



UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

# The Development of the Educational Psychologist's Role in Post-16 Education

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*Professional Identity, Self-Efficacy and Extension of the Professional  
Role*

**Submitted by Helena Daniela Maria Vukoja, to the University of Exeter as a  
thesis for the degree of Doctor of Educational Psychology in Educational, Child  
and Community Psychology, May 2017**

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## Abstract

The introduction of Education Health and Care plans proposed in the Children and Families Act (2014) extended the statutory support for children from up to 19 years of age, to 25 years of age. This has in turn extended the role of educational psychologists to work with young people/adults to the age of 25, and some (Atkinson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Wright, 2015) have argued that this is one of the most significant developments of the profession. This research, therefore, seeks to understand how current educational psychologists see their role and how it may change when working with post-16 education; it also seeks to understand what needs post-16 education may have and how educational psychologists can support these needs. The methodology used in this thesis has the ontological stance of interpretivism (Cottrell, 2014) and epistemological stance of social constructionism (Andrews 2012). Interviews were held with educational psychologists (phase 1) and with post-16 providers (phase 2) to explore the views both these main stakeholders had of the extension of the educational psychologists' role. Needs from both stakeholders, as well previous literature, were taken into account in order to understand what the educational psychologists' role in post-16 education would entail. Interviews were developed using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989) and were analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. Findings suggested that the extension of the educational psychologists' role to work with post-16 learners is not the most significant development that the profession has seen in recent years, but that there are certain points that the profession needs to address. The findings are relevant to the local authority's development of their offer to post-16 educational providers. The findings also contribute to the role of the educational psychologist in general.

*Keywords:* Educational psychologists, educational psychologist-role, post-16, role development, professional role, professional identity

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## List of abbreviations

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
ABA	Applied Behaviour Analysis
AEP	Association of Educational Psychologists
ASC	Autism Spectrum Condition
BPS	British Psychological Association
BSL	British Sign Language
CAMHS	Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CIC	Community Interest Company
CoP	Code of Practice
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSE	Certificate of Secondary Education
CYP	Children and Young People
DECP	Division of Educational and Child Psychology
DfE	Department for Education
DoH	Department of Health
EHC	Education Health and Care
EHCP	Education Health and Care Plan
EP	Educational Psychologist
EPNET	The Educational Psychology List (e-mail based forum)
EPS	Educational Psychology Service
FE	Further Education
GCE	General Certificate of Education
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HE	Higher Education
IB	International Baccalaureate
LA	Local Authority
LSA	Learning Support Assistant
MS	MicroSoft
NEET	Not in Education, Employment or Training
PSPA	Post-School Psychological Services
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SENCO	Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disability
SLI	Specific Language Impairment
TA	Teaching Assistant
TEPNET	The Trainee Educational Psychology List (e-mail based forum)
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VI	Visual Impairment



# 1. Introduction

## *1.1 Rationale and context for this research*

In this introduction, I will explore what prompted this research in order to understand what I aim to study. The aims will be presented later in this chapter, however to demonstrate its significance I will firstly explore what prompted it. In the subsequent parts of this introduction, I will explain the policy changes, give an overview of the historical and global background, introduce the history behind and concept of compulsory education and explain the post-16 educational context.

The main prompts for this research were the policy changes of the new special educational needs and disability code of practice (SEND CoP) (Department for Education & Department of Health (DfE & DoH), 2015), which will be explored in further depth in the next section of this chapter. However, there were also other prompts. One significant prompt was a two-day placement at a college in a larger city in the South West of England in early 2015. During this placement, it struck me how little the management and the college staff knew about educational psychology generally and the EP role specifically. What particularly struck me was the management's expectation that we, as trainee EPs, would do direct work with learners without their or their parents' consent and to do this under the pretence that we were 'volunteer support workers'. This made me reflect upon my own role and what the potential future role expectations would be if I would be working within post-16 education as an EP. I particularly reflected upon the ethical implications of their requests. The BPS Code of Ethics (Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society, 2009) states in chapter 4, section 1.1iii that psychologists should avoid practices that are unfair or prejudiced, which I believe that engaging with a young person without having gained their consent and without them knowing why they were engaging with us would be. Chapter 4, section 1.2i states that psychologists have to keep appropriate records and section 1.2ii states that consent should be obtained if the client is legally competent to give their consent. Again, these would be parts of the Code of Ethics (Ethics Committee of the British Psychological Society, 2009) that would not be adhered to if we

were to have followed the managements suggestions and as such would have serious ethical implications. I therefore reflected upon what this would mean if other post-16 providers had similar perceptions of the EP role. During this time the local authority (LA), where I was on placement, started thinking about what the work with post-16 was going to comprise of and what they would be able to offer to the post-16 sector.

These events led to reflections and a literature search for what the EP role in post-16 would potentially be. Atkinson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Wright's (2015) discussed some of the hurdles that the profession would have to work through for extending the role, and the area of research therefore seemed significant. The significance of the research became even more apparent as Atkinson et al's (2015) paper only focused on trainee EPs. It had not involved post-16 providers but had interviewed what they called 'expert EPs'. The expert EPs were a self-selected group that had experience in working in the post-16 sector. The EPs that had self-selected for Atkinson et al's (2015) study had all been contacted through EPNET, an online forum for EPs in the UK. It is important to acknowledge that all EPs are not members of EPNET and probably not all EPs are comfortable in replying to EPNET messages. In addition, some EPs who wanted to have been part of the study might not have seen the message in time. This means that the nature of the approach and selection of participants is likely to be limited and does not represent a view across all practising EPs. Atkinson et al's (2015) proposed a framework for what trainee EPs needed to know therefore seemed unanchored to the context of this future area of work. This was also confirmed when other papers and research was looked at, e.g. that of Clarke (2014)

Having considered the above-mentioned factors, a thorough examination of the policy change and its effect on the EP role was therefore completed.

### *1.2 Policy changes and effects on EP role*

The recent change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) has, among other changes, extended the role of the educational psychologist (EP) to work with children and young people from birth to the age of 25. Previously, EPs most

commonly worked with children and young people between the ages of 0 and 19. This change in the work of EPs has been debated whilst many educational psychology services (EPSs) are planning how to respond to this change (Atkinson et al, 2015). Atkinson et al (2015) have argued within this debate that "the extension of the role of educational psychologists (EPs) working with young people up to the age of 25 represents one of the most significant developments the profession has ever experienced." (p. 159). While it could be debated whether this is the most significant development the profession has experienced, it has to be acknowledged that the extension of the EP role is an important one. Although this is a new area for EPs in England and Wales, in other parts of the UK, for instance in Scotland, EPs have worked in the post-16 context since 2003 (MacKay, Marwick & McIlvride, 2006).

Considering that EPs, particularly in England, have had little experience in post-16 education it has to be recognised that there could potentially be a gap in skills and knowledge that current EPs have with regards to working with young people up to the age of 25. I therefore aim, in this research, to explore how EPs see their role changing with the move to working with young people up to age of 25, particularly working more closely with post-16 providers, as roles develop within particular contexts (Ibarra, 1999; Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Within this research I also aim to find out how post-16 providers see themselves in terms of strengths, challenges and what support they currently are receiving and what support they would like to be receiving. This will support to inform how the EP role is likely to develop with regards to working with post-16 settings.

In addition, to understand how the role may develop I will have to understand how the role has developed in the past, in terms of changes and expansions to the role, and what consequences this has had.

### *1.3 EP role: a historical and global background*

To gain an understanding of the development of the EP role over time I firstly provide a historical and more global overview of the role. The discipline of educational/school psychology was first formally recognised after the Second

World War, when UNESCO (United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization) in cooperation with the International Bureau of Education organised a survey on the status of school/educational psychology across 54 countries (Zapletalová, 2001). The results of the survey showed that there were broadly four types of professional practices. The first type of practice involved working within a larger school or had a patch of schools, often working in multidisciplinary teams. The second type was one that involved being part of LAs, or equivalent, and focused on the coordination of preventative interventions, therapeutic activities, as well as reactive interventions. The third type was one that involved those being part of a child guidance clinic run by a child psychiatrist or a paediatrician and their role was to diagnose children and young people (CYP) rather than focusing on interventions or therapeutic work. The last type of EP was one that focused on researching child development and factors that could adversely affect this development. Zapletalová (2001) recognises that how the profession developed further depended upon the educational system in place in each country as well as the economic situation in that country.

However, these four types of professional practice of EPs have been prevalent within the United Kingdom (UK) (Hill, 2013) in varying degrees since educational psychology was established in the country. Over time the four types of EP practice that Zapletalová (2001) describes have amalgamated and they have all had an impact upon the role of the EP and how it is generally understood. This was also confirmed by Love (2009) who outlines the identity and role of EPs from the early 1950s and how they impacted upon EP practice.

Jimerson, Skokut, Cardens, Malone & Stewart (2008) also investigated what educational/school psychology services (from now on referred to as EPS) looked like across the UN member states, but from a more current perspective. Out of the UN's 192 member states 83 had evidence of educational/school psychology; 29 countries required their EPs to be licenced, registered or credentialed; 39 countries had professional associations for EPs. Fifty-six countries had university training for them and out of these 19 were doctoral programmes. Jimerson et al (2008) argue that these five factors provide a proxy

indicator for how school or educational psychology has developed across countries. For instance, they argue that although many countries require their EPs to be registered or have a license in order to be a practicing psychologists, many do not have a specific licence for EPs. This, they argue, might impact upon how recognised the profession is within the country. Looking specifically at England and Wales, it was established that EPs there have to be registered with a governing body, however it is not a governing body specific to EPs. This may have an impact upon how recognised the profession is in England and Wales and how others understand EPs and their role, the more recognition the profession has through professional bodies the more understood it will be by the general public according to Jimerson et al (2008). This will be further explored in Chapter 2.

Jimerson et al (2008) also argue that the ways EPs are trained impacts upon the role. This in turn, they, argue has an influence upon what impact the role has on society. Having a programme that is specific to educational/school psychology was seen as preferable and training up to a doctoral level was also seen as preferable, as Jimerson et al (2008) argue, this would lead to more contributions to research and as such advance the field of educational/school psychology within their country, as well as the world. Others (e.g. Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009) also argue that in order for EPs to become more recognised they need to contribute to research and publish it more widely than just within educational psychology journals. This is clearly a positive for educational psychology within England and Wales, as in order to become a qualified EP one needs to attend a recognised doctoral programme and complete a doctoral thesis (AEP, 2017; Frederickson, 2013). However, as there were only three indicators for England and Wales, out of five, that Jimerson et al (2008) considered to be indicators of the development of educational/school psychology, they argue that the profession is not very well developed. One of the indicators that are missing for England and Wales is that there is no specified curriculum for the training of EPs and this varies across the different universities that provide the course. This may have had an impact upon how the role is perceived in England and Wales and some of the confusion around it. This may also mean that the proposed competency framework by Atkinson

et al (2015) could create more consistency across the different courses in England and Wales, if adopted by all, at least in terms of EP work in post-16 education. This may also mean that the role could become more understood by non-psychologists.

Looking at the EP-role from a domestic perspective it could be argued that it long has been considered to be a role that changes in accordance with political change (Burden, 1999; Burnham, 2013), something that Jimerson et al (2008) fail to take into account when evaluating ‘where in the world’ (p. 131) educational/school psychology is in different countries. This has been argued to be due to that both education and LAs are subject to such political changes (Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010), as EPs and EP services traditionally have been situated within LAs they have therefore also been subject to such change, and the EP role has thus been a variable one. In accordance with Zapletalová’s (2001) analysis, it can also be argued that the economic situation within the UK has had an impact upon the EP role, as many LAs face financial restriction during times of economic uncertainty (Lowndes & Garner, 2016; Asenova, Bailey & McCann, 2015). This has an impact upon how many EPs are employed, how workload is managed and as such what type of work is carried out. In combination with the historical changes described above, the EP role is therefore not an easy one to define within the UK, particularly in England & Wales. Hence, in order to understand how the EP role will develop while working with post-16 providers, and young people over the age of 19 in particular, it will be important to establish how current EPs see their role. I will further explore the EP role and its relevance to my research in Chapter 2.

Having explored the role from a historical, global and national perspective it appears as if the frequent changes to the role have been big factors in the understanding of it; both by EPs themselves and by those utilising their services. This has been confirmed by more recent papers, such as Lee & Woods (2017). However, to my knowledge there is little research into who is responsible for communicating our role to others. Jimerson et al (2008) and Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) argue, that if EPs are educated up to doctoral level they are more likely to publish research and would as such make their

contribution and role more overt to others, however I would also argue that the profession needs to not only do that, but also be able to communicate their role to those they are directly working with. This is something that seems to have been developing recently with the increase in traded working as EPs and EP services have had to articulate what they can offer and what they do offer to schools, school staff and their pupils (Lee & Woods, 2017), something that Clark (2014) also argued was important, particularly when it comes to developing a relationship between EP services and the post-16-sector.

Having looked at the EP role, I will now go on to explore compulsory education and the development of it. As one of the reasons that the EP role has been extended to work with young adults up to the age of 25 is due to the change in policy on when young people can leave education.

#### *1.4 Compulsory education and its development*

The view on education has changed over time and so has the view that education is necessary for everyone. As the economy evolves more skilled jobs are needed which in turn puts more pressure on the population to be educated to a higher degree, hence the school leaving age constantly being extended (Bartlett & Burton, 2007). Although the school leaving age is currently still at 16, a recent policy change has practically extended it to 18 years of age by stipulating that young people in England have to stay in full-time education, start an apprenticeship or traineeship, or work 20hrs/week while being in part-time education or training, until they reach their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday (School leaving age, n. d.).

As aforementioned, views on who is in need of education and until when they need it are constantly changing (V. Hill, 2013). In 1880 the Elementary Education Act 1870 (also known as the Forster Education Act) introduced the entitlement to compulsory education and a framework for educating children between the ages of 5 to 13 and applied to England and Wales. Education became compulsory until the age of 10 and later this was extended to 11 (Elementary Education (School attendance) Act (1893)). In 1899 the school leaving age was again extended, to the age of 13. The Fisher Education Act

(1918) extended the school leaving age to 14 and the Education Act (1944) extended the compulsory education to 15. It was not until 20 years later that government started preparing for another extension to the school leaving age and in 1972 all children had to stay in education until they were 16 years of age. This meant that all children and young people had to stay in education and either take their GCEs (General Certificate of Education) or their CSE (Certificate of Secondary Education), which were later combined into GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education). In 2008 the government increased the school leaving age again and the Education and Skills Act (2008) requires young people to not leave education or training until the age of 17 from 2013 and not to leave education or training until the age of 18 from 2015.

My intention in outlining the changing school leaving age is to highlight how the view of who is in compulsory education has changed with time. It could therefore be argued that the SEND CoP had to extend which CYP it covers in order to comply with the change in compulsory education. When the Elementary Education Act (1870) came into place a new cohort of children came into contact with education and as such a much varying educational need among them was discovered (Hill. V., 2013). Hill. V. (2013) also argues that previous to the Act only those who could afford to send their children to school did so, and as such these children were often well fed and clothed, and hence more ready to learn. Teachers quickly expressed their concern about their ability to adapt their curriculum to the growing variety of pupil needs that they experienced (Haywood, 2001). Many of those children were very often underfed, malnourished, had various diseases or disabilities, making it challenging for them to follow a curriculum that was initially designed for children without these additional needs (V. Hill, 2013). As the leaving age rises again, it is likely that teachers/lecturers in post-16 education come into contact with a wider variety of student needs due to students that traditionally might have not stayed in education, now will have to. The most recent rise, where young people need to stay in education until they are 18 years of age, means that educational establishments who cater for this age group are likely to be unfamiliar with their needs as they traditionally might have gone on to employment or taken part in other activities at the age of 16 instead of staying



in education. Much as it did in 1880 (V. Hill, 2013; Haywood, 2001) it is likely that post-16 establishments might find it difficult to adapt their curriculums to this new cohort.

Whether or not post-16 educational establishments will find it difficult to adapt their curriculums to the new cohort will depend on what the post-16 context looks like and this will be examined in the next section.

### *1.5 Post-16 context*

I will now go on to explore what post-16 education looks like in England, as this study is based in England and due to the difference in how post-16 education is structured across the four different countries in UK and Northern Ireland. I will explore how other parts of the UK, e.g. Scotland, supports post-16 educational establishments through the use of educational psychology, in Chapter 2. It will be important to understand what post-16 provision looks like in England, in order to recognise the complexity of it and how EPs in this study could fit in within that context.

Post-16 education can cover any type of education or training from basic skills to a Foundation Degree and does as such not cover university education at degree level (Hill, 2013). University education is usually covered by the term Higher Education (HE) and other post-16 education is covered by the term Further Education (FE), however at times, these can overlap. For instance, FE includes education for people over the age of 16 usually taught at FE colleges, work-based learning providers, and adult and community learning institutions. The courses offered at these institutions can be similar to skills taught at secondary schools and 'sub-degree' courses taught at HE institutions. 'Sub-degree' courses, such as Foundation Degrees, can be taught at HE-institutions, i.e. universities. Colleges in England that are regarded as part of the FE sector include general FE colleges and tertiary colleges, Sixth form colleges and specialist colleges (such Horticulture and Agriculture colleges or specialist drama and dance colleges) and Adult education institutes. Furthermore, FE courses may be offered in the school sector; both in sixth form colleges (16-19) and in sixth forms within secondary schools. Since 2012 it has also been

possible to establish academies for 16-19-year-olds. This means that the range of different institutions for post-16 education is vast and varies to a greater degree than does primary and secondary schooling, although this may also change in the near future. This might further impact upon how the role of the EP will develop within this sector, due to its variation and many different set ups, which may make it difficult to navigate for EPs.

FE in England is seen as forming one part of a wider learning and skills sector alongside other non-school, non-university education such as workplace education and prison education. This used to be overseen by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, however, the education for 14-19-year-olds was overseen by the Department for Education. Nevertheless, the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills was later merged with the Department for Energy and Climate Change and as such the DfE now oversees most of FE (School leaving age, n. d.).

Not only is the FE sector wide in terms of its institutions and where those over the age of 16 can receive educational provision, but it has also been overseen by two different governmental departments, that had different agendas and focuses in how different courses were run. These agendas may still remain, and as such it may become difficult to navigate this educational sector for EPs.

### *1.6 Summary*

In summary, it is clear that the changes in legislation, e.g. the Children & Families Act (2014), and as such the SEND CoP from 2014 has opened up a new area of work for EPs, as they will now be expected to work with young people up to the age 25. The ever-changing nature and variability in the EP role also makes it difficult for providers to understand what EPs can offer them. One reason for this change in legislation and the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) is the ever-changing thinking that surrounds who is in compulsory education and who is educable, as highlighted in section 1.4 of this chapter. The context of post-16 education has here been shown to be variable, which might mean that the extension of the EP role into post-16 education might become a challenging task.

### *1.7 Broad aims of research*

The broad aims of this research are; to understand what the role of the EP is, as seen by current EPs, and how they perceive it will change with the extension of the role to work with post-16 education and its providers. I am particularly interested in how the recent policy changes will affect current EPs in their view on their own role. I am also interested in what needs the post-16 sector has in terms of being able to meet the needs of young people and how EPs fit in within this.

A diagrammatic overview of the research can be found in Figure One, which shows the aims for each section of the research as well as research questions. It also shows how the two parts of the thesis link.

**Title:** The Development of the Educational Psychologist's Role in Post-16 Education: Professional Identity, Self-Efficacy and Extension of the Professional Role

Exploration of literature (literature review).

**Aim: Phase 1:**

- To explore how current educational psychologists, perceive their role.
- To explore how psychologists with and without experience of working in post-16 education feel their role has changed or will change in the future.

**Research Questions:**

1. How do EPs perceive their professional role and identity?
2. How has the EP's professional role or identity developed/changed when working in post-16?
3. How confident are EPs with and without post-16 experience in using skills necessary for such work (self-efficacy levels)?

**Research Design:**

*Participants*

- *Selection process:* Whole service e-mail sent out with criteria for participation.

**Aim: Phase 2:**

- To understand post-16 providers, their view on what they need and what they might expect EPs to do.

**Research Questions:**

1. What strengths do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
2. What challenges do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
3. What type of support do post-16 providers perceive themselves to be in need of?

**Research Design:**

*Participants*

- *Selection process:* Initial e-mail sent out to all Ofsted registered post-16 providers in local area.

*Continue overleaf*

**Research Design cont.:**

- 4 EPs with experience of working with post-16 students and staff answered initial e-mail and agreed to participate.
- 2 EPs without experience of working with post-16 students and staff, but likely to gain such in the next 12 months answered initial e-mail and agreed to participate.

*Materials/data collection method*

- Semi-structured interviews developed using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989).

**Analysis:**

- Semi-structured interviews, were transcribed and then analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

**Findings:**

- Findings presented for each theme and sub-themes within them.

**Research Design cont.:**

A reminder e-mail was sent out to local post-16 providers and new e-mail to newly established providers.

One post-16 provider was identified through recommendation from colleague.

- 3 staff from post-16 educational provision at different positions replied and agreed to participate through the above-mentioned selection process.

*Materials/data collection method*

- Semi-structured interviews developed using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989).

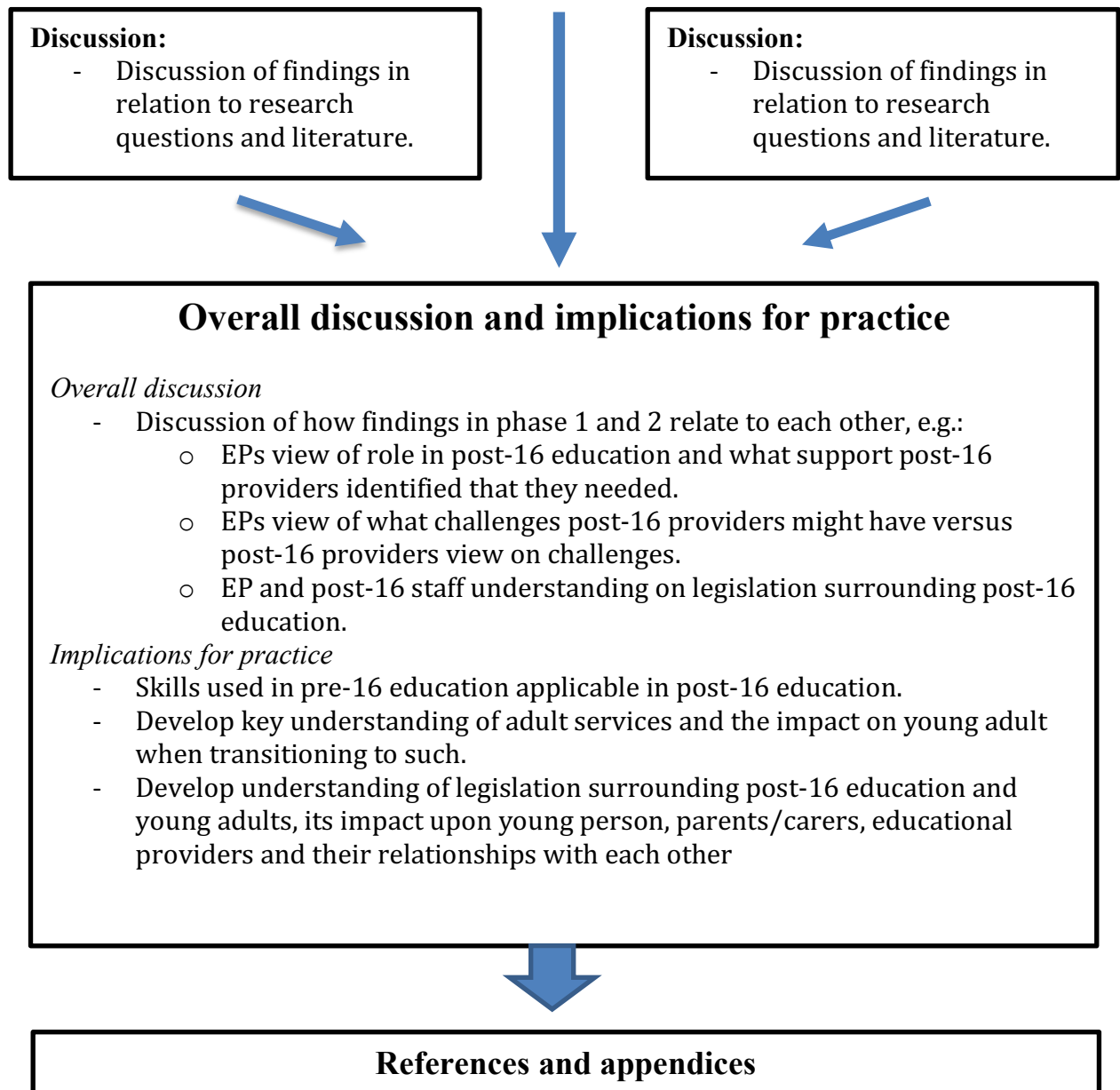
**Analysis:**

- Semi-structured interviews, were transcribed and then analysed using Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis.

**Findings:**

- Findings presented for research questions 1, 2 and 3.

*Continue overleaf*



*Figure 1.* Overview of thesis

## 2. Literature review

### *2.1 Introduction*

The main aim of this selective literature review is to provide a synthesis and examination of the literature and illuminate current knowledge in order to guide this research.

Firstly, a description of how literature was searched for will be provided. It is recognised that this search cannot be exhaustive, however, the majority of relevant and key research should have been found and in order to support this study.

I will firstly look at what the EP role is, how it has been defined and how it is understood within the wider field of psychology. I will also look at how a role is defined in general and how this ties in with the role of the EP. This will inform the understanding of professional identity and role development by drawing on literature from other disciplines on role expansion (e.g. Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Ibarra, 1999; Pratt, Rockmann & Kaufmann, 2006). By understanding this it will support the hypothesising of how EPs may continue to develop their professional identity and role, and if it will support them to venture into a new domain of work. The psychological framework guiding this will be Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel, 1978, 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1985 and Hogg, 2016) as well as Social Role Theory (Albery, 2007; Biddle, 1979; Boardman & Bozeman, 2007 and Edwards, 2014).

I will then look at self-efficacy; what it is, what contexts it has been researched in and how role expansion can affect one's self-efficacy levels. Low versus high self-efficacy affects effectiveness in work differently and the research evidence will be used to hypothesise how moving into a new work domain effects self-efficacy as well as work-related confidence.

The literature review will also include an overview of the post-16 educational environment; the strengths and needs that it has been reported to have as well as the structures around it.

## *2.2 Search criteria*

EBSCO, EJS as well as Google Scholar were used to electronically search for relevant literature. The search terms were ‘role’, ‘educational psychologist’, ‘professional identity’, ‘self-efficacy’, ‘post-16 education’ ‘further education’, ‘educational needs in post-16 education’ and various combinations of these, such as ‘role + educational psychologist’. Looking at the papers’ keywords refined these search terms and additional literature was found through the relevant papers’ references. The ‘cited in’-function on Google scholar was also used in order to find additional relevant literature that had cited particularly relevant papers. Books, likely to contain relevant material, were also searched for in two local university libraries.

To ensure that an appropriate coverage of literature in educational psychology journals was obtained, the following journals were searched separately; British Journal of Educational Psychology, Educational Psychology, Educational Psychology in Practice, and the Division of Child and Educational Psychology’s (DECP’s) Debate. Relevant articles from the British Psychological Society’s (BPS’s) magazine “the Psychologist” were also included in this review. These journals were chosen, as they were most likely to contain articles relevant to educational psychology practice in England and Wales.

Literature from all years was initially included but only the most recent literature is included here, unless it is particularly relevant to the area under review. Recent papers were published within the last 10 years, and papers published earlier than this were thought to be particularly relevant due to their theoretical bases, or due to it being the most recent literature in its specific area.

In total the initial search strategies generated 60 papers, from which additional literature was identified as described above. This produced a total of 72 papers. A further search for papers, using the same strategy as above, in order to bring this review up to date and reflect the development of this research, generated



an additional 13 papers. Further literature was also searched for after the initial two searches. This generated an unpublished thesis (Clark, 2014) and a paper by the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013). A selection of the most relevant literature is presented here. Papers were chosen for their relevance as described above.

### *2.3 EP identity and role*

In order to understand how professional identity develops within the workplace, I have used decided to use SIT (Tajfel, 1978; 1981; Tajfel & Turner, 1985), as it offers a social-psychological perspective on the development of identity. I have also used role theory which has been developed within social psychology (Albery, 2004). I will firstly explain how identity develops, before explaining the theory of social roles, and lastly, I will relate the two together.

Tajfel (1978; 1981) and Tajfel & Turner (1985), who developed SIT, argued that people categorise themselves into various social identities. This serves two functions: firstly, it segments and orders the social environment cognitively; secondly, it allows the individual to define him- or herself in their social environment. This provides individuals with a systematic means of defining others and allows the individual to define him- or herself in their social environment. Ashforth & Mael (1989) argue, using SIT, that identifying with a social group means that one defines oneself in term of a social referent. This means that identity is formed within a social context, hence the social context is important when looking at identity development. Organisational or professional identity is a specific form of social identification, as an individual's organisation many times provides an answer to the question "Who am I in this professional environment?". Hence, SIT (Tajfel, 1971; 1981 and Tajfel & Turner, 1985) will be guiding this research in understanding how professional identity develops in the social context of an EPS as well as within the wider social context of post-16 education. I would predict that both of those will be social referents, that will form the professional identity development in this case.

