused	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1%
New Deal	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1%
Custodial Sentence	-	-	1	-	-	-	1%	-
	75	75	75	75	100%	100%	100%	100%

Appendix 2: Data from vulnerable groups

2004 Leavers

	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
AG	-	-	1	-	-	3%
Employed without Training	2	1	3	7%	3%	10%
FE College	11	10	6	37%	33%	20%
HE	-	1	-	-	3%	-
Moved Away	-	3	1	-	10%	3%
Not Available	1	2	5	3%	7%	17%
No Results	-	1	5	-	3%	17%
Not Known	-	1	1	-	3%	3%
PDO	3	1	-	10%	3%	-
Specialist Provision	1	2	-	3%	7%	-
Staying at School	3	-	-	10%	-	-
Unempoyed	8	5	3	27%	17%	10%
WBL	1	2	3	3%	7%	10%
WBLA	-	1	-	-	3%	-
NWBL	-	-	1	-	-	3%
Part Time Education	-	-	1	-	-	3%
	30	30	30	100%	100%	100%

2005 Leavers

	2005	2006
FE College	15	10
No Records	-	2
Moved Away	1	1
Not Available	1	2
Staying at School	1	1
Unemployed	4	5
WBL	1	1
PDO	-	1
	23	23

2005	2006
65%	43%
-	9%
4%	4%
4%	9%
4%	4%
17%	22%
4%	4%
-	4%
100%	100%

2006 Leavers

	2006
Not Available	2
FE College	15
Unemployed	7
Employed without Training	1
PDO	1
WBL	1
	27

2006
7%
56%
26%
4%
4%
4%
100%

Grovehill

Appendix to Project Element Three - ▓▓▓ ▓▓▓▓

2003 Leavers

	2003	2004	2005	2006	2003	2004	2005	2006
FE College	2	1	1	-	9%	4%	4%	-
Unemployed	11	4	4	2	48%	17%	17%	9%
WBL	2	1	1	-	9%	4%	4%	-
Moved Away	2	3	3	1	9%	13%	13%	4%
Job without training	3	6	6	2	13%	26%	26%	9%
Not Available	2	4	4	-	9%	17%	17%	-
PDO	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	4%
Part-time Employment	-	1	1	-	-	4%	4%	-
No Results	-	2	2	1	-	9%	9%	4%
Ex-connexions	-	-	-	15	-	-	-	65%
New Deal	-	1	1	-	-	4%	4%	-
Custodial Sentence	1	-	-	1	4%	-	-	4%
	23	23	23	23	100%	100%	100%	100%

2004 Leavers

14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project

	2004	2005	2006		2004	2005	2006
FE College	4	1	1		50%	13%	13%
Unemployed	1	3	1		13%	38%	13%
WBL	1	-	-		13%	-	-
Job without training	-	2	3		-	25%	38%
Not Available	1	1	2		13%	13%	25%
PDO	-	1	-		-	13%	-
Custodial Sentence	1	-	1		13%	-	13%
	8	8	8		100%	100%	100%

2005 Leavers

	2005	2006		2005	2006
Moved Away	1	-		14%	0%
FE College	2	-		29%	0%
Employed Without Training	2	2		29%	29%
Staying at School	1	-		14%	0%
No Records	-	1		0%	14%
Unemployed	1	4		14%	57%
	7	7		100%	100%

2006 Leavers

	2006		2006
Staying at School	3		30%
FE College	2		20%
Not Available	1		10%
Unemployed	2		20%
PDO	1		10%
WBL	1		10%
	10		100%

	NEET	Entering Learning		Staying At School		Further Education College		HE / Advanced FE		Employed with Training towards NVQ2		Employed with Other Training		Work Based Training - Trainee		Preparation Training		Employed Without Training		Personal Development*		Custody		Unemployed		Not Available		Moved Away		Not Known		Total	
				Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Plymouth Unitary Authority Total	0.0%	0.0%		-114	21.9%	-188	37.3%	0	0.0%	-12	2.3%	-27	5.2%	-4	1.3%	-21	4.5%	-21	4.4%	-10	1.9%	-1	0.2%	-47	12.9%	-23	4.4%	-17	3.3%	-1	0.3%	-495	100.0%
Cohort Without LDD, Special School, PRU or Out of Mainstream	67.1%	17.5%		31	21.6%	43	30.6%	0	0.0%	5	7.6%	0	6.2%	3	2.5%	1	4.5%	6	4.5%	0	1.8%	1	0.2%	4	12.9%	3	4.4%	17	3.3%	0	0.5%	433	100.0%
School Action	76.7%	0.0%		31	25.6%	43	35.8%	0	0.0%	9	7.6%	9	7.5%	3	2.5%	3	6.0%	6	6.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.0%	4	6.0%	3	2.5%	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	120	100.0%
School Action Plus	53.8%	23.1%		14	28.9%	13	26.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.8%	4	7.7%	0	0.0%	4	7.7%	3	5.5%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%	9	17.3%	2	3.8%	1	1.8%	0	0.0%	12	100.0%
Statemented	51.7%	24.0%		83	30.6%	76	43.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	1.7%	1	0.5%	6	2.9%	6	2.9%	4	2.3%	0	0.0%	19	10.9%	8	2.9%	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	174	100.0%
Maintained School Cohort With LDD	74.5%	12.5%		83	29.5%	132	38.5%	0	0.0%	10	2.9%	16	4.6%	4	1.2%	11	4.5%	10	4.6%	0	1.6%	1	0.5%	34	8.0%	10	2.9%	6	1.6%	0	0.5%	348	100.0%
School	100.0%	0.0%		0	0.0%	5	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%
School	70.0%	20.0%		1	5.0%	14	70.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	5.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	20	100.0%
School	83.3%	8.3%		0	0.0%	10	83.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	12	100.0%
School	93.3%	0.0%		13	86.7%	2	13.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	16	100.0%
School	42.9%	14.3%		1	14.3%	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	28.6%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	7	100.0%
School	42.9%	14.3%		1	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	42.9%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	100.0%
	100.0%	0.0%		0	0.0%	8	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	100.0%
Special Schools Cohort	81.1%	12.2%		16	21.6%	43	58.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	2	2.7%	3	4.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	8.1%	3	4.1%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	74	100.0%
Educated - by parents at home	0.0%	0.0%		0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	50.0%	0	0.0%	4	100.0%
Educated otherwise home tut.	33.3%	33.3%		0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	3	100.0%
Educated otherwise post 16	0.0%	100.0%		0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	100.0%
Educated otherwise tut centre	33.3%	33.3%		0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	100.0%
Excluded/Suspended	50.0%	0.0%		0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
Maintained Out of Mainstream Cohort	23.1%	20.0%		0	0.0%	2	14.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	23.1%	0	0.0%	1	7.2%	2	14.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	1	7.2%	3	23.1%	0	0.0%	13	100.0%
Plymouth Tuition Service - Wellingate	21.1%	43.2%		0	0.0%	18	21.7%	0	0.0%	2	2.4%	7	8.4%	2	2.4%	4	4.8%	4	4.8%	5	6.0%	0	0.0%	26	31.3%	6	7.2%	6	8.0%	1	1.2%	83	100.0%
Plymouth Tuition Service - Young Parents Centre	25.0%	75.0%		0	0.0%	1	25.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	75.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	100.0%
PRU Cohort	31.0%	44.8%		0	0.0%	19	21.8%	0	0.0%	2	2.3%	7	8.0%	2	2.3%	4	4.6%	4	4.6%	0	6.7%	0	0.0%	26	29.9%	9	10.3%	6	6.9%	1	1.1%	87	100.0%

* Personal Development Opportunities including Voluntary Work and Pre 2a

14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project

26 July 2007

Plymouth Unitary Authority Total	Staying At School		Further Education College		HE / Advanced FE		Employed with Training towards NVQ2		Employed with Other Training		Work Based Training - Trainee		Preparation Training		Employed Without Training		eZa/PDO/Voluntary Work		Custody		Unemployed		Not Available		Moved Away		Not Known		Total		Entering Learning	NEET
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	%	%
Cohort Without LDD, Special School, PRU or Out of Mainstream	-211	84.3%	-190	30.4%	0	0.0%	-22	3.6%	-12	1.6%	-7	1.1%	-28	4.3%	-23	4.5%	-24	3.5%	-4	0.5%	-44	8.6%	-18	2.6%	-11	2.4%	-4	0.6%	-416	100.0%	74.9%	12.1%
School Action	191	44.6%	49	23.7%	0	0.0%	13	6.3%	4	1.9%	4	1.9%	9	4.3%	11	5.3%	4	1.9%	0	0.0%	7	3.4%	2	1.0%	2	1.0%	1	0.5%	207	100.0%	75.0%	14.3%
School Action Plus	31	44.9%	10	14.4%	0	0.0%	2	2.9%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	4	5.8%	3	4.3%	2	2.9%	1	1.4%	9	13.0%	0	0.0%	6	8.7%	0	0.0%	69	100.0%	64.1%	14.5%
Statemented	61	35.5%	61	35.5%	0	0.0%	2	1.2%	3	1.7%	1	0.6%	5	2.9%	6	3.5%	8	4.7%	1	0.6%	10	5.8%	7	4.1%	6	3.5%	1	0.6%	172	100.0%	75.6%	10.3%
Maintained School Cohort With LDD	183	41.1%	120	26.9%	0	0.0%	17	3.8%	8	1.8%	5	1.1%	18	4.0%	20	4.5%	14	3.1%	2	0.4%	26	5.8%	9	2.0%	14	3.1%	2	0.4%	446	100.0%	74.5%	8.1%
... School	2	33.3%	4	66.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
...dale School	0	0.0%	15	57.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	7	26.9%	1	3.8%	1	3.8%	0	0.0%	26	100.0%	61.5%	30.8%
... Special School	0	0.0%	9	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
... School	9	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
... School	3	33.3%	2	22.2%	0	0.0%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	1	11.1%	1	11.1%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	9	100.0%	66.7%	22.2%
...phia School	1	14.3%	5	71.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	14.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	7	100.0%	85.7%	0.0%
Woodlands School	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Special Schools Cohort	16	22.5%	39	54.9%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	3	4.2%	0	0.0%	8	11.3%	2	2.8%	1	1.4%	0	0.0%	71	100.0%	80.3%	14.3%
Educated - by parents at home	0	0.0%	6	50.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	16.7%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	8.3%	12	100.0%	75.0%	9.1%
Educated otherwise home tut	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	16.7%	6	100.0%	50.0%	33.3%
Educated otherwise tut centre	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	50.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Excluded/Suspended	1	20.0%	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	5	100.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Maintained Out of Mainstream Cohort	1	4.0%	10	40.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	0	0.0%	1	4.0%	2	8.0%	3	12.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	12.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	4.0%	25	100.0%	64.0%	13.0%
Tuition Service	0	0.0%	15	25.4%	0	0.0%	1	1.7%	4	6.8%	1	1.7%	5	8.5%	5	8.5%	7	11.9%	3	5.1%	16	27.1%	2	3.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	59	100.0%	37.3%	30.5%
Tuition Service - Centre for Young Parents	1	7.7%	6	46.2%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	7.7%	5	38.5%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	13	100.0%	53.8%	7.7%
PRU Cohort	1	1.4%	21	29.2%	0	0.0%	1	1.4%	4	5.6%	1	1.4%	5	6.9%	5	6.9%	7	9.7%	3	4.2%	17	23.6%	7	9.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	72	100.0%	40.3%	33.3%

	all LEA		LEA		Unitary Authority		Unitary Authority		LEA		Total	
	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%
Staying at School	1983	29.47	3003	33.47	2102	59.63	747	43.33	2	6.90		
Further Education College	3469	51.55	3963	44.18	663	18.81	640	37.12	24	82.76		
HE / Advanced FE	1	0.01	3	0.03	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00		
Employed with Training towards NVQ2	186	2.76	412	4.59	163	4.62	63	3.65	1	3.45		
Employed with Other Training	119	1.77	243	2.71	57	1.62	29	1.68	0	0.00		
Work Based Training - Trainee	78	1.16	92	1.03	44	1.25	13	0.75	0	0.00		
Preparation Training	134	1.99	58	0.65	68	1.93	25	1.45	0	0.00		
Employment Without Training	267	3.97	439	4.89	137	3.89	48	2.78	0	0.00		
Personal Development *	92	1.37	106	1.18	39	1.11	47	2.73	0	0.00		
Custody	2	0.03	3	0.03	3	0.09	0	0.00	0	0.00		
Unemployed	196	2.91	311	3.47	136	3.86	45	2.61	0	0.00		
Not Available	27	0.40	40	0.45	28	0.79	9	0.52	0	0.00		
Moved Away	145	2.15	252	2.81	77	2.18	54	3.13	2	6.90		
Not Known	31	0.46	46	0.51	8	0.23	4	0.23	0	0.00		
Total	6730	100.0%	8971	100.0%	3526	100.0%	1724	100.0%	29	100.0%		
% Entering Learning		86.9%		83.9%		86.2%		86.3%		93.1%		
% Unknown		0.5%		0.5%		0.2%		0.2%		0.0%		