Ibarra (1999) and Ashforth & Mael (1989) have argued that in order to develop a successful professional identity, one needs to see oneself as having the particular professional role, as well as being seen by others as having that professional role. This would mean that in order for EPs to develop a successful professional identity they need to see themselves as having a particular role, and people they work with need to perceive them as having that role too. Hence, in order to understand how the EP role will develop, I will have to outline what role EPs see themselves as having and how this has affected their professional identity, which is the main aim of phase one of this study.

In more recent research, Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop (2004) argue that identity is not a fixed phenomenon, but a relational one. In their research on teachers' professional identity they argue that the concept of self or one's identity strongly determines the way teachers teach, the way they develop as teachers and their attitude towards educational changes. I would therefore argue that concepts of self and identity determine the way EPs practice, the way they develop as practitioners and applied psychologists, as well as their attitudes towards educational changes and changes in the way educational psychology is practiced. Beijaard et al (2004) also argue that research on teachers' professional identity adds to our understanding and acknowledgement of what it feels like being a teacher in today's schools, where many things are rapidly changing and how they cope with such changes. I would again like to extend this to the world of EPs and argue that this piece of research will contribute to our understanding of what it feels like being an EP in today's political climate where the work is rapidly changing and expanding, how they cope with such changes, how it affects their professional identity, as well as what supports can be put in place to equip EPs to cope with new areas of work.

Social role theory (Albery, 2004) suggest that as human beings we do not expect each other to behave randomly, but to behave in certain ways in certain situations. People have particular expectations about different situations on what the correct way of behaving is during these. With each social role that

people adopt come a set of expectations. If people are in a particular role they adapt their behaviour to fit those expectations. When it comes to the EP role, people might therefore have a certain expectation of what an EP does in certain situations, e.g. if an EP is in a school and a child there is upset people might think 'Oh, the EP will start taking notes on this! They will then tell us what to do about it.'. Hence, if an EP's expectation of their own behaviour within certain situations is different to that of their clients, for instance teachers' expectations, they may experience 'role strain' (Biddle, 1986 and Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994). The theory of 'role strain' was developed by Biddle (1979) and he subsequently revisited his own work in 1986 (Biddle, 1986). The theory has been used in many other professions to explain role development and role behaviour (e.g. Boardman & Bozeman, 2007 and Edwards, 2014). It occurs when an individual disagrees with the assessment of others concerning his or her performance within their role. For instance, keeping in mind the scenario described above and that the EP instead of taking notes and telling people what to do, decides to talk to the child's teacher, their parents and later perhaps with the child about their emotions. He or she then decides to support the school staff and parents to think of how they can support the child with managing their emotions. This may lead to the school staff feeling as if this is not the correct behaviour for someone who has the role of EP and therefore not be satisfied with the EPs work. This may therefore create 'role strain'.

Understanding how EPs see their role and professional identity will, therefore, inform myself and this research of where the profession is now and where it is likely to go when expanding into the world of post-16 education.

Understanding what needs those working in post-16 education have and what services they would like, will therefore predict whether post-16 educational settings will perceive the EP role similarly to EPs themselves or not. The results from this will have an impact upon EPs' potential 'role strain', and therefore on their professional identity.

As mentioned in chapter 1, there is great diversity in the EP role within the UK, which has created confusion around it for those coming into contact with

EPs. However, there are some definitions of the role by UK organisations. The British Psychological Society (BPS) describes the EP-role as follows:

“Educational psychologists tackle challenges such as learning difficulties, social and emotional problems, issues around disability as well as more complex developmental disorders. They work in a variety of ways including observations, interviews and assessments and offer consultation, advice and support to teachers, parents, the wider community as well as the young people concerned. They research innovative ways of helping vulnerable young people and often train teachers, learning support assistants and others working with children.” (British Psychological Society, 2013, para. 5).

The Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) also has a definition of the EP role;

“Educational Psychologists also support those with learning difficulties to achieve their full potential through the use of assessment, monitoring and evaluation.

Educational psychologists work with children and young people usually between 0-19 years of age experiencing difficulties. For example, to promote learning, develop emotional, social and behavioural skills and support psychological development. They work mainly in consultation with parents, teachers, social workers, doctors, education officers and other people involved in the education and care of children and young people.” (AEP, 2017, para. 3)

These descriptions are relatively broad, encompass several skills that vary between EPs and mention tasks that could be done in different ways or be done by different professionals, such as SENCOs and advisory teachers. The descriptions also omit the systemic work that EPs often aim to do with schools as well as attempting to change perspectives of schools and school staff (Ashton

& Roberts, 2006). It also has to be pointed out that the description by the AEP (2017) is displaying the previous age range EPs worked with, and those accountable for the information on the website have not updated this, potentially creating more confusion around the role. The reasons for such a broad definition are many. As mentioned before Burnham (2013) argues there is a sheer diversity of practice among EPs that is accepted as well as the constant need to adapt to social and political changes. I would argue that it may also be due to the way EPs are trained in the England and Wales (Jimerson et al (2008) and the way in which the profession has changed historically (Zapletalová, 2001). I would also argue that at this point in time the profession is yet again at the crossroads of social and political change and about to work with a sector that knows, at best, very little about what the EP role is. However, the move to work with the post-16 sector might not be the most significant one, as the way LAs (Lowndes & Gardner, 2016) and therefore the way in which EPS are funded is changing as well. Due to recent budget cuts, most EPSs are now adopting an either partially or fully traded model of service delivery, where schools and other educational establishments have to buy the time they want from their EP (Lee & Woods, 2017) and this may affect the work EPs will do in the future.

In addition to these broad definitions, general confusion of what EPs do, and the great diversity within the profession, there also seems to be an unawareness of what EPs do within the field of psychology in general. This was demonstrated in the November 2016 edition of the British Psychological Society's (BPS's) 'The Psychologist' where clinical psychologist Cathy Betoin wrote;

“Why is every school across the country struggling under the pressure of so many children with such poor readiness to learn? And what have psychologist really got to offer other than becoming adjuncts to an essentially psychiatric approach that delivers diagnostic explanations for challenging behaviour?” (Betoin, 2016, p. 814).

Betoin (2016) continues her letter to explain how she has put evidence-based information and practice together. She aims to influence the practice and understanding of parents and frontline staff within schools. In this Betoin (2016) essentially outlines the practice of an EP. This is confirmed by a reply from Susan Greig in the February 2017 edition of the 'The Psychologist', where she writes that

“Educational psychologists can and do offer a wide range of approaches to supporting children, families and educators. Our aim is to promote the best possible outcomes for children and young people, drawing on sound psychological theory and strong evidence base. As well as providing holistic assessments of individual children, we provide consultation to educators to help enhance their understanding of issues such as children’s social, emotional and mental health. (Greig, 2017, p. 6).

It is interesting that the role of an EP has to be outlined to other psychologists as it highlights the unawareness of educational psychology and what its psychologists do. Not just from Betoin (2016), but as her letter was published in a magazine that reaches every BPS member and has several prominent psychologists as its editors, it is likely to mean that there is a widespread unawareness or at least confusion around our role; how we use psychology and how we fit in within the world of education, children and young people.

This unawareness and confusion around the EP role begs the question of whether the role has been defined adequately. Norwich (2006) argues that there are two ways of defining roles. The first one is to look at what specific service aims a particular profession has, for instance in the case of medical doctors whose aim is to diagnose and treat medical conditions. Similarly, teachers’ aims are to promote learning and development in the context of education (DfE, 2012). The second one is defined by applying a field of knowledge or discipline to broadly defined ends (Norwich, 2006). As was demonstrated in Chapter 1, the history of educational psychology has meant that the role of EPs has changed over time and at one point in time the role was defined by its specific service, and over time it has changed to become more of applying a field of

knowledge to broadly defined ends. However, at the same time EPs still seem to be defined by others as providing a specific service. This may be as EPs in England and Wales also provide a statutory service; they provide statutory assessments for EHC plans. This may mean that those who are not EPs may only come into contact with EPs for this specific service, if at all, and as such they may define the role by this service.

Although Norwich (2006) has argued that roles are identified in these two ways, understanding roles is perhaps more complicated than that. Ashton & Roberts (2006) argue that the skills certain professionals have also defines roles. Hence, understanding what skills they have and how they use these to do their work will support understanding the role of EPs. Ashton & Roberts (2006) used questionnaires with EPs and SENCOs in order to determine what each professional group valued about the EP-role and their skills. Twenty-two SENCOs and eight EPs were interviewed and found that the activities most valued by SENCOs were ‘advice giving’, ‘statutory assessment’ and ‘individual assessments’. EPs, on the other hand, valued the relationships they had with their schools, being able to change perspectives and being able to incorporate the views of pupils. SENCOs thought that the unique skills that EPs had were linked to statutory assessments, the use of closed tests and having the EP as an expert. The skills and parts of the role that EPs valued were often seen by SENCOs as something that other professionals could offer, and it was therefore not valued as much. This means that it may be difficult for EPs to form a professional identity as they see their role differently to how those they work with see it (Ibarra, 1999; Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Ashton & Roberts (2006) also found that EPs found it difficult to list skills that they thought were unique to them. Statutory assessments were the only skill/contribution that EPs consistently felt was unique to their role. They felt that other professionals, such as advisory teachers, could offer the other skills that they felt they had. Interestingly no one mentioned their skill in applying psychology or supporting key professionals to understand what is happening for a child psychologically.

Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) also discuss the role of EPs and argue that one of the concerns for the profession is the lack of applied psychology. They argue that due to the move away from individual casework with CYP, psychology is no longer applied in the context of education and that this may lead to that the profession is in danger of becoming 'obsolete' (p. 72). They also question whether the profession has decided to avoid individual casework, due to it being associated with IQ testing and the categorisation of children (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). Although Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) do not endorse IQ and other psychometric testing they feel that this shift has caused the profession to also move away from applying psychology completely. This could be why the participants in Ashton & Roberts' (2006) study did not mention applying psychology. This is an interesting question, and this could be why the profession of educational psychology is so poorly understood by other psychologists, as demonstrated by Betoim (2016). I would however question Boyle & Lauchlan's (2009) assumption that a lack of individual casework equals a lack of applying psychology within education. There are many psychological theories that apply to groups, cultures and systems (e.g. Albery, 2007). These psychological theories can potentially be applied within education by EPs to change such systems in order to achieve a better outcome for CYP. Although I am not arguing that individual casework should not be part of the EP role, I am arguing that the role should not be defined by whether EPs do or do not take on individual casework and I would agree with Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) in their argument that applying psychology should be at the heart of what EPs do, similar to Norwich's (2006) argument.

However, Norwich (2005) argues that educational psychology is more complicated than that and that the many coexisting models of practice lead to a tension. He describes this tension as follows:

The more you take a systemic psychology perspective, the less you are working in distinctive ways from other allied professional groups; but the more you take an individual child focussed perspective, the less you can intervene in wider systemic factors impacting on children (Norwich, 2005, p.391).



Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) clearly think that in order to relieve this tension psychologists should take an individual child focused perspective, although this may lead to not being able to impact the wider systemic factors that affect children. There is clearly a tension of where and on what level EPs should practice in order to affect the most change for CYP. When moving to work with post-16 providers and learners, working in a wider systemic fashion might be something that becomes more difficult. Working systemically with CYP below the age of 16 may be more viable as they according to the Mental Capacity Act (2005) are deemed not to have the capacity to make decisions and as such working with the agencies around them is necessary. Once they are deemed to have such capacity perhaps individual casework will become more necessary.

Having discussed the role and established that EPs are psychologists first and foremost, who apply psychology to educational concerns and problems, I will now go on to explore self-efficacy with regards to how this may affect EPs' confidence to apply psychology within post-16 education.

#### *2.4 Self-efficacy*

As mentioned earlier, I have chosen to use Bandura's (1995) theory of self-efficacy to guide this research. This is because self-efficacy theory looks at two parts; outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. Outcome expectations are what one believes is important in order to successfully succeed with a task and efficacy expectations are whether or not one feels confident in ones ability to perform what one believes is important for the success of the task. It has been shown that people in general undertake tasks where self-efficacy is high, and avoid tasks where self-efficacy is low. When self-efficacy is significantly lower than actual ability it discourages growth and skill development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997), hence it is important that self-efficacy is relatively high in order for people to continue developing skills. Therefore, if we want to see EPs continuing to develop skills for successful working in the post-16 sector it will be important that their efficacy expectations, i.e. whether they feel confident in performing the skills needed in order to successfully work in post-

16 education, match their outcome expectations. If they do, the work in the post-16 sector is more likely to be successful.

The literature on the effect of self-efficacy on potential performance is again fairly common for sales professionals, student performance, job seeking, volunteering, and managers, but scarce when it comes to EPs.

Self-efficacy has been found to be related to improvements in students' self-regulated learning processes' and to mediate their academic achievements (e.g. Zimmerman, 2000). Stajkovic & Luthans (1998) performed a meta-analysis of 114 studies and concluded that there was a significant weighted correlation between self-efficacy and work-related performance, the higher the self-efficacy the better the work-performance. On closer analysis, they also concluded that the better the description of a task's complexity the better professionals can direct their efforts and a better assessment of their efficacy. It would therefore be plausible that self-efficacy is likely to be a factor in how EPs take on challenges in the post-16 sector.

Holzberger, Philipp & Kunter (2013) investigated the self-efficacy of teachers and how it affected their instructional quality, i.e. how well they taught. They collected data from 155 teachers and 3,483 students, on the teachers' self-efficacy levels and evaluations on the teachers' teaching from the students over an academic year. They found that, in line with previous research, high self-efficacy levels did lead to better teaching both rated by the teachers themselves and by their students. They also found that over the year the better their teaching became the higher their self-efficacy levels became.

Bandura (1995) argues that success raises self-efficacy in people, while failure lowers it. Lunenburg (2011) also argues that those with low self-efficacy are less likely to learn from training and use that learning in their work. This means that if EPs start working with the post-16 sector and do not have the necessary skills or are not confident in using them, their self-efficacy will be lowered and they will feel less confident in working successfully in post-16 education. Also, if EPs start to work in post-16 education and it is not

successful, they will be less likely to take on training to improve their performance in the area. Similarly, if current EPs feel that they are competent in working with post-16, but actually do not have the necessary skills, they will not be likely to work successfully either. The optimum level of self-efficacy has been shown to be slightly above ability, and that this is when people are likely to take on challenging tasks and gain more experience (Csikszentmihayli, 1997). This means that in order for EPs to work effectively in post-16 education their self-efficacy cannot be too high or too low. The skills they need will have to match the needs of the post-16 sector, and they will have to feel confident in applying them. If EPs think that they need a specific set of skills to work in post-16 education, but those skills are not needed by the post-16 sector, their work is likely to be unsuccessful.

Having explored the concept of self-efficacy, I will now investigate what the needs may be in post-16 education, as this will support the understanding of what work EPs might do in post-16 education and how this might affect self-efficacy levels.

### *2.5 Post-16 education*

In order to understand the context of post-16 education, its strengths and difficulties and how the EP-role can fit into that, I will firstly describe what research has been conducted in this area. Understanding the difficulties, and the nature of them, that post-16 establishments experience will highlight possible opportunities for EP involvement.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 1, post-16 education in England covers education and training from basic skills to a Foundation degree level (Hill, 2013) and is covered by the term FE. These can be offered by sixth form colleges, FE colleges, work-based learning providers, and adult and community learning institutions (Hill, 2013).

There have been many investigations into post-16 education; its strengths, difficulties and effectiveness (Baird, Rose & McWirther, 2012; Beauchamp-Pryor, 2012; Carroll, 2015; Dewson, Aston, Bates, Ritchie, Dyson, 2004;

Guishard, 2000; Hewett, Douglas & Kiel, 2014; Hyland & Merrill, 2001). However, two lines of inquiry have dominated post-16 education research: “inclusion/rights” and “transition” and I will, therefore, present these two lines of inquiry here.

### **2.5.1 Inclusion**

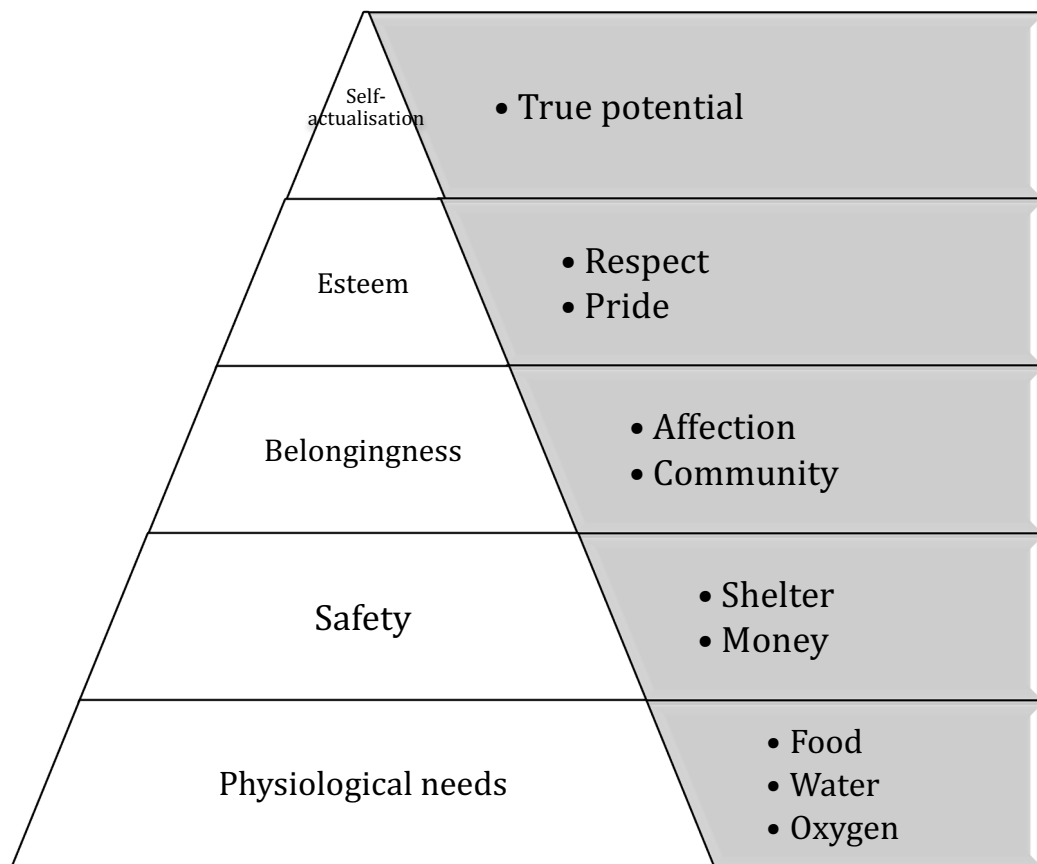
Inclusion is often seen and defined as a journey away from the segregation that historically has happened to different groups of people (Fredrickson & Cline, 2009). In this research, the focus will be on inclusion as a journey away from the practice of segregating children and young people with particular difficulties in education away from children and young people of their age who are not perceived to have particular difficulties. This practice is perhaps not as historical as some other forms of segregation within our society and many children and young people are still educated away from their peers who are not perceived to have special educational needs. One of the side effects from this practise is that it leads to stigmatisation and can restrict access to educational and employment opportunities (Fredrickson & Cline, 2009).

Research investigating inclusion in post-16 provisions has often found that staff in post-16 education find it hard to manage the learning of a ‘mixed needs group’, especially when there are students with ‘difficult to manage’ behaviour (Guishard, 2000). Spenceley (2012) also argues that there is a lack of training for those working in post-16 education on inclusion, especially when it comes to including those with ‘special needs’ and as such inclusion is perhaps not as successful in post-16 education as it is in compulsory education. Similar arguments have been made by Chown & Beavan (2012) who investigated inclusion of post-16 students with autism spectrum condition (ASC).

Chown & Beavan (2012) conducted a literature review relating to students with ASC in FE; highlighting barriers for these students and how they could be overcome. Some of the barriers they found were a difficulty in adapting to the structure of post-16 education which often were much more flexible and relied more upon students working on their own and being self-reliant, compared to secondary schools; a lack of knowledge and understanding of ASC; and a lack

of involving the young people and their parents in designing support. Chown & Beavan (2012) write in their conclusion that post-16 education needs to focus on the teaching and learning process rather than focusing on the end qualification in order to overcome some of the barriers as well as involving parents and young people in discussions surrounding support needs. I would argue that these are areas that EPs, with their skills, would be well suited to help post-16 education develop. This could be in terms of supporting transition planning, consultation and assessments as well as person centred planning.

One of the reasons that inclusion is important, can be explained by Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Jones, 2004). Maslow (1954) argued that humans are born with a hierarchy of needs and that we need to satisfy "lower", base needs before we can reach higher levels and achieve psychological growth. The goal of psychological growth is to achieve self-actualization, where we find personal fulfilment. Although some have discredited the theory, it has also been found to still be valid (e.g. Jerome, 2013; Jonas, 2016).



**Figure 2.** Diagram of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, adapted from Maslow (1954).

As can be seen from Figure 2, Maslow (1954) argued that we first need to satisfy our physiological needs, i.e. we need to make sure that we have food, water and clean air to sustain our existence, before we can go on to think about finding shelter and making money, and so on. This means that before we, as humans, can reach the self-actualization need we must satisfy our need for belongingness first, along with the other needs below that. Inclusion can be thought of as belongingness in terms of being part of the community. When young people are not part of their community and are segregated or in other ways told that they do not belong, such as when they are told, directly or indirectly, that they cannot be taught in a class or group with others (e.g. Guishard, 2000; Spenceley, 2012), they are less likely to reach and become able to fulfil their needs of esteem and self-actualization. This could mean that they will be less likely to successfully transition from post-16 education to employment. Similarly, Chown & Beavan (2012) showed that young people with ASC were not included appropriately as they found it difficult to adapt to the structures of the FE college described in their paper. Maslow's (1954) theory would say that the FE college's inability to include these students prevents them from fulfilling their esteem need, and therefore also from their self-actualization need.

### **2.5.2 Transition**

Carroll (2015) reviewed how empirical research into transitions into post-16 education for young people with learning difficulties had been conducted. She concludes that different aspects of post-16 transitions have been researched and that there are different meanings attributed to the word 'transition', which makes such research difficult to compare and contrast. However, from Carroll's (2015) paper it is also evident that there is relatively little research into how young people with learning difficulties transition into post-16 education and therefore there is still much to investigate in order to get a better understanding of what facilitates a 'good' transition and successful outcomes for young people with learning difficulties.

Hewett, Douglas & Keil (2014) investigated the 'post-16 transition experience' (p. 211) of visually impaired (VI) young people in England and Wales. Although, VI is relatively uncommon in young people today and only one specific need, some of these barriers and challenges as well as strengths could be applied to other groups of young people with different SEND or additional needs. For instance, the discussion around independence for young people with VI is pertinent to young people with different types of SEN as well.

Hewett, Douglas & Keil (2014) had 78 students (31 from year (Y) 9 and 47 from Y11) participating in their study. The study collected data on background information such as details on the VI, what support they had received at school, details on their transition planning if they had had any work experience, what careers advice they had received, their plans for their future, and also a measure of their locus of control. The results showed that the group was high achieving with 60% having achieved 5 A\*-C grades in their GSCE examinations, compared to 53% achieving the same results nationally. Only 51% of the Y11s in the sample were confident that they had had a transition meeting or review. Thirty-two percent of the Y11s had not had any transition review or meeting. Interestingly out of those who had had a transition review/meeting 90% had a statement of special educational need (SEN), indicating that there was a failure to support in planning transition for those who had a specific need but did not have a statement of SEN. A third of the young people that were in Y11 at the time of the interviews expressed negative comments about the support that had received or that they had not received any support. However, at the interview-points after the transition to post-16, most young people were positive about it, only 8 said that it could have been improved. One thing that the young people highlighted as particularly good was the information that had been passed onto their college from their secondary schools. This is something that should happen for everyone with a statement of SEN (and for those with the new Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans), however Hewett, Douglas & Keil (2015) do note that even the majority of those who did not have a statement of SEN mentioned this as a positive. When it came to the support they received in their post-16 establishment most students reported that the support they received was good

and met their needs at least most of the time. Where support had been reduced, students saw it as a good thing and as an opportunity to increase their independence. Unfortunately, there were disputes in some cases about the format of support and differentiation a student received, where the college argued for one method and the students preferred another. There were similar results reported for transport arrangement to the post-16 establishment of choice for the young person. However, there were cases where a young person had wanted to independently travel to their college, but the college had said no due to feelings that a VI young person might be a health and safety risk when walking up or down the “school drive” (as described in Hewett, Douglas & Keil, 2014, p. 218). In some cases, parents had also said no to their child walking independently to school.

The results that are presented in Hewett, Douglas & Kiel’s (2014) study point to several things that work well for students with additional needs, and for those with VI in particular, when they transition to post-16 education. However, it also points to factors that could potentially be a barrier when transitioning into adulthood. I would argue that EPs would be well suited to support post-16 establishments, young people and their parents to overcome these barriers. This could be done through a psychological consultation approach (Wagner, 1995) in order to problem-solve together with involved parties and help them find the solution that will work best for them. It is also interesting to note that even though the participants in the study were described as “high achieving” (p. 214) there were still challenges and barriers to achieving appropriate support. If the students had not been so “high achieving” there could have been more barriers and challenges to attaining appropriate support as it has been argued that post-16 education particularly finds it difficult to manage the learning of ‘mixed needs’ learners (e.g. Guishard, 2000).

Palikara, Lindsay & Dockrell (2009) examined how the first year of post-16 education had been for students with a history of a specific language impairment (SLI). Most of the results were positive in terms of support and the post-16 experience so far. However, nearly half of the participants in the study



reported that there had been issues on the course they were on. These issues were diverse, relating to the increased demands on the students in terms of academic challenge, but also in terms of difficulties with peers and being victimised by them. Some participants suggested improvements to the support they received, such as more detailed information about coursework requirements and breaking tasks down into smaller steps. One of the barriers to achieving this was finding skilled support assistants that both knew how to support well and knew the curriculum well enough to be able to differentiate it for different needs. This has been supported by Spenceley (2012) who also argues that there is a lack of formal training for staff in post-16 education, especially within the further education (FE) sector, in supporting pupils identified as SEND in order to improve the quality of provision that they receive.

Another important aspect from the Palikara, Lindsay & Dockrell (2009) study is the emphasis put on the support young people receive from their family. It, therefore, occurs to me that including the family in designing support at post-16 education is important and resonates with the conclusion in Chown & Beavan's (2012) study. This is perhaps another aspect of the role of the EP within post-16 education that could be developed, as EPs are often well situated in supporting families to develop their own strategies. However, this would mean that the EP role in post-16 education may be to bring families and educators together, which, from the literature, would appear to be something that does not happen.

Another type of transition that has not been mentioned in the literature as frequently but that Atkinson et al (2015) has specifically argued is of importance to work successfully in post-16 education, is the transition to employment. Bell (2010) examined the transition to employment for adults with dyslexia. The main finding is that adults with dyslexia have generally been well supported during their education, however this support is not always available in the workplace and many employers have no understanding of the young adult's needs or how to meet them. It does therefore seem that it is important for EPs to know how to support the transition from post-16

education to employment. However, I would also question whether the support from the young person's education, including the support during their post-16 education, is helpful to young adults if it does not prepare for employment adequately and perhaps this is something that EPs could support post-16 providers with as well, in terms of preparing the young people for the demands of work and how they can support themselves in different situations.

I will now go on to outline Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological systems theory, before examining how it can guide thinking around a young person who is transitioning to or already has transitioned to post-16 education.

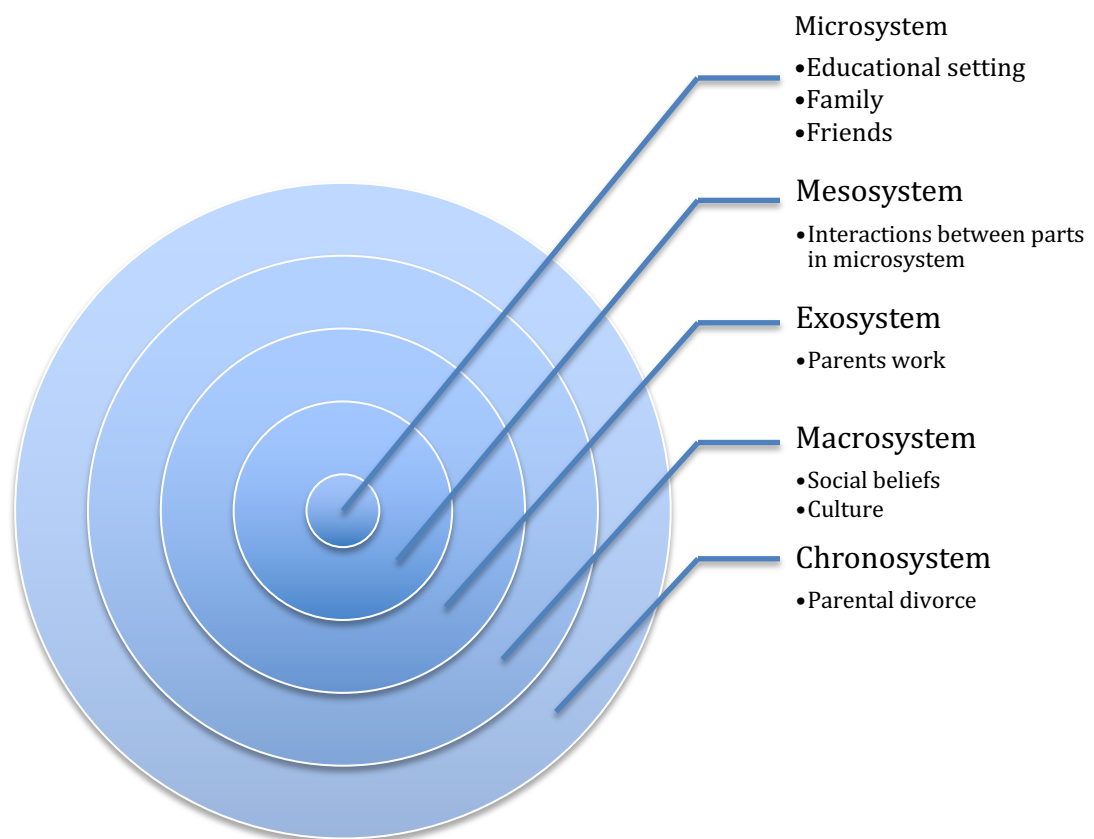
Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological systems theory, or framework, proposes that children and young people's development is affected by everything in their surrounding environment. Bronfenbrenner (1992) divided the environment into five different systems; the microsystem, which is closest to the child/young person and the one they have direct contact with, such as school, family, etc. All relationships in the microsystem are bidirectional and as such what the child or young person does affects another person in that system, whose behaviour in turn affects the child or young person.

The second system is the mesosystem, which consists of the different parts of the microsystem and their interactions with each other. These interactions may have an indirect impact upon the child or young person. This may be the relationship between parent/carer and a child or young person's school. It is generally believed that if the different parts of the microsystem work together in the mesosystem it will have a positive effect on the child or young person. If they are not working together they are believed to have a potential negative impact upon development.

The third system is the exosystem, which is an environment or environmental changes that do not involve the child or young person directly, however it still affects them. This could for instance be that a parent/carer receives a salary rise or that they lose their job.

The fourth system is the macrosystem, which comprises of social and cultural beliefs held within the society that the child or young person lives in. This may be gender norms and religious beliefs.

The last system, the chronosystem, includes the environmental events and transitions which occur throughout a child's or young person's life. This may involve a parental divorce or other events such as puberty. See figure 2 for a model of the Bronfenbrenner's (1992) ecological systems theory.



**Figure 3.** Diagram of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1992).

The literature, presented earlier in this section, would suggest that there might become several tensions for a young person within and between the different systems within the ecological systems theory. For instance, the lack of training in order for staff to differentiate teaching and manage 'challenging behaviour'

(e.g. Guishard, 2000; Spenceley, 2012; Chown & Beavan, 2012) will affect the young person directly and as such is an added factor that may affect the young person within the microsystem and therefore affect their development negatively. There was also literature suggesting that when a young person transitions to post-16 education there were different levels of parental involvement. For instance, Chown & Beavan (2012) found that post-16 educational establishments failed to involve parents into the design of support for young people. Hewett, Douglas & Keil (2015) found that parents, at times, were delaying their child's transition to independence by saying no to their child walking to their new educational setting. This would suggest that within the mesosystem tensions may arise, as there will have to be a new relationship built between the new educational setting, the parents and the young person themselves. Careful consideration will also have to be made to whether the young person wants their parents/carers involved in their education, whether their parents accept that, and also whether the young person has parents/carers that can be involved in their education. It will be important to note that some young people who transition to post-16 education may be young care leavers who may no longer have carers and as such a part that has always been in their mesosystem, might now be missing.

Palikara, Lindsey & Dockrell (2009) found that young people who had just transitioned to post-16 education often felt that they were victimized by their peers. The transition to post-16 education might therefore affect the microsystem in this way. A further transition to employment might affect both the microsystem and the chronosystem, for instance Bell (2010) found that employers were not always able to support those with dyslexia in the workplace effectively. It is also important to note that as the young people who are transitioning to post-16 are also in a transition to adulthood, which is likely to affect the chronosystem. They will be moving from a position of almost full dependence on adults in their lives to increased independence from them, some of the young people may become parents themselves and others may have to start to manage their own money and household (e.g. care leavers). The potential negative interactions within and between these systems, which the literature suggests, may affect the development of the young person negatively.

## *2.6 Educational Psychology in post-16 education*

A survey of the Educational Psychology workforce in 2013 (National College for Teaching and Leadership, 2013) looked into what areas EPs are currently in and to what extent. They did this by sending out their yearly survey to LA EP services and compared the answers with four previous surveys that had been conducted. While the survey looks at a broad range of work that EPs conduct, I will focus on what the survey shows about EP work in the post-16 sector. The survey showed that there was an increase of EP work in the post-16 sector, particularly traded work, meaning that the post-16 settings would have to pay for the service from their local EPS. The respondents to the survey anticipated that there was going to be more work for EPs in the post-16 educational sector in the future. Although they anticipated this increase, only a small proportion of work was completed in post-16 education; out of 115 respondents only 33 (28%) said that EPs in their EPS worked with the post-16 sector. There was an even smaller number of respondents that reported that their TEPs (11 respondents, 9.5%) did work with the post-16 sector. These results would suggest that only a minority of EPs are working in this particular type of education and developing experience and expertise of working in the sector. This would also suggest that only a minority of post-16 providers have the experience of working with EP services and EPs. What is even more interesting is that in 22 LA where EPs are working in the post-16 sector, their TEPs are not provided with this experience, suggesting that they are therefore not able to develop skills and understanding of post-16 education in relation to their new and emerging professional roles and identities. It is therefore understandable that Atkinson et al (2015) suggest developing a competency framework in order to support TEPs to develop these skills.

Although, EPs in England have had little experience of working in post-16 education and the studies presented above only highlight potential areas of work, EPs in Scotland have had more experience in this area. MacKay, et al (2006) evaluated the “post-school psychological services” (PSPS) in Scotland between 2004 and 2006. They concluded that the provision of psychological services to education providers after compulsory schooling, such as Scottish

colleges, had led to a wide range of initiatives that supported transitions, the development of new assessment frameworks and provision of staff training. They also found that EP services needed time to develop contextual knowledge, establish contacts and to explore opportunities. They also concluded that the extra financial support that were provided to “Pathfinders”, EP services that trialled working as PSPS, should remain and had been a key factor in the development of the services delivered to post-16 providers. MacKay et al (2006) also conclude that not having enough resources was one of the main barriers to developing PSPSs in non-Pathfinder authorities. This is important to acknowledge as MacKay et al (2006) conducted their evaluation before the financial crisis of 2008 and the current austerity measures that are in place across England (Lowndes & Gardener, 2016; Asenova, Bailey & McCann, 2015). These measures may affect what services can be put in place to develop post-16 EP services in England. LA budgets are currently pressed, and it could be questioned whether any funding would be available in order to develop effective post-16 EP services in England, at least in the same way as it has been in Scotland. However, the successful outcomes that MacKay et al (2006) point to are important as they show that psychological services were highly valued by providers and that outcomes for young people, such as employment, were improved by having educational psychology involvement in the post-16 sector.

As mentioned, the research into educational psychology involvement in post-16 education in England is sparse due to it being relatively new to the profession (NAPEP, 2013). However, Clark (2014) conducted a case study into how her local EPS would be able to support, what she calls, learners with learning difficulties and disabilities (LLDDs) up to the age of 25. She also explored how the local EPS could start developing a relationship between them and the local college. Clark does this by conducting focus groups with EPs, tutors at supported learning courses within FE colleges, professionals from the local Connexions service, the LA SEN team, and professionals from a local school for young people with moderate learning difficulties. Her results suggested that those working in FE wanted specific services from the local EPS, particular mention was given to advice giving, consultation, direct

assessments, having a named link EP, and someone who would value and be able to elicit a young person's views.

Clark (2014) argues that what those working in FE want from their local EPS impacts upon how the local EPS develops their model for service delivery to the local FE college. She also comments upon how it would have to be linked to the new SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). One of Clarke's (2014) arguments is that there would have to be careful planning between the local EPS and the FE college in order to be able to develop a relationship between them. She continues the argument with that the service agreement would have to be negotiated in order to meet the local FE college's needs and the needs of the local context. Hence, understanding the need of post-16 providers will be paramount in order for the EPS of interest in this study to be able to plan their work with them and offer them something that they are likely to feel that they are in need of.

One of the constraints to a potential relationship with the FE college that Clarke (2014) highlighted was the lack of clarity and boundaries of the EP role, which also has been discussed in this literature review. She argues that this means that the participants in her study, particularly the FE college, might not know what to expect from the local EPS and as such not seek out their services. Therefore, she argues, the local EPS needs to know how to explain their services to them and in particular they need to specify what their unique contribution could be to them and their learners. Clark (2014) also hypothesises that EPs might need to be 'up skilled' in order to be able to carry out post-16 work efficiently, and that TEPs might need to receive more input on the post-16 sector in their training courses. It will therefore be interesting to explore how current EPs see their role and what skills they believe that they will need to acquire in order to work effectively in the post-16 sector.

## *2.7 Summary*

In summary, it can be said that the literature suggests that there is widespread confusion around the EP role and I would argue that the way in which it traditionally has been defined is actually not fit for purpose and this will be

addressed in this research in order to further understand what the role in post-16 might entail.

In terms of self-efficacy, there is a lot of research that suggests that people's self-efficacy needs to be at the right level in order for them to take on new and challenging tasks successfully. Again, in order for EPs to be able to take on their role in post-16 successfully their self-efficacy level will, therefore, have to be at the right level.

Finally, the post-16 educational environment has not been researched in much detail beyond the two lines of inquiry that I have presented in this literature review. This means that it will be difficult to understand what type of work EPs might be taking on in post-16 education. However, looking at the work that has been done in Scotland it shows great scope for several areas such as training, assessments, consultation and systemic work with post-16 learners and educational settings. The research by Clark (2014) also implies that EPs need to explain their role appropriately to post-16 educational providers and also understand post-16 providers' needs in order to be able to meet the local needs. These needs may of course differ across the nation and as such finding these out for the local context to the EPS that this study concerns, will be important in order for an appropriate service model to develop.

Taken together, this would suggest that in order to understand the EP role in post-16 education, the EP-role will firstly have to be defined appropriately. Secondly, what post-16 providers want in terms of support and what challenges they face will also be important in order to understand the developing EP role within the sector. Their levels of self-efficacy will guide whether EPs are ready to take this on.



### 3. Aims, research design, research questions and ethics

Robson (2011) suggests that when developing research questions, one firstly has to consider what purpose the study one is conducting has. In this case the purpose of the study is to explore what the EP role in post-16 might look like. The current situation is that the EP role is both defined by what service EPs provide (e.g. BPS, 2013; AEP, 2017) while others define it by the what theory and knowledge we apply to specific problems. The ever-changing nature of the role due to changes in the political and economic situations in the country has also created confusion around it (e.g. Fallon, Woods & Rooney, 2010; Burnham, 2013). This means that as a profession we need to gain knowledge and understanding of the EP role as perceived by EPs themselves, as well as about how it will be applied in post-16 education, in order to ensure that we are providing an appropriate service and meeting needs, as argued by Clark (2014). Clark (2014) emphasised that a wider understanding of the local post-16 context is paramount in order to develop EP services and meeting local need for post-16 students. Research questions were developed with this in mind i.e. clarity around role definition, changes in practice and understanding the local post-16 context. Such questions were developed as the understanding gained would enable EPs and services to work collaboratively together and hence improve outcomes for young people in post-16 education.

With the aforementioned reasons in mind, this study specifically aims to explore if and how those EPs with experience of working with the post-16 population have perceived that their role has changed, and if and how those without experience believe it will change. It also aims to highlight what needs current EPs have in order to feel confident and adequately equipped to work with the post-16 sector. In order to understand how the role will develop the research also aims to understand the post-16 educational sector in terms of their strengths, challenges/needs and what type of support they themselves believe to be in need of. Please see figure 1 for a diagrammatic overview of the thesis and its aims.

Phase one and two of this research ran consecutively, however, the end of phase one overlaps with the beginning of phase two, please see table 2 and 7 for timelines of the data collection for the research. The two phases inform each other in order to meet the aims of the research. In order to meet the main aim of the research I have developed separate research questions for each phase, so as to be able to explore each area thoroughly, figure 1 shows how both phases and their research questions inform the overall aim of the study. I will now present the research questions for each phase.

### ***3.1 Phase 1***

As the EP role has been difficult to define and is one that varies the main aim for this part of the research is therefore to understand how the EP role is understood by EPs themselves, whether they felt that working within post-16 education has or will change their role, and to ascertain whether the EPs in this LA and study feel that they need to develop certain skills in order to work effectively in post-16 education. The specific research questions for phase one of this study were as follows:

- ⇒ How do EPs perceive their professional role and identity?
- ⇒ How confident are EPs with and without post-16 experience in using skills necessary for such work (self-efficacy levels)?

#### **If EP has got experience of work in post-16 sector:**

- ⇒ How has the EPs' professional role or identity developed/changed when working in post-16 education?

#### **If EP has not got experience of work in post-16 sector:**

- ⇒ How do EPs believe their professional role or identity will develop/change when they start working in post-16 education?

### ***3.2 Phase 2***

The main purpose for this part of the research is to understand different post-16 providers' needs in relation to their learners, as well as their systems. As previously identified (Clark, 2014) understanding the needs of the post-16

sector in relation to its local context is important in order for the local EPS to be able develop their service model and their offer to the post-16 sector. The specific research questions for phase two of this study were as follows:

- ⇒ What strengths do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
- ⇒ What challenges do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
- ⇒ What type of support, potentially from EPs, do post-16 providers perceive themselves to be in need of?

### *3.3 Overall research design*

This study is of a flexible research design (Robson, 2011) as it is using a qualitative strategy to data collection. The research aimed to be participant-led in order allow participant-generated meanings to be heard (Willig, 2001). This involved using semi-structured interviews with open-ended and flexible questions to facilitate the emergence of new, and sometimes unanticipated categories of meaning and experience. The questions within the semi-structured interviews functioned as triggers that encouraged the participants to talk. Even though this style of questioning is sometimes described as non-directive it is important to acknowledge my research questions were driving the interviews, through my questions; I was steering the interviews in order to gather data that would answer my main research questions for each phase.

I chose to use semi-structured interviews in order to meet the aims of my research. One of the reasons for choosing this type of interview was as it allowed me to narrow down specific areas that I could ask the participants about. This was something that was recommended in the literature (e.g. Rabionet, 2011). I considered using unstructured interviews (Robson, 2011) as this would have allowed me to explore the general area of interest and a conversation would have developed around that area. However, when conducting unstructured interviews there is a risk of not exploring all the topics one wants to cover (Rabionet, 2011) and as such there was a risk of not being able to answer my research questions using this approach to interviews.

Another option to semi-structured interviews would be fully structured interviews. These have mainly predetermined questions with fixed wording

and are set in a specific order (Robson, 2011). This would include questions which would generate 'yes' and 'no' answers or answers that would be on a scale, as well as a few open-ended questions (Robson, 2011). All questions would also have had to be read out word for word as they appear on the interview schedule, in order for them to be read out in the same fashion to all participants. This would ensure a great deal of consistency across participants, however would perhaps not allow me to hear the participants stories and let them use their own language to construct their own meanings. As I wanted to have a relatively open discussion; hearing the participants stories, but also cover certain topics, semi-structured interviews appeared to be meeting these criteria. Considering the ontological and epistemological stance of this research, as outlined and explained in Chapter 4, it was also important to ensure that the methods I used to elicit knowledge and explore understandings fitted those. Both the ontology and epistemology I choose to use, place an importance upon that knowledge is not 'out there' to be discovered, but is constructed by those experiencing it. There is also an emphasis placed upon the use of language as a way of understanding people's thoughts and feelings about certain experiences. Using semi-structured interviews therefore allowed me to use questions that allowed the participants to use language to construct and explain their thoughts and feelings about their experiences.

The semi-structured interviews for each phase were developed using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989). Several subjects were identified for each phase to be investigated and questions around these subjects were then developed. The first questions for each subject of the interview were open-ended and broad. More focused questions that explored the subject further were also planned for in case the participants did not cover certain aspects that were important in order not to lose sight of the original research questions (Tomlinson, 1989 and Willig, 2001).

In order to ensure the validity of the data I gathered using semi-structured interviews within a flexible, qualitative framework (Robson, 2011) it was important to consider triangulation. Triangulation of data, within qualitative research, usually means a combination of data drawn from different sources, at

different times or from different people (Willig, 2001; Flick, 2004; Jonsen & Jehn, 2009; Robson, 2011). Hence, it was important for me to draw on information and gather data from different people, with different experiences. For phase one this meant that the EPs interviewed had trained to become EPs at different times and it also meant that they had done so under different frameworks. Some had experience of working within post-16 education, and some did not. For phase two of the research this meant that the participants were from different types of post-16 education, with different cohorts of students and different locations. In both phases, the participants were interviewed at different times from each other, but also at different times in their careers. For the study as a whole there were two main groups; EPs and post-16 educators. The information gathered from these two different sources were combined in order to provide new knowledge to the area.

### *3.4 Ethics*

Ethical approval was gained by the Graduate School of Education's ethics committee on the 16<sup>th</sup> of February (see Appendix 1a and 1b). Information sheets outlining the nature of the study along with information on confidentiality, right to withdraw and who to contact for more information, consent forms and information on how data would be used and stored during and after the research (see Appendix 2) was included in initial correspondence with potential participants. This information was sent out again to those who showed an interest in participating in the study and was also brought to their attention before the interview. The time it took to complete interviews were made clear to participants before agreeing to be interviewed, after having agreed to be interviewed and just before the interview. Consent to participate was provided by signing the consent form, which came with the information sheet (see Appendix 2), prior to interview.

Consideration was given to how to preserve anonymity for individuals within the study. In both phases of the study participants were given a participant number that was initially linked to their name. Participants were informed that after interviews were transcribed, coded and themes had been found within them, the documents containing links between participant numbers and names

would be permanently deleted if electronic, and physical documents would be shredded. Participants were only identified by their broad professional group, which had been identified as of particular interest in this study, i.e. EPs and post-16 staff, but specialist roles, seniority and particular institutions have not been identified. All quotes were thoroughly screened for any identifying features, which may compromise anonymity, such as location, names, and reference to specific roles.

My own reflective practice was crucial within this study in order to remain ethical throughout. Self-reflection during and evaluation after each interview was of particular importance as each interview was unique and different circumstances accompanied each of them. This supported me to reflect on my actions and was also used as a tool to for reflecting 'in action' as outlined by Schön (2017). This ensured that I remained sensitive to the needs of my participants and that the research was conducted in such a way that it respected and upheld the values of the University, my educational psychology training course, the BPS, the HCPC (Health, Care Professionals Council) and the AEP.

## 4. Methodology

In this section I will firstly restate the aims and overall research questions as Teddlie and Tashakkori (2005) and Thomas (2013) argue that it is those research questions that determine your ontological and epistemological stance. The research questions for phase one of this research are concerned with finding out how a particular group of professionals perceive their professional role and how they believe it will change. The research questions for phase two are concerned with finding out how a certain sector perceives their own strengths, challenges and what type of support they would like to receive and believe they will benefit from. The overall aim for this research is to understand how the EP role will develop within the context of post-16 education. Having restated these, I will now go on to explain these stances.

### *4.1 Ontological and epistemological stance*

This research sits within the paradigms of interpretivism and social constructionism. In this section I will explain these two stances and how they fit in with my research and its aims.

The ontological stance of interpretivism is that knowledge is not ‘out there’ to be discovered, neutral, depersonalised and abstract (Cottrell, 2014). According to interpretivism, what constitutes knowledge varies through societies and how they construct it. As a researcher, I was particularly concerned with understanding the experiences and viewpoints of a small sample of EPs from the same LA. I wanted to understand how they had constructed their knowledge around their professional identity and role within the micro-society of their workplace. My aims were therefore not to generalise their experiences to all EPs, but to give an insight into this sample. Hence, the ontological stance of interpretivism was chosen as it was consistent with the aims of the research.

The epistemological stance of social constructionism is that reality happens in the interactions between people and in their use of language to construct it (Andrews, 2012). As a researcher, I was particularly interested in how EPs’ meetings with other professionals within education, both other EPs and non-

EPs, impacted upon how they perceived their role. I was also interested in how they used language to construct their role. By interviewing EPs in order to understand their role and also their identity, which was explored in chapter 2, I was therefore only exploring the reality that those EPs had constructed for themselves and how this sat and had developed within the wider social context of their workplace. As was also explored and described in chapter 2, professional identity and role construction develop within a particular social context, how the EP role, therefore, will develop is dependent on the educational context of the post-16 sector (Pratt et al, 2006, Beijjaard et al, 2004, Ibarra, 1999 and Ashforth & Mael, 1989), hence the importance of understanding this setting. Interpretivism suggests that in order to make full sense of one's research one has to investigate the broader structures and rich contexts in which it is constructed, and in this context: in which it will be constructed in in the near future.

The beliefs and values presented above influenced every aspect of this research. The use of semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore the social influences on thinking about and creating their own role, and to explore the views of those working within the post-16 sector. Without using interpretivism as ontological stance and social constructionism as epistemological stance I would not have been able to explore how EPs constructed their role and identity, nor would I have been able to explore how those working in post-16 saw their places of work in terms of their potential work with EPs.

#### *4.2 Biases, prejudices and other influencing factors upon the study*

Having stated the ontological and epistemological stances of this research it is also important to acknowledge my own background as according to interpretivism the knowledge that I will retrieve from the interviews come from my point of view and the reality that I perceived from interviewing, transcribing, reading and re-reading the transcripts, coding and finding themes within them are likely to coexist with other points of view and others' reality (Cottrell, 2014). It is also acknowledged that the realities that are described within my interviews are particular realities that happened within interactions



between my interviewees and myself. How language was used, understood and interpreted is, therefore, dependent on the social context it was used within, in this case, an EPS in the South West of England located within a unitary LA.

I have been on placement and as such worked for the LA of interest in this study since late 2014. It is therefore important to acknowledge that I am embedded within the LA's social context and social systems. Hence there is the potential that my interpretations could have been different if I had been on placement elsewhere and as such had a different evolved point of view. This means that one of my biases is a cultural bias where I, as the researcher, am judging what participants are conveying to me by what is seen as important within the culture that is present in this particular LA. My ability as a researcher to identify these is limited due to not having an experience of working in another LA (Stevenson, 2009). However, I would hypothesise that one of these would be the importance put on community psychology as this is something this particular EPS has in its title.

In addition, my own experience of post-16 education might have an influence upon my approach to the study. I particularly enjoyed my post-16 education and as such I may have a positive bias towards the importance of such education. This may have influenced how I approached the participants, especially in phase 2. Due to the ontological stance of interpretivism I may have interpreted the data in a way that resulted in me looking for confirmation of my own assumptions and as such creating a confirmation bias (Robson, 2011).

I have put measures in place to counteract any significant biasing effects. These were to share my interview schedules with research supervisors and colleagues that were not part of the study in order to ensure that questions were not leading or that wording that may have biased the participants to answer overly positively or negatively were not used. The interview schedules were also shared in order to counteract any culture bias, as colleagues who had been placed with different LAs were part of looking over them and gave feedback

on potential cultural biases. My awareness of my potential impact upon the data serves, in my view, as a protective factor in ensuring that I am eliciting and representing participants beliefs as much as possible. I also shared my data, codes and themes with my research supervisors and two colleagues in order to ensure that I was representing my participants beliefs as much as possible.

As well as these biases, I understand that I have explicit demographics, such as being female and being from a foreign country and as such have a foreign accent, which may evoke conscious and unconscious reactions in my participants.

## 5. Phase One

### *5.1 Methods*

#### **5.1.2 Participants**

EPs were identified through an initial e-mail sent out to the EPS, introducing my research and explaining the criteria for participating in this part of the research; either having some experience of working with the post-16 educational sector or being likely to gain the experience within the next year. Those who responded and expressed an interest in the study were then sent an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 2). If they were still interested after this a time was booked in for an individual interview to be held.

Due to the way in which the EPS is organised in this LA the initial e-mail only applied to nine EPs. Out of these a total of six EPs who had the relevant experience or were likely to gain the relevant experience within the coming year replied to my initial e-mail. Subsequently these six EPs were all interviewed. As this research was part-commissioned by the EPS only EPs from it were interviewed. If the topic had not been exhausted or, as it would be called in Grounded Theory (Willig, 2001), had reached 'saturation' after having analysed the transcripts, further interviews would have been sought from EPs in other LAs and EP services. After the analysis of the six interviews it was clear that the topic had been exhausted; no more themes were generated after the initial three interviews.

All, but one, were female and their experience of working as an EP ranged from 1 to 26 years. Three of the participants had qualified under the Master of Education (MEd) programme, and three had qualified under the Doctoral programme. Four of the six participants had some experience of working with young people above the age of 16 and the post-16 educational sector. Two of the participants had no experience of working with young people over the age of 16 or with the post-16 educational sector. The table below shows an overview over these characteristics of the interviewees.

**Table 1.** *Characteristics of participants in phase one*

Participant	Gender	Years practising	Qualification	Additional qualification/experience
<i>Experience of working with the post-16 educational sector</i>				
1	Male	6	Doctorate	Worked as assistant EP Position as senior EP
2	Female	10	Masters	Teaching qualification Position as joint Principal EP
3	Female	17	Masters	Teaching and SENCo qualification Worked as Advisory teacher Position as senior EP
4	Female	26	Masters	Teaching qualification Position as joint Principal EP
<i>No experience of working in post-16 educational sector</i>				
5	Female	1	Doctorate	Teaching qualification Qualified to teach outdoor education for young people aged 14 and up
6	Female	6	Doctorate	Teaching qualification Experience of teaching abroad

### **5.1.3 Procedure**

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with EPs spanning over a period during May 2016 to October 2016.

I began developing the semi-structured interviews by looking at Atkinson et al's (2015) competency framework regarding developing EPs' skills in post-16 education. The areas in the competency framework were; context, legislation,

assessment, interventions and outcomes, development, and transitions were then expanded upon using Tomlinson's hierarchical framework (Tomlinson, 1989) to develop specific questions and determine an interview schedule (see Appendix 3 and 4). However, during my reading and reflecting on this research it became clear that these areas and questions surrounding them were not going to be enough in order to answer my research questions. Thus, I added an additional two areas; professional identity then and now, and self-efficacy/confidence. The initial interview schedule, pre-piloting, can be seen in Appendix 6. Questions that were changed or removed are marked in red.

The interview schedule was firstly posted on "TEPNET"; an e-mail based forum for trainee EPs. It was also sent out to trainee EPs on the local DEdPsych programme. This ensured that questions were well worded and easily understood. A mock interview was then held with an EP that did not qualify for my research. During this process, it became evident that some questions were superfluous, others were duplicated and some areas were irrelevant to my research aims. Therefore, some of the areas taken from the Atkinson et al's (2015) competency framework were combined in order not to duplicate questions and other areas were removed. The final areas then were; professional identity now and then, challenges to EP practice, strengths of post-16 education, differences to pre-16 education, legislation around post-16 education, post-16 context and self-efficacy/confidence. Some questions within these interviews were worded slightly differently for those with and without experience of working with the post-16 sector. The final interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 7.

### *Interview procedure*

All participants were invited to choose a venue where they felt most comfortable being interviewed, they were reminded that it was important that the space was confidential. All participants in the phase one part of the study chose to be interviewed in a smaller meeting room at their local office. Participants were then presented with the information sheet and consent form again and they were invited to ask any questions that they might have. Their attention was then drawn to their participant number and it was explained to

them that if they wished to be withdrawn from the study, they could do so by contacting myself via e-mail or by telephone and reporting their participant number. Participants were made aware that if they did withdraw their data this would not affect them adversely in any way. They were also reminded that they were going to be recorded and if they wished not to be that this was okay and that I would write their answers down instead. All participants agreed to be recorded.

**5.1.4 Data collection and analysis**

All interviews were recorded using a digital Dictaphone and each recording was saved with the participant's participant number. Data was also collected during the interview by writing keywords and meanings down on the interview schedule. Particular emphasis on certain words or sentences were also noted. The audio recordings were then listened to once, then listened to again while transcribing the qualitative data into a Microsoft (MS) Word document. Once transcribed, the document was read through while listening to the audio file again and any typos or missed out content was added. Any additional anomalies, such as words that were difficult to hear or questions over meaning were clarified with the interviewee to validate their responses.