* Personal Development Opportunities including Voluntary Work

14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project

183

23   23   00%   100%

184

	2004	2005	2006		2004	2005	2006
FE College	4	1	1		50%	13%	13%
Unemployed	1	3	1		13%	38%	13%
WBL	1	-	-		13%	-	-
Job without training	-	2	3		-	25%	38%
Not Available	1	1	2		13%	13%	25%
PDO	-	1	-		-	13%	-
Custodial Sentence	1	-	1		13%	-	13%
	8	8	8		100%	100%	100%

2005 Leavers

	2005	2006		2005	2006
Moved Away	1	-		14%	0%
FE College	2	-		29%	0%
Employed Without Training	2	2		29%	29%
Staying at School	1	-		14%	0%
No Records	-	1		0%	14%
Unemployed	1	4		14%	57%
	7	7		100%	100%

2006 Leavers

	2006		2006
Staying at School	3		30%
FE College	2		20%
Not Available	1		10%
Unemployed	2		20%
PDO	1		10%
WBL	1		10%
	10		100%

connexions

Report Date: 8th February 2004

Entering
Learning

63.5%	23.8%	
69.7%	16.7%	
68.2%	22.5%	
69.7%	14.7%	
100.0%		

100.0%	0.0%	22.2%
72.2%		16.3%
100.0%	0.0%	20.0%
64.1%		
38.0%	55.0%	39.4%
88.2%		42.0%

12.5%

12.5%

12.5%

connexions

Entering Learning

100.0% 0.0%

81.1% 12.3%

14.3%

Report Date 6th February 2007

Entering
Learning

12.1%

74.0%

10.1%
8.1%

75.6%
76.9%

100.0%

14.3%

100.0%
89.3%

20.5%
13.0%

20.5%

37.3%
53.8%
40.3%

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11.1%

11.1%

14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project

188

	all LEA		LEA		Unitary Authority		Unitary Authority		LEA		Total	
	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%
Staying at School	1983	29.47	3003	33.47	2102	59.63	747	43.33	2	6.90		
Further Education College	3469	51.55	3863	44.18	663	18.81	640	37.12	24	82.76		
HE / Advanced FE	1	0.01	3	0.03	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00		
Employed with Training towards NVQ2	186	2.76	412	4.59	163	4.62	63	3.65	1	3.45		
Employed with Other Training	119	1.77	243	2.71	57	1.62	29	1.68	0	0.00		
Work Based Training - Trainee	78	1.16	92	1.03	44	1.25	13	0.75	0	0.00		
Preparation Training	134	1.99	58	0.65	68	1.93	25	1.45	0	0.00		
Employment Without Training	267	3.97	439	4.89	137	3.89	48	2.78	0	0.00		
Personal Development *	92	1.37	106	1.18	39	1.11	47	2.73	0	0.00		
Custody	2	0.03	3	0.03	3	0.09	0	0.00	0	0.00		
Unemployed	196	2.91	311	3.47	136	3.86	45	2.61	0	0.00		
Not Available	27	0.40	40	0.45	28	0.79	9	0.52	0	0.00		
Moved Away	145	2.15	252	2.81	77	2.18	54	3.13	2	6.90		
Not Known	31	0.46	46	0.51	8	0.23	4	0.23	0	0.00		
Total	6730	100.0%	8971	100.0%	3526	100.0%	1724	100.0%	29	100.0%		
% Entering Learning	86.9%		83.9%		86.2%		86.3%		93.1%			
% Unknown	0.5%		0.5%		0.2%		0.2%		0.0%			

* Personal Development Opportunities including Voluntary Work

14-19 Vulnerable Groups Project

189

Appendix 3: Values and beliefs

Values and Beliefs

As well as illuminating or generating understanding of what supports YP to remain in EET, the participatory paradigm reflects the values I have as a researcher. These personal values are strongly held and influenced all parts of the research process. I have a commitment to completing research which values and privileges the voice of the participants. Underpinning this approach is the belief that people are purposive actors (Robson, 2002); people have ideas about their world and attach meaning to what is going on around them. I believe in the value of completing research which takes into account these meanings to understand and explore current practice. In addition I have a commitment to using the findings to help to improve future service and delivery, driven by the views of all participants within the system.

I was interested in hearing first-hand the participants' lived experiences and asking them what they felt would best support YP with their needs to remain in EET. This contrasts to more traditional approaches where the researcher (individual who holds the power) only contributes to the thinking and the participant solely contributes to the action being studied. In traditional research the roles of the researcher and the participants are mutually exclusive. In co-operative inquiry these mutually exclusive roles are replaced by a co-operative relationship to work towards working together as co-researchers (Reason and Heron, p 125 as cited in Smith et al, 1995).

Appendix 4: Role of researcher:

With conducting this type of research it is important to position myself as a researcher who acknowledges that personal experiences and constructs can affect the understood perceptions and portrayal of information. I am a white Irish middle class female who grew up within the Irish education system. The Irish education system has a range of similarities and differences to the British system. The most notable difference perhaps is the higher number of YP who remain in EET in Ireland, when compared with their British counterparts. Byrne and Smith (2010), report that up to 86% complete either the Leaving Certificate (A level equivalent) or Applied Leaving certificate (Vocational course).

I have always had a strong belief, linked to my upbringing and personal values, in the opportunities education has to offer YP. Throughout the process I remained aware of my own cultural beliefs and values and how they may influence the interpretation of the data.

I acknowledge, as a researcher, I hold my own value base and theoretical views which have been influenced by the nature of my work as an Educational Psychologist working with YP with SEBD. My views are shaped by a life-long commitment and interest to address the social and historical barriers which marginalised groups' experience. Creswell, (2007), suggests researchers committed to a participatory epistemology are strongly influenced by empowerment approaches. I believe such an approach brings an interactionist positioning to this

study. Therefore I acknowledge my research was not coded in an "epistemological vacuum" (Braun and Clarke, 2006) but has been strongly guided by my position.

Appendix 5: Prolonged Involvement:

France, Bendelow and Williams (2000) have highlighted the importance of not being seen as a 'proper adult' in order to secure involvement with young people, while constructing an acceptable identity built on empathy, openness and honesty. This was particularly pertinent to the participants involved in the first stage of this study, who by virtue of their experiences within the education system, are often characterised as "Hard to Reach" (Hughes, 2007 as cited in Pomerantz et al 2007). Fundamental to this study, was the need to build relationships with the participants so they felt supported in sharing their views and experiences of the education system. In order to achieve this, three approaches were considered; focus groups, pro-longed involvement and member checking.

I adopted a prolonged involvement approach with the participants (Robson, 2000 pg. 172). Prolonged involvement is identified to help reduce both the reactivity and respondent bias. This was particularly important in this study due to the highly interpretive nature of the study**.** Prolonged involvement supports the development of a trusting relationship between the researcher and participants. I engaged with the participants over a period of eleven months. This included the initial focus group, the semi-structured interview and the final interview to feed back the themes. In addition, prolonged involvement enabled me to gain a perspective of the changing experiences the young people had over an extended period of time, this included;

- leaving the SEBD School,

- entering FE school,

- breakdown of placements,

- and re-engagement with EET.

Respondent bias was also particularly significant in this study. I was aware I was asking the YP to reflect on their time in the EBD School (which for many was their first positive experience of education) and their relationship with Erica. I was cognisant of the need to revisit the themes and ensure the responses given were not to please either Erica, myself or the EBD School.

Appendix 6: Member Checking:

Robson, (2000) suggests there can be a greater researcher bias with prolonged involvement. To address this possible limitation I also used "member checking" (Robson, 2000; p. 175). This involved returning to the participants and presenting them with a mind map of initial themes which emerged from the data. Previous research which has used member checking have adopted a number of different approaches when considering how to feedback initial themes (see Bloor 1997, Willis 1997). All five participants in this research had significantly lower levels of reading than would be expected for YP of their age. This information was confirmed by the school staff from the EBD School. Therefore it was felt the use of a mind map was a useful means of representing and feeding back the emerging themes.

Consideration was also given to an abbreviated version of the themes which we could read together but, based on my experience of using mind maps as a way of structuring ideas with pupils with literacy difficulties, I felt this was an appropriate and useful visual way of representing the themes. The staff at the EBD School also verified by the participants had familiarity with using mind maps, so it made sense to adopt this as a way of feeding back themes.

The purpose of member checking was three fold:
- Firstly it reduced the threat of researcher and respondent bias.

- Secondly it supported the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings, as it enabled me to seek confirmation that the findings are congruent with the views of the participant.

- Thirdly it enabled me to explore in greater depth any initial themes which I thought were particularly significance and check if these were also considered relevant to the participant.

(Robson, 2000)

Appendix 7: Thematic Analysis Protocol:

A rich description of the entire data set was conducted to give readers a sense of the most important themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun and Clarke argue that this is a useful method to utilise in an under-researched area where the views of the participants are unknown. This is particularly pertinent to this study where priority was given to an under researched group, namely YP with SEBD.

Braun and Clarke identify two ways for themes or patterns to be identified these include inductively ('bottom-up' process with the themes identified and linked specifically to the data and not to the researchers theoretical interest) or deductively ('top-down' process with a more detailed analysis of some aspects of the data linked to the researchers theoretical interest in the area). For the purpose of the study an inductive process was undertaken as the themes emerged, and were strongly linked to the data. This ensured the themes were data driven and represented the views and experiences of the participants involved. However, I acknowledge the data is not coded in an 'epistemological vacuum' (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

This analysis focused on latent themes (themes that are identified beyond explicit or 'surface' levee meanings) and identified the underlying issues and assumptions that may be informing the semantic (surface level) content of the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the latent thematic analysis involves interpretative work and is not just a description of the data. This

method of data analysis supports the methodology and interpretative framework that shapes this study.

Stages of analysis

The first stage of the analysis involves the researcher familiarising yourself with the data. This involves transcribing the data, due to time constraints the time needed to re-visit the participants (as part of prolonged involvement) the interviews were transcribed by a transcrber. However all interviews were listened to ensure they represented the views of the participants accurately.

Data was then coded and themes were generated from the initial list of codes sought from the data. According to Braun and Clarke (2006) themes 'capture' something important within the data set in relation to the research questions and provide a level of patterned response from within the data set.

The next stage requires the researcher to generalise the initial codes (the production of initial codes from the data). Stage three involves the searching for themes (sorting different codes into potential themes and collating the relevant codes data extracts within the identified themes). The researcher must then review the themes in stage four, before defining and naming the themes in stage five. The last stage (six) is the production of the report. (Braun and Clarke,2006). The thematic analysis of the data from this research was conducted using this six stage model.

Appendix 8 Excerpt 8: Alan's transcript

The coding below is an example of the method described by Braun & Clarke (2006). I began with a systematic line by line coding which I then re-examined as initial codes began to emerge Braun and Clarke suggest:

> Analysis is not a linear process of simply moving from one phase to the next. Instead it is a more recursive process, where movement from back to forth is needed throughout the process.

> (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p.86)

At this time I was looking for patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data. This involved a constant moving backwards and forwards through the whole data set (five semi-structured interviews). Throughout the process I wrote down thoughts and ideas which continued throughout the analysis process.

An initial list of codes and area worthy of further thought were identified from reading and rereading the data. Initial codes were identified in the transcript in the first transcript, following this I looked at each interview and identified similar meaningful data extracts which illustrated the similar code. This also allowed for new codes to emerge upon reading of the transcripts. Codes were matched with data extracts to demonstrate that code.

An example of the codes applied to a shore segment of data:

Data extract	Coded for
A: Yeah I don't think I should have been there you know. Yeah personally I don't think so. I got kicked out in primary school and I went to O, then C, then O again and the here like a bloody yo-yo. I just got kicked out of school and I ended up here.	25 Pattern of exclusion 53 Not involved in decisions
L: That must have must have been really hard, so can you tell me more about what the other schools were like?	
A: Ah stupid1 I had a thing and then the headmaster he's ahhhh. He's a full on dickhead. So if you walk around with your top button undone he makes you pick up litter right in front of everyone. I'm like what!! Yeah I was like no,, don't think so I ain't	

picking that up. Then he got me kicked out.	
L: really so can you tell me about the teachers there?	
A: My helper Mr S, he was allright but sometimes it was like the stupidest thing and he would be right down the corridor, Whatever decision he made that would go,. I fucking hated it…yeah every classroom I went I ahd a TA, I was like just leave me alone. I had enough…they fucking stalked me it was absolute shit	53 Decision making 49 feeling controlled

After all the data was coded, different codes were sorted into potential themes and analysed to identify the final overarching themes for paper one. This involved searching the codes, finding relationships between the codes and if necessary merging them.

At this stage of grouping the data I looked for meaningful groups and patterns to challenge the syntheses, as well as finding out what did not fit the themes

(Richard, 2005, p. 165). Themes were reviewed and overarching and sub-themes were identified to capture the main themes in relation to the entire data set.

Appendix 9 Excerpt focus group transcript

L: What I am interested in doing is finding out what you think about you helps you to stay in some kind of education, employment or training. So today is about what kind of questions you think are important. What your views are on it and having a chat about that and then will maybe meet up again if you are happy to do so. So it's about your experiences maybe leaving Grovehill, where you have gone and finding about this year. Perhaps, what's been good, what's been not so good and what you think could have been better...

Student B: Yeah cool beans

L: yeah sounds good, seen as your guys who have left Grovehill, I think you'll be able to tell me what it's been like. Because I guess I'm trying to think about what you think is important really, what kinds of questions are important to ask about your experiences in EET.

Student C: Where I am going to end up...prison

L: Is that what you think?

Student C: Yeah, maybe I don't really it's all different

L: So if you wanted to tell your story this has been my experience, what things have been really important to you this year?

Student C: Erica, if it wasn't for Erica I wouldn't even be here now I'd be sat down playing computer games or something

Student B Yeah I'd be a bum or selling the big issue I think

Student C: yeah I'd be at home like

Student D Yeah Erica definitely she motivates me

L: So Erica is something that would be good to talk about. What about leaving Grovehill

Student A: Well I knew I was leaving and I knew I was going to college so I didn't really care..

Student C Well I didn't want to go I didn't really want to leave there

L: Oh really so was that an important time when you were thinking about leaving?

Student B: The thing about Grovehill is like everyone's the same and they can sort of sort you out. It's not like anywhere else.

Student C: Well I went there too late and they said they couldn't really do anything for me I went to A then they excluded me then I went to O then I went back to A and I git excluded again and then I went to F and I lasted 3 weeks then I went back to A and I got kicked out there and then I just went home. I wasn't in any school and then I just went for like one hour a week I didn't even know about Grovehill. The school went behind my and my mum's back and a letter came to the door and said you have an interview at Grovehill

L: Really so do you think that's something important to talk about, your individual experiences with education?

Student C: Well there was harsh on me as well say we did the same thing **** would be all right and me and **** would always get into trouble

Student B: That's why I kicked off half the time, it was like unfair treatment

Student C Yeah that's it like unfair treatment

L: So if I was going to think about the questions from what you're saying not being involved in like some of your decisions from , that's sounds pretty rubbish and also teachers treating you differently…

Student A: They'd excluded you for like the littlest thing

Student B: Yeah like we'd be treated differently. Yeah like **** punched **** and spat at him and all he had to do was sit in a room for like 5 minutes.

Student C Yeah and like then me I was messing around with this teacher, like what was I saying,. I was like put my hand on her shoulder like messing and stuff and she went to J and said I grabbed her, grabbed her tits and stuff saying "hello gorgeous I can't wait to be alone with you and that..." and I wasn't even saying that and I got excluded for like 3 weeks

L So talking about how you are treated is important is it? So were all of you excluded

Student B Not me I wasn't excluded I was a good boy I was ...Nah I was went to E, then O, then back to O then to Grovehill

L Wow that's alot of places isn't it?

 Student B Yeah but I got kicked on in the end

L So I've written not being involved in your decisions, the parts leading up to Grovehill that you've talked about today. What about after leaving Grovehill this year what bits do you thing think I need to ask

Student B: how I got to college or something

Student C: Erica is really important and yeah when I was still in school you do work experience and stuff you like go out don't ya I went to the garage project and I got kicked out of there and I went to MB, I got kicked out of there but the reason I got kicked out was there were trying to make me put on this orange things and they went all the way up and the woman was trying to make me wear them and I went like aghhhh I started swearing and I went and I punched the glass

Student B: I refused to wear them it was horrible she wanted me to clean a powerboat and I was like fuck off. She didn't even ask me

Student C Then I went ******, which was a pile of wank cos like we refused to go if not.. So I went and when I was there I went downstairs and sat down, they told me to go and they were going to call the police and that, cos they don't like me. Every time I turned up but they didn't like me they'd belittle me and make me feel really small...

L: So that bit sounds really important to talk about, like this part has been good but this part has been rubbish and we need to change that? What about when it's gone wrong?

Appendix 10 Semi-structured interview

1. How would you describe yourself?
    b) How would you friends describe you?
    c) How would your carers describe you?
    d) How would your teacher/tutor describe do you think

Educational experiences prior to attending EBD School

2 .Can you tell me about the school you attended up until you went EBD school?

 a) where did you go to school?

b) Tell me about your school?

c) how would you describe your school experience?

d) What parts did you enjoy (prompt)

 d) where there any parts of school you did not enjoy?

Experience of attending EBD

3.   Can you tell me how you came to EBD school?

    a) where you involved in deciding the type of support you needed in class?

    b) do you know what your statement of SEN entitled you to?

4.   How would you describe your experiences of attending EBD?

    a) what did you like about EBD?

    b) what did you dislike about EBD?

Decision making process about post-16 EET?

(Exploration of participant's level of involvement in decision making process)

5. What did you want to do when you left school?

a) what support did you get to help you make decisions?

b) did you attend work related programmes, tell me about them?

c) did you get to choose the course you wanted to attend? Who helped you make the choice-connexions, teacher, parents etc..

d)Tell me about the information and guidance on the courses that were available to you? Was it help, was there anything you felt you did not get?

e) If yes can you explain to me why you wanted to do a course like that,

- what did you think it would be like,
- have your thoughts/expectations of what the course would be like matched up to your experience on the course?

f) If you did not get to attend the course you wanted, do you know why? Explore...

g) How important to you is to be involved in decisions about the courses you choose post 16.

- Do you think you were fully involved, if yes can you tell me how, if no what could school do to ensure are fully involved in decisions regarding your future?

Post 16 experiences...

6. How has life changed since you left EBD?

a) what course did you begin, are you still attending that course

b) how did you feel leaving EBD and entering a mainstream setting?

c) what has been difficult, can you tell me about challenges you have faced? **Prompt**; Explore crisis points, identify what helped/did not help.....

d) who has helped you overcome your challenges?

e) what have you enjoyed since you left EBD?

f) what do you enjoy doing outside of E, E or T.

g) have you made new friends since leaving EBD?

7. Can you describe how Erica has supported you over this year? **If Erica is mentioned...**

a) explore characteristics of Erica?

b) have there been any other people who have helped you if needed help this year?

8. Can you tell me about your tutor in your setting? What's important about this relationship, if anything?

a) Do you think they have understood your needs moving from special school to mainstream

b) how do you think _____ views you?

Exploration of ideal characteristics of course/ teacher

9. How would you describe an ideal teacher? What qualities does a teacher need that helps you?

10. How would you describe your ideal course? What would the course look like?

11. How do you know if a course is the right course for you?

a) what have you learned?

b) what you like to learn?

c) what would the best way to do it?

12. Can you tell me three things that you think will help support you to remain in education, employment or training?

13. Can you name three things that make it more difficult to remain in education, employment or training?

14. If you feel like giving up your course, what would you do?

Future hopes and aspirations..

15. Where do you expect you will be in six months' time/why?

- What would you like to be in five years' time/why?
- What sort of person do you want to be and what part does EET play in this?

16. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about to help me understand your views and experiences of staying in EET?

Appendix 11 Aspects of a qualitative interview:

Within this research there was a commitment to enter into the social and psychological world of the participant. Therefore I identified my role in the semi-structured interview as facilitating and guiding the discussion, rather than dictating exactly what happened during the process. Steiner Kvale, a leading commentator on the interview process notes twelve aspects of understanding that he felt described the qualitative interview schedule. These aspects have been reproduced below in Table 1 and demonstrate why I chose a semi-structured interview as the most appropriate method to gather the YP's views.

Table 1: The main aspects of a qualitative research interview.

Life World	The topic of qualitative interviews is the everyday lived world of the interviewee and his or her relation to it.
Meaning	The interview seeks to interpret the meaning of central themes in the life world of the subject. The interviewer registers and interprets the meaning of what is said as well as how it is said.
Qualitative	The interview seeks qualitative knowledge expressed in normal language, it does not aim at quantification
Descriptive	The interview attempts to obtain open nuanced descriptions of different aspects of the subject's life world

Specificity	Descriptions of specific situations and action sequences are elicited, not general opinions.
Deliberate Naïveté	The interviewer exhibits an openness to new and unexpected phenomena, rather than having ready-made categories and schemes of interpretation.
Focused	The interview is focused on particular themes; it is neither strictly structured with standardised questions, nor entirely —non-directive.
Ambiguity	Interviewee statements can sometimes be ambiguous, reflecting contradictions in the world the subject lives in.
Change	The process of being interviewed may produce new insights and awareness, and the subject may in the course of the interview come to change his or her descriptions and meanings about a theme.
Sensitivity	Different interviewers can produce different statements on the same themes, depending on their sensitivity to and knowledge of the interview topic.
Interpersonal Situation	The knowledge obtained is produced through the interpersonal interaction in this interview.
Positive Experience	A well carried out research interview can be a rare and enriching experience for the interviewee, who may obtain new insights into his or her life situation.

(adapted from Kvale, 1996; p. 29)

Appendix 12 Ethical Consent

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER

School of Education and Lifelong Learning

Certificate of ethical research approval

STUDENT RESEARCH/FIELDWORK/CASEWORK AND DISSERTATION/THESIS

You will need to complete this certificate when you undertake a piece of higher-level research (e.g. Masters, PhD, EdD level).