The following table shows a timeline of the development of the interview schedules, data collection as well as the data analysis. It also contains a column showing some of my thinking regarding the different actions. These comments have been taken from my reflective research diary which was kept during all stages of the research.

**Table 2.** *Timeline of research for phase one*

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Comment from reflective research diary</b>
<i>February</i>	17 <sup>th</sup>	Starting to develop interview schedules as described in	While developing these interview schedules I was conscious of wanting to ask questions related to the literature presented in the literature review. I therefore used

	chapter 5, section 1.3.	hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989) as I therefore could anchor questions to areas from the literature, especially from Atkinson et al's (2015) paper as this was the most recent paper on the subject. It also allowed me to incorporate other literature, such as the literature on transitions (e.g. Carroll, 2015).
25 <sup>th</sup>	Ethical approval was granted.	
26 <sup>th</sup>	Information sheet was sent out to potential participants.	Although I knew that I was not going to be able to complete interviews until the interview schedules were finished, I wanted to have enough time to gather participants and to give my participants enough time to consider the study and their potential participation. Cottrell (2014) also mentions the importance of thinking through how to find the right participants for the study and through sending out information to potential participants early, I felt that this gave me time to do so. She (Cottrell, 2014) also mentions the importance of thinking through whether or not the participants have the time to take part in the study, and hence I wanted them to

			be aware of the study early, so that they could put time away in their diaries while it was still available.
	30 <sup>th</sup>	Four EPs replied that they wanted to participate in the research. All of these had experience of working in post-16.	I considered who the participants were and whether they would be appropriate for my research. All participants had different backgrounds and had practised different lengths of time. I felt that this was appropriate in order to be able to triangulate findings from the interviews.
<i>April</i>	15 <sup>th</sup>	Interview schedules were completed and sent to colleagues on the doctoral course as well as posted on TEPNET.	Having completed the interview schedules I wanted to make sure that the questions would be well understood by potential participants. Sending them out to colleagues and posting them on TEPNET therefore felt like a good way forward to doing this.
<i>May</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Feedback on interview schedules were received from five different people; 3 colleagues from local university and two TEPs from different universities.	I wanted an overview of the similarities of what the different people who looked the schedules over thought, as I was aware that different people would have different preferences, likes and dislikes when it comes to conducting research. Overall, all those who looked over my research liked that there were prompt-questions, in case participants would go silent and



			three of the five wanted some changes to the schedules.
	5 <sup>th</sup>	Interview schedule amended from feedback received and piloted with EP that did not qualify for study.	In order to make sure that the interview schedules were understandable while I was reading them to the participants, rather than just participants reading the questions to themselves, and to ensure that the prompt questions worked well as a tool to continue the interview and elaborate on answers, I piloted it with a colleague. This ensured that I reworded some questions and removed others as they were duplicated in other sections of the schedule (Robson, 2011). Some questions did not make sense when reading them out either or in the context of their sections (using guidance from Cottrell, 2014).
	6 <sup>th</sup>	Interview schedule amended once more using feedback from piloting it. This version was then sent to supervisors. Discussed the interview schedule and it was agreed	Before going ahead with my interviews, I wanted to have the interview schedules looked over one final time and discuss the feedback from those that had seen the interview schedules electronically and from the pilot interview. For me, this ensured that the interviews would be of good quality and any final questions and queries that I had

		that interviews could go ahead.	could be addressed. For me, this meant that I would ensure that my methods would have a good chance of providing the type of data that I wanted to gather (Cottrell, 2015). Despite this, I did not want to expect that the data collection would work out just as I had planned (Robson, 2011) and was aware that participants may cancel their interview appointments with me, be ill or simply choose to withdraw.	
	16 <sup>th</sup>	First interview completed.	<p>Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.</p> <p>I listened through the tape after the interview was completed and I put down notes of what to me felt as significant parts of the interview. These were noted down so that I could</p>	<p>I wanted to ensure that what I was reporting was fair, balanced and thorough (Thomas, 2013) and therefore came back to my participants with these initial notes and messages that I felt that they were conveying. These were</p>

			come back to it later.	then discussed
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Second interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.  Again, I noted what to me felt to be the main messages from the interview and compared these to the first set of notes from the first interview.	with the participants and some were elaborated upon and changed.  Throughout the interviews I was aware of my social background, ethnicity, class, gender and other characteristics which could influence my
	27 <sup>th</sup>	Third interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.  Just like the other interviews I noted down the messages I felt	participants (Thomas, 2013). I therefore tried to counteract this. See chapter 4, section 2 for a more in-depth description and discussion of

			were coming out strongly from the interview. These were compared to the other two sets and put away to come back to later.	these characteristics and the counteraction of them.
<i>June</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Fourth interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.  Similarly, to the other interviews, I listened through the recording and noted down the messages that I felt were communicated through the interview.	
<i>July</i>	25 <sup>th</sup>	Fifth interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.	

			As this was the first interview with an EP that had not had any experience I listened through the transcript with particular interest in what meanings I felt were conveyed through it. These were noted so that it could later be compared with the meanings from previous interviews.
<i>August</i>	8 <sup>th</sup>	All completed interviews transcribed in turn during these dates.	Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 96) state that in order to meet the criteria for good Thematic Analysis one should make sure that “The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.” Reflecting upon this I therefore made sure that I listened to the recordings before I transcribed them, once transcribed I then listened to them
	10 <sup>th</sup>		
	15 <sup>th</sup>		
	22 <sup>nd</sup>		

			again while reading the transcripts. All the parts where I had not heard something correctly were noted and I contacted my participants to clarify.
<i>September</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Sixth interview completed.	<p>Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign.</p> <p>While listening through the transcript I noted down what to me felt to be the messages coming out of the interview in order to later be able to compare it to the fifth interview (the other one where the EP had no experience of working in post-16).</p> <p>As with the other interviews I wanted to ensure that what I was reporting was fair, balanced and thorough (Thomas, 2013) and therefore came back to the last participant with these initial notes and messages that I felt that the interview was conveying. The messages were then discussed with the participants and some were elaborated upon and changed.</p>

			Throughout the interview I was again aware of my social background, ethnicity, class, gender and other characteristics which could influence my participants (Thomas, 2013). I therefore tried to counteract this. See chapter 4, section 2 for a more in-depth description and discussion of these characteristics and the counteraction of them.
	8 <sup>th</sup>	Exploring ontology and epistemology in conjunction with different approaches to qualitative analysis.	At this point in time, I wanted to pick the most appropriate method for analysis that would be coherent with my ontology and epistemology, as well as be appropriate to the research aims and questions.
	15 <sup>th</sup>	First and second stage of analysis done for first two interviews. Both interviews coded.	I wanted to immerse myself in the data and as such I read through the data sets for the interviews (stage 1) and highlighted parts that I thought were of importance and particularly described and answered the questions I was asking in my interviews (stage 2).
	18 <sup>th</sup>	First and second stage of the analysis done for the second two interviews. Both interviews coded.	

	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Reading transcripts again. All interviews with EPs with experience in post-16 education have been transcribed and coded.	As I was coding I reflected upon what I thought was coming out in the interviews and what particularly struck me was what I called ‘the unique contribution of EPs in post-16’. At this point in the research and within the profession I felt that what was coming out of my interviews and the way that it was described was about finding a new place for EPs in a new world and establishing what they would be bringing to it.
<i>October</i>	19 <sup>th</sup>	Started to theme codes from interviews with EPs that had experience of working in post-16 education. Codes were sent to research supervisors and one TEP on the local EP course.	At this point I was aware that Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 96) emphasised that the ‘themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive’ and I therefore sent my codes to my supervisors and one colleague in order to make sure that I was not coding ‘a few vivid examples’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 96) that I then generated themes from.
<i>November</i>	17 <sup>th</sup>	First interviews with EP without experience in post-16 education is transcribed.	This was done in the same fashion as when the first four interviews were transcribed firstly. Please see the section showing my actions and



	27 <sup>th</sup>	Second interview for EPs without experience in post-16 education is transcribed.	reflections in August, in this table.
<i>December</i>	11 <sup>th</sup>	Interviews for EPs without experience in post-16 education were coded.	This was done in the same way the first four interviews were coded, please see the section for September 15 <sup>th</sup> to 23 <sup>rd</sup> to see reflections for this.
<i>January</i>	16 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion held with research supervisors regarding codes that were sent to them previously (on 19 <sup>th</sup> October), as well as for the codes that were done for the last two interviews, in conjunction with feedback from the TEP who also saw codes and extracts. All agreed with the codes overall, some were discussed and amended.	As I wanted my codes to be fair and balanced (Thomas, 2013) but also have some overall consistency and making sure that my interpretations were not down to my own prejudices and other predispositions, I therefore wanted others who had not been involved in the research or in the LA, where the interviews were held, to look at them to see if they agreed.
	20 <sup>th</sup>	Transcripts read through and codes amended as per	Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 96) suggest that 'themes [should] have been checked against each

		<p>discussion in research supervision. Codes discussed and checked with participants. Themes amended to accommodate amended codes. The themes were then checked against each other and with the original data sets and my original notes taken when I first listened through the recordings of the interviews.</p>	<p>other and back to the original data set.' I therefore decided to again take the amended codes back to the participants before checking back with the original data sets. The participants agreed with the codes and felt that they conveyed what they meant in their interviews. The themes were then slightly amended as some of the codes had been amended.</p>
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Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected, as it has been argued to be a flexible method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Other methods, such as conversation analysis (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (e.g. Smith & Osborn, 2003), are both fairly rigid in their applications and analysis has to be done in a specific way. Thematic analysis is also free of theoretical paradigms and therefore provides a flexible research tool (Braun & Clarke, 2006), meaning that it can be used with research of different ontological and epistemological stances. However, the approach is not so flexible that it can be done in any way one would like. It does have guidelines on how it is performed; allowing the researcher to be flexible, but guided in their analysis, ensuring that the research is robust (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis has also been

specifically developed for psychology research. The approach is therefore useful in this piece of research, as I have chosen to position it within the ontology of interpretivism and epistemology of social constructionism, as well as being based on psychological theory. Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis puts an emphasis on the active part the researcher takes in identifying the themes, which ones are selected and reported to the reader. It is also a method of identifying, analysing and reporting patterns within collected data. Hence, this particularly fits with the ontology of interpretivism as it assumes that the researcher, i.e. me, is a participant in their own research and the information gathered is understood and interpreted by me, as such the research findings cannot exist independently of me (Thomas, 2013).

Thematic analysis is a way of ‘identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data’ (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp 79), and as I wanted to find patterns across my data, I therefore selected it over other theme-based approaches, such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Grounded Theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967) looks to generate a theory from the data, and even though it also looks at finding themes and patterns, I did not aim to generate a new theory, and as such decided against it. Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Robson, 2011) looks to reveal and convey deep insight and understanding of concealed meanings of everyday life, lived experiences. Again, my aim was not to reveal insights of concealed meanings, but rather highlight and bring forward meanings and understandings of one profession’s view of their own identity and role. My aim was also to highlight their own thoughts on how their profession might change in the future, and is therefore not a lived experience. Hence, I decided against using phenomenology in this research.

Although most research on thematic analysis has come from Braun & Clarke themselves (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2014a; 2014b 2013; and 2006), which may indicate that there may be a positive bias towards their own method, I have still chosen to use it in this piece of research. As mentioned, Braun & Clarke’s (2006) it has been particularly developed for use with psychological research, fits well with ontological and epistemological stance of this research, as well as

being better suited, than other methods, to fulfil the aims of this research. Braun & Clarke (2006) outline 15-point checklist with criteria for good thematic analysis (pp. 96). The fifteen points for analysis and presentation of data are set out in the table below, together with a column explaining how I have met each criterion.

**Table 3.** *15-point checklist for good thematic analysis phase one*

<b>Process</b>	<b>Criteria (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006, pp. 96)</b>	<b>Researcher's actions and reflections in order to meet criteria</b>
Transcription	1. The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.	The audio recordings were listened to once, then listened to again while transcribing them. Once transcribed, the transcripts were read through while listening to the audio files again and any typos or missed out content was added. Any additional anomalies, such as words that were difficult to hear or questions over meaning were clarified with the interviewee to validate their responses. I believe that this has led to the data being transcribed to an appropriate level of detail.
Coding	2. Each data item has been given equal attention in the data process	Data was gathered approximately seven months before handing in the completed thesis. This allowed considerable time to complete

		analysis and allowing each item to be considered in detail.
	3. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive	Coding was done by noting down ideas during transcription, reading each complete extract and noting down what was said/conveyed at each point. These comments were then translated into codes, and the codes were later arranged into themes. Thus, ensuring that the whole data sets were considered and not just certain points that appeared ‘vivid’ to myself.
	4. All relevant extracts for each theme has been collated, for each data set	I used the coding programme “nVivo” (version 11) in order to code and theme my data sets. This ensured that all relevant extracts for each theme were collated for each data set.
	5. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.	I continually referred back to the original data set (i.e. transcribed interviews) in order to ensure that the themes were coherent and fitted the original data sets. Additionally, a colleague (a fellow TEP) and my thesis supervisors completed this stage where they looked at initial data sets, codes, sub-

		themes and themes, which were later agreed upon.
	6. Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive	This was achieved through continuous checking and referring back to the original data sets. A TEP and my thesis supervisors checked the transcripts, codes, and themes with quotations for half of the transcripts.
Analysis	7. Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather than just paraphrased and described	The codes making each theme up were looked at again and I reflected upon what the common denominator for each code in each theme was, and as such what it was communicating. This ensured that I thought about, and hence interpreted and made sense of, the data.
	8. Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims	The data analysis involved continuously checking that data sets, codes and themes to ensure that they matched each other. Choosing quotations to illustrate each theme and its analytic claim, ensured that the data sets matched the analysis, and when discrepancies were found changes were made in order to ensure that the themes and analysis reflected the data.

	9. Analysis tells a convincing and well organised story about the data and the topic	See Chapter '5.2 Findings'
	10. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.	See Chapter '5.2 Findings'
Overall	11. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a one-over lightly	Allocated study time was planned out with a great deal of detail. The analysis stage was given a substantial amount of time, and when needed extra time weekends and school holidays were used to ensure that enough time was given to all stages of the analysis.
Written report	12. The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated	The first part of Chapter 5, i.e. this part, sets out to explain in detail what was done in the data analysis process. This is supported with examples in the findings section and in the appendices. It has also been recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006) to read other research that uses Thematic Analysis, which was done prior, during and after the analysis of this research.
	13. There is a good fit between what you claim to do and what you show you have done – i.e.	The analysis was done alongside writing the majority of the methodology chapter and writing down notes from

	described method and reported analysis are consistent	each step in a reflective research diary to ensure that each step was captured, recorded and later explained.
	14. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis	My ontology and epistemology are clearly explained and discussed in Chapter 4, and my aim was to ensure that it underpinned every aspect of my research, for instance writing this thesis in first person as I am not independent of the research.
	15. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process, themes do not just ‘emerge’	During the transcription as well as analysis Braun & Clarke’s (2006) paper was referred to continuously in order to ensure that the guidelines were followed. Upon completion of the analysis the transcripts were read again with the coding programme “nVivo” (version 11) being on-screen so that all themes could be seen while reading the transcripts. This ensured that they captured the entire data set and that I was actively in the research process rather than just waiting for themes to emerge. Additionally, a colleague verified the themes and sub-



		themes by examining a selection of the data separately. Discrepancies between us were discussed and edits to the analysis were made.
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*Note.* Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006, pp 96).

In order to illustrate the process described above I will now show two examples of transcribed text with initial notes and codes.

**Table 4.** *Examples of transcribed text, with notes and/or reflective comments and codes.*

<b>Transcribed text</b>	<b>Initial notes/reflective comments</b>	<b>Code</b>
<p>I would say that I'm a psychologist and that I am applying psychology in education. I think that probably, in the way that we work in the current context, in fact actually largely in the way that I always have had to work in local authorities has meant that we have had to be relatively solution focused and brief in some of our interventions. But I see myself as a consultant and I see myself as a joint problem-solver. I do think it is important to recognise the information that we bring from our knowledge base, so I don't think consultation can be content free. I think consultation to be effective, you have to have more than just the process.</p>	<p>What it means to be an EP; how the work EPs do shapes the role. Needing to recognise knowledge base that EPs have – being anchored in our context?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EP-role</li> <li>• Consultation</li> <li>• Current knowledge base</li> </ul>
<p>To take the broadest, to see things holistically. I don't think I have a bias from any sort of angle. I just think about what's best to solve any situation. As an EP I don't have to justify things or come from a particular angle.</p>	<p>Seeing children/young people within their systems/holistically. Don't have to use a particular theory or framework; you can mix these in order to support young people.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EP-role</li> <li>• Community/systems psychology</li> </ul>

The above extracts from the interviews show an example of transcribed texts with notes and later identified codes. A more substantial example of transcribed text, showing the process from raw data to findings can be found in Appendix 12.

## 5.2 Findings

The aim of this section is to present the findings in a complete and coherent manner as advocated by Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 93). This will be done by firstly presenting the themes and sub-themes generated by the Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis of the interviews conducted with EPs in a table format. Following this, each main theme will be presented with its sub-themes, quotations from the data sets will be included in order to illustrate and supplement the themes. Extracts of transcripts can be found in Appendix 8, codes can be found in Appendix 10 and substantial extracts from transcripts, with initial notes, codes, sub-themes and main themes can be found in Appendix 12.

The analysis generated five themes across the whole data set and each theme will be presented separately. Even though the themes were the same for both EP groups within phase 1 of the study, I will present them separately in order to illustrate that there are core skills that are useful in post-16 work and that these do not necessarily develop out of experience of working within post-16 students and educational establishments. The themes will firstly be presented in a table for the purpose of clarity. I will then go on to provide a summary that will attempt to answer the research questions set for this phase of this study.

**Table 5.** *Themes and their sub-themes for phase one*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme within it</b>
1. EP role and identity	N/A
2. Post-16	Differences in post-16 vs. pre-16 education
	Post-16 context
	Changing practice

3. Changes	Changing systems in post-16 education
4. Work in post-16 pre-2014 policy change	N/A
5. Improving EPS	N/A

Before presenting the themes and sub-themes in detail, I would firstly like to summarise the main findings from phase one of this research. The presentation of the main findings is thought to highlight key concepts from the themes before exploring them in detail and looking at extracts to illustrate these.

As can be seen from the table above, the first theme was EP role and identity, within this all EPs described their role and identity in terms of being psychologists first and their role was to apply psychology to different learning situations. They therefore felt, and demonstrated, that they had core skills that were applicable across age/stage ranges and not necessarily specific to doing work in pre-16 education. This therefore brings me to question the need for a new competency framework purely for post-16 work, as proposed by Atkinson et al (2015).

Another view that came out of the interviews, with regards to the EP role, was that explaining the role was the responsibility of EPs themselves. One EP raised that they felt that the EP role had been discussed in a lot of detail within the EP profession and literature, but that perhaps this understanding had not been disseminated to the general population. This would suggest a greater onus on EPs themselves to disseminate this understanding of the role. This would ensure a holistic understanding of the EP role and as such EPs would be more likely to be commissioned for a broader range of work, both on a systemic and individual level.

One of the more tangible outcomes that EPs in this research wanted was more training on the Mental Capacity Act so that they could understand the implications of it for their practice. This was particularly important for the EPs

as they moved to work with young people that were seen as adults, due to their age, however might have difficulties in making decision due to their life experience or due to conditions leading to learning disabilities. EPs in this study were unsure of their role within this legal framework and how it would apply their work. Further CPD on this was hoped for. When the Mental Capacity Act was discussed EPs referred to young people's capacity and their psychological understanding of it and how this could support to inform other professionals to support young people to start making their own decisions. They also reflected upon how young people were taught to make decisions and take responsibility for them.

Other findings were about how young people's increasing capacity in post-16 education could create tensions between themselves and the professionals, for instance if the young person's parents had different views to the young person. EPs also reflected upon how young people's circumstance changed through different life transitions and that their needs could become significantly different if they were living alone for instance due to leaving care. EPs were also very likely to have integrated their previous professional identity into their current professional identity and continuously drew on knowledge and experiences that they had in their previous careers.

I will now go on to present the themes and their sub-themes in more detail and each theme will be illustrated with quotations from the transcripts.

### ***5.2.1 Theme: EP role and identity***

This section explores how interviewed EPs constructed their role and professional identity. It was important for me to explore this area, as it would give insight into how the role would change when the profession expands into post-16 education. However, it has to be emphasised that although my research questions sought to explore this area and my interview questions specifically asked participants about their role and professional identity, the theme emerged across several parts of the interview and came up when asking about other subjects as well. As mentioned previously, I will firstly present how those with experience in post-16 education constructed their professional role and

identity, before going on to present how those without this experience constructed their professional role as well as identity. I will then provide a brief summary outlining the similarities and differences between the two groups.

*EPs with experience of working in post-16*

“I would say that I’m a psychologist and that I am applying psychology in education.” – EP4

When asking the EPs in my study about what their role was, all spoke about that they were psychologists first and education professionals second. There was a potential link between the EPs’ backgrounds and this view. They had all had a good grounding in psychology, all having done a psychology degree and then branched off to work with children and young people in different aspects and capacities. This meant that they all had started off within the field of psychology and then continued to apply this knowledge in their work as teachers, teaching assistants, Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) practitioners, SENCOs and other work involving children and young people. The excerpt also shows how intertwined role and identity is, where all the EPs in phase one of the study saw themselves as psychologists (professional identity) and their role was to apply psychology within education.

When questions were asked about other subjects, participants expanded upon their professional identity and role even further.

“As an EP I use psychology to enhance understanding for adults and children. To me, it means that I maximise the outputs of systems. I like to think systemically and if I increase adults’ understanding what is happening I can make the outcomes for children better, as adults are the systems around a child.”- EP2

Participants with experience in post-16 education, felt it important to explain what frameworks they drew upon and how they used those particular psychological frameworks to fulfil their role, as demonstrated by the quote

above. It was also clear that when given time to talk about certain aspects of their practice they were more likely to re-think specific issues and put them within a psychological framework more overtly than during the initial questions. This, therefore, supported EPs to think about their role would be within post-16 in a more explicit fashion.

When talking about their identity, EPs in the first part of the phase one interviews emphasised how much their previous work roles within education had influenced their practice. This was very much part of who they were now as practising EPs and had influenced their professional identity. This was the case for all EPs in this part of the study and there did not appear to be a difference whether or not they had had experience of being teachers or not.

“I had a good starting point and having been a SENCO and worked in lots of different environments in my teaching career. Then also being an advisory teacher, which helped me thinking about the roles beyond doing the hands-on stuff. That was again very much empowerment, training, and those skills, as well as the consultation skills.” – EP3

“I think there are pros and cons to haven’t been a teacher before, I generally don’t know much. I don’t know about what teachers do and what they can and can’t do. So that is disadvantage, but it is also an advantage because I have a genuine naivety about what can be done so I don’t ask if it can be done, I just ask how can we do it.” – EP1

When asking participants about what had been different when working in post-16 education and with post-16 educational establishments and its students, they felt that it would not be that different, as demonstrated by the quote below.

“For me working as an EP has always been about building a community, preparing young people for adulthood, so no I don’t feel it is different to working with the pre-16 population.” – EP3

However, when given time to reflect upon it they then considered concerns such as that there perhaps might be other issues; such as homelessness, absent parents/carers and a different type of poverty for post-16 students.

“Actually, this has made me think more of a community psychology perspective in terms of what is around a young person, I’m thinking about Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model and the post-16 young person in the centre of that, influenced so much without necessarily the buffer of a parent or a carer and sometimes without a home.”- EP4

This then led to reflections upon how the role might be different within post-16 education. Transitions to adulthood was one aspect of working in post-16 education that came up as being different to working with pre-16 education, as well as the need to change perceptions within post-16 education about how we treat young people and how we support them to reach successful outcomes. A third aspect, which came up in the interview with EP4, was that a young person’s parents or carers might not be involved and that the young person whom the EP is working with is seen as an adult, which made the EP broaden their practice.

“Transitions to adulthood come naturally and when you have additional needs it might not be as straight forward as when you don’t”. – EP2

“Reflecting on my previous experience, before becoming an EP, there were still hospitals where children were rather than being in education. They were still in hospitals and I happened to be working there during one of my summer volunteer things that I did. For me it was just shocking, that’s always been a key driver for me, you know, how are we treating people? Are we treating them as health rather than education and looking at what they might achieve. This is very prominent in post-16, but has become more prominent for children and young people across the spectrum.” – EP3

“But one of the difference is that I am working with somebody that is an adult and I am not in the same way involving their parents or carers,



although their parents or carer are still involved, it depends on the needs of the young person. I am also broadening, I think we all need to broaden, our focus for post-16 so that we not necessarily just focus on educational attainment or skills to learn, I think we should be looking more at life skills. Enabling the young person to access what they need to in order to move forward in life. So we're looking at how they can problem solve to overcome barriers. It might be in the work place, it might be with friends, relationships.” – EP4

*EPs without experience in post-16 education*

“I am very clear that I am a psychologist. I do think that the term “educational psychologist” is open to a number of interpretations within our own profession but also outside the profession. I think we've been trying to reconstruct it from the 70's and we've spent a lot of time navel gazing frankly, fundamentally, my professional identity is as a psychologist that works with children and young people.” – EP6

EPs that did not have any experience of working in post-16 education had a similar view on their professional identity to the EPs that had worked in post-16 education. They emphasised that they were psychologists first, and one of the two EPs interviewed, emphasised that this was perhaps a topic that had been debated too much within Educational Psychology in general and felt that this was something that should already be established.

When asking EPs about how they thought their role would be different when working with post-16 providers and young people, both EPs in this part of phase 1 of the research thought that the main change would be working with an adult and they reflected upon how this would affect their role.

“But thinking about someone who is 16 and actively moving towards adulthood, they will be involved, the child or young person's voice, I think there is a... even more kind of.... I guess that part of it is, not more important that's the wrong word, but, but depending on the level of need

and the individual case the young person is moving towards adulthood and you have to be aware of their own decision-making particularly around outcomes, you know, as supposed to someone who's still very much under care of a parent or carer. So, from that perspective there will be a change in the role.” – EP5

The other EP interviewed, for this part of the phase one study, had a similar view of how the role would change as the young person moves closer to adulthood. But also emphasised the importance of understanding and learning about the structure around post-16 education, which she felt would be another important aspect of the role of an EP in post-16 education.

“I think it's probably just, considering what is most appropriate at that age. In terms of, there's becoming familiar with the legal situation and being familiar with what responsibilities providers have and the legal standing of young people and who makes decisions. It's sort of practical issues about who you're talking with and guiding decisions. It's something about becoming more familiar with the services; the schools, the support, the benefits, the government programmes.” – EP6

Similarly, to the EPs with experience of working in post-16 education, the EPs without this experience placed a particular focus on their previous roles, roles that they had had before training to become EPs. Both EPs in this part of phase one felt that their previous role had given them a good foundation to stand on in order to work well as EPs.

“I think it has helped in terms of having a reasonable, having had a fairly good grounding at least in the primary curriculum and the realities of teaching, which I think can sometimes be helpful in consideration. Not that you need to have that sort of grounding, but for myself I consider it to be... to inform my discussions and helps with that, feeling the empathy and reflecting upon what works.” – EP5

“I was quite glad that I had quite a lot of experience within the educational system at many different levels. ‘Cause actually I think it gives you an understanding of... I mean I agree with the change that you don’t need to be a teacher, but I think it gives you an understanding of how schools function and actually at different levels because a TA role is actually very different to a teacher role and all of the implications around that.” – EP6

Clearly, being an EP is as much about what you did before training to be one and how you use the skills you gained then. Those that had been teachers placed great emphasis on having been teachers and how that supported them to understand the system from the ‘inside’. Whereas those that had not been teachers placed emphasis on the advantage of it supporting them to think outside the box and not feel constrained by preconceived ideas of what can be accomplished by teachers. Drawing on previous knowledge was quite clearly something that all EPs in the study valued and continuously did many years after qualifying.

*Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16*

For the theme “EP role and identity” the main findings across both group of EPs was that they saw themselves as psychologists who worked with young people. Both groups also emphasised how their roles before training to become EPs were an integral part of their identity and all of the EPs used their previous experience in different ways to inform their current practice. When participants were asked about how their role had changed or how they anticipated it to change, all answers centred around transitions to adulthood; the young person that they worked being an adult or nearly an adult and the decision making that came with that. The dynamics being different to when you worked with a child that was still under the care of parents or carers was also mentioned as a potential factor for role extension.

The main difference between the two groups was that the EPs with experience of working in post-16 education were more explicit in that their role was to apply psychology. EPs without experience of working in post-16 education spoke more about the potential skills that they might need to use, for instance

becoming used to adult assessment methods, or learning about the legal context. As they had not worked within post-16 education they had perhaps not had to reflect as much on what their role was as those that had worked in the post-16 context, where they had to establish their role again.