To activate this certificate you need to first sign it yourself, then have it signed by your supervisor and by the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee.

For further information on ethical educational research access the guidelines on the BERA web site: http://www.bera.ac.uk/publications/guides.php and view the School's statement in your handbooks.

READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY **AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER**

(the form will expand to contain the text you enter)**.**

DO <u>NOT</u> COMPLETE BY HAND

Your name: Lorraine O'Sullivan

Your student no: 560021625

Degree/Programme of Study: Doctorate in Educational Child and Community Psychology

Project Supervisor(s):   Dr Tim Maxwell, Mr Andrew Richards

Your email address: lmo202@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: 07515276434

Title of your project: An exploration of the systems which support young adults with social, emotional and behavioural needs to remain in further education and/or training post 16.

Brief description of your research project: My research is underpinned by the belief that there is a greater need to take young people's thinking into account, and involve them in decisions which relate to their lives, to enable full participation within society. I am interested in researching young people's views, and considering how their views can shape, and inform future practice within

the local authority I work in. The focus of my first paper is concerned with exploring and understanding the views and experiences of young adults with Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (SEBD) who have moved from specialist, to mainstream post 16 provision. The second paper will consider the perspectives of the wider systems of support, for example parents, professionals and strategic decision makers around current practice and provision. My interest hopes to explore the systems which surround young adults identified as being at risk of becoming NEET (not in education, employment or training). At present in the local authority I work in there is no special school provision post 16. I believe there is a need to explore how we can best meet the needs of individuals making the move into further education and training. Research in Practice Review (2008) highlights transition as a time of risk for young adults at risk of NEET. I suggest that transition is just one part of a young adults life, my research will explore what happens next , the challenges to moving into mainstream education and training, and what supports young adults to remain in education and training. As well as young adult's views and experiences I am interested in exploring the views and perceptions of the range of different agencies involved in these young adults' lives. My enquiry will consider what the similarities and differences are between the young adults (micro), range of professionals and carers (meso) and strategy leaders (macro). I hope to obtain a more holistic understanding of how the system works and identify suggestions for improvement in the future. I am interested in researching the perspectives from a micro (Individual), meso (professional and carer) and macro (strategists) level around what is effective current practice in the prevention of NEET. Traditionally eco-systemic analysis has focused on the meso and macro elements of a system. Findings from the Joseph Rownetree foundation's review on the links between education and poverty highlighted a significant gap in the research as being the micro level of understanding (Raffo et al, 2007).Therefore a critical element of my research will be exploring the views and perspectives of the young adults around what is effective support in the prevention of NEET.

Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved): My research will consider the views and experiences of six young adults male who have left their specialist provision to enter further mainstream education or training. The participants in my research have been selected as they are part of a current pilot project 'Centrepoint' in the authority I work in. Centrepoint has evolved from the schools concerns about young adults becoming NEET once they finish in the SEBD School. The six young adult's ages range from 16-17.

I will also be completing interviews with a selection of individuals who currently support the young adults in their settings. This will include staff from the Further Education College; staff from the local entry into education programme, Tomorrows Futures staff-a mentoring programme for young adults at

risk of NEET, Strategic Decision makers e.g. 14-19 curriculum development leaders in the local authority, representative from the Learning Skills Council

Give details regarding the ethical issues of informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality (with special reference to any children or those with special needs)

I will ensure I have both verbal and written consent from the young adults I am undertaking my research with. I intend to get consent from their parents/carers as they are under eighteen and also from the participants themselves. I will send a typed letter to the participant's carers detailing the purpose of my research and asking for signed permission to meet with their children. I will also phone and meet with the parents/carers if any additional clarification or information is required. I will also meet with the participants and explain the purpose of my research and get signed informed consent. I will ensure I have positive consent which will mean a returned signed letter indicating their willingness to be part of the research.

Safety of the clients will be considered at all times. I am aware the group of individuals I am working with have been given a label SEBD, I will ensure I am respectful towards their feelings about the label when discussing how it feels to be in a SEBD school and also ensure I am to open and transparent about the nature of the research. I will ensure I do not cause any harm, detriment or any undue stress to any participants at all times. Of importance to this research is ensuring the participant's views and voices are represented truthfully and without judgement. I will ensure I am respectful and fully represent the views of the participants without judgement at all times.

The participants will be able to withdraw at any point in the research I believe young people are often products of a hierarchical and unequal education system and I am committed to exploring their views around what supports them to remain in further education and training. Fundamental to my research is a commitment and a belief in the need to explore the lived experiences of learners and give voice to their views and lived experience. In my practice as trainee Educational, Child and Community Psychologist the importance of gaining views of children and young people I work with is paramount. This is also echoed in both national and international publications, Article 12 of *United Nations Convention on Rights of Child* (UN, 1990) asserts that every child has right to express his or her opinion in all matters affecting him/her. I believe we have an ethical and moral responsibility to ensure we gain the views of young adults around issues which affect their life chances. All data received will be anonoymised and will not be shared with any other agencies.

Reflexivity is also of particular concern in my practice as a researcher, I am conscious of the need to be aware of my biases, interests, values, experiences and characteristics that may affect my research and interpretations. As discussed previously I intend to use both prolonged involvement and member checking to guard against any potential for bias. I am also aware of my limitations as a researcher and will ensure I continue to question what I have done, am I using the most appropriate methods, and the impact I may have on a setting, situation, participants etc. (Bannister et al, 1994)

Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

I intend to use semi-structured interviews to gain the views of the young adults around current practice and provision. There will have a number of probes and prompts which will be used in a consistent manner with all interviewees. This will be iterative rather than linear. The interviews will be taped and transcribed and a copy will be attached in the appendices of my paper. I will also use member checking (Robson, 2002) to increase the trustworthiness and reliability of my findings. This will involves going back and presenting the participants with the transcripts I have made. I hope this will guard me against researcher bias.

I propose to use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to analyse the data I receive in paper one. IPA allows the researcher to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world. IPA also emphasis the dynamic process of research, where the researcher has an active role in the research completed (Smith and Osborn, 2007). IPA also suits the first section of my research as I am looking at a particular group on individuals with SEBD. This approach will enable me to explore in detail the views and experiences of this particular group of people but will not be generalizable to the wider population. I intend to complete the interviews over time as I believe an important element of my research is the need to build rapport and trust with the young adults I am interviewing. I hope to meet them both in their school environment, local community and youth centres to explore and build up a picture of their life experiences as a learner. Once transcripts have been recorded I will read them a number of times and begin to look for themes. IPA considers themes and moves the response to a slightly higher level of abstraction and may invoke more psychological terminology (Smith & Osborn, 2000). These may involve themes such as belonging, resilience, identity; the themes will be dependent on the data generated from the interviews. This method I would suggest will allow me to make valid inferences from the data to the context of the research being completed.

Paper two is concerned with building up a view of the systems of support to enable young adults with SEBD to remain in further education and training. Firstly I will give a questionnaire to a range of

individuals involved in supporting the young adults including teachers from FE college, voluntary organisations e.g. Tomorrow's future, entry to education, Stephanie-mentor/life coach from Centrepoint project, Youth Offending team, Learning skills council, Connexions,14-19 co-ordinator for ***** Local authority. The sampling will be purposive as the persons interviewed will be chosen to help me as a researcher to formulate new understanding of the situation. The questions will be generated from the themes of the first paper. This will ensure I am exploring issues which are central to the views of the young people within the system. I aim to have 8-10 questions with a mix of closed and open ended questions. Some of the questions will necessitate open-ended questions as I will be looking for examples of practice and others will be suited to the closed approach. The data will coded using a coded scheme for the closed questions, this will be determined when the questionnaire is designed. The open questions will be coded according to a limited number of categories/themes for the purpose of feasibility and manageability. The themes for the open ended questions will be generated by the nature of the respondents answer. Data will be analysed using SPSS and produce descriptive statistics. The main aim of the questionnaire is to gather a wider range of information and also to guide the semi-structured interviews which will follow the questionnaire.

Analysis of the data will follow a grounded theory approach. I am interested in building up a view of the current system. Grounded theory seeks "to generate a theory which relates to the particular situation forming the focus of a study" (Robson, 2002, pg. 190). I hope to gain a conceptualisation of the whole system in place. My theory/ conceptualisation will be grounded in the data obtained during the study, particularly in the actions, interactions and processes of the people involved. As discussed, systems theory is interested in the relationships between each part of the system and I believe grounded theory will enable me to build up a view of the system in place. A possible outcome may be suggestions for future practice. I will re-analyse the views of the young adults (micro) to reflect the purpose of this section of the research e.g. an understanding of the whole systems in place to support young adults to remain in further education and training.

Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project (e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires or special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.): All data received will be anonoymised and will not be shared with any other agencies. All data will be stored in a safe, locked file while the research is been carried out. Any taped copies of the interviews will be stored safely in a secure storage file and will be destroyed in a safe and secure manner once the research is completed. Copies of the transcripts and completed questionnaires will be appended to the final papers. I will ensure I adhere to the British Psychological Society code of ethics and conduct (2006).

The code is based on four ethical principles I will adhere to at all times: respect, competence, responsibility and integrity.

Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants): **I am not aware of any potential political or ideological conflicts which may arise from my research. Above all I intend to be open and transparent about the purpose of my research and committed to exploring and representing equally and in good faith, all participants involved in the research.**

---

*This form should now be printed out, **signed by you below and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's** Research Support Office **for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.***

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given above and that I undertake in my dissertation / thesis (delete whichever is inappropriate) **to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.**

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:……………………………………………………………..date:………………………..

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: **until:**

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature):

………………………………………….…**date:**……………………………

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occurs a further form is completed.

SELL unique approval reference:…………………………………………….

Signed:………………………………………………………………..date:………………………..

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

This form is available from

http://www.education.ex.ac.uk/students/index.php then click on On-line documents.

Appendix 13 Consent form

Hello Rick,

 My name is Lorraine O'Sullivan and I am a second year Trainee Educational Psychologist working for ***** Psychology service. As part of my training I have to complete a research project. I am really interested in understanding what helps support young adults like your self to remain in further education employment and/or training. So I have decided to look at this area for my research project.

I have been reading and doing some research of different people's views around what supports young adults to remain in education, employment and/or training. There are lots of different opinions but the one thing I have noticed is that very few people actually ask young people like yourself what you think.

 I believe it's really important to listen to young people and ask them what their opinions are. I think you need to be fully included and involved in any decisions which are made regarding your future.

 I also am interested in thinking about how we can all improve any services which are in place in ***** at the moment. I would really like the chance to meet with you and have a

discussion about what you feel helps support you to remain in education, employment and or training.

I will not use your name in any of my research and will share with you anything I find out which helps improve post 16 education in *****.

 I need to get consent from you in the form of a signature if you would like to meet with me.

If you would like to take part could you sign this from and return it to Erica and hopefully we will meet up soon. At any time you have the right to withdraw from the research.

I really hope you are interested in meeting and having a discussion about what helps support you to remain in further education,

Looking forward to meeting with you,

Lorraine

Lorraine O'Sullivan   or   Jim Murphy

Trainee Educational Psychologist   Principal Educational Psychologist

***** Psychology Service   ******* Psychology Service

01234   345678   01234   345678

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

An exploration of the current practice and Post 16 provision for young adults with Social, Emotional and Behavioral Difficulties (SEBD).

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

There is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me

Any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

All information I give will be treated as confidential

The researcher will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

.......................………………..

....

(Signature of participant)   (Date)

………………………………….

(Printed name of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher(s)

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Lorraine O'Sullivan   or   Jim Murphy

Trainee Educational Psychologist   Principal Educational Psychologist

***** Psychology Service   ***** Psychology Service

01234 345678   01234 345678

CONSENT FORM FOR THE PARENTS OF CHILD PARTICIPANTS

An exploration of the current practice and Post 16 provision for young adults with Social, Emotional and Behavioral Needs (SEBD).