## **5.2.2 Theme: Post-16**

### **5.2.2.1 Sub-theme: Differences between pre- and post-16 education**

#### *EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

When asked about the differences between pre- and post-16 education all but one EP emphasised that the difference between pre-16 education and post-16 education would not be a significant one in terms of what challenges that could potentially emerge. There were particular challenges that all four EPs had experienced before, such as the role of an EP not being understood.

“This really varies according to the individual setting, it varies massively anyway, schools can be like different countries, can’t they? I have had one experience where the SENCO of a post-16 college has been really on the ball and has a raft of support staff, understands what EHCPs are and early help and I have had an experience of another person in another setting who did not know the first thing about it, who somehow had fallen through the net and failed to attend the local authority training and there was really a job of work to be done there in terms of ensuring that basic rights were adhered to.” – EP4

There was a general feeling across all EPs, in this part of the phase one study, that post-16 providers had to be treated separately and individually, just like schools had to. Post-16 providers were not seen as special or different from other educational settings. Instead, attentiveness to particular settings and their individuality was emphasised. EP4 particularly showed that, just like in pre-16 education, certain places were more experienced and well trained and as such did not need much support, whereas others had fallen through the net and needed more support.

### *EPs without experience in post-16 education*

“People struggle to understand what our role is in pre-16 is, so I think, yes, if we are very much seen... I think that’s our role, possibly around ensuring that stakeholder or other professionals or educational settings are aware of our range of expertise because we work across those four areas of the code of practice.” – EP6

Just as the EPs with experience in post-16 education, EPs without that experience felt that as post-16 providers may have not had much contact with EPs before and therefore may not understand what an EP does. They therefore thought that one difference in the EP role in post-16 education would be to actually explain their role to post-16 educational providers. This was perhaps not something that was not uncommon in pre-16 education, however they felt that this would be even more prominent in post-16 education due to the relative inexperience of EPs within these settings.

### *Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16*

All EPs, those with and those without experience of working in post-16 education felt that the role was misunderstood by many and that a part of their role would be to explain the role to those they would work in partnership with.

#### **5.2.2.2 Sub-theme: Post-16 context**

##### *EPs with experience of post-16 education*

When asked about the post-16 context and whether or not this was supportive to EP practice all EPs, in this part of the phase one study, felt that services were disjointed for post-16 students. This made EP practice within this sector more challenging, and it was perceived to be more difficult for the young people to keep track of what services were involved with them.

“It is more disjointed actually and I’m not used to it. I’m sure that with experience it will become much more clear. But it is much more difficult to get the right people involved like I said earlier it is more disjointed. I don’t know what they all do and they don’t know what I do.” – EP1

The extract above also points to that some professionals involved with young people that are in post-16 education might have previously never met an EP and therefore might have different role expectations, which then might affect the EP role within those interactions.

All four EPs felt that unfamiliarity of a setting and how they chose to support young people could affect their role in terms of that they would be expected to support in a different way than in pre-16 education.

When examining what EPs found particularly challenging within post-16 education it seemed to be the unfamiliarity with the settings and the range of services that post-16 could offer. Keeping on top of post-16 and understanding the different providers seemed to be another challenge that EPs faced.

“It’s all new and I have to say I am learning on the job! When it comes down to it, having to do a fair bit of reading, talking to colleagues and CPD is really important, but there are times when I think ‘this is really difficult and I can’t do this on my own’ and so supervision and opportunities for good CPD are really important. But I wouldn’t say that EPs are not qualified to or are not the right people to take this forward. I think that we can, given the right environment. We really need to gather information and to actually look at what works in different contexts and the role of the EP as the scientist-practitioner and I like that idea.” – EP4

“Keeping abreast of what’s on offer to them and what is not on offer to them is really important if we’re actually going to jointly problem solve with people and provide this package.” – EP4

Two EPs also found it a challenge that support could not be offered equally to all and felt that if support was going to be offered to post-16 providers it should also be offered to universities. It was clear that EPs found it unethical that

some young people should get support whereas others should not, especially as the new EHC plans were meant to span to the age of 25.

“If we offer services to post-16 providers, perhaps we should offer services to the university as well? There is something inherently unfair about offering services to some but not to all, and different systems creating something akin to post-code lotteries. How can we then ensure that everyone’s needs are met?” – EP2

All EPs in this part of the phase one study agreed that offering their services to a wider age group, i.e. to post-16, was going to be an improvement and step towards services and support for young people with SEND becoming less disjointed. However, they felt, as demonstrated above, that not offering the same services to universities would only move the stumbling blocks for support that used to be between secondary schooling and post-16 provision to be between post-16 provision and university education.

While analysing and coding my transcripts, within the sub-theme of post-16 context a smaller sub-theme formed. I have chosen to label this sub-theme ‘tensions’ as there appeared to be many tensions surrounding post-16 work on many different levels within its context. These were financial tensions, tensions between different stakeholders, tensions between young people and their parents/carers and/or other key adults, and tension between professionals about who is best placed to do certain work.

“That creates a tension because all the professionals sitting around the table can see... I’m just thinking of a particular lad, that was not able to look after himself and when he was on his own he got into serious trouble. [...] everyone could see that what he wanted to do would not work. We sat at a meeting and he was saying I’m 18, I can do what I want, I am going to that. That’s a very difficult situation.” – EP1

“We have responsibilities to the young person in a way that is different to when we work with younger clients, because with a younger client we are

much more working with the parent, we do still work with the child and we are child-centred but I think that working with an adult, the responsibility is perhaps more focused on that young person and we need to ensure that we are meeting the needs of that young adult and carefully thinking about if a parent has an opposing view how to deal with that. This can become difficult depending on the young person's capacity." – EP4

The change in who the client is for the EPs clearly created, or at the very least, revealed tensions within the system that these young people might find themselves in. Understanding a young person's capacity to make their own decisions was clearly something that was at the heart of this tension and many questioned their own ability to judge that;

"I have a guide to the mental capacity act on my desk and at the moment it is something I have thought about, the fine line between representing the aspirations of the young person and the parents." – EP4

"Yes, I know about the Mental Capacity Act, but not in detail. I have had to look it up from time to time." – EP2

"Ehm, I don't know much about it [Mental Capacity Act]. But it was talked about at our meeting this morning as an area of tension really. As a result of that, I will have to learn more about it. I was at a meeting around a new SEND degree [at a local university] and they were looking at what they needed to teach, and the Mental Capacity Act was one of them, I think it is because professionals have a lack of understanding around it." – EP1

#### *EPs without experience in post-16 education*

Similarly, to the EPs with experience of working in post-16 education, EPs without this experience commented on not being familiar with the different systems surrounding post-16 education and that this might change their role in either a positive or negative way depending on how the settings already support their young people.



“But in post-16 you’d work with a setup that you might not be as familiar with and I suppose that could affect your role in terms of in the way that they support young people...” – EP5

The EPs also commented upon the different tensions that could arise between young people wanting to make their own decision and their parents/carers/other adults wanting to make the decisions for them. They reflected upon what their role within this would be and similarly to the EPs with experience of working post-16 education, they thought about how to balance this and whether this might become part of their role.

“It could become interesting if the outcomes wanted by the young person were different to the ones wanted by a parent, I suppose that that could be more challenging at post-16. You know, whose success criteria are we going by? It might be that there are different expectations of a young person by different people. We all judge what a good outcome is in pre-16 education about engagement and progress in your core subjects, but what is a good outcome in post-16? Once you talk about life skills and making a positive contribution to society, those kind of things, it’s a different... What are the priorities we are using? Whose priority is it? And do they match? ‘Cause if they don’t match, you know, working your way through that could be interesting.” – EP5

There were also references made to how young people were taught to make their own decision and whether they were prepared for this. One EP in this part of the phase one study referred back to an example that she had heard about from another EP who had had some experience of working with a young man in post-16 education. Both EPs in this part of the study reflected upon whether or not it would be part of their role to support young people to develop their decision-making skills.

“I’ve also had conversations with people about young people where all decisions have always been made for them and suddenly they reach an age

where they can make their own decisions, that's a lot of all in one go if they're not used to it. I think that was what the medication case was like [from previous example]. They had never had control and suddenly they did get to have some control, and actually that was quite traumatic for them when they had to make decisions. There are conversations to be had about making a gradual increase in autonomy for young people that's appropriate, giving them a sense of appropriate control. Managing that. But I think that could be really complex, because the speed needs to be kind of negotiated with parents, health professionals and the young person." – EP5

*Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16*

While the EPs with experience of working in post-16 education mentioned a disjointed service, the EPs without such experience were more concerned with how young people were taught to make decisions. This might be because EPs who had worked in post-16 education had also experienced the disjointed services, whereas EPs without had not and as such did not know about it. All EPs across the two groups were concerned about being unfamiliar with the post-16 settings and the different tensions that could occur between young people/adults and parents/carers or other professionals.

**5.2.3 Theme: Changes**

*EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

All four EPs felt that the change to working with post-16 providers was one for the better. Two EPs pointed out that they had looked at literature from other parts of the country and had been advocating for working in a similar way and three EPs felt that 25 years of age was a better cut off point than 19, as by this time most interventions should have supported that young person to a successful transition to adulthood.

"Now when the work goes to 25, well you're definitely an adult when you are 25 so that's a better cut off point for educational psychologists, I always found it odd that we would abandon children at a certain age." – EP1

“I have been reading the literature coming from Scotland and how they work in the post-16 area and I was advocating for that we should be doing more of that.” – EP3

Three EPs also welcomed the change for different reasons. They felt that it seemed to join up the system in other areas. For instance, they felt it allowed them to monitor vulnerable young people that were placed outside of the LA and that other young people felt that they had an additional professional who they could discuss their needs and support with.

“The other thing is that the young people themselves think that it has been an advantage to them to actually have someone that they can talk to and discuss their needs, discuss their aspirations with someone who can, and sometimes I think that can be the EP, someone who can be an advocate for them in terms of ensuring that the work around them is person centred.” – EP4

“...there are new possibilities to work across ‘borders’ and linking in with other agencies.” – EP3

#### *EPs without experience of working in post-16 education*

The EPs in this part of phase one also alluded to more joined up work, for instance if a young person needed long term input from the EPS, following them up to post-16 education would be a change for the better. There was also a feeling that these young people’s participation would not be as tokenistic if they were regarded as adults, this really highlighted a shift from pre-16 education to post-16 education that EPs without experience of doing EP work within the post-16 sector considered.

“I guess it depends, I mean all children will have to remain in education until 18, you know perhaps if it is an on-going piece of work around, understanding that person’s needs as they get older. I think there’s a culture of perhaps, rather than seeing them as a child I think there is sort of a culture that they are treated as young adults. Maybe that might mean that it

won't be as tokenistic in terms of the levels of participation for that young person and that they actually are the client.” – EP6

*Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16*

All EPs, both those with and without experience in post-16 education felt that the change to working with young people up to the age of 25 was a change for the better in terms of work being more joined up, and young people who needed long term support would get better quality support. EPs with some experience of working in post-16 education also mentioned further strategic benefits, such as being able to monitor young people that were placed on courses outside of the LA. This was something that those without the experience of working in post-16 had not thought of, perhaps because they did not have this insight into the work and were thinking about more day-to-day impact of the change.

**5.2.3.1 Sub-theme: Changing practice**

*EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

As mentioned previously, all but one EP that were interviewed initially said that the move to post-16 would not influence their practice at all, that their practice would be exactly the same as it always has been. They emphasised that their practice always was reflective and that it changed depending on a young person's circumstances rather than just changing because this was a new age range. However, as mentioned above, with further questioning and time for reflection EPs were able to note different things about their practice that would change. These will be explored further in this section.

“My practice? No, not at all.” – EP2

“No, not really. On one level it is the same level, it is still what is the best interest [of the child]” – EP1

As mentioned, further questions and allowing time for reflection most EPs recognised that the move to working with post-16 education had influence their practice to some degree.

“But it [my practice] must do [change]. Yeah, you will need to do more of a negotiation. You have to work with their agenda because what they [young people] decide to do is what they do.” – EP1

“I suppose it has broadened my practice. I like to learn new things all the time and with a slightly older population you meet other professionals and you learn other things.” – EP2

“I suppose some of this influences my practice, like today I went in to do a review for a year 9 student and we were actually very much thinking about that these are the decisions we should be making and actually we are trying to give them more say than perhaps we would have done before.” – EP3

As seen in the three extracts above, EPs felt that they had to give the young person more of a say and negotiate directly with them as they were deemed to have that capacity, more than in pre-16 education. The extension to working in post-16 seems to have shifted the focus from providing services for children and young people, to working out services with them to higher degree than. One could argue that this is something that happens in pre-16 education as well and that EPs are working in a child-centred way, which was also referenced by the EPs in this study, however the key difference here was that the EPs were not doing as much work, if any, with the young person’s parents/carers.

#### *EPs without experience of working in post-16 education*

The EPs interviewed in this part of the phase 1 study did not necessarily feel that their practice would change, apart from having to adapt to new systems and learning about the practical aspects of the work. But there was also an excitement about certain work potentially being commissioned and working in new and innovative ways with post-16 providers from one of the EPs without such experience.

“In the end, I think a lot of our work is to encourage people’s voice and young people post-16, depending on their needs we might need to helping

them accessing their voice, supporting parents. Thinking through the different options. The challenge is my lack of familiarity of the practical aspects, but not the psychological aspects, I don't necessarily see those as very different. Obviously, the young person's voice might be stronger at that time, but you're still trying to balance the needs about working towards positive outcomes, which is our role no matter what the age of the person.”- EP5

“There is always the scope, particularly I know, work around staff's understanding around SEMH, so staff's understanding, which can be very limited. So, there's huge scope for working alongside staff or training, training for all sorts, of delivering interventions.” – EP6

#### *Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16 education*

EPs with experience of working in post-16 education were able to reflect upon how their practice had changed when working with post-16 students and educators, even though they initially did not feel that it had changed. They all felt that their practice had broadened because of the new set of professionals that they all had to work with, working closer with the young person/adult. EPs without this experience did not necessarily feel anything would change, but rather adapt. However, one of the EPs without experience was excited about supporting post-16 providers in a way that had not been possible before, whereas two of the EPs with experience were concerned that if post-16 providers did not buy in services from them there would not be scope for work other than statutory assessment. This is perhaps reflective of that they had more experience and knew how difficult it was to get post-16 providers to buy in services from them.

#### **5.2.3.2 Sub-theme: Changing systems in post-16**

##### *EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

Although some practices within post-16 were essentially not different to those in pre-16, there was more of that work that had to be delivered and the work had to be more intense.

“We have also been able to provide advice to settings and who might have bought in psychology services for specific things like access arrangements, but who clearly benefited from work when consulting with them on other areas and on other psychological aspects related to education. So, for example how do they support a young person on the autistic spectrum, do they really understand how to problem solve from an autistic perspective? So that is working at the next level up in terms of helping providers developing skills.” – EP4

“Hopefully that focus will be shifting, but I don’t know because these cases can be quite insular, their support is not part of the local authorities. We might be saying you need to come to this briefing meeting, that briefing meeting. Some of them are increasingly parts of a chain, but some are still small providers, especially the ones that are more social care led and have an educational element. So that’s another great opportunity and hopefully it will all come together and we can identify what the priorities are.” – EP3

The type of work described in the above excerpt clearly happens in pre-16 education as well, but when interviewing EPs about this it seemed that this type of work was more prominent and something that EPs were keen to work on. Changing post-16 providers’ perspectives on their systems and changing the systems around post-16 provision, in general, was perceived as an important aspect to change for EPs. One part of the systems that had changed, that EPs felt was a good change was the EHCP process.

“I think the EHC plan system has worked well actually, a lot of people engage well with it. I’ve done a couple which have involved the providers and the ones I have been involved in have had good multiagency approaches, getting the right people around the table and people have engaged.” – EP3

*EPs without experience of working in post-16 education*

Interestingly, EPs without experience in post-16 education did not comment or mention changing systems in post-16 provision. This might have been because they might have not been sure of what systems already are in place and why they might need changing or adapting. Clearly, having an insight and experience supports with this thinking.

**5.2.4 Theme: Work in post-16 previous to 2014 policy change**

*EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

EPs who had worked as EPs for more than 5 years, i.e. all EPs with experience of EP work in post-16 education, emphasised that they had had an opportunity to work with post-16 students before the official change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015). One had a very broad experience, but most had only had a relatively narrow experience that had somehow been linked to their role in pre-16 education.

“I’ve always had a secondary school so I have always potentially worked with sixth formers. It has not been a great area of our work, because generally there have not been many with SEN that have gone on to sixth form.” – EP1

“I have mainly worked with special needs colleges, so I don’t have much experience how other providers work.” – EP2

“Well, we’ve always had sixth forms and one of the schools that I have worked with long term on and off, at one point they bought in a lot of our time and I ended up working a lot in the sixth form. So, that was basically a lot of individual work with students that had exam anxiety and students with literacy processing difficulties, which had not come to light until their A-level. I also worked on a lot of pastoral support with the tutors, around how to be a tutor and how to tutor young people who are in that transition to adulthood.” – EP3



As can be seen from the examples above, three of the four EPs with experience had only worked in a limited fashion with post-16, the expansion into this educational sector will, therefore, call upon different skills to be used, which were mentioned when discussing what implications this change had had. These discussions are presented in the next theme.

#### *EPs without experience of working in post-16 education*

As both EPs in this part of the phase 1 study had not had any experience of working as EPs in post-16 education, none of their answers were relevant to this theme. This may have been due to that they were both relatively recently qualified and as such their work had been limited to pre-16 education.

### **5.2.5 Theme: Improving EPS**

#### *EPs with experience of working in post-16 education*

All EPs that were interviewed, in this part of the phase 1 research, were aware of how they wanted to improve their own practice, but also how to improve the EPS in general. Many felt that the real gap was in understanding the systems that might come into place for young people in post-16. For instance, those that had made a transition between children/adolescent services to adult services, such as adult mental health and or social care support. It was recognised that even though the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2015) had extended support for young people up to the age of 25, other services still finished at the age of 18 and hence little was known about the services that came into place after 18.

“The challenge is also to expand our knowledge, but I haven’t found that difficult over the last few years. It’s about networking, talking to people, being curious, finding out about the local offer, which has published information and there is emerging post-16 relevant information there too now. And certainly the ‘preparing for adulthood’ resources online.” – EP3

“I think that there are new responsibilities due to the new age range, so we have to ensure that we have the new knowledge to work with that age range. There are also CPD implications.” – EP4

There were various continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities that all EPs in this part of the phase one study wanted, but many felt the need to expand their knowledge on new services that they now would have to work with, as mentioned above. But in particular many wanted to evaluate how the work with post-16 so far had worked and what the role of the EP had been in that work and how the EPS could develop from there. Others wanted to understand the legal perspectives that surrounded post-16 work.

“I’d like to write a position paper for myself or for the service and look at where are we now with post-16. What have we learnt over the past few years? What are the cases we have been involved with and why those? What has the role of the EP actually been? What are the systemic implications at a college/setting level or perhaps even the world of work? What are the implications for the local authority in terms of planning for these young people and supporting those settings? The EP role would weave through that in each of those areas. But with reduced time and funding for EP services, we might need to consider core and traded service delivery, in fact, we would need to.” – EP4

“Find out about the Autism Act! Legislation really and all the services that are out there. There’s a whole raft of services that are out there, that I don’t know about. Because it is such a small area of work, you’re never going to become as fluent with it as the things you do every day and when you come back to it it’s probably changed again.” – EP1

As can be seen from the excerpt from EP1, five EPs felt that post-16 work changed rapidly and hence thorough CPD work was felt to be necessary in order to keep up with this work and not to lose valuable skills, such as being able to apply key legislation to their work and understand the effects it had, as well as having a working knowledge of the different provisions, systems and other key knowledge around post-16 education, that were deemed important for this part of their work.

*EPs without experience of working in post-16 education*

The EPs who had no experience of working in post-16 education also wanted to improve their skills and were aware of what type of CPD they would like. Both EPs wanted more knowledge and understanding around how different systems around a young person worked, such as housing, mental health services, and so on. They also wanted to know more about how the Mental Capacity Act would impact on their work and if and how they might be expected to apply it to their clients.

“I think probably we may need to do some work around understanding the processes around housing all those different areas, because some of these young people might fall between the gap of for instance CAMHS and adult mental health, that sort of thing. Those two systems themselves work, it seems, in isolation, so I think that is a challenge for us.” – EP5

“I think one of the things that we need to look at are things around the mental capacity act, things about Gillick competencies, Fraser competencies, because traditionally you see that more in line with health and CAMHS type roles, but there are issues around that.” – EP6

#### *Summary of findings across EPs with and without experience in post-16 education*

As can be seen from the excerpts for this theme, both EPs with and without experience wanted similar CPD and learning opportunities to improve their practise in post-16 education. This was mainly about the legal side of the work, such as understanding the Mental Capacity Act. Those EPs with experience in post-16 education wanted more of an overview of the work that had currently been done in post-16 in order to understand how they could go from there to improve their own and the EPS’s practice. This may be because the EPs who did mention an overview of the work across the EPS were senior EPs and therefore had a more strategic role in general and might therefore have been used to thinking across the service rather than just for themselves.

### *5.3 Dissemination of results*

All EPs in this study had the opportunity to look at their transcripts as well as the initial notes. Meanings and interpretations were discussed in order to ensure that I had not interpreted what they wanted to convey incorrectly. Their views were noted and initial notes were amended if needed. The findings were later presented at a team day for the local EPS in the form of a presentation. The presentation can be found in Appendix 13.

### *5.4 Discussion*

The following discussion outlines some of the key findings from the research and answers the research questions for this phase of the research. The sections below will each answer the research questions I asked in phase one of this research. The findings will be discussed with the psychological theories, presented in Chapter 2, as frameworks and in light of the literature presented therein.

#### ***5.3.1 Research Question: How do EPs perceive their professional identity and role?***

As described and discussed in Chapter 2, SIT (Social Identity Theory) Tajfel (1978, 1981), Tajfel and Turner (1985) and Hogg (2016) suggest that our social identities are a system that provides us, as humans, a systematic means of identifying others and lets us define ourselves within the social environment. These identities are formed within the social environment (Hogg, 2016) and provide us with answers to the questions “Who am I in this environment?” and lets us know whether we belong to a certain social group. I therefore argued, in Chapter 2, that both the post-16 environment and the local EPS would be social environments that the EP role would develop in.

All EPs in this study saw their professional identity as being psychologists who use psychology to bring about understanding and change to systems for the benefit of children and young people. All EPs saw themselves as psychologists first and hence this became intertwined with the role that they had, which they described as applying psychology to specific situations, to build community, and to support key adults’ understanding of what is happening for children and

young people psychologically. They all spoke about how they used systemic and community psychology, seeing the systems around children and young people and wanting to change them. This would indicate that the environment EPs in this study were in, had allowed them to see themselves as psychologists first, and in particular as community and systems psychologists i.e. people who use and apply psychology within communities and systems. This was interesting as they did not put emphasis on the educational part of their role title, despite working in educational settings. As mentioned, the way EPs in this study saw their identity and the way in which they discussed it, became intertwined with their role. Their description of their identity, and subsequently their role supports the notion that the role of the EPs is defined in the second way Norwich (2006) suggests; by applying a field of knowledge or discipline to broadly defined ends. This is in some contradiction to the way the role is described by both the BPS (2013) and the AEP (2016). These descriptions do not mention the systemic work nor the psychology that EPs use, and spoke about in my interviews, and instead mention certain children, e.g. those with learning disabilities, and certain skills, e.g. using assessments, monitoring and evaluation, to describe the role, which is the first way of defining a role; to look at what specific service aims a particular profession has.

The difference between the descriptions EPs themselves used and that of professional organisations would suggest that there might be some “role strain” (Boardman & Bozeman, 2007, Edwards, 2014). As described in Chapter 2, “role strain” occurs when your own expectations of your role are different to that of others’ expectations. It will therefore be important to explore how post-16 providers perceive the EP-role, and this will be further explored in Chapter 6.

The findings from this phase of my research would suggest that the EP role has been defined by wrongly using the first way to define a role and hence this has continued to create debate about what an EP does and how this is different from other similar professions, such as advisory teachers and SENCos (Ashton & Roberts, 2006). Some of what EPs do is inherent to them and their role, but the role is not defined by what EPs do, rather by what area of knowledge they

apply and it is applied to a broadly defined end. This may create difficulties, as Norwich (2006) himself has argued, and this will be discussed in the overall discussion. This is in stark contrast to Boyle & Lauchlan's (2009) argument, who suggested that EPs no longer apply psychology in their work. It is clear that EPs in this study drew on many psychological theories that they applied to improve the outcomes for CYP. It is also interesting to note that the EPs had such strong professional identities. This was despite other professionals not always attributing the same skills and role aspects to them as they did to themselves, and hence is in contrast to Ibarra's (1999) and Ashforth & Mael's (1989) argument that one has to have a similar view of one's role to that of people one works with.

It was also interesting to note that even though EPs saw themselves as psychologists first they had all integrated their previous professional experiences into their identity. They felt that these previous experiences helped them to understand and support educational establishments in different ways. As such this broad, yet specific in terms of it being around education, experience that EPs have, and perhaps other groups within psychology do not, is important when it comes to understanding their identity and what makes EPs different to other psychologists.

***5.3.2 Research Question: How has the EPs' professional role or identity developed/changed when working in post-16?/How do EPs believe their professional role or identity will develop/change when they start working in post-16 education?***

Although most of the EPs had only worked with post-16 education providers and students for a relatively short period of time, they all felt that their identity had not changed. Those who had not yet started working in post-16 did not anticipate any future changes in their professional identity. All EPs were also adamant that their professional identity should not change as the result of working with a new age group. The reason for EPs feeling that their professional identity should not change may be due to their current professional identity which, despite working in post-16 education, would still

answer the question, “Who am I in this environment?”, as argued by Hogg (2016). SIT is therefore well suited to explain how EPs can continue to keep the same professional identity in a new context (Hogg, 2016).

Initially when asking EPs about if they thought that their role would change, most said that it would not. However, when asking further questions, they all agreed that they had developed a broader practice and had had to look up other aspects that affected young people in the 16-25 age range than previously. This would indicate that the role is not changing but is rather becoming broader and EPs’ skills will have to be extended rather than having to acquire new skills, which Atkinson et al. (2015) argue. All EPs felt that they mainly needed an increased awareness around legislation that applied to post-16 education and a familiarity with assessment methods that were appropriate to those in post-16 education. Having worked, mainly with teachers, TAs, SENCOs and parents/carers they all felt that they had acquired skills to work with those over the age of 16 and as such did not need to incorporate this into their own role. The view that the role would have to be broadened, and the way EPs spoke about it, indicated that they all prepared for some “role strain” (Boardman & Bozeman, 2007 and Edward, 2014) i.e. they thought about what post-16 educational providers wanted from them and attempted to think about what skills they might need to develop in order to meet these needs. This might have been due to previous experiences from working in pre-16 educational settings, which it was alluded to.

EPs mentioned that their role would perhaps be more of a mediator between different stakeholders and that they would have to work more directly with the young person. This means that perhaps EPs will have a more distinctive role in post-16, as Norwich (2005) argues, but less of an impact upon the systems around the young person.

### ***5.3.3 Research Question: How confident are EPs with and without experience in post-16 education in using skills necessary for such work (self-efficacy levels)?***

As expected, EPs with experience of working within post-16, both before the 2014 change in policy and after it, were more confident that they had the skills to work in post-16 education. Those that had limited or no experience of working in post-16 education were less confident, but at the same time confident that they knew where to seek support from and find out more information if they needed it. In general, those who had worked as EPs for longer were more confident than those who had worked as EPs for a shorter period. This is in agreement with the literature on self-efficacy (e.g. Stajkovic & Luthans, 1998; Zimmerman, 2000; Holzberger, Philipp & Kunter, 2013).

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1995) looks at two parts; outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. Outcome expectations are what one believes is important in order to succeed with a task and efficacy expectations are whether or not one feels confident in their ability to perform what one believes is important for the success of the task. The interviews with EPs would suggest that they believe that understanding the young person in post-16 education and creating positive outcomes, through the use of psychology is important. The findings from the interviews also suggested that the EPs felt confident that they had the skills to create positive outcomes, despite needing some more training on certain aspects. I would argue that this is positive because when self-efficacy is slightly higher than ability, people are likely to take on challenging tasks and gain more experience and continue to develop their skills (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). The experienced EPs interviewed had a self-efficacy level just above their ability, as they knew that working in post-16 education would be different than their previous work in post-16, but they still felt as if they could do it. Similarly, those with no experience in post-16 felt confident that they would extend their skills that they thought they needed and they felt that they knew where to get support in order to do that.



## 6. Phase Two

### *6.1 Methods*

#### **6.1.2 Participants**

The participants in this study consisted of representatives from three different post-16 educational establishments. They were considered to be representatives as they had been chosen by their employer, or I had been directed to interview them as they were seen to be the ones most likely to be able to answer my questions. All of the interviewees, and the establishments they worked, for could potentially be part of working directly in partnership with EPs, e.g. through consultations or in other meetings, such as planning meetings, with EPs. They were identified through an initial e-mail that was sent out to all local post-16 providers in the local area. The e-mail outlined the study and what a potential interview might entail, as well as the broader aims of the study. This generated an initial two replies with interested, potential, participants; these were then sent an information sheet and consent form (see Appendix 2). One of the initial participants was still interested after having read the information sheet and consent form. The second potential participant had to decline due to unforeseen change in workload and was therefore not able to schedule a date for an interview.

Another provider was identified as a potential participant after an EP from the LA had visited them when a local student had been allocated a place there. This provider was out of area, but still within commuting distance for local post-16 students. A phone conversation was held with the provider outlining the aims of the study and what a potential interview might entail. They were still interested after this and agreed to book a date for an interview.

A third provider was later recruited through sending another e-mail to post-16 providers that had just become established within the LA. Similarly, to the previous procedure, an initial e-mail was sent out describing the study and interested potential participants were then sent the information and consent

form. One provider was still interested after this and a time was booked in for an interview.

A total of three staff from different post-16 providers agreed to participate. There were therefore three participants, one from each provider. Two providers were well-established larger colleges and one was a smaller, specialist provider.

**Table 6.** *Characteristics of participants in phase 2*

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Additional qualifications/experience</b>
1	Female	Learning Support Manager/SENCo.	BSc Disability BSc Social Policy
2	Female	Lecturer in health & social care, early years, and children and young people's work force.	BA Education & Training
3	Female	Director post-16 educational provision (Community Interest Company).	BA Education Responsible for courses at job centre

### **6.1.3 Procedure**

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted with the three interviewees from the different providers over a period during October 2016 to January 2017.

The semi-structured interviews were developed by looking at the specific research questions for phase two and using them as starting points to develop specific interview questions. The research questions lead to three main subjects to be researched; strengths, challenges, and support. These subjects were established from the initial literature review where the certain strengths, challenges and areas of support were identified, however there was limited research and literature on how those working in post-16 education perceive these themselves. The subjects were then expanded upon to formulate specific interview questions using Tomlinson's hierarchical framework (Tomlinson, 1989) and determined the interview schedule. This can be seen in Appendix 4.

The interview schedule was then piloted with two previous post-16 lecturers. During the piloting, it was established that some questions needed to be changed. They were then changed in order to be better understood by the interviewees. The interview schedule pre-piloting can be seen in Appendix 6. The final interview schedule can be seen in Appendix 7. Questions that were changed, added or removed are marked in red.

#### *Interview procedure*

All participants were invited to choose a venue where they felt most comfortable being interviewed, they were reminded that it was important that the space was confidential. All participants in phase two of the study chose to be interviewed at their place of work and had chosen a small office where they could be interviewed without being disturbed. Participants were then presented with the information sheet and consent form again and they were invited to ask any questions that they might have. Their attention was then drawn to their participant number and it was explained to them that if they wished to be withdrawn from the study, they could do so by contacting myself via e-mail or telephone and reporting their participant number. Participants were made aware that if they did withdraw their data, this would not affect them adversely in any way. They were also reminded that they were going to be recorded and if they wished not to be that this was okay and that I would write their answers down instead. All participants agreed to be recorded.

#### **6.1.4 Data collection and analysis**

All interviews were recorded using a digital Dictaphone and each recording was saved with the participant's participant number. Data was also collected during the interview by writing keywords and meanings down on the interview schedule. Particular emphasis on certain words or sentences were also noted. The audio recordings were then listened to once, then listened to again while transcribing the qualitative data into a MS Word document. Once transcribed, the document was read through while listening to the audio file again and any typos or missed out content was added. No additional anomalies, such as words that were difficult to hear, were noted.

The following table shows a timeline of the development of the interview schedules, data collection as well as the data analysis. It also contains a column showing some of my thinking regarding the different actions. These comments have been taken from my reflective research diary which was kept during all stages of the research.

**Table 7.** *Timeline of research for phase 2*

<b>Month</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Comment from reflective research diary</b>
<i>February</i>	17 <sup>th</sup>	Starting to develop interview schedules as described in chapter 6, section 1.3.	While developing these interview schedules I was conscious of wanting to ask questions related to the literature presented in the literature review. I therefore used hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989) as I therefore could anchor questions to areas from the literature, especially from the research on educational provision in post-16 educational establishments (e.g. Carroll, 2015).
	25 <sup>th</sup>	Ethical approval was granted.	
<i>September</i>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	Information sheet was sent out to potential participants in post-16 education.	I wanted as many different types of post-16 educational establishments to be part of my interview in order to get a wide range of experiences and understand different types of provisions. I therefore sent the

			information sheets out to all providers in the LA I was working in and that were registered with OfSted.
	30 <sup>th</sup>	One member of staff from a post-16 provider was recruited.	I reflected over who this participant was, which type of post-16 educational setting they were from and which other types of providers I might need in order to get the different types of post-16 providers I wanted in my study.
<i>October</i>	7 <sup>th</sup>	The interview schedule was piloted with one person who previously was a lecturer in a FE college.	Having completed the interview schedules I wanted to make sure that the questions would be well understood by potential participants, as this was recommended by several authors on the subject (Thomas, 2013; Robson, 2011; Cottrell, 2015). Piloting it with a person who had experience of the post-16 educational environment therefore seemed like a good way forward. This ensured that the questions were relevant to the sector and would be well understood by participants. Suggestions from the participant in this pilot

			<p>were incorporated into the interview schedule and discussed with my supervisors.</p> <p>Reflecting upon what type of data I wanted to gather I completed the pilot and discussed it, and the interview schedule in general, with my supervisors to ensure that my methods would have a good chance of providing the type of data that I wanted to gather (Cottrell, 2015). Despite this, I did not want to expect that the data collection would work out just as I had planned (Robson, 2011) and was aware that participants may cancel their interview appointments with me, be ill or simply choose to withdraw.</p>
	14 <sup>th</sup>	First interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign. This was important as it meant that I would follow the ethical guidelines by the BPS and my university.

			As this was the first interview with a professional working within the field of post-16 education I listened through the transcript with particular interest in what meanings I felt were conveyed through it. These were noted so that it could later be compared with the meanings from the other interviews.
	20 <sup>th</sup>	First interview transcribed.	Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 96) state that in order to meet the criteria for good Thematic Analysis one should make sure that “the data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.” Reflecting upon this I therefore made sure that I listened to the recording before I transcribed it, once transcribed I then listened to it again while reading the transcript.
<i>November</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Second interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign. This was important as it meant that I would follow the ethical

			<p>guidelines by the BPS and my university.</p> <p>Similarly, to the first interview, I listened through the transcript with particular interest in what meanings I felt were conveyed through it. These were noted so that it could later be compared with the meanings from the previous interview. I kept in mind my own status while completed the interview and reflected upon whether there may have been any power dynamics playing a role. I attempted to follow the instructions in Cottrell's (2015) guide on how to conduct face-to-face interview in order to counter such imbalances. I did for instance ensure that I was not making certain facial expression or nod too much which would make the participant think that certain answers were better than others and as such would not answer truthfully.</p> <p>These reflections and considerations were thought</p>
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			of for the other interviews as well, however I reflected upon this more with this participant as I assumed that they would often come to be criticised if student were not making certain progress and as such some of the questions could have been sensitive if not delivered sensitively.
	18 <sup>th</sup>	Second interview transcribed.	Again, I wanted to make sure that “the data [had] been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts [had] been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp. 96). Reflecting upon this I therefore made sure that I, again, listened to the recording before I transcribed it, once transcribed I then listened to it again while reading the transcript. During this interview, all recordings were clear and no words or parts of the interview were hard to hear or understand.
	19 <sup>th</sup>	The first two interviews were coded.	I wanted to immerse myself with the data and as such I read through the data sets for the interviews and highlighted parts that I

			<p>thought were of importance and particularly described and answered the questions I was asking in my interviews. These initial highlighted parts were then looked and thought about what they were trying to say, this was then coded. I came back to my participants and asked whether the codes were fair and representative of what they were conveying. Some codes were therefore amended as participants explained what they meant.</p>
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<i>December</i>	1 <sup>st</sup>	More providers contacted.	At this point I felt that I needed more providers as the subject was not exhausted. The codes the first two interviews had generated could potentially create themes, but I felt that as there were only participants and only two types of post-16 educational settings represented this would only give me a very limited view of what post-16 educational establishments would need/want from EPs. I therefore sent out another e-mail to post-16 providers.
	9 <sup>th</sup>	Another participant recruited.	Reflecting on this the participant was from a smaller, specialist post-16 educational provision and I felt that this would be complementary to the participants that I already had interviewed. A date for a time after the new year was booked in for interview.
<i>January</i>	6 <sup>th</sup>	Third interview completed.	Participant reminded of the purpose of the study and given consent form to read through and sign. This was important as it meant that I would follow the ethical

			<p>guidelines by the BPS and my university.</p> <p>As with the first two interviews, I listened through the transcript with particular interest in what meanings I felt were conveyed through it. These were noted so that it could later be compared with the meanings from the other interviews and something later themes could be compared to as well.</p>
	10th	Third interview transcribed.	<p>As with the first two interviews and the interviews in phase 1 of the research I wanted to make sure that “the data [had] been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts [had] been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.” (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006, pp. 96). Reflecting upon this I therefore made sure that I, again, listened to the recording before I transcribed it, once transcribed I then listened to it again while reading the transcript.</p>
	13 <sup>th</sup>	Exploring ontology and epistemology in	<p>At this point in time, I wanted to pick the most appropriate</p>

		conjunction with different approaches to qualitative analysis.	method for analysis that would be coherent with my ontology and epistemology, as well as be appropriate to the research aims and questions. Which method was used and why can be seen in chapter 6, section 1.4.
	16 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion held with research supervisors regarding codes that were sent to them previously (for phase 1), as well as for the codes that were done for interviews from phase 2 of the research. All agreed with the codes overall, some were discussed and amended.	Braun & Clarke (2006, pp. 96) suggest that ‘themes [should] have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.’ I therefore decided to again take the amended codes back to the participants before checking back with the original data sets. The participants agreed with the codes overall, but did not feel that all of them conveyed what they meant in their interviews. The codes were therefore amended slightly. The themes were then amended to reflect the amended codes.
<i>February</i>	23 <sup>rd</sup>	Reading transcripts again. All interviews with post-16 providers have been transcribed and coded.	As I was coding I reflected upon what I thought was coming out in the interviews and what particularly struck me was how two of the providers, those in more

			<p>established settings, were particularly constrained by screening tools and official diagnoses. They often referred to how they were not able to do anything if a screening tool showed a potential difficulty in an area, but they did not have the capacity or budget to send the young person to get an official diagnosis.</p>
<i>March</i>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	<p>Started to theme codes from interviews with the three providers as I had not been successful in gaining any more participants for the study.</p>	<p>At this point I was aware that Braun &amp; Clarke (2006, pp. 96) emphasised that the ‘themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive’ and I therefore sent my codes to my supervisors and one colleague in order for to make sure that I was not coding ‘a few vivid examples’ (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006, pp. 96) that I then generated themes from.</p> <p>I was also aware of that I only had three participants, however at this point I felt that I was not able to get any</p>

			<p>more themes when the third interview was coded, and I felt that I had reached a point of ‘saturation’ (Glaser &amp; Strauss, 1967) in the data. I decided to continue to look for more participants, however if no more were found before the end of March I had to continue with the analysis due to the time constraints of the study (Cottrell, 2015).</p>
	24 <sup>th</sup>	Discussion held with supervisor.	<p>Discussed with research supervisor the codes and themes that I had sent in order to meet the above explained criteria from Braun &amp; Clarke (2006, pp. 96). This supported me to reflect over certain aspects of the interview that I had neglected and these parts were therefore coded as well and later themed.</p>
<i>April</i>	27 <sup>th</sup>	No more post-16 providers had contacted me with interest in the study, despite having contacted providers in other authorities as well.	<p>I again reflected upon this in terms of whether my data would be ‘enough’. However, as I had a selection of different types of post-16 providers and as no new themes could be made with the third interview data I</p>

			decided to stop my data collection there.
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Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data collected, as it has been argued to be a flexible method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Other methods, such as conversation analysis (e.g. Hutchby & Wooffitt, 1998) and interpretative phenomenological analysis (e.g. Smith & Osborn, 2003), are both fairly rigid in their applications and analysis has to be done in a specific way. Thematic analysis is also free of theoretical paradigms and therefore provides a flexible research tool (Braun & Clarke, 2006), meaning that it can be used with research of different ontological and epistemological stances. However, the approach is not so flexible that it can be done in any way one would like. It does have guidelines on how it is performed; allowing the researcher to be flexible, but guided in their analysis, ensuring that the research is robust (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis has also been specifically developed for psychology research. The approach is therefore useful in this piece of research, as I have chosen to position it within the ontology of interpretivism and epistemology of social constructionism, as well as being based on psychological theory. Braun & Clarke (2006) argue that thematic analysis puts and emphasis on the active part the researcher takes in identifying the themes, which ones are selected and reported to the reader. Hence, this particularly fits with the ontology of interpretivism as it assumes that the researcher, i.e. me, is a participant in their own research and the information gathered is understood and interpreted by me, as such the research findings cannot exist independently of me (Thomas, 2013).

Thematic analysis is a way of 'identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, pp 79), and as I wanted to find patterns across my data, I therefore selected it over other theme-based approaches, such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) or Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994). Grounded Theory (Glaser & Straus, 1967) looks to generate a theory from the data, and even though it also looked at finding themes and patterns, I did not aim to generate a new theory, and as such decided against it. Phenomenology (Moustakas, 1994; Robson, 2011)



looks to reveal and convey deep insight and understanding of concealed meanings of everyday life, lived experiences. Again, my aim was not to reveal insights of concealed meanings, but rather highlight and bring forward meanings and understandings of how those working in different types of post-16 educational provisions perceive their own needs within those provisions. My aim was also to understand what support they perceive themselves to be in need of in the future, and this is therefore not a lived experience yet. Hence, I decided against using phenomenology in this part of the research.

As mentioned, Braun & Clarke’s (2006) approach to thematic analysis was chosen as it has been particularly developed for use with psychological research. Although most research on thematic analysis has come from Braun & Clarke themselves (e.g. Braun & Clarke, 2014a; 2014b 2013; and 2006), which may indicate that there may be a positive bias towards their own method, I have still chosen to use it in this piece of research. As mentioned, Braun & Clarke’s (2006) thematic analysis it has been particularly developed for use with psychological research, fits well with the ontological and epistemological stance of this research, as well as being better suited, than other methods, to fulfil the aims of this research. Braun & Clarke (2006) outline 15-point checklist with criteria for good thematic analysis (pp. 96). The fifteen points for analysis and presentation of data are set out in the table below, together with a column explaining how I have met each criterion.

**Table 8.** *15-point checklist for good thematic analysis phase two*

<b>Process</b>	<b>Criteria (Braun &amp; Clarke, 2006, pp. 96)</b>	<b>Researcher’s actions and reflections in order to meet criteria</b>
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Transcription	1. The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tape for 'accuracy'.	The audio recordings were listened to once, then listened to again while transcribing them. Once transcribed, the transcripts were read through while listening to the audio files again and any typos or missed out content was added. Other anomalies, such as not being able to hear certain words were not noted. I believe that this has led to the data being transcribed to an appropriate level of detail.
Coding	2. Each data item has been given equal attention in the data process	Data was gathered approximately four months before handing in the completed thesis. This allowed considerable time to complete analysis, especially as there were only three interviews to analyse, and allowed each item to be considered in detail.
	3. Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive	Coding was done by noting down ideas during transcription, reading each complete extract and noting down what was said/conveyed at each point. These comments were then translated into codes, and the codes were later arranged into themes. Thus, ensuring that the whole

		data sets were considered and not just certain points that appeared 'vivid' to myself.
	4. All relevant extracts for each theme has been collated, for each data set	I used nVivo (version 11) in order to code and theme my data sets. This ensured that all relevant extracts for each theme were collated for each data set.
	5. Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.	I continually referred back to the original data set (i.e. transcribed interviews) in order to ensure that the themes were coherent and fitted the original data sets. Additionally, a colleague (a fellow TEP) and my thesis supervisors completed this stage were they looked at initial data sets, codes, sub-themes and themes, which were later agreed upon.
	6. Themes are internally coherent, consistent and distinctive	This was achieved through continuous checking and referring back to the original data sets. A TEP and my thesis supervisors checked the transcripts, codes, and themes with quotations for half of the transcripts.
Analysis	7. Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of – rather	The codes making each theme up were looked at again and I reflected upon what the

	than just paraphrased and described	common denominator for each code in each theme was, and as such what it was communicating. This ensured that I thought about, and hence interpreted and made sense of, the data.
	8. Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims	The data analysis involved continuously checking that data sets, codes and themes to ensure that they matched each other. Choosing quotations to illustrate each theme and its analytic claim, ensured that the data sets matched the analysis, and when discrepancies were found changes were made in order to ensure that the themes and analysis reflected the data.
	9. Analysis tells a convincing and well organised story about the data and the topic	See Chapter ‘6.2 Findings’
	10. A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided.	See Chapter ‘6.2 Findings’
Overall	11. Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a one-over lightly	Allocated study time was planned out with a great deal of detail. The analysis stage was given a substantial amount of time and when needed, extra time in the form of weekends were used to

		ensure that enough time was given to all stages of the analysis.
Written report	12. The assumptions about and specific approach to thematic analysis are clearly explicated	The first part of Chapter 6, i.e. this part, sets out to explain in detail what was done in the data analysis process. This is supported with examples in the findings section and in the appendices. It has also been recommended by Braun & Clarke (2006) to read other research that uses Thematic Analysis, which was done prior, during and after the analysis of this research.
	13. There is a good fit between what you claim to do and what you show you have done – i.e. described method and reported analysis are consistent	The analysis was done alongside writing the majority of the methodology chapter and writing down notes from each step in a reflective research diary to ensure that each step was captured, recorded and later explained.
	14. The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis	My ontology and epistemology are clearly explained and discussed in Chapter 4, and my aim was to ensure that it underpinned every aspect of my research, for instance writing this thesis in first person as I am not independent of the research.

	<p>15. The researcher is positioned as active in the research process, themes do not just ‘emerge’</p>	<p>During the transcription as well as analysis Braun &amp; Clarke’s (2006) paper was referred to continuously in order to ensure that the guidelines were followed. Upon completion of the analysis the transcripts were read again with the coding programme nVivo (version 11) being on-screen so that all themes could be seen while reading the transcripts. This ensured that they captured the entire data set and that I was <b><u>active</u></b> in the research process rather than just waiting for themes to emerge. Additionally, a colleague verified the themes and sub-themes by examining a selection of the data separately. Discrepancies between us were discussed and edits to the analysis were made.</p>
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*Note.* Adapted from Braun & Clarke, (2006, p. 96).

In order to illustrate the process described above I will now show two examples of transcribed text with initial notes and codes.

**Table 9.** *Examples of transcribed text, with notes and/or reflective comments and codes*

Transcribed text	Initial notes/reflective comments	Codes
<p>Other challenges are the number, I think it's really important to know how to utilise and deploy your LSAs. And I think quite often there's a lot of training needed in and around that. People think that "oh you're here for John" and that therefore you're going to sit with him and be with him all the time. There's no realisation that that can have a negative impact. So, we often discuss about overly supporting students and how we can stop that.</p>	<p>Use of LSA (learning support assistants) within post-16 education. Teachers/lecturers understanding of support. Negative impacts of 'velcro-LSA'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Best use of support</li> </ul>
<p>We would like to have more support professionals that can help us mentor and coach, help us with staffing, eh, not staffing, student issues. The challenges working with people with EHCPs that's, we need... Perhaps they can be quite complex. If we're not on the systems, because we're not on a school system because we're an independent provider we are sometimes handicapped with knowing what is on the intelligence systems and different things like that.</p>	<p>Mentoring and coaching, consultation? Do they know they can get this type of support from EPs? Access to systems – the disjointed work in post-16.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not knowing where to find professionals who can support</li> <li>• Barriers to multiagency working</li> </ul>

## 6.2 Findings

The following section presents my findings generated by Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, as described above, of the interviews conducted with professionals working in post-16 education. As the interviews sought to answer the research questions for phase two, the findings will be presented in three sections that represents the three main areas that were initially identified as the main subjects to be researched (see Appendix 5), extracts from a transcript can be found in Appendix 8, codes can be found in Appendix 10, and substantial extracts from the interviews with initial notes, codes, sub-themes and main themes can be found in Appendix 12.

The themes and sub-themes will firstly be presented in a table for the purpose of clarity.

**Table 10.** *Themes and their sub-themes for phase two*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>
Strengths	Staff
	Systems
	Ability to cater for different needs
	Current support strategies
Challenges	Funding
	Systems
	Understanding and knowledge
Support	N/A

Before looking at the themes in more detail I will briefly present the main findings for this phase of the study. The first theme was 'strengths' and all interviewed participants emphasised that having knowledgeable staff was a huge strength, as were having certain systems in place. They were also proud to be able to cater to different educational needs and having certain support strategies in place. These strengths might not be different or better than those that are in pre-16 education, however acknowledging these is important in



order for EPs to be able to work with the settings and support them to build on them.

The second main finding was around challenges. Post-16 educational providers found funding particularly challenging, and while pre-16 education is currently having difficulties with funding as well, post-16 providers described an ever-changing nature of their funding, and different funding streams coming in to place depending on what type of students they had, which could change quickly. They also described how they often were on the fringes of larger systems not getting enough information about their students and that it therefore became difficult to plan and put support in place for their most vulnerable students. Lastly, they described a lack of understanding for certain conditions, such as dyslexia. All providers had to some degree misunderstood conditions and how personal circumstances affected these and were therefore not able to put the correct support in place.

The last major finding in phase two of this study was around the support post-16 educational providers wanted to receive. All providers wanted a consultation-style support where someone could help them make links between theory and practice in order to overcome barriers to learning. Lastly, they also felt that some support around helping parents to see why and how support for their child would change due to them moving towards independence would be helpful.

### **6.2.1 Theme: Strengths**

There were four sub-themes within the theme ‘strength’. These mentioned different strengths or parts of their provision, that were seen as strengths to them these were: ‘staff’, ‘systems’, ‘ability to cater for different needs’, and ‘current support strategies’. These will all be presented here.

#### **6.2.1.1 Sub-theme: Staff**

All providers mentioned that one of their biggest strengths was the staff that worked with/for them. Many were aware of the level of expertise of their staff and the low turnover, which they appreciated. Skills such as having qualifications in dyslexia, British Sign Language (BSL), or specific

qualifications such as brick laying or catering/cookery, were valued and seen as something that was of value to their students.

“But the strengths, I may have somebody that is an ex-teacher, I might have somebody who has spent many of their years in primary school for example and then they’ve moved to FE, I’ve got staff that are level 7, eh, qualified in dyslexia and detect visual stress assessments as well. Most of my staff are level 3, eh, qualified in whatever background they had previously. So that might be health and social care, it might be learning support or the higher learning support. But they tend to be, learning support training seems to be much more based on schools, but we are trying to change that. From a training perspective we’ve had people who have been paid to do part of their masters, we’ve had people that have been trained to do BSL 3, so they’re signing. Good experience, good experience and I’m lucky.” – FE College SENCo.

“If we think that they’ve got skills that we could adapt and develop, like [Name of staff] in the kitchen here, she was a chef in restaurant. She hadn’t taught, but she was really good at explaining things to people and working with people with special needs. We’ve trained her as a tutor and then we’ve trained her to work with people with special needs and then they become stronger in a way because they come together and become a stronger team, so the people we have tend to stay a long time.” – Manager of small, independent provider.

“...we make sure that they can understand what it means to work in a person-centred way and having person-centred awareness so we always put the student first. So the tutors has to, above all their qualifications they have to understand pupils with challenging behaviour, autism, etc.” – Manager of small, independent provider

#### **6.2.1.2 Sub-theme: Systems**

Two providers felt that they had good systems that supported them to develop their work and be flexible and adapt quickly to changes and their students.

“Because we’re a CIC [community interest company], we’re directors and we can actually adapt, and adapt our changes very quickly. So, for example if we were a charity we’d have to have a board of trustees so every time there’s a change in contracts, a change in provision, we would probably have to wait some time before we could do it, by which time it’d probably be too late.” – Manager of small, independent provider

“I think we’re really flexible, with regards to learning support specifically across the college, yeah I think we’re very flexible. We know that we have to adapt to each year to the support needs of the students that come in. We’re a very small team for a large FE college, I mean we’ve got 15 000 students as an average year after year, so that includes something, on average again, around 6 000 new 16-18-year-olds every year. Approximately, between 9 and 15 per cent year of students make a disclosure of having learning support needs, disabilities or difficulties across the college and we support on average 6-700 a year.” – FE College SENCo.

The FE College had set up a system of where they would observe each other regularly in practice and give each other feedback on what went well and how they could improve.

“Also we have observations of our learning support assistants, we don’t just observe curriculum and academics, which I think is really, really important. And we give feedback. So I might observe somebody from a line management perspective, but equally another LSA might observe an LSA.”  
FE College SENCo.

Another system that was mentioned was that of risk assessments. All providers felt that they had a system in place that supported young people with varying needs to achieve while managing the risk that they might face. This might not be different from the systems that schools have, however it has to be noted that the post-16 educational establishments that were interviewed saw this as a particular strength.

“We might write a risk assessment if you have something like epilepsy and you need some support or a risk assessment written that still allows, not allows you, but enables you to be on ordinary courses.” – FE College SENCo.

“We have worked with ‘higher functioning’ people who have wanted to go to university and we have worked with them on how to teach themselves, how to cope with self-directed study and coping with their own behaviours in classroom settings. That’s been a course in itself, we helped, there is a learner in [different town], who was at [local] college actually, he was working in a, with the team that dealt with autism, he had quite high functioning autism. He got so stressed and unfortunately the tutor put himself between him and the door and she was in the way and he literally grabbed her by the throat and pinned her up against the room and got expelled from the college. [Local organisation] brought him to us and asked if we could work with him and we put risk assessments in place, there were always exits for him. He was able to get around on bus and transport and if he wanted to leave he could and we would be contacting his mother to say if he left. So there were all these risk assessments put in place for him. He completed his year, he got access to university, he did not leave us once, he was totally focused and is now learning on a full-time master’s degree.” – Manager small, independent provider.

The smaller provider that was interviewed felt that they had systems in place that complemented other systems within society, such as courses that the job centre would offer, but that certain individuals were not able to attend.

“Whereas some, we work closely with job centres for mainly unemployed people, when sometimes people are not able to join a group or large classes and they have mental health issues. Sometimes it might just be housing issues; homelessness, drug and alcohol abuse and they can’t make it into a group session that the job centre referred them to. We do something called

‘multi-barrier support’, which is offering one-to-one support for a period of time working with that individual.” – Manager, small, independent provider.

The smaller provider in this research was particularly proud that they had devised a system, which allowed them to be very person centred and saw this as one of their main strengths and what made them stand out from other providers.

“One of our strengths is the ability to change and to work with people in a person-centred way.” – Manager, small, independent provider.

The manager of this provider had described how they would hire tutors and lecturers who would suit a certain individual learner’s needs and how the whole curriculum would be formed around that person. This was something that the larger providers were not able to provide, due to their sheer size and systems that were already in place. However, the larger provider was able to put other systems in place, which they had had in place before the change in policy in 2014.

“Until the recent changes with the Children & Families Act ladee-da, we didn’t have a lot of input, most of our students had a statement and they came to us with what’s known as section 139A, a transition document, stating what this person wanted but there was no statutory need to really do or listen to it. But we did though in this college and we always tracked our students before the Children and Families Act, I like to think that as an FE we’re doing a lot, there’s an awful lot of good practice in FEs, and we were tracking our students for three years that had a section 139A. So, we were reading those documents and saying to people what they needed to do for those students so you need to take that into consideration.” – FE College SENCo

#### **6.2.1.3 Sub-theme: Ability to cater for different needs**

All providers mentioned that they were able to cater to different needs and that their colleges offered a variety of courses that would suit a variety of individuals. This is perhaps not surprising, however would be important to acknowledge and build on when offering services to post-16 educational providers. It is also interesting that this is mentioned as a strength, indicating that they may perhaps believe that other settings do not cater to different needs or offer a variety of courses.

“...so we’ve got young people with moderate to severe learning difficulties through level 1, 2 and 3. So, vocational courses, IB and A-levels.” –

Lecturer at tertiary college

“Our ability to work in a very person centred way, in so that we can structure education around the needs of that person to capture their interests. For example, we have our list of referrals and we can see from their initial advice and guidance, we look at what their interests are and we recruit the tutors to suit the learner. So when we have someone with a sports interests, for instance, we recruited someone who has sports science and we work with them in the community in sport centres and we use this place as a base for, anything like maybe maths or English or using it as a base to, as a meeting point, but we will work with them out in the community for those who don’t want to come in, who are for instance school phobic.” –

Manager, small, independent provider.