I have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

There is no compulsion for my child to participate in this research project and, if I do choose for my child to participate, I may at any stage withdraw their participation

I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about my child

Any information which my child gives will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications

All information given by my child will be treated as confidential

The researcher will make every effort to preserve my child's anonymity

...........................……………...

....

(Signature of parent of participant)

(Date)

……………………………………

(Printed name of parent of participant)

One copy of this form will be kept by the parent of participant; a second copy will be kept by

the researcher

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Lorraine O'Sullivan   or   Jim Murphy

Trainee Educational Psychologist   Principal Educational Psychologist

***** Psychology Service   ***** Psychology Service

01752   224962   01752   224962

Appendix 14 Mind maps
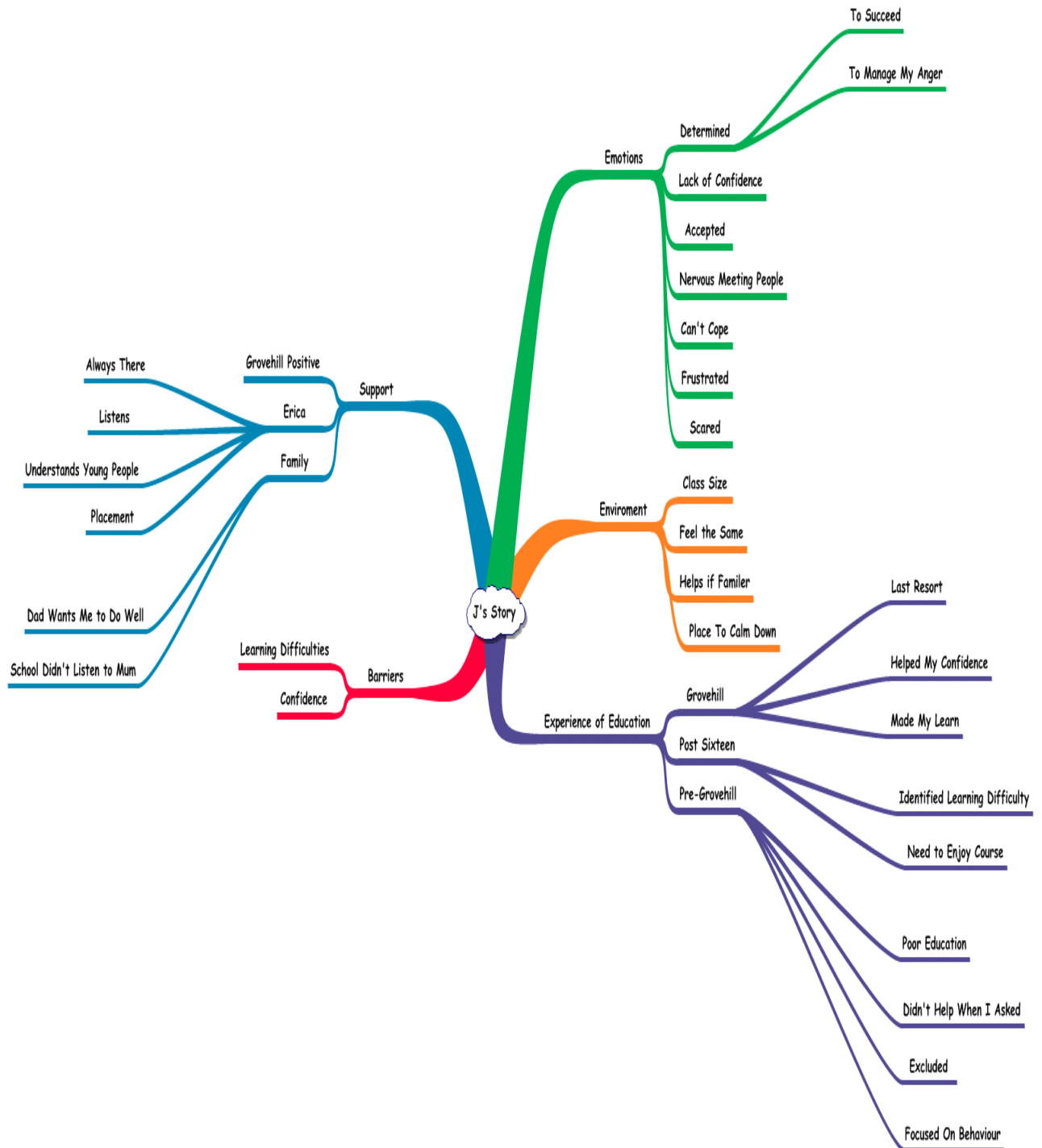
Jake's Story

I. **Environment**

    A. **Class Size**

    B. **Feel the Same**

    C. **Helps if Familiar**

    D. **Place to Calm Down**

II. **Barriers**

    A. **Learning Difficulties**

    B. **Confidence**

III. **Support**

    A. **Grovehill Positive**

    B. **Erica**

        1. **Always There**

        2. **Listens**

        3. **Understands Young People**

        4. **Placement**

    C. **Family**

        1. **Dad Wants Me to Do Well**

        2. **School Didn't Listen to Mum**

IV. **Experience of Education**

    A. **Grovehill**

        1. **Last Resort**

        2. **Helped My Confidence**

        3. **Made My Learn**

    B. **Post Sixteen**

        1. **Identified Learning Difficulty**

        2. **Need to Enjoy Course**

    C. **Pre-Grovehill**

        1. **Poor Education**

        2. **Didn't Help When I Asked**

        3. **Excluded**

        4. **Focused On Behaviour**

V. **Emotions**

A. Determined
    1. To Succeed
    2. To Manage My Anger
B. Lack of Confidence
C. Accepted
D. Nervous Meeting People
E. Can't Cope
F. Frustrated
G. Scared

Rick's Story

R's Story

Support
- Further Education
- Lack of Pre-Grovehill
- Erica
  - Prevents Quitting
  - Understands Me
  - Advocate
  - Placement
  - Arranges Things

Behaviour
- Can't Control
- Too Late to Change
- Link to Support
- Barrier to Learning

Teachers
- Primary
- Grovehill
  - Had a Laugh
  - On the Same Level
  - Understand Needs
- Further Education
  - Low Opinion
  - Focus on Behaviour
  - Don't Understand

Feelings
- Angry
- Disengaged
- Stressed
- Isolated

Inclusion
- Don't Belong
- Nobody Wanted Me
- Lack of Opportunity

Experience of Education System
- Boring
- Exclusion
- Disengaged
- Need To Enjoy
- Academic Vs Practical

Environment
- Smaller Class
- Place to Calm Down
- Attachment to Grovehill
- Familiar/Unfamiliar

Rick's story

I Support
- A) FE
- B) Lack of pre-Grovehill
- C) Erica
  1. Prevents quitting
  2. Understands me
  3. Advocate
  4. Placement
  5. Arranges things

II Inclusion
- A) Don't belong
- B) Nobody wanted me
- C) Lack of opportunities

III   Experience of the education system

A) Boring
B) Exclusion
C) Disengaged
D) Need to enjoy
E) Practical V's Academic

IV   Behaviour
A) Can't control
B) Too late to change
C) Linked to support
D) Barrier to learning

V   Teachers
A) Primary
B) Grovehill
1. Had a laugh
2. On the same level
3. Understands needs
C) Further education
1. Low opinion
2. Focus on behaviour
3. Don't understand needs

VI   Feelings
A) Angry
B) Disengaged
C) Stressed
D) Isolated

VII   Environment
A) Smaller place
B) Place to calm down
C) Attachment to Grovehill
D) Familiar/unfamiliar

Appendix 15 Semi-structured interview paper 2

- **Questions on role/practice/provision**

- Can you describe your role in Post 16 Education?

- How would you describe/Can you tell me about your experience of working with young adults with Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs?

- Can you tell me about the provision you offer to YA with SEBN?

Prompt questions if they don't address...

- How do you YA become aware of provision? Do you receive referrals from other organisations?

- How do you engage and retain YA on the course?

- How do you know the provision you offer is effective?

- How you follow up young people's activities once they have left your course?

Needs of Young adults?

- Can you tell me your view around the needs of YA with SEBN post 16?

- What challenges do you view this group of individuals as having?

- What supports them to remain in EET?

- In your view what are the factors which are associated with YA becoming NEET post leaving special school

- What qualities do you think a practitioner needs when trying to meet the needs of this group of YAs?

Questions on transition

- Where you involved in the transition plan from MT to new placement?

- Can you tell me about what pastoral structures are in place to support transition?

- What information do you receive regarding YA who make the transition from special school to post 16 education?

- Do you provide any additional transition preparation programmes for YAs joining to your course

Support

- How are young people identified as needing additional support when leaving post 16?-Did you receive information from S140?

- What do you view as effective support for young adults making the move from specialist to mainstream EET?

- Can you tell me about any support/training you receive to understand YAs needs?

- What support would you like (if any?)

- What are the gaps (if any) in current systems of support?? How could they be filled?

Multi-agency

- Can you tell me about any other organisations you work with in your role working with Young adults?

- How do you work with the other organisations? Are their agreements in place-implicit/explicit?

Communication

- Can you tell me about how you involve the young person in decisions about post 16 EET? - facilitators/barriers?
- How would you describe your relationship with range of agencies who work with YAs?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't covered?

Extra questions...

- How can the involvement of parents/carers and other agencies be made more effective in the process of transition?
- What course of action could be taken by schools and post-16 providers to enable new initiatives to move forward?
- How can all schools and post-16 providers work together to ensure that learners have all the relevant information to make informed decisions and the skills to make effective applications?

Appendix 16 Suggested alterations highlighted in red

Questions on role/practice

- Can you describe your role in Post 16 Education?

- How would you describe/Can you tell me about your experience of working with young adults with Social Emotional and Behavioural Needs?

- Can you tell me about the provision you offer to YA with SEBN?

Prompt questions if they don't address...

- How do you YA become aware of provision? Do you receive referrals from other organisations?

- How do you engage and retain YA on the course?

- How do you know the provision you offer is effective? How do you measure the effectiveness of the provision you offer? What targets are set? By whom? How often are they reviewed or evaluated?

- Do you follow up young people's activities once they have left your course?

Needs of Young adults?

- Can you tell me your view around the needs of YA with SEBN post 16?

- What challenges do you view this group of individuals as having?

- What supports them to remain in EET?

- In your view what are the factors which are associated with YA becoming NEET post leaving special school

- What qualities do you think a practitioner needs when trying to meet the needs of this group of YAs?

Questions on transition

- Were you involved in the transition plan from MT to new placement?

- Can you tell me about what pastoral structures are in place to support transition?
- What information do you receive regarding YA who make the transition from special school to post 16 education?
- Do you provide any additional transition preparation programmes for YAs joining to your course
- What transition support would you like to see in place? What are/ have been the barriers to achieving this?

<u>Support</u>

- How are young people identified as needing additional support when leaving post 16?-Did you receive information from S140?

- What do you view as effective support for young adults making the move from specialist to mainstream EET?

- Can you tell me about any support/training you receive to understand YAs needs?

- What support would you like (if any?)

- What are the gaps (if any) in current systems of support?

Multi-agency

- Can you tell me about any other organisations you work with in order to ensure that young people receive appropriate support?

- How do you work with the other organisations? Are their agreements in place-implicit/explicit?

- How do you feel about the experiences that you have had when working with other organisations? - Positives and challenges.

- What support would facilitate joined-up working with other organisations?

Communication

- Can you tell me about how you involve the young person in decisions about post 16 EET? - facilitators/barriers?

- How would you describe your relationship with range of agencies who work with YAs?

- Is there anything else you would like to add that I haven't covered?

Extra questions...

- How can the involvement of parents/carers and other agencies be made more effective in the process of transition?