#### **6.2.1.4 Sub-theme: Current support strategies**

The FE college had the most support from outside agencies, this is most likely to be due to that they are the largest provider of the three and had been established for a long time. However, the other two providers interviewed also had some contact with outside agencies for support, such as social services and specific training providers.

“So we work with ‘pluss’, ‘mind’, all those people. We actually buy in our own EdPsych, a private one that we buy in for our other students. She’s eh, she used to work for the Local Authority and the great thing about her is that she’s got an autism background, which is really, really important for us.” – FE College SENCo

But there were also other supports that the providers had developed in-house and used on an ad-hoc basis when needed. For instance, they had developed different IT-programmes for their students who English was an additional language for or for those with specific literacy difficulties.

“We have got support systems that they can access support. How, I think we’ve got, I can’t remember the name of it, but the computer systems that can translate for them.” – Lecturer tertiary college

“A couple of years ago the dyslexia assessor, we also have a specialist dyslexia teacher on the team, and another exam assessor got together and they wrote, exam techniques and stresses, so they’re just top tips.” – FE College SENCo

Providing one-to-one mentoring was also something that the providers saw as a strength, however, the success of it depended on how it was organised.

“For students with autism and global developmental delay we organise one-to-one mentoring, because a lot of those students are very bright, but they have spiky profiles, so quite often they will have, eh, support outside the class on a one to one basis. Lots of level 3 students and our access students have that because their issues are not necessarily their intellectual abilities but actually it’s about that their other engagements.” – FE College SENCo

“They can access support in their ‘frees’ if they’ve got one and usually they can access support there [support site], but it’s according to whether there is someone around and that the student is able to. So if a student that is

anxious or would rather go and do something else in their spare time, it's not always as effective as it could be. ' – Lecturer tertiary college

It is interesting to note some of the contradictions that some of the providers mentioned, for instance when the FE College SENCo spoke about students with global developmental delay, but also spoke about that those students being very bright. This is interesting because it indicates that there might be certain confusion around concepts, which EPs could support with. However, there might also be different understandings about words such as "bright". These contradictory pieces of information will be explored more under section 6.2.2.3.

### **6.2.2 Theme: Challenges**

Three main themes emerged after coding and theming codes, which all related to some type of challenge for the providers. These themes were 'funding', 'systems' and 'understanding/knowledge'.

#### **6.2.2.1 Sub-theme: Funding**

All providers that were interviewed found funding challenging. The nature of the challenge differed across the different providers, the smaller independent provider found it difficult to plan ahead as they felt that funding for them was unpredictable and the larger providers found it difficult to adjust for cuts in budgets and having fewer resources for their students.

"The challenges are usually around funding in that we never know how long we're going to have funding for the funding streams which change." – Manager, small, independent provider

"Budget cuts. We're now teaching extra hours for the same pay, so I teach, and compared to two years ago, I teach an extra hour and a half a week and that translates into extra marking and extra prep for the lessons and I think everybody feels like that. So there's not so much money for additional sort of stuff that we would have been able to do for students, so staff are under pressure, the college is under pressure and so, yeah, things aren't as easy as they used to be." – Lecturer tertiary college



“Then it’s the challenge of resource, you know you might have whole schools, primary schools with iPads, but here we tend to not have reams and reams of resources...” – FE College SENCo

“But we all know that we have limited services. And I guess largely my job is, I’m called a manager, but it is about co-ordinating what we’ve got, so it has an impact.” – FE College SENCo

#### **6.2.2.2 Sub-theme: Systems**

All providers had some challenges around how to set up support for students and how to link up with existing support within the LA.

“Other challenges are the number, I think it’s really important to know how to utilise and deploy your LSAs. And I think quite often there’s a lot of training needed in and around that. People think that ‘oh you’re here for John’ and that therefore you’re going to sit with him and be with him all the time. There’s no realisation that that can have a negative impact.” – FE College SENCo.

This was clearly an issue that the larger provider, which this FE college is, found difficult to get across to all staff at the college. Organisation of how to set up support for students was not always easy because many lecturers wanted an LSA (learning support assistant) to sit with a specific student throughout their lesson. This tied in with what the lecturer at the tertiary college explained when discussing what systems were in place for support and how LSAs were used across the college they worked at. This will be demonstrated further in the sub-theme ‘understanding/knowledge’.

Another challenge was the size of groups and how this impacted upon the support that was available to students. A system with larger groups and how group sizes were decided was seen as a challenge in terms of supporting students to learn.

“It’s much more difficult now because we’ve also got larger classes, because of the cuts we won’t run a class if it drops below 12. So, at one time the college was able to do that, when having smaller classes for level 1 students was doable and maybe level 2 students, whereas now it’s not a viable class unless it is 18 or more. I think we’ve one class that has gone down to 15, but they’re second year students, so they haven’t any choice with that, but if it is a first year group then yeah they would shut it down. –  
Lecturer tertiary college

Many also felt that they were not able to give equal support to everyone who needed it and found that system a challenge, as they had to prioritise whom they would support.

“We have to prioritise, that’s my biggest job, so every year we start off with the students with an EHC and our support is allocated to those areas and we have to support students that come in and are more mature and have needs such as, visual impairments, severe visual impairments or hearing impairments and we’ve got signer communicators here, level 2 and level 3 BSL, we’ve got a whole plethora of staff that are assessing for exam concessions and dyslexia.” – FE College SENCo

When discussing the systems from the LA or other outside agencies, the smaller provider found it difficult to know where they would get support from and also found it confusing as they worked across different LAs.

“We don’t actually get support, but we work with the SEN team in [local town] and the SEND team in [local city], it’ll be SEN in [local town] and SEND in [local city]. We work in [local city], [local town], and [local area] and it’s all, they all have slightly different working arrangements, so we work in partnership with people. Obviously within those partnerships people do support us if we’ve got queries or questions, but I can’t say it’s actually support support, we have to ask if we can maybe have the educational psychologist in [local town] who came in to have a look at our learners and did a little bit of work with them around, eh, possessions and ownership and

attachments and things like that, and that helped that situation, as we had been dealing with some problems. Again depending on which area we're in, [local city]... I don't know if we have any support with [local city]." –  
Manager small, independent provider

The smaller provider also found that the different systems across LAs often worked in a disjointed manner, which made it difficult for them to have all relevant information in order to make appropriate decisions around young people and their education.

"...unless we ask the right questions we don't know whether there is any probational needs, any other agencies, we ask them directly and then we have to join up the dots and different departments don't all work with one another. You might find that it's not the same with children services as adult services and you can't assume that they are talking to other people and that they will know. In [local town] I had a child in need meeting for one of our learners and the social worker did not know what an education, health, care plan was. So, I had to explain to her what that was, you just assume that SEND talk to child services. I mean, she might have been new, but some of these issues that some of our learners are facing, if everyone had better insight we could work together in a better, more, in a community way that means that we can better support the person. If all of us just have little bits of information that could be quite dangerous... - Manager small, independent provider.

### **6.2.2.3 Sub-theme: Understanding and Knowledge**

This theme is a collation of all the codes that pointed to how certain understandings or knowledge around subjects could be seen as a barrier or challenge. There was one subtheme within this, which has been labelled as 'misinterpretations'. This is where those interviewed had particular beliefs around certain aspects of education or educational difficulties, which prevented them from putting support in place.

“...quite often a lot of the European students will come and say that they have got dyslexia, but dyslexia is... It’s very difficult to assess somebody whose English a second language, who’s from Hungary for example, because how can you assess because their language is so different and the make-up of dyslexia is such that English needs to be your first language.” – FE College SENCo.

“So we have parents that say “I think my child has got Asperger’s” and “I think my child’s dyslexic” and the screening might indicate that the students might have issues around that, but not sufficient for us to implement something specifically because they, I think they still got to have a local offer, no, an educational health and care plan to have an LSA with them.” – Lecturer, tertiary college

There were quite a few understandings around dyslexia that were similar to the extract above. These understandings became a barrier as it dismissed a need and prevented certain support to be put in place. It also indicated that effective support was seen as having a LSA assistant with the student and in order to get this the student needed to have an EHC plan. The support that the LSA provided and that was viewed as very desirable was to differentiate information for the student they were assigned to and to ensure that the student understood the learning materials. All interviewed knew that not everyone could have an EHC plan and as such, they felt unable to provide students with adequate support.

Some providers also felt that there were misinterpretations about them from the LA, for instance during conferences the general language was still focused on schools and pupils and this made post-16 providers feel misunderstood and not included.

“There’s still a bit of a way to go. If we go to a local authority, and I’ve said this to them several times, everything is about schools, eh, they talk about schools. And even in their post-16, a conference for post-16 providers across [local area], us being the largest one, they still talked about schools.

So we had to keep saying to them “Ahaa! Hang on, hang on, it’s 0-25 change your language.” I just think it’s been a big learning curve for them as well. I think [local area] has done really well. I know I’m supposed to say that, but I am being honest, they have been trying to include us in many aspects, in an awful lot of reviews for our students with complex needs.” – FE College SENCo.

All interviewed spoke about the difficulties of differentiation. Some had relied on having an LSA or TA in their classes to facilitate differentiation, however, due to financial constraints, they were no longer able to have an LSA or TA in the class and found it difficult to facilitate the differentiation. This indicated that they needed some more knowledge on how to facilitate differentiation without having that extra member of staff with them.

“Also, they were very good at, if you had a particular, group of two or three students who struggled in a particular way, the differentiation in the classroom was far more, sort of workable, because you could say to them, if I set these tasks I know those students need an extra 5-10 minutes to do it, I’ve got a stretching challenge activity for other students and they would support them in that. That worked much better because then there’s a lack of disruption and everybody is working towards their own strength.” – Lecturer tertiary college

Others found the strict guidelines from certain awarding bodies difficult, as they did not allow meaningful differentiation to their students.

“Also the qualifications have changed because of the government initiative and they’re making vocational courses more academic which seems in some ways, I can understand that they want academic rigour in one way because some of the students want to use vocational programmes to go to university, however, the way they, some of the qualifications have gone... It’s not really supporting the students, to me what we’re trying to do is judge does this young person know this? Is this young person able to do this? Can this young person translate that into practice? And for some of them, some of

the qualifications that I deal with are less supportive than others, so students are writing, for instance we had a level 3, 1 unit that came in a few weeks ago, and this student had written 10 000 words. Which is ridiculous, because this student felt that, they were so anxious to hit the point that they needed to get the grade that they wanted. So they worked and worked and worked, actually I don't really think that's necessary." – Lecturer tertiary college

"Having the flexibility with learning, because it is the education bit that you are particularly interested in, the learning programmes that are governed by law, to be able to provide and the amount of learning hours. We understand that the education and funding agency obviously want money for, or their bucks for money so to speak, so limited in helping people to make transitions into environments and if we could have some flexibility to work with people and not put such strict guidelines into place and to offer more flexibility for example to get people to attend for longer, you know they have to attend for so many hours of their guided learning hours a day over a week, if we could be flexible around that and the requirements for doing maths and English, because as soon as we, we obviously understand the importance for those skills, but it can be a real barrier. As soon as we mention those words to some people, as soon as you mention that to some people that we try to work with on their maths and English without realising that that is what they're doing, there comes a time where they do have to take an assessment or an exam or have some form of certification and that can be very challenging in the way that we are meant to work them towards their GSCE levels, where for some people, they might have that capability eventually, but not in that academic year and with that we then get penalised as we then haven't met the statistics that we're meant to meet, so we, you know, then get marked down as a provider as they're too focused on statistics and achievement rates, when there are softer outcomes that we are after." – Manager small, independent provider

### **6.2.3 Theme: Support**

All interviewees wanted some sort of support that they did not already have. Most of the support wanted was around wanting consultations and problem-solving sessions around how to understand theory, the young person and apply this to the classroom setting.

“But, I went to some training one time on dyslexia and we had a guy come in and he was really, really, really good and gave us a clearer idea of what students with dyslexia might struggle with and strategies that we could use with them. Anything that would do that so, just ideas to support students really. Bit like a brain-storming session really.” – Lecturer tertiary college

“We can look at general training and things like that, but when an educational psychologist really knows our learners and some of our learners that we’ve had have gone through the system and been known to the educational psychologist, they were then able to come in and work with us when we had a problem around that particular individual, which was very, very much mentoring around the learners which helped us remove some of the barriers. So, when you have standard training, people can come in and say ‘this is what typically happens’, we already know a lot of that, but what you don’t know is how to work with that person’s issue. So that would be really helpful.” – Manager small, independent provider

There was also a want and a need for more individual support for students from less fortunate backgrounds. The larger provider wanted to be able to set up peer and professional mentoring for some of these students in order to meet their needs and preventing them from becoming NEETs (not in education, employment or training).

“I would like every student who makes a disclosure, to have peer mentoring and some sort of professional mentoring. Within that I don’t mean counselling, although we have counselling here as well. Whether or not it is learning support or otherwise. Because our biggest issue through FE and something that we get crucified for, which I think is unfair, are students that

end up being NEETs. I think students that become NEETs have backgrounds that perhaps haven't been very nurturing. I think many of them have difficulties in general literacy and numeracy and I guess that everybody would want every child that left school in England and the UK, had good English and maths and they don't, and we know that." – FE College

Setting up this type of support for students was something that the college did not do currently and they felt that they needed some expertise in how to set up such support to be effective.

Similarly, to the previous theme 'challenges', interviewees also mentioned dyslexia in this theme. However, when it came to support, interviewees felt that they needed some support around how to support young people that did not qualify for certain assessments but still needed something to be put in place in order to help them overcome literacy barriers to learning.

"For instance, we might have students who we think possibly, have, might have issues around dyslexia or something like that. We can do a general screening, but the college can't pay for, testing for dyslexia now. I think sometimes, the problem is that people are very aware of people with various issues around learning and sometimes trying to establish whether somebody is dyslexic or just has never had the opportunity to learn to read can be quite difficult." – Lecturer tertiary college

Another area of potential support was around having conversations about the changing nature of support as a child/younger person grows up. Many felt that as young people transitioned parents wanted them to continue having the exact same support that they had had in school, i.e. having a TA or LSA only supporting their child. Educational psychologist would be able to mediate the advantages and disadvantages of keeping support and explain the psychology behind why support changes.



### *6.3 Dissemination of findings*

All participants were contacted by e-mail and their transcripts with initial codes were shared with them. Their thoughts on the transcripts and notes were noted and the transcripts were amended if needed in order to convey the messages that they wanted to express. This also ensured that I had not misinterpreted what they had said in their interviews. All participants were reassured that this was part of the research process and not an additional measure to get certain answers. They were also reassured that I wanted to represent their views fairly and as accurately as possible. The findings-section for this part of the research was later also shared with the participants and their views were noted and sections were amended if needed.

### *6.4 Discussion*

The following discussion outlines some of the key findings from the research and answers the research questions for this phase of it. A more in-depth discussion of some of the key findings, areas for development and implications for future practice can be found in the overall discussion and conclusion of the two papers and in the concluding chapter.

#### ***6.3.1 Research question: What strengths do post-16 providers see themselves as having?***

The findings indicate that post-16 providers see themselves as having strengths when it comes to their staff, systems that they have set up, their ability to cater for different needs, and certain support strategies that they are using.

The literature (e.g. Chown & Beavan, 2012) suggested that many post-16 providers found it difficult adapting their structure to students with ASC, however, the providers interviewed in this study showed understanding for those with the condition, or at the very least a desire to understand it and support students with it. For instance, one of the providers explained that they would only hire tutors with a good knowledge of conditions and another provider employed a private psychologist who specialised in ASC. They were able to put strategies in place and used anecdotal evidence to show that they had many times succeeded better than previous providers. Many learners had

come to them from other providers that had not been able to meet these students' needs. This was particularly true for the smaller, independent provider that was able to provide person-centred education. However, one thing that is missing from this is the voice of the young people with ASC. It will be very important for future studies to look at whether those diagnosed with the condition feel that their needs have been met in post-16 education.

Similarly, Hewett, Douglas & Keil (2014) showed in their research that young people were particularly pleased with the way their information had been passed onto colleges from their secondary schools. This was another strength that one of the providers saw themselves as having as they had had a long tradition of following their students and taking on information from their secondary schools. However, all providers felt that it could improve and that information from other organisations, such as social care could be better joined up in order for providers to provide better support to their learners.

The literature also identified that students in post-16 provision were happy with the support that they received. All interviewees in this study felt that the staff that they had were well trained and understood student needs. However, one of the interviewees felt very strongly that she needed an assessment or a diagnosis in order to provide adequate support. This might mean that potentially those higher up in organisations have a different understanding to those that are teaching and that support staff also might have the understanding, but again, that this is not extended to those actually teaching. This was mentioned by the FE College SENCo and will be further discussed in the next section of this chapter. It may also be an opportunity for EPs to offer individual assessments, not necessarily ones that would lead to diagnosis such as dyslexia, but that through the use of psychology could lead to better support strategies, as has been argued by Boyle & Lauchlan (2009). In terms of linking this to more systemic work and psychology it could be argued that through assessment the EP is able to understand the young person and their needs and therefore report this back to those teaching or working with the young person who can change their approach towards the young person accordingly. This could ensure a better microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), where, as mentioned in Chapter 2,

whatever those around the young person do, directly affects the young person, and the young person's behaviour directly affects those around them. If EPs are, through assessment, able to support those around the young person to change their approaches, the young person might become happier and readier to learn which in turn will affect those teaching them in a positive manner as well.

Understanding the post-16 provider's understanding of what their strengths are is important in order for EPs to work collaboratively with them. Seeing certain practices and wanting to change them might not be as successful if the providers see them as a strength. This could therefore potentially lead to tensions between EPs and post-16 providers. This may also be of importance when working from a strengths-based consultative approach (Wagner, 1995). A strengths-based consultative approach (e.g. Wagner, 1995) suggests that in order for people to change, we need to acknowledge what they are already doing well and build upon that, rather than finding fault.

### ***6.3.2 Research question: What challenges do post-16 providers see themselves as having?***

Post-16 providers saw three main areas to be barriers or challenges for them. These themes around funding, access to systems and working with certain government or LA systems. There was also a challenge around everyone having a shared understanding of support and needs.

Funding was a big concern for all the providers and it impacted upon what support they were able to provide for different needs within their provision and how they planned ahead. The uncertainty around where money was going to come from and if the government was going to change the way post-16 provision was funded had an impact, and will potentially have an impact upon if they will be able to buy in EP services as this might be seen as an unnecessary cost. This is important to understand, as wanting to provide support that one cannot, may be frustrating and create feelings for post-16

providers of not being able to do enough for their learners. This is something that was not found in the literature and perhaps more research in this area is needed.

One challenge, which has already been mentioned in the previous section, was that of the understanding of inclusion and differentiation. One of the interviewees found it particularly difficult to facilitate her differentiation for a 'mixed needs' group without a TA or LSA in the class. Guishard (2000) and Spenceley (2012) argue in their papers that there seems to be a lack of training on inclusion and how to teach a 'mixed needs' group in post-16. This was reflected in this research as well, and the larger provider did mention that they had to do a lot of training on lecturers understanding the use of TAs/LSAs. This may be an area where EPs can provide support in terms of looking at the systems and supporting providers to change them, as well as changing the attitudes towards the usage of TAs/LSAs.

Chown & Beavan (2012) also argued that post-16 providers should focus on the teaching and learning process rather than focusing on the end qualification. This proved difficult for many post-16 providers and is a challenge. This came under 'systems' in the findings section because providers were within a national system where young people had to achieve a certain qualification in order for the provider to meet certain criteria, such as that young people had to be taught a certain number of hours and gain qualification within a certain time frame, and secure future funding. This also made it difficult for lecturers to differentiate tasks for such qualifications, as there sometimes were very strict guidelines around what the submitted work needed to include and what it should look like.

Another challenge that post-16 providers perceived as having was that of parents wanting certain things for their children, which they did not perceive to be in their best interests. For instance, when parents wanted their child to have more support or were seeking particular diagnoses. Hewett, Douglas & Kiel (2014) highlighted that young people often saw it as a good thing when support reduced when they went on to post-16 education. I would hypothesise that this indicates a new level of independence for that young person and a feeling of

stepping towards adulthood. However, parents wanting to keep their child safe and insisting on support might create tension between the post-16 provider, the young person, and the parents.

The literature (Palikara, Lindsay & Dockrell (2009) argued that a challenge to post-16 provision was to find skilled support assistants that knew how to support and knew the curriculum to be able to differentiate for different needs. This did not seem to be a barrier/challenge for the providers interviewed in this study. However, it is acknowledged that this could be as those that were interviewed wanted to give a certain picture of themselves. Also, students were not observed or interviewed in this study and as such their views on the support that they receive are not captured.

***6.3.4 Research questions: What type of support do post-16 providers perceive themselves to be in need of?***

The support that post-16 providers wanted was to have someone to come in and provide strategies that would work within classroom settings and that were individualised to the young person. Many had previously received what they called ‘standard training’ but found it difficult to apply this to specific students or see how that would fit within their particular setting. They felt that having someone to brainstorm ideas with them and support to apply their ‘standard training’ to the particular situation would be especially useful.

Another support that the providers felt would be of particular use to them was to be able to provide peer and professional mentoring. They felt that students that disclosed that they had particular difficulties, but were not eligible for particular support would benefit from peer mentoring. However, setting this up was difficult for them and they felt that they might need someone who could offer students training and supervision in how to mentor peers. Training around how to mentor young people was also something that they felt would be useful to their staff so that young people who needed professional mentoring would be able to receive such.

## 7. Overall discussion

This study represents a small sample of EPs' and post-16 providers' thoughts on the EP-role in post-16 provision at a particular point in time. From the point of the new SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2014) to the point of interviews, EPs working with post-16 providers was still in its developing stages and many EPs emphasised this in their interviews. The development of this and the constant work in this fast-paced area likely means that the LA has already addressed some of the points discussed in this research.

I will now summarise the findings from the two phases of research, before going to discuss how they relate to each other. The summaries will provide a reminder of the key findings for each study.

### *7.1 Findings from phase 1 and 2*

#### *Phase one*

Phase one of this research aimed to find out about EPs' professional role and identity, about how their role and identity was changing and how confident they felt about working with post-16 providers. The findings would suggest that EPs' professional identity is to apply psychology to concerns around learning, which can occur in many scenarios, ages and stages of life, as well as within traditional, formal learning and work-based environments, through understanding each educational establishment's community and systems, whether that was work or classroom based. All EPs felt that their role was to support adults around a child to understand what was happening for that child psychologically and how it could be addressed. This was important to understand in order to then appreciate how EPs thought their identity and role would change when working with post-16 providers. All EPs felt that neither their identity nor their professional role would change when working with post-16 providers or learners within post-16 education. They were still applying psychological knowledge/psychology to concerns around learning and supported young people/adults and key professionals to understand what was happening for them psychologically. However, they did recognise that their practice had broadened and that their thinking had changed due to the new SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2014). For instance, there was a greater awareness of

legislation, such as the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Gillick competency and Fraser guidelines. All EPs felt confident in their use of psychology with this older age group, however, they felt that they needed to become familiar with particular legislation, as mentioned above, and with assessment methods for an older population. Some felt less confident about what professionals were involved with post-16 learners that were over the age of 18 and about working with agencies that come into contact with young people/adults at that point. This was due to that EPs had not worked with adult services, and a belief that professionals in adult services might not understand the EP role. As mentioned in the literature review Bandura's (1995) theory of self-efficacy theory looks at two parts: outcome expectations and efficacy expectations. An outcome expectation is what a person believes is important in order to complete a task or piece of work successfully. As demonstrated above EPs believed that their role was to apply psychology to an educational situation or concern and they felt that this was the most important aspect of their work, whether it was for post-16 or pre-16 settings and learners. An efficacy expectation is how confident someone feels regarding performing these tasks successfully. Again, as demonstrated above, EPs felt confident in applying psychology to educational settings and learners, they were less confident about certain details about the work. However, they did feel happy to go and research these details and were confident that they would quickly pick some of these skills up.

### *Phase two*

In the second phase of this research, I aimed to find out what strengths and challenges post-16 providers felt that they had, as well as finding out what support they had received in the past and what support they felt that they were in need of. Post-16 providers felt that their main strength was their support staff whom they felt had a lot of expertise and experience. They also felt that they had appropriate systems in place such as that they had a built-in degree of flexibility and were able to adapt to changes in legislation and guidance quickly. They also had systems in place for improving their staff's practice, as well as putting appropriate risk assessments in place in order to enable all students to learn. All post-16 providers also felt that one of their strengths was their ability to adapt their learning to different needs and providing services

such as mentoring to their learners. The challenges were mainly around funding, providers did not know how long their funding would last or if funding streams would change. They also had challenges around how to use their support staff effectively across their organisations, and how to manage group sizes.

Another challenge was around understanding and knowledge around specific diagnoses and how to differentiate for certain needs. This was a challenge that I identified in the literature review and that had been previously highlighted by Spenceley (2012) and Chown and Beavan (2012). Although these papers highlighted these concerns five years ago, they seem to still be apparent today. However, as EPs were not involved in post-16 to the same degree that they may become now urged to be and as certain populations might not have been encouraged to go on to post-16 education previously, there might have not been the same need for training on inclusion and differentiation. Some of them felt that they still did not understand the different systems that the LA had in place.

Post-16 providers also mentioned that supporting parents to understand support arrangements being appropriate for a young person/adult and to work towards independence was a challenge. This was another challenge highlighted in chapter 2 of this thesis (e.g. Hewitt, Douglas & Kiel, 2014) and emphasises the importance of this. The connection between supporting parents and young people/adults into becoming independent to varying degrees and the Mental Capacity Act 2005 will be discussed further, later in this chapter.

## *7.2 Findings relation to each other*

### **7.2.1 EP identity and role**

As mentioned in Chapter 2, Tajfel (1978; 1981) and Tajfel & Turner (1985), who developed SIT, argued that people categorise themselves into various social identities. This serves two functions; firstly, it segments and orders the social environment cognitively; secondly, it also lets the individual define him- or herself in the social environment. This provides individuals with a



systematic means of comparing themselves to others and understand where in this system they fit. Ashforth & Mael (1989) argue, using SIT, that identifying with a social group means that one defines oneself in term of a social referent, this is something that has also been argued in more recent literature, e.g. Hogg (2016). This means that identity is formed within a social context, hence the social context is important when looking at identity development.

Professional identity is a specific form of social identification, as an individual's profession many times provides an answer to the question "Who am I in this environment?". I predicted that the local EPS and the post-16 environment would be social referents (Hogg, 2016) for EPs, and that this would have an impact upon their identities. The professional identity that EPs had developed within their local EPS was therefore explored and as mentioned, all EPs within the study saw themselves as psychologists first with some elements from their previous professional identities integrated within this. They drew upon their previous professional identities in order to understand their clients and the clients' professional environments and therefore it appears as if this previous experience works as a social referent that informs their current practice. I would argue that this might be unique to EPs in terms of being a wider pattern across a profession, as other professions do not necessarily require a substantial background of working in specific professional areas.

Both Ibarra (1999) and Ashforth & Mael (1989) argued that one could only develop a professional identity if one saw oneself as having a role and those one works with see one as having that role too. In the case of EPs, who saw their professional identity as 'psychologists', it would mean that they would have to perform tasks within their daily professional lives congruent with this identity and those that they work with would have to see EPs as performing tasks congruent with what a psychologist does. The literature (e.g. Burnham, 2013; Ashton & Roberts, 2006) emphasised a diversity in the practice of EPs and a need among EPs to constantly need to adapt to social and political changes, hence the role was not one that was easy to describe or specify. EPs in this study also expressed that those they worked with often did not understand

their role and would often ask them to do things that EPs felt was not within their professional remit. This would suggest that those that EPs are working with do not assign them the same role as they do to themselves, and according to Ibarra (1999) and Ashforth & Mael (1989), working from SIT theory (Tajfel, 1978; 1981) and Tajfel & Turner (1985), they should therefore not have developed a very strong professional identity. However, the findings in this study would suggest that EPs have, despite this, managed to develop a strong professional identity. The complex way in which the profession of educational psychology has developed, throughout history both across the world (e.g. Zapletalová, 2001 and Jimerson et al, 2008) and within the UK and the constituent countries therein (e.g. MacKay, Marwick & McIlvride, 2006), including the qualification pathway for the role, appears to have created a multi-layered way of developing a professional identity. One of the findings in this research was that a big part of EPs identity was the role that they had had before training to become EPs. Perhaps this is something that again is different from most other professions because EPs have had to have a different career in a related profession in order to be able to train as EPs. Perhaps it is also why their identity develops differently. More research on how EPs develop their identity is therefore needed in order to understand how the profession might develop further and how they may take on new challenges.