- What course of action could be taken by schools and post-16 providers to enable new initiatives to move forward?

- How can all schools and post-16 providers work together to ensure that learners have all the relevant information to make informed decisions and the skills to make effective applications

Appendix 17: Excerpts of research diary

June 18th, 2009

One of the challenges of my research was to how to reach a group such as the Young adults I am completing my research with. As I have read the literature on this area what has struck me has been the lack of involvement of the YAs in decisions made about them. Subsequently to fit in with the pragmatic approach I have taken to my research which is concerned with "what works" , "what solutions " (Creswell, 2007) I have decided to try to co-create the questions for the semi-structured interviews with the participants. This I feel will help me ensure I am asking the questions which are important to them.

June 30th, 2009

Today I met with the participants at a local youth club. Steph who has been supporting the YAs since they left their previous school placement also attended. I felt this was important as I was a stranger to the boys and having Steph there was reassuring for them. I was very clear about my aims that I wished to hear their views around what how they experienced the move to EET. Therefore I did not have a structured set of questions. The meeting was led by what the boys wished to discuss with me clarifying their views and suggesting possible areas which we could discuss further in their semi-structured interviews. Furthermore meeting with the boys allowed me to get face to face consent which I felt was important . After completing the focus group today it struck me the challenge of ensuring all voices are heard. Today was definitely dominated by 2-3 of the group. I must ensure that during their

individual interviews I ask them if there is any other questions I need to ask or if they would like to share any additional information.

July, 2009

Creation of questions:

I have listened to the focus group and a common theme which the YAs returned to was the importance of adults who understood their needs. This has been significant throughout their educational lives and I feel it will be of value to explore how they would describe an ideal teacher, perhaps allowing discussion around support within provisions they have attended. I have included questions about YAs past school experiences as throughout the discussion it came out. I don't believe you can divorce past school experiences with this group who historically have a "negative " experience with education.

I have also included questions levels of involvement around decisions made about their lives. As throughout the focus group this was alluded to. A fundamental part of the transition plan protocol for leaving specialist provision is the YAs involvement in decisions made. Subsequently it will helpful to explore this area further in terms of how it has helped support YAs to remain in EET.

Throughout the past year the YAs have faced a number of obstacles, some have becoming NEET for a transitory period of time. I will include questions which explore what their experience has been, what challenges they have faced and where they have received help. This questions will have to be broad and open ended as I am

interested in hearing their experience and understand that there are multiple experiences, some which may be shared by all participants but some which may be unique to each individual's unique circumstances. I wish to gain as holistic a picture as possible therefore I will be guided by the responses of the participants

July/September

A real obstacle I have to face is the difficulty of arranging appointments with the participants. At the focus group we had agreed that I would contact them via Steph or via phone to arrange an individual interview. It has now come to July time and all of the participants are on holidays. Therefore I've decided to begin the interviews in September. It will have been one year since they left their previous school and I hope will allow me explore the positives and challenges these YAs have faced.

September, 2009

Again what has struck me has been the challenge of meeting up with the participants. Clearly I have my own work commitments but also the difficulties with lack of phones, missed appointments, etc have been a challenge.

I met my first participant. Reflections on the interview, participant A was happy to be involved in the process and keen to share his views. He found it difficult to reflect on how he felt others perceived him (a question included to explore core beliefs and values held about himself). I also felt the inclusion of the word "enjoy" e.g. what did you enjoy about EBD school was quite a leading questions and have decided to change this to tell me about EBD school and probe responses. I suppose this was a

classic novice interview mistake and is part of the learning experience of completing

this nature of research. I was aware throughout the interview that participant A found

it difficult to go below surface descriptions of the experience. I felt as if we

established rapport but I am aware of the need to return

Literature Review

Contents:

Introduction;

This research will explore the views and experiences of young adults (YA) with
social, emotional and behavioural needs (SEBN). It will focus on the type of support
YA with SEBN require to remain in further education, employment and/or training
(EET). These YA are all over school leaving age. My research will explore the views
of five Young Adults (YA) who have been identified as having emotional and
behavioural difficulties by their local authority. Up until the age of sixteen all had a
statement of special educational needs. These YA are all over school leaving age.

This study is particularly relevant to the local authority I work in, as currently there
are no post 16 special school provisions. Subsequently YA make a transition into
mainstream EET. The second paper will consider the views of the wider system of
support, this will include:

- further education (FE) staff in the local city college,

- Connexions

- Voluntary organisations who support YA to remain in EET e.g. Prince's Trust, Tomorrow's People

- Sixth form school staff

- Educational Psychologists

- 14-19 Strategy Group within an urban local authority.

In addition, it will identify facilitators and barriers within the system. It hopes to identify and examine definable features of best practice and consider ways of working in the future. Systems theory and critical enquiry will underpin the research. These theories will be used to consider each individual part of the system and how it functions as a whole. This research will seek to obtain a holistic overview of the current systems of support for YA who leave specialist provision and enter into further mainstream EET.

 YA can miss out on opportunities to access education because they do not get the support they need as they make the transition into FE. Nonetheless, The Children's Act (2004) provides a statutory framework for cooperation between local authorities (LA) and partner agencies to improve the five outcomes for all CYP including YA with SEBN as a special educational need (SEN). Furthermore the need for more developed collaboration between schools and Further Education (FE) institutions is extremely timely given the current climate of reform within education and the government goal of raising the minimum school leaving age to 18 years by 2015.

It is proposed that this research will explore the current system and identify the different views which are held by the individual (micro), practitioners and parents (meso), organisational and funding (macro) levels of the system, to be discussed below. Additionally it will explore, what type of support is required to enable YA feeling 'psychologically resourced' to remain in EET.

CONTEXT FOR RESEARCH:

EP Involvement:

My interest in this area stemmed from a realisation within my service and in the literature of a lack of involvement from Educational Psychology (EP) in understanding and supporting YA with additional needs that enter in post 16 education. This is evident in spite of the EP remit which covers the 0-19 age range. I will argue that the need for EP involvement in this area is particularly acute for YA who are 'at risk' of becoming Not in Education, Employment and/or training (NEET). The NEET population has generated a range of research from a wide variety of disciplines, such as sociology, social policy and education. However, in England and Wales there is a lack of research from an EP perspective. Other disciplines have completed a range of research which focuses on different initiatives to re-engage YA who have become NEET. However, there is an absence of research which considers the views and experiences of YA 'at risk' from a psychological and educational perspective.

I believe EPs, who work across a range of different levels, are well placed to identify the needs of YA who make the transition into further EET. Furthermore as MacKay, (2002) emphasises, EPs have a role in raising educational achievement, promoting social inclusion and carrying out real world research.

MacKay identifies the area of post school psychological services as a "new field of practice" (pg.5, MacKay, 2009). The majority of research from a UK perspective originates in Scotland which has an identified commitment to the development of post-school psychological services. This, MacKay asserts, has not been evident in the wider UK EP services (MacKay, 2009). In Scotland each psychological service has a commitment to providing a post school service. Hellier, (2009) identified that an individual's experience of negative outcomes in the three years succeeding compulsory school is a powerful negative predictor for life-long outcomes. Hellier argues for the need for EPs to become actively involved in strategic developments to enable sustained change for YA at risk of life-long social exclusion. I would argue that this unaddressed need in England and Wales places a strong argument for research from a psychological perspective.

Values and beliefs:

Secondly my research is underpinned by the values and beliefs that shape how I practice Educational Psychology. I believe we need to complete real world research which can critically identify the views and experience of the whole system. Therefore I am using critical inquiry as a research approach. Critical inquiry is an approach to research which not only seeks to understand but seeks to challenge the status quo and bring about change (Crotty, pg 113 2003).

Areas of literature:

Firstly I will consider the literature around social exclusion (SE) and what has driven the Governments current interest in reduction of NEET. During this I will question policies which have been created to 'tackle' this area. I will question how successful the Government or related working organisations have been in their commitment to listening to the 'voice' of the young person. This puts into context the rationale for my first paper as my interviews will provide a voice for YA who have made the transition from specialist to mainstream EET. My second paper will be informed by paper one as the themes which emerge in paper one will be used to develop a questionnaire for the meso and macro level of the system.

Secondly, I will consider the literature relevant to participants in my research. In addition I will explore literature and current thinking about transition from specialist to mainstream provision. This will illuminate my argument for the need to recognise this period of transition as being a particularly vulnerable time. I will argue for the need to consider interactions between the whole system so we can empower, and enable, this group of individuals to experience social inclusion and lifelong emotional wellbeing.

Thirdly, I will discuss in detail the theories (listed above) which underpin my research.

SE and NEET:

Since the Labour Party came to power in 1997, there has been a repeated commitment to reducing SE. The Government announced a goal of full participation of all CYP to improve outcomes and life chances (Bridging the gap, 1999, Every Child Matters, 2001, Education and Skills Act, 2008). This commitment to reducing SE has been the driving force behind reduction of the NEET population. The social exclusion unit report 'Bridging the Gap' claims that every year 161,000 young people between 16 and 18 are not involved in EET. This translates as 9% of 16-18 year olds. Subsequently, tackling 'disaffection' and 'educational underachievement' is identified by the government as fundamental to preventing the inheritance of disadvantage.

However, Milbourne critiques this approach highlighting how under New Labour policies, success in tests are prioritised. Milbourne argues this has taken precedence over social values and local learning needs

"political and social values of education were overwhelmed by the requirements of performance and the language of effectiveness and targets"

Ball, 1998 as cited in Milbourne, 2002

Milbourne presents a compelling argument for critically addressing the influence of initiatives put in place by central Government. Milbourne's research highlights the challenges voluntary organisations face meeting targets under the current Government agenda.   Her approach questions the implications of such a shift within the educational market for the least advantaged. Throughout their educational career the participants in my research have experienced marginalisation and social exclusion. How do central government policies designed to tackle 'disadvantage' and

'exclusion' really address the local and lived experiences of a group of YA with SEBN?

This argument is also echoed by Colley, (2001) who illustrates that, paradoxically , rather than reducing social exclusion, the plethora of schemes and initiatives created by Government are actively constructing SE in a narrow and restrictive manner. Colley argues that by defining acceptable behaviour and thus the boundaries of social inclusion tightly, a large number of individuals, groups and communities who live partly different lives and hold different views or priorities are potentially excluded. This argument is particularly pertinent to the group of individuals I am researching who, as a group, have experienced school exclusion. Often this exclusion has been because of challenging behaviour which as Visser et al (2002) identified has resulted in them being 'problematic to include'.

It is by listening to and valuing the 'lived experiences' of participants, as well as exploring wider views within the system, that I can begin to critically address issues that impact on their ability to feel included. Haydn & Dunne (2001) stated that despite the principles of Article 12 of United Nations Convention on Rights of Child (UN, 1990) which asserts that every child has a right to express his/ her opinion in all matters affecting him/her, there are only a small number of studies which investigate the views of YA with SEBN on their educational experience.

What we do know is that individuals who leave school with low levels of attainment, especially those who lack basic literacy and numeracy skills, are at higher risk of

experiencing social exclusion as adults (Social Exclusion Unit 1999a). What other factors may lead to SE? And do YA recognise what would support them to remain in EET?

Challenges to reviewing literature on NEET:

There are a number of difficulties which arise when reviewing the literature on NEET. Yates & Payne, (2006) identify that NEET is a problematic concept which defines individuals by what they are not and identifies concerns within a deficit model. They argue NEET is a negatively perceived label which fails to identify that these groups of individuals are a heterogeneous mix of young people, with varied situations and difficulties which are often not fully conceptualised.

Often the existing literature is focused on critiquing a support package or evaluation of a programme in terms of outcomes. This narrow focus puts in place a strong argument for the need to listen to YA lived experiences, so we can begin to identify systems of support which can avoid YA becoming NEET. My research hopes to examine the needs of YA by widening the lens and considering the views and experiences of all elements of the system. It is hoped that by identifying common and divergent views between each of the three levels, I can begin to critically examine broader issues. These issues include, power, participation and involvement.

Risk factors:

While acknowledging that there are conceptual difficulties, discussed above associated with the term NEET (Yates & Payne, 2006), this research holds the view

that is important to identify themes or risk factors associated across the NEET group. Individuals involved in supporting YA at risk of NEET need to be aware of aware of risk factors when considering how best to support YA. These factors have been broadly identified in the Scottish review of NEET (2005) as deprivation, financial exclusion, low attainment, weak family and other support networks, stigma and attitudes of others and debt adversity. Evidence from the Social Exclusions Tasks Force (2006) highlights poor parenting, truancy, living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and exclusion from school as key factors linked to NEET status. Research by Pearce & Hillman, (1998) identified increased risk factors such as unemployment, poor health and criminal activity linked to YA who are NEET. Further evidence of the financial impact of the NEET population is argued by Godfrey et al, (2002), who found lifetime costs associated with NEET status, between the ages of 16-18, is estimated at £7 billion pounds in resource costs and £8.1 billion in public finance costs.

Supporting YA 'at risk'

Existing literature on supporting YA at risk of becoming NEET identify:

- an alternative curriculum,

- ongoing support at key stages of transition,

- brokering holistic support from a range of agencies,

- securing involvement of carers and listening and acting upon the views of the YA

as factors which support YA to remain in EET (Tunnard et al, 2007, Scottish review of NEET, 2005,). Furthermore Lloyd et al, (2003) highlighted that no one single approach can ensure YA at risk of NEET remain in EET. They argued support appeared most effective when it's built upon individual circumstances and views of YA. This was also supported by The National Forum for Educational Research (2007) which indicated that any support for young people must take into account their lives, values and choices. My research will explore the individual circumstances and views of five YA. It is hoped that the findings can contribute to our understanding and support local future practice in the area.

Yates & Payne, (2006) argue that early discussions in the UK recognised the diversity of groups at risk of NEET. The key focus was on varying obstacles and difficulties YP may face that could be associated with disaffection and disengagement (SEU, 1999, 2000). They argued that since this time a policy perspective has evolved which "eschews holistic focus" and which has begun to identify NEET as a bluntly negative manner solely linked to concepts such as "low levels of aspiration and motivation" (Popper, 2003, pg. 8 as cited in Yates &Payne, 2006). This is further supported by the challenge Connexions workers face in meeting local authority targets to reduce 'NEET' while at the same time meeting the needs of such a varied group. Yates & Payne illustrate despite Connexions advocating a 'holistic approach' to working with YA, the service has been set targets which clearly defined its primary aim as reducing the number of NEETs.

Participant Literature

Students with SEBN experience the least favourable outcomes of any individuals with disabilities (Bullis & Gaylord- Ross, 1991 as cited in Jolivette et al, 2000). Jolivette et al (2000) completed a review of post- school outcomes for students with SEBN in the United States. This identified links with being SEBN and low educational achievements, difficulties with social relationships and poor outcomes with respect to employment outcomes.

Jolivette et al's study highlighted a number of limitations in longitudinal studies of post- school outcomes for students with disabilities. This includes uneven sample sizes which usually focus on a wide range of needs, rather than just focusing on individuals with SEBN. The authors argue this makes it difficult to identify the specific needs of students with SEBN. Secondly, the authors identify many studies are particular to certain geographical areas which impacts on the generalizability of the data. Thirdly, difficulties are identified in measuring variables which are often quantitative in nature. Fourthly, the study identified a lack of consensus in research around the data collection procedures.

These shortcomings could be partly explained by the commitment within traditional research approaches to using quantitative data, whose purpose is to identify direct causal links. The aim of qualitative research is not the verification of a predetermined idea but discovery which leads to new insights (Sherman & Webb, 1990). Therefore it is proposed that the qualitative approach of this research will provide a holistic view, which can generate new understanding and inform future professional practice.

Much research illustrates the typically poor outcomes for children and young people with SEBN. Eber and Kennon (2004) found that 'many youth with emotional and behavioural disorders traverse through special education, mental health, juvenile justice and child welfare with historically dismal outcomes'. This pattern of failure often shapes their views and experience of education and further training. Lund (1986) claimed the self esteem of young adults with SEBN is significantly lower than the self esteem of young adults in mainstream schools. Links also have been made between the identification of children and young people with SEBN and experiences of stigmatization. This can result in children and young people displaying more negative than positive social behaviours (Bryan and Bryan, 1977).

Much of the research into SEBN notes the poor academic outcomes that these children can face. Boreson (2003) found students with SEBN are expelled more, have the highest unemployment rate of any disability area four years after leaving school, are at risk of homelessness and have decreased job stability. Numerous other studies highlight the high levels of school failure and dropout, unemployment and delinquency (Tobin & Sprague, 1999, Quinn et al 2005)

In addition, Boreson's research highlighted that the main predictors of students with SEBN leaving school early were lower functional skills, absence of vocational education and schools failure to address pastoral and counselling needs. One study reported that as many as one third of students with SEBN fail to obtain gainful employment within 2-5 years of leaving school. Of those who found employment in the study 19% reported losing their job at least once (Wagner et al, 1995). Sinclair et

al (2005) focused on school dropouts and found that only one third found employment and 73% had been arrested within the first few years of leaving school.

These factors amongst others have been attributed to young adults ending up 'at risk' of SE. Yet the critical question remains if we (as a society) are aware of these 'risks', what can we do to address them? What do this group of YA identify as the barriers? More importantly what are the protective factors which can help support this vulnerable group of young adults?

I believe that much of the previous research on negative outcomes fails to identify complex situations as experienced by YA. I would argue that if the Government's focus is on increasing young people's life chances, a critical approach to understanding lifelong social exclusion is vital. Such an approach acknowledges that reality is complex, multiple and socially constructed (Robson, 2002). In addition, government policies such as the Action on Social Exclusion (2006) demonstrated that young people who face severe and complex needs are less likely to benefit from policies. Instead what is required is improved local service design and delivery. I hope my research will have direct implications for practice by contributing and generating new understandings of YA with SEBN.

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) 2005 policy on transition for young adults with complex needs identifies that SE for young adults with complex needs can continue into adulthood. The policy identifies five outcomes for service delivery,

- involving young people and their carers in designing and delivering services

- actively managing transition from youth to adult services

- taking thinking and behaviour into account

- giving effective information about services and sharing information

- offering young people a trusted adult to support them

Also identified is a stated commitment to understanding the views of young adults, the SEU focus group for young adults with complex needs states they will:

> " listen to what young people are saying, take their views into consideration, treat young people as equals, let them be involved in discussion around them and explain things clearly"

While the Government efforts to seek the views of young people in service delivery is to be welcomed, it is evident that the questions are driven by policy agendas. The series of questions explored in the SEU's Task Force on transitions is an example of this agenda-driven approach. My research hopes to explore how the YA themselves experience and understand their situations. Therefore, I am using elements of co-operative inquiry by asking the participants in my research which questions they feel I need to ask them (Reason & Riley as cited in Smith, 2008).

SEBN and prevention of NEET:

Charlton et al, (2004) demonstrated that exclusion from schools can result in lifelong alienation for young people. All five participants in my research have previously experienced school exclusion. They now have left the familiarity of their specialist

provision to enter mainstream EET. A recent research project commissioned by the Learning Skills Authority (LSA) in the authority I work in identified that up to 20% of the students who left the local Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties School became NEET after the first year of leaving school. The reasons for this were not explored in the research which solely relied upon quantitative data from the local Connexions office. Yet clearly this LSA research highlighted a particularly worrying trend which exists for this group of students. Similar findings have also been highlighted by the National Audit Office (2004) on Connexions service advice and guidance. The report highlighted that while the majority of people leave the NEET group and avoid re-entering the NEET group, a significant minority who leave the NEET group find it difficult to sustain the job or education placement. As a result they rejoin the NEET group after short periods (N.A O. 2004).

The Mayor of London report highlighted the need to align the provision for young people to support prevention of NEET with the Government's Public Service Agreement of raising the proportion of YA who achieve a level 2 qualification (Greater Local Authority, 2007). In addition the report highlighted the needs for extensive collaborative work between local authorities, Connexions, Learning Skills Councils and key stakeholders. My research will explore the views of the above agencies and should contribute to supporting future joined up working. As discussed, much of the research which looks at preventing NEET focuses on a description of the programme, rather than a focus on the views of the range of individuals involved. It is hoped that this research will provide a detailed insight into the psychological and social world of this particular group of individuals, which can in turn inform the wider system of support.

Transition:

One of the core questions asked in the Green paper 'Excellence for All Children: Meeting Special Educational Needs' was how can YA with SEN make a successful transition and remain in EET? (DfEE,1999). This concern was also echoed in the SEU's report Bridging the Gap report (1999, DfEE). Tunnard et al's (2007) review highlighted the difficulties some young people with learning difficulties may have making the transition from school to further education. This was also supported in the Scottish report 'More Choices, More Chances' which emphasised the need for tracking and providing support especially at transition (Scottish Executive, 2006).

Polat el al's, (2001) research focused on YA with SEN and provided a comprehensive overview of post 16 transitions. The research took place in two parts and forms part of a longitudinal research which will consider the long-term outcomes for YA with SEN. The research highlighted a number of key areas: YA were found to have lower levels of support and enter into the bottom end of the market when compared to YP with largely uncontested impairments. In addition the research found YA with SEBN were the least likely to remember attending a transition planning review, a core part of the transition plan for YA with statements of SEN.

The research also highlighted that YA who had SEBN were the least likely to have gained qualifications from school. A key finding of particular relevance to my research was that transition planning for this group is the least satisfactory.

Furthermore YA without a statement and those with SEBN were more likely than other types of SEN to have been unemployed at the time of the survey (Polat et al, 2001).

The research partly addresses why this is the case, suggesting that it is:

" the nature of these pupil's difficulties. Many of them may be 'turned off 'school".

I would argue that to adopt a 'within child' approach fails to critically address the challenges that these YA face entering a mainstream system. There is a need for research which moves beyond a reductionist analysis of individual behaviour and begins to explore the system as a whole. Polat et al's comprehensive research highlighted a number of key areas which YA with SEN face but fails to critically explore why such failings exist within the system. I hope that adopting a critical approach to understanding the views and experience of these YA, I can begin to address these failings and identify implications for future practice.

Trotter (2004) highlighted positive factors for remaining in FE such as strong tutor support, good course information, attendance and an emphasis on students getting to know one another during induction . Martinez (2001) found reasons for student drop-out fell into three categories; college, work and personal/family related. Interestingly the research highlighted the importance of the decision making process. The research highlighted students have complex and multiple reasons for withdrawing from FE College and these reasons can often be seen as rational and positive for students. A criticism of many of the studies is that they have relied on questionnaire responses and as such are subject to possible bias and researcher effects. My research will avoid this shortcoming by using 'prolonged involvement'

and member checking to increase the validity and ensure the themes identify reflect the views of the YA (Robson, 2002).

My review of existing literature highlights a dearth of research from the perspective of YA with SEBN on the transition process. Examples can be found of retrospective accounts of experiences on attending an EBD school (Polat & Farrell, 2002, Jahnukainen, 2001). However there is a lack of research on the subsequent transition from specialist to mainstream post 16 provisions which could inform future practice and generate understanding to ensure YA needs are met. As already discussed, this particular group appear to be underrepresented in research and remain at risk of becoming NEET.

Mallinson's (2009) research explored the views of a sample of vulnerable students and their teachers regarding transitions and dropping out from FE. The exploratory study used focus groups with students and focus groups with teachers from the college preparation course. The aim of the research was to identify key issues and to suggest possible improvements. Emerging themes from the research include the need for good information, positive attitudes, learning and teaching opportunities. These are themes which are reflected throughout the literature on post-16 transitions. The study had a number of limitations as it used a single college context.