Having touched upon role within the previous section on identity development, I will now go on to explore how the literature of role and its adaptation fits with the findings from this study. As mentioned in Chapter 2, social role theory (Albery, 2004) suggests that people expect other people to behave in a way that is congruent with their social roles and the situations that they are in. This may mean that post-16 providers will expect EPs to behave in a certain way and if this is not congruent with the way EPs perceive their own role, it will create 'role strain' (Biddle, 1976; 1986; Bitner, Booms & Moore, 1994). The findings from this current study would suggest that EPs do experience 'role strain' within their day-to-day work and often have to explicitly tell those they work with what their role is in order to mitigate any negative effects from the 'role strain'. One of the overarching aims for this study was to understand how the extension of the EP role to work with young people up to the age of 25, and

therefore with post-16 providers, would mean for EPs. The findings from phase two would suggest that there would be a reduction in 'role strain' for EPs when working in post-16, at least from post-16 educational staff. Their expectations of what EPs could do for them was mainly in line with what EPs in phase one expected to be doing, i.e. consultative and systemic work as well as bringing a psychological perspective to staff's and parents' understanding of young people, and to young people themselves.

As was also mentioned and elaborated upon in Chapter 2, and demonstrated by Norwich (2006), a professional role can be defined in two ways; either by a profession's specific service aim or by what field of knowledge a profession applies to broadly defined ends. As was also discussed in section 5.3 it appears as though the role of an EP is defined by the second way, however, both the BPS (2013) and the AEP (2017) have defined it by a specific service aim, potentially indicating that even these organisations are confused around what EPs do in their professional role. Ashton & Roberts (2006) argue that in order to understand roles one also has to look at what skills professionals have. The skills mentioned in this research by EPs were communication skills, understanding systems, and communities, consultation skills, being able to empower people, training, and being reflective practitioners; which all involve applying psychology. This is something that Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) felt that was slowly disappearing from educational psychology practice. Although individual casework was not specifically mentioned, which is what Boyle & Lauchlan (2009) particularly argue would bring applied psychology back to the profession, it was clear that psychology was at the heart of what the EPs did and would bring to post-16 education.

As abovementioned, Norwich (2005) argued that there was tension between whether EPs should be doing systemic work and as such not be as different from other professionals in the field of education, or whether they should be completing more individual work and distinguish themselves from other professionals, but not be able to make as much of a difference to CYP. It seems as though, due to the nature of post-16 work and due to legislation (e.g. Mental Capacity Act (2005)) perhaps EPs will have to do more direct work with

learners in post-16 education and this may open up for a more distinguished contribution from the profession, in terms of demonstrating the use of psychology directly with young people/adults and as such distinguish the profession from other professions that support education. Although, this research would suggest that both systemic and individual work is achievable and applying psychology is possible in both types of work.

Atkinson et al (2014) argue that a whole competency framework for trainee EPs needs to be developed in order for them to acquire skills that are necessary when working with post-16 providers and learners. As mentioned previously, they came to this conclusion through interviews with self-selected EPs who saw themselves as experts on working within post-16 education. However, my research with post-16 providers pointed out that the support post-16 providers wanted would be met by the skills that EPs saw themselves as already having. This would suggest that EPs moving to work with the 16-25 range is not the most significant development the profession has ever experienced as Atkinson et al (2015) would argue. For instance, as pointed out previously post-16 providers felt that they wanted consultations to support individual learners in their provisions. They felt this would support them to understand how the theory, on attachment for instance, applied to an individual learner and then be able to support that learner better. Some post-16 providers also wanted their lecturers to become better at understanding how to differentiate for students who needed it, without the use of an LSA or TA. This was especially needed for students who did not qualify for an EHCP or a formal assessment of some sort. Each of these needs could be addressed by EPs with the use of psychology, especially using consultation skills (Wagner, 1995), and using psychological theory of individual differences and how teaching strategies for those with difference can support all learners.

Although I have argued that the move to working with learners in the 16-25 age range is not the biggest role extension that the profession of EPs have ever experienced, Atkinson et al (2015) do have a point. There are areas that EPs felt would be, or had experienced them as, either challenging or felt that they needed more information and knowledge. This was particularly true when it

came to legislation around post-16 education, particularly the Mental Capacity Act (2014).

As mentioned previously in this chapter, the literature review highlighted that supporting young people/adults to become independent was challenging for post-16 providers, especially for their SEN or additional needs cohorts (Hewett, Douglas & Kiel, 2014). This can become difficult as the Mental Capacity Act (2005) starts from the assumption that a person aged 16 or over has the full legal capacity to make decisions for themselves unless it can be shown that they lack the capacity to make a decision at the time it needs to be made. The act states that

“before deciding that someone lacks the capacity to make a particular decision, it is important to take all practical and appropriate steps to enable them to make that decision themselves” (The Stationery Office (TSO), 2005, p. 29).

Atkinson et al (2015) argue that more teaching around the Mental Capacity Act 2005 needs to be put in place for trainee EPs and although they do not mention already qualified EPs, it could be argued that they may also need extra training around this. They argue that understanding young people’s capacity for decision making will be more important when working with post-16 learners in terms of ethical practice, gaining consent and shared decision making, especially for those learners who have more profound difficulties with communication. I would argue that my research has highlighted that this is something that is certainly needed, even for qualified EPs, who were not mentioned in Atkinson et al’s (2015) paper. However, EPs in this study highlighted that the question of capacity for making decisions was not only confined to those learners with restricted communication means, but also applied to a much larger cohort of learners. As aforementioned in section 5.3, there were several tensions that were encountered when working in post-16, one of which was about who knew best; the parent/carer or the young person/adult themselves? How would a decision be made about a young person’s capacity to make important decisions and how would an evaluation be

made that all practical and appropriate steps to make decisions have been put in place? Many EPs in my interviews spoke about young people making decisions that might not have been in their best interests, but who made them anyway because they suddenly felt free to make those decisions. In both the examples given by EPs in my interviews it was clear that the practical and appropriate steps for those young people to make decisions had not been put in place and there were clear struggles between parents/carers and professionals about who should be making them. EPs felt able to use consultation skills to steer the conversation to discussing joint decision making and bringing all relevant parties to compromises. However, there was no mention of supporting that young person to be making those decisions in the future. Perhaps this was something that felt natural to EPs to do anyway and perhaps these were steps that were put in place as a result of the meetings these EPs were part of. However, there is still a risk that this was not a priority and perhaps there should be an onus on EPs to highlight this requirement and apply their psychological knowledge in order to support young people/adults to make such decisions in the future. I would also argue that there is a place for EPs to support other professionals involved to understand that some parents/carers and young people/adults might have had certain roles for a long time; the parents/carers might have always been the decisions makers and the young person/adult might have always followed others' decisions and directions. Breaking free from such a pattern and narrative might create discomfort and as such, some parents and young people/adults might stay in their presumed roles. Changing these narratives and roles could again be a role for an EP, as changing narratives is something that EPs often do in their consultation work (Wagner & Watkins, 2005).

### **7.2.2 Self-efficacy**

As was mentioned in Chapter 2, EPs levels of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1995) were going to be investigated through the interviews, particularly in term of what their outcome expectations and efficacy expectations were. Outcome expectations refer to what an individual believes is important in order to successfully complete a task, and efficacy expectations refers to whether the

individuals believe that they have the skills they believe to be important to complete the tasks successfully. For this research, this meant that EPs had to firstly tell me what skills they believed to be important to have when working in post-16 education and also whether they believed whether they could use them successfully. The theory of self-efficacy suggests that if the EPs believed that they had the skills necessary to do the work and were able to use them successfully, their self-efficacy would be high.

As has been mentioned previously in this discussion, the findings suggested that EPs believed that the most important skill when working with post-16 education was to apply psychology to concerns regarding learning. This included several other skills, such as consultation and communication skills, understanding communities and systems, etc. All interviewed EPs were able to give examples of how psychology had been applied in their work with post-16 education and those that had not yet worked in post-16 education were able to think of how psychology could be applied. This would therefore suggest that the EPs interviewed had high levels of self-efficacy, which would also suggest that they are likely to undertake challenging work in post-16 education and that this work is likely to be successful (Bandura, 1995; Csikszentmihayli, 1997).

The literature (Holzberger, Philipp & Kunter, 2013) suggested that when self-efficacy is high, the work individuals performed is rated as better, compared to when it is low, by both the individuals that performed the work and by those they worked with. This would suggest that if EPs' self-efficacy is high, which the findings in this study would suggest it is, their work is likely to be rated as good both by themselves and by those they work with in post-16 education. The findings from phase one and two, which suggests that 'role strain' might be considerably less for EPs when working with post-16 education, meaning that EPs and staff in post-16 education have a similar view of what the role entails, their work is even more likely to be rated as good..

Stajkovic & Luthans' (1998) findings also suggest that high self-efficacy lead to better work performance. But their findings also suggest that if self-efficacy is high and the complexity of the work is well defined, individuals will perform

even better as they can manage and direct their efforts better. All EPs interviewed in this study explained that a part of their role was to explain their role and ascertain what their exact role was going to be in each case. This is likely to involve explanations and elaboration of the case and how complex it might be, which means that EPs will be able to direct and manage their efforts better. As was also mentioned above, EPs incorporated their previous professional identities into their current one and this may support them to understand the complexity of their work, which will also lead them to manage and direct their efforts better, and again improving their self-efficacy levels.

### **7.2.3 Post-16 context**

Another challenge when working with post-16 providers was that EPs felt that services for post-16 felt disjointed. This was something that two of the three post-16 providers also felt. One major concern was that although EPs now worked with students from birth to their 25<sup>th</sup> birthday, other services would change at 17/18. The lack of familiarity, with for instance, adult mental health service and adult social care opened up for misunderstandings between services and some EPs felt that adult services had a different agenda to child and adolescent services. EPs also mentioned that adult services probably were unfamiliar with them too. This was confirmed by the interviews held with post-16 providers who had encountered professionals from social care that did not know what EHC plans were and found themselves in situations where they had to explain it to other professionals. It is also likely that these professionals have little or no experience with the educational world and as such might find meetings and meeting formats novel and unfamiliar.

Atkinson et al (2015) suggested in their proposed competency framework that EPs will need to be aware of the context post-16 educational provision sits in, including the understanding of curricula, courses, understanding key professionals, and socio-cultural contexts that young people of this age group often find themselves in. However, there is no mention of the challenge all providers quoted as one of the main ones; funding. Although I am not arguing that EPs should understand all details around how post-16 providers are funded, understanding their concerns around how to support students if they



are uncertain about their future funding is something that will need to be taken into account. This will also be important as some EP work offered to post-16 providers might be traded, requiring providers to put away money in their budgets and this might not be a priority.

### **7.2.3.1 Inclusion**

The literature review showed that post-16 providers found it challenging to manage ‘mixed needs’ groups, and especially those learners who had difficulty to manage behaviour (e.g. Guishard, 2000). It was also argued that post-16 providers and staff had a lack of training on inclusion and how to cater for those with special educational needs (Spenceley, 2012). This was something that did come through in my research as well, see chapter 6, section 6.2.2.3, however when looking at the findings in more detail, it is evident that all post-16 providers were very proud of the diverse support that they were offering and the training that they did give their staff on inclusion. Two of the providers were also rated well on this in their most recent OfSted (Office for Standards in Education, Children’s Services and Skills) Inspection reports (‘Outstanding’ and ‘Good’), however, the third provider had not yet been inspected. The difficulties appeared when it came to differentiating for students with particular needs. Even though they knew how to differentiate tasks, so that they met their students’ needs, they felt that this was not possible due to requirements for certain qualifications. This was interesting, because it shows that there are more barriers to inclusion rather than just being able to adapt and differentiate one’s teaching. There is clearly a need for being able to differentiate and adapt certain qualifications, e.g. change wording that may be anxiety provoking for students. But there is also a need to support post-16 providers to support their learners to be able to use strategies so that they become able to take these qualifications. This is something that neither Guishard (2000), Spenceley (2012) nor Chown & Beavan (2012) mention. Chown & Beavan (2012) do however mention that post-16 providers need to focus on the learning process rather than the end qualification, nevertheless this may be difficult for post-16 providers as they need to promote themselves by offering certain qualifications. An additional difficulty for the providers is also that they are judged by how quickly young people achieve certain qualifications.

Returning back to Maslow's (1954) theory, I would argue that inclusion in post-16 education is different for this age group than it is for children and young people in pre-16 education. Not only do the post-16 educational providers need to differentiate their teaching and learning tasks, but they also need to support young people to be able to take certain qualifications that cannot be significantly differentiated due to the nature of them. If post-16 providers are not able to do so, young people may not be able to reach the two higher tiers in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs. If young people are not able to reach these tiers in post-16 education they may become less likely to fulfil their need of belongingness in the community after they have left compulsory education and as such there is a risk of them never becoming able to reach the self-actualisation tier of the hierarchy. This may also lead to unemployment and young people with little self-esteem.

Another challenge that, to my knowledge, was not mentioned in the literature was the ability to differentiate for students that did not meet specific criteria or official diagnosis. This challenge had two levels to it; the first one was an issue of resources, the second an issue of feeling that if you, as a lecturer/teacher, did not know the exact, named learning need you did not know what to do about it, as can be seen in section 6.2.2.3 in Chapter 6.

Post-16 providers felt that their risk assessment system was a real strength in their work, as they felt it allowed students to take part in certain courses, but be safe at the same time. The literature on this however, pointed to that such risk assessment might not be seen as a positive by students (e.g. Chown & Beavan, 2012) and can actually be a barrier to inclusion. However, the first phase of this research showed that EPs thought that one of their skills was to be able to take on a multitude of perspectives and communicate effectively with many different stakeholders, as well as using systemic and ecological theories. This may be a very useful skill when it comes to overlooking and supporting post-16 providers with such systems, so that they do not become a barrier rather than a support for all involved.

### **7.2.3.2 Transition**

Although ‘transition’ was one of the more researched areas in post-16 education, it was still a very small area of research (Carroll, 2015). It was also difficult to establish a common definition for what was meant by the word ‘transition’ in the post-16 context and as such a fair comparison was difficult to establish (Carroll, 2015). However, Atkinson et al (2015) particularly emphasised transition in their competency framework (see Appendix 3) as something EPs needed to be aware of and understand the impact of. In Chapter 2, the ecological system theory by Bronfenbrenner (1992) was used as a framework to guide my thinking around transitions and what happens in the different systems around a young person when they are transitioning to post-16 education.

Interviewed EPs were already aware of some of the concerns that could arise from different transitions, such as a transition to parenthood or independent living. They particularly emphasised systemic thinking, referencing Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) theory, around different circumstances and how they would apply psychological theories to overcome some of these barriers and support young people. This therefore begs the question whether trainee EPs need a specific curriculum, or a competency framework, to be aware of, and tackle such issues. This research would suggest that they do not and that their training on, and ability to work in a, person-centred, yet systemic, way may be more than enough in order to understand young people’s circumstances from their point of view, and how to support them through times of transition.

Post-16 providers did not mention other transitions than transitions to employment. This might have been high on their list of priorities due to the way they were being judged by authorities, and getting their learners into employment might have been seen as a marker of success. However, considering Bronfenbrenner’s (1992) theory, they might be missing important aspects that are affecting a young person’s development and therefore their efforts to support a young person to employment may not be as effective. EPs with more experience of working with post-16 providers spoke of their work on how to support young people into employment, but also had a more holistic

view of other difficulties that young people had, that would impact upon their ability to secure employment. This would indicate that their knowledge of psychological theory, such as Bronfenbrenner's (1992) theory, may give them an advantage in supporting young people with additional needs into employment. This could therefore be something that they can support post-16 educational providers with. Post-16 providers did in their interviews all talk about other factors that impacted upon their learners' lives, but did not explicitly make the link between these and successful transitions to, for instance, employment. This is perhaps an area that EPs can support post-16 providers with in order for learners to make even more successful transitions to different aspects of adulthood.

One article did examine the transition from post-16 education to employment for young people with dyslexia (Bell, 2010) and found that this transition was a source of stress and potential failure for these students. One of the key sources of stress was the fact that employers often did not, and perhaps were not able to, provide the same support and adaptations in the workplace, as post-16 providers had been. This indicates that there is a change in the young people's micro- and mesosystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1992) which may be the reason for this stress and something that EPs and post-16 educational providers will have to take into account. Bell (2010) recommends that there needs to be support for young people with dyslexia, particularly to encourage metacognition so that they recognise their own strengths and are able to apply these in the workplace. She also recommends that there should be literacy-based programmes for people with these types of literacy difficulties that are not linked to accreditations or qualifications, but rather supportive of their needs as adults. Another recommendation, among many, was for employers and career advisors to become much more aware of dyslexia and the potential barriers it may bring in employment. The interviews with EPs pointed to that this might be something that they could support with, perhaps not specifically for dyslexia, but also around broader literacy-based difficulties. Some EPs spoke about holding transition meetings with employers and that this clarified the needs of young people to the employers and what support they would need. Clarifying these needs would ensure better interactions between the parts in the

microsystems, leading to lesser tensions in the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1992), and as such leading to more successful development for young people.

One of the difficulties with the literature on transitions in post-16 is that research has often been done on specific needs and diagnoses, such as dyslexia, SLI, ASC and VI and almost no effort has been made to look at the broader transition needs for young people with additional needs. This may be why providers were particularly focused on dyslexia and ASC, and found it difficult to provide support for young people without specific diagnoses. The literature (e.g. Hewett, Douglas & Keil, 2014; Palikara, Lindsey & Dockrell, 2009) also points to that those with statements of SEN or EHC plans were likely to get more support with their transitions and more support in general in their post-16 education, which was also mentioned in the interviews with post-16 providers. This was something that EPs were concerned about as well and feared that they would perhaps only be able to support students with EHC plans, if providers were not able to buy in EP services.

### *7.3 Limitations*

This study represents a small sample of LA EPs who had been or were about to be involved with post-16 work. It also involved a small sample of post-16 providers. This was done at a point in time when EP work within post-16 education was in its infancy. The findings that are presented in this piece of research are not intended to be definitive nor generalisable. Rather its intent was to explore what the role within post-16 education might entail, what skills EPs felt would be important to have in order to work successfully in partnership with post-16 providers, learners, and parents. It also set out to explore what post-16 providers felt they needed in terms of support. It has highlighted areas for development for EPs, the LA, and its EPS. It has also highlighted areas that EPs are meeting and skills they have that would be welcomed by post-16 providers.

The research was to a certain extent directed by me in order to gain EPs' and post-16 providers' views as I used semi-structured interviews with questions that had been generated by using Tomlinson's (1989) hierarchical framework

and finding areas within the literature that I wanted to ask participants about. I have also relied on participant's use of language that constructed their realities, and in turn, I have also had to interpret the use of their language in order to construct my understanding of their constructs. Alternative methodologies, such as Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) could have been used in order to let the theory come from the participants rather than me, as the researcher, fitting their answers into theory. These are all limitations to my study, both for phase one and two, in addition to this it could also be debated whether the interviews with post-16 providers should have been conducted before the interviews with EPs and as such the findings from the interviews with post-16 providers could have been used to inform the interviews with EPs. This would perhaps ensure that this research becomes more community centred.

I would also like to point to the fact the LA, which was the focus of this study, calls it's EPS a 'community psychology service'. This might mean that it attracts EPs that have certain views and practice in a particular way. This might be why the findings from phase one pointed to such a strong use of 'community psychology' and 'systemic psychology' when EPs described their identity. It would be interesting to see whether this is a local description or whether it is more of a key part of EP professional identity and role.

#### ***7.4 Critical review and reflections***

Having stated the specific limitations of this research study in the preceding section, this I will now review and reflect on the points raised in the previous section. I will also consider how the points can be addressed with the ontological and epistemological stances used in these studies i.e. that of interpretivism and social constructionism.

##### ***7.4.1 Small sample***

One of the limitations mentioned previously was the small sample in both phases of this research. The completion of a larger project, able to pay attention

to a wider range of voices, perhaps across several different LAs and a greater range of professionals working for post-16 educational providers, would certainly provide a more thorough picture of what it means to be an EP and what the role of the EP in post-16 education might look like. It would also provide a more varied picture of the needs of the post-16 educational sector in order for local EP services to be more likely to meet their needs. Involving different LAs would also allow comparisons between different EP services situated within them as well as the LAs relationship with their EPS.

Although, a larger sample might have given myself, as the researcher, and the reader, a wider and more thorough picture of the role of the EP within post-16 education, being situated within the paradigms of interpretivism and social constructionism, the research would still have the assumption that knowledge is constructed and differs throughout and between societies. As such the perceived difference between LA might not be an actual difference, but a difference in how the EPs would have constructed their realities and how I, the researcher, have constructed their constructed and, to me, relayed realities. Being a piece of research that uses qualitative methods, this means that it is open to the “inconcludibility problem” (McGhee, 2001, p. 108), meaning that it is open to further and further reinterpretation *ad nauseam* and accuracy can, therefore, never be reached. However, this would have still brought greater degree of validity to the research, as McGhee (2001) would argue, and a wider range of participants would have perhaps capped the number of reinterpretations that could be made.

McGhee (2001) argues that reliability for qualitative research should be called “dependability”, and this would mean others should be able to depend on the research in order to be able to replicate it and its findings. McGhee (2001) argues that if the data, leading to the findings, have been collected in a systematic and well-documented manner, similar findings should be found in similar settings. I would argue that my research has been collected in a systematic manner as much as possible and has been well-documented in this thesis (see pages 60-72 for phase 1, and pages 108-119 for phase 2). In order to make the data collection for this research more systematic, perhaps a precise

schedule for when different participants should be interviewed, would have been helpful. This would have ensured that participants were all interviewed at different times and would counteract the effects of fatigue that one might get when interviewing participants at the end of the working day. It would also ensure that those wishing to carry out the research again could replicate it in greater detail. However, due to the nature of the ontological and epistemological stances, it could be argued that the knowledge constructed at a later date, by different people, would still be different than the knowledge constructed, and relayed to me, in this study.

#### ***7.4.2 Interactions, language and participants***

As mentioned in the section on limitations, the research was, to a certain degree, directed by myself. Some researchers, particularly those who employ a phenomenological method to their research, refer to a process of bracketing or ‘epoche’ (Langdrige, 2007), during which the researcher removes their interpretative self, suspends judgement and immerses themselves in the experience of another, i.e. those whom they have interviewed. Although I have not used a phenomenological method to my data analysis, I still followed a similar process where I bracketed off my emotional reactions and sought to ensure that the data represented the individuals who had been interviewed. However, as social constructionism would argue that reality happens in the interactions between people and in their use of language to construct it (Andrews, 2012), my interactions with the interviewees are therefore very much part of the findings.

One way of counteracting some of the influence of my interactions and the specific interpretation of language, and still stay within the paradigms of interpretivism and social constructionism would be to have a co-researcher who could do part of the data collection and analysis (Cottrell, 2014). The co-researcher could then look at my data collection and analysis, and I could look at his/hers. This would ensure that all the interpretations and analysis of the data would be triangulated between the two of us. This was in part done by giving extracts of transcripts with initial notes and codes to colleagues,



however having someone to look over the whole data set would improve upon this.

Lastly, the research could have been improved by interviewing young people who attend post-16 education. A view of the support that they currently receive and how it could be improved would give more depth to this research and to the understanding of the EP role in post-16 education. This is something that future research could, or perhaps should, focus upon.

## 8. Conclusion and implications for practice

As important as it is to acknowledge the limitations of my research, it is equally important to acknowledge the significance of its findings and what they mean for current and future EP practice.

Prior to the completion of this study, research aiming to explore the EP role was vast and the definitions for it were many. However, research considering the EP role in post-16 education was scarce. There are several reasons for this; one of them being that there has not been a statutory obligation for EPs to be working in post-16 education until recently. Recent changes to the Children & Families Act (2014) led to a change in the SEND CoP (DfE & DoH, 2014), which in turn put a statutory duty onto EPs to work with learners up to the age of 25. Since this, there have been calls for the initial training of EPs to incorporate competency frameworks that would prepare them for work with post-16 providers and learners (Atkinson et al 2015). However, there was, to my knowledge, very little in the literature about what current EPs thought they needed in order to work successfully in post-16 and there was also very little in the literature about the needs of post-16 providers. In this piece of research, I have argued that in order for EPs, and educational psychology as a whole, to become and remain relevant to post-16 providers, their needs firstly need to be understood. I have also argued that the EP role in post-16 will not change significantly as has been argued by Atkinson et al (2015). However, due to that the EP role has been defined by its specific service aim (Norwich, 2006) it might appear that it will be changing significantly. If one believes that the EP role is defined by what specific skills and service aims it has, then extending the role to work with a new age group might be seen as a significant change. However, if the role is defined by what field of knowledge the EP applies to broadly defined ends, then the move to working with a new age group is less significant.

### *8.1 Concluding remarks on findings*

The main aim of this research was to understand what the role of the EP is, as seen by current EPs, and how they perceived it would change with the

extension of the role to work with post-16 education and its providers. The findings suggested that the role of the EP is to apply psychology to different concerns regarding learning. However, the word “learning” was not exclusively used for formal education, but also in terms of supporting young people/adults in employment-based education and into employment. The EPs did therefore not perceive their role as changing, despite the extension of the role.

### *8.2 Influences and implications for the Educational Psychology profession*

As has been argued previously in this research, and the findings supported this, is that the EP role should be defined by what field of knowledge or discipline that we apply to broadly defined ends, i.e. psychology (Norwich, 2006). However, due to the complex nature of the role and the many different practices that are accepted within the profession there have been tensions around whether EPs should concentrate more on systemic or individual casework. (e.g. Norwich, 2005) and some have argued that if the profession does only do systemic work, it is at a danger of becoming obsolescent (Norwich, 2005; Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009). It has also been argued that in order to make sure that psychology is at the heart of what EPs do the profession needs to return to individual casework (Boyle & Lauchlan, 2009).

From this research, however, it can be concluded that there is a place for both systemic and individual casework. Due to the nature of post-16 work and due to having to work more directly with the learners, as they ultimately make their own decisions and have much more influence over their own lives, more individual work may be needed. But from the interviews with the post-16 providers it was evident that there was scope for systemic work as well. Many pointed to the disjointedness between different services and this is something that perhaps EPs will be able to join up, due to supporting young people from compulsory school all the way to the age of 25, whereas other services finish their support around the age of 18 years.

The findings also pointed to that there was a great need for support with differentiation and this is a potential area of systemic work for EPs, within post-16 education. This is also an excellent example of where EPs can apply psychology to more systemic areas, as well having an impact on more than one student. Another particular area of support that emerged in the interviews was how to support young people that did not qualify for formal assessments or had an EHC plan.

However, there were also areas that EPs themselves felt that they needed training and further development in. These will be presented below.

### ***8.2.1 Mental Capacity Act (2005)***

Further training on the Mental Capacity Act (2005) was something that Atkinson et al (2015) argued was needed for EPs to successfully work with post-16 education. I would argue that this is something that this research also has found. Specifically, what it means for EPs in their day-to-day practice with post-16 learners and education providers, but also what it means for the EPS as a whole. As mentioned in the overall discussion, the Act assumes that everyone over the age of 16 can make full decisions for themselves and their life. However, participants mentioned situations where parents and their children disagreed, and heated discussions were had in meetings. Most EPs took the role of a mediator in these situations; however, this might not always support an adherence to the young person's/adult's rights under the Mental Capacity Act 2005. Further professional development on the understanding of the Act and its legal duty put on professionals is therefore important. What role EPs have in deciding whether a young person has had the opportunity to learn to make such decisions for themselves is another debate to be had for the LA, as well as for those professional bodies that govern EP work.

### ***8.2.2 Adult assessments and adult services***

As has been mentioned previously, EPs felt that they needed some time to become familiar with assessment methods for learners aged 18 and over. It was mentioned that cognitive assessments all followed a certain structure, however that they would still like to become familiar with these before having to

complete them with a young adult. Due to not having used these assessments before and a limited use of them for those that work regularly in post-16 education, there is perhaps a greater need to explore assessment methods for adult learners and familiarise oneself with them. There is also a debate to be had about what recommendations that can be drawn from these assessments and what they mean for adult learners, as well as for their teaching and learning, and potentially employability.

Another implication for practice would be for the EPS to familiarise themselves with other professionals who work with young adults. Services such as adult social care and adult mental health services would be particularly important to link up with in order to provide young adults with support that is collaborative and not as disjointed as it appeared to all EPs that were interviewed. It has to be acknowledged that even though a young person's EP-work with them might now not be as "cut off" as it was before, however if a young person is supported by other agencies such as social care and CAMHS, there will be a transition for that young person when they turn 18, possibly a year before. Hence linking up with the adult side of these services and understanding how they work will be paramount to being able to support young adults. There might also need to be a system put in place to facilitate multiagency working.

### ***8.3 Implications and influences on the 'local' EPS within a LA***

As this research aimed to understand the post-16 educational sector's needs and how this will impact upon EP practice, I will now go on to present some specific implications for EP practice that was found from the post-16 providers. This will be particularly relevant to the local EPS within the LA where this research was conducted, due to their links to the rest of the LA and access to systems.

#### ***8.3.1 Seeing the whole picture***

The findings from the interviews with post-16 providers showed that they often did not get all the information about a student's needs, and when they did they found it overwhelming and challenging to see the bigger picture. I would argue

that as EPs are placed within an area of both systemic work and individual casework they would be paramount at supporting post-16 providers to be able to see a young person's needs in a holistic way.

### **8.3.2 Post-16 funding**

All post-16 providers found funding one of their main concerns and challenges. This