Also as Mallinson highlighted, the fact the student's views were going to be reported back to the college may have resulted in social desirability effects. Similarly, college teachers may have wished to present a more favourable picture rather than acknowledge weaknesses in the system. Furthermore the study was based only on student and teacher perceptions. My research will build on current understanding by

capturing the views of a range of individuals and providers who work with a specific group of vulnerable YA.

Craig (2009) also considered the practice of one local authority's experience of supporting post-school transitions. The views of the young people were sought using person-centred planning. In addition, questionnaire responses from staff in schools, FE colleges and Careers Scotland were sought. The study found the young people valued advocacy from adults, good peer relationships and familiarisation of intended destinations. This research highlighted common themes associated with transition, yet it did not explore or compare views of the system as a whole. I believe there is a need to research and compare what each level of the system 'prioritises' to truly begin to understand how best to meet the needs of YA 'at risk' of NEET.

Theory:

(I)   Critical Inquiry

Robson illustrates that critical realism/inquiry criticizes the social practices that it studies (Robson, 2002, pg. 38). In essence critical enquiry is about the power of ideas and developing a fresh way of examining a system so it can be further developed and improved.

This research technique has links with community psychology and a commitment to working holistically. I have an interest in research which looks beyond the individual and begins to adopt a holistic approach to understanding how to meet the needs of individuals, groups, schools and the wider community (MacKay, 2006). Furthermore Hellier, (2009) argues the move towards systems thinking emphasises a holistic

rather than a reductionist approach and identifies that the whole is more than the sum of its parts (Gorrell-Barnes, 1985 as cited in Hellier, 2009).

A key theme which emerged from Tunnard et al's (2008) research into NEET practices was "that things happen" when they are carried out by local champions who pay careful attention to what young people and their families say about what works for them and why. This alone puts in place a strong argument for my research. Tunnard et al's (2008) review highlighted the need for an appreciative inquiry approach to establish what works in NEET practice and shape future practice. Appreciative Inquiry advocates focusing on what works for young people, rather than adopting a deficit model of reducing NEET status. My research will focus on what works for YA with SEBN but will also identify barriers which exist within the system.

Critical Psychology:

McCrae et al (2003) assert that any definition of social exclusion needs to incorporate a challenge to those who exclude such as the education system and wider professionals. Paul Cooper a leading writer on SEBN and education discusses:

> "our sense of discomfort and fear regarding children in society. It is almost as if, for the most part we (at a societal level) do not know what to do with our children, especially when they are 'difficult'. Our first instinct is to marginalise them; to send them away somewhere/anywhere".

All the participants in my research have experienced school exclusion in their lives. I believe to fully explore the current systems of support, the voice of the young adults

is fundamental. A lack of literature is evident on the views of YA with SEBN who have made the transition into EET. As discussed, it will become statutory for young adults to remain in education until the age of 18 by 2015. Therefore, I would argue this research will illuminate our understanding of how we can ensure YA feel psychologically resourced to remain in EET.

Within psychology, critical psychology is growing and it draws strong parallels with a socially critical approach to research. A social critical approach identifies the inequitable nature of the society we live in. Critical Psychology challenges mainstream psychology in fundamental ways and is strongly linked with social justice and human wellbeing (pg.1, Fox et al, 2009). By adopting a critical approach to research I hope to draw on a wider theoretical framework and practice rationale for analysing and identifying future actions. This will enable me to address the complexity of social and educational contexts which young people who make the transition from specialist to mainstream provision experience (Kelly, 2008).

My research is strongly influenced by the view that EPs have a vital role in addressing inequality and voice. I would argue for the need to re-address the power imbalance which occurs within traditional research methods. My research is concerned with the need to understand the reality as experienced through the eyes of participants. This, I consider, fundamental to understanding the social and educational contexts within which the participants live. Underpinning my approach to research is the belief that people are purposive actors (Robson, 2002), people have ideas about their worlds and attach meanings to them. As a result, part of this research can be identified as being phenomenological. That is, about describing,

interpreting and understanding the meaning of experiences of participants in relation to the research questions.

My research holds the view that different people have different interpretations of what happens around them, according to their view of the world and how they construct their view of reality (Cooper, 1994 pg. 16). This research is set within a context of real world research which involves, is guided by and ultimately is informed by participants views (Robson, 2002, pg. 24, Ch2). I would argue that the first step in this type of research is the need to try and understand the reality as perceived by participants. Following we can then begin to identify and ensure the necessary support is in place for all YA who have made the transition into post 16 education.

Raffo et al (2007) argue that simply tacking the issue of poverty and education will ultimately prove to be ineffective if underlying inequalities are permitted to reproduce problems in other forms. I would argue that the same idea could be put forward for this group of YA. Research has highlighted what young adults with SEBN value in education. Cooper (1993) cited trusting, mutually respectful and supportive relationships with adults in EBD schools as central to helping them develop more positive self images, self regulate and support academic engagement. Cooper et al (2000) found the most pressing concern of CYP was the extent to which they felt themselves acknowledged and respected as human beings. Many of these findings were also repeated in Pomeroy's 2000 study, as cited in Cooper et al 2000, of 33 pupils excluded from school in UK. This study found problematic relationships with teachers as the main reason behind their exclusion. Some of the issues highlighted in the study were: teachers refusing to listen to young persons' views and teachers

266

treating pupils unfairly. In addition, further research on transition, as discussed above, highlights what factors will promote a smooth transition into EET. Yet the question remains, if we know what YA with SEBN value in education, why do a significant number of this cohort end up in negative destinations?

Critical thinkers such as Paulo Freire identified that education is not neutral and indeed neutrality in education is not desirable. Friere argued for the need for questions, reflections and actions from all members of society to ensure equity of services. Freire's seminal writings in 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed" argued that

"Education becomes a tool for the emancipation of the oppressed and a means for developing consciousness so reality can be transformed" (Friere as cited in Raffo et al,2007).

I hope to explore reality for this group of YA and use their views to develop and raise awareness across the current system.

It is evident that there are a range of interventions designed to meet the needs of YA who become NEET. Yet what is needed is a psychological understanding of these young adult's experiences to inform future practice. Therefore this research is committed to addressing the issues of 'voice' exploring equality and supporting participation at all levels.

'Voice' of YA with SEBN

I would contest that YA are often the products of a hierarchical and unequal education system. Therefore, fundamental to my research is a commitment to listening to their YA. Throughout recent government publications there is a stated

commitment to ensuring the views of CYP are actively sought and taken into account. (The Children's Plan, 2008, Every Child Matters, 2007). Recently, the Children's Plan (2008) legislated that local authorities must give children a say in statutory plans for CYP. Notions of 'pupil voice' are becoming dominant in the United Kingdom and are also echoed in Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on Rights of the Child. However as Jelly et al (2000) contends it seems pupils with SEBN are unlikely to have their views represented when subjects such as school exclusion are put to question. This could be understood by their marginal status within school systems and complex needs as illustrated by Cooper's quote in the section on critical psychology .

Participation:

Literature has also considered levels of participation when considering 'voice'. This often has been strongly influenced by Hart's 1997 work on participation, which considered levels of participation ranging from a tokenistic level to CYP being actively involved in decisions which affect their lives. Shier, (2001) identified, perhaps ironically, that the greatest benefit of Hart's model is the exposure of false types of participation. Often what is viewed is participation is merely tokenistic and the views of CYP do not actively influence decisions which affect their lives.

In Shier's model children are listened to, supported, their views are taken into account; they are involved in decision making process and share power and responsibility in decision making. At each level of Shier's model, it is recognised that different individuals and organisations have different levels of commitment to the process of empowerment (Shier, 2001). This model is influential in terms of a means

of exploring YA with SEBN experience of being involved and included in decisions. Currently there is a lack of research which asks YA how involved they were in decisions that affected their future lives. This research aims to address the gap by interviewing the YA and addressing questions such as levels of participation and decision making. The research hopes to explore and understand the social world of a group of YA who made the transition into mainstream EET.

(ii) Systems Psychology

My research is underpinned by systems psychology. I am interested in building a conceptualisation of the system as a whole. Therefore this research is concerned with three different, but interrelated levels of the system. The framework I am using is adopted from a sociological perspective Raffo et al, (2007). It provides a useful structure for identifying wider systems which support YA. My framework identifies the individual as the micro level, the parents and practitioners as the meso level and the social structures, the organisational and funding level, as macro level. It will explore the relationships between the various levels using systems thinking as identified by Bronfenbrenner, (1979).

 Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development provides a framework for identifying risk and protective factors but also reminds us that

 "children do not develop in a vacuum but within a complex web of interacting, interdependent factors"

<div align="right">(Bhabra, Dinhos & Ghate, 2006).</div>

This quote suggests that if we are to truly understand what enables or prevents YA remaining in EET we cannot separate how each 'element' of the system influences one another. Currently there is a lack of literature which considers the 'whole system'.

Raffo et al's study indicates that much of the research which adopts a critical approach to understanding systems fails to include the individual/micro level. It is proposed that my research can fill this gap. I will adopt a critical approach which challenges mainstream psychology. My approach argues for the need for EPs to become involved in real world research which aims to question and challenge educational practices which could be potentially unequal.

Systems theory

Systems theory incorporates Cybernetics (Weiner, 1948 as cited in Souter, 2001) and General Systems Theory (GST) (Von Bertalanffy, 1968 as cited in Souter, 2001). Cybernetics proposes a view of how information is processed and how feedback systems operate to maintain a self regulating system. GST asserts all living things are maintained through the interaction of their constituent parts. The organisation of the system and how the parts communicate define the system. In GST, Von Bertalanffy theorised that an understanding of the system could be obtained by looking at the 'transactional processes' between the systems (Von Bertalanffy as cited in Souter, 2001). This was further developed by concepts such as open and closed systems.

Systems theory is a synthesis of GST and Cybernetics which introduced the idea of a self regulating open system. This is viewed as an alternative to mechanistic

preconceptions, moving beyond simple cause and effect understanding of behaviour and arguing for a developmental and organsimic concept of social behaviour.

Ecological systems psychology is influenced by systems theory. Bronfenbrenner (1979) developed an approach to analyze relationships between systems. Bronfenbrenner proposed five systems which he described as nested, where each is embedded in a larger setting. Factors at each level can influence and be influenced by the other levels of the system. Bronfenbrenner concluded that when elements in one system changes, elements in other react and interact. Subsequently CYP at the centre of these systems are continuously affected by the systems around them. This eco-systemic approach may enable a clearer conceptualisation of the complex interactions between individual, social and structural processes involved in providing effective and sustainable change for YA at risk of NEET.

I believe a systemic framework for research will allow for illumination of current practice and could provide directions for further interventions, rather than prescribe interventions based on deductive hypotheses (Avramidis et al, 2000). In addition, one of the key features of an eco-systemic approach is recognition of the power that can be derived from different perspectives on a situation (Cooper, 2006). This also has links to critical psychology.

Conclusion

After considering the literature I feel my research can contribute to our current understanding of how we can best support YA to remain in EET. SEBN appears to be an area where there is a lack of research which considers the 'voice' of the YA and how they experience moving from specialist to mainstream provision. There has

been a range of research which identifies what YA with SEBN need, yet there is a

lack of research which looks at the views held by the whole system. Moreover, there

is a lack of research which considers the views of the range of groups who are

involved in supporting YA with SEBN. This is where I feel my research can

contribute, by adopting a critical approach to understanding the current system, I

hope to be able to illuminate our current understanding and identify ways to improve

future practice. Above all, I hope to identify the common and divergent views around

what works, what are the challenges and what needs to be in place to support YA to

remain in EET

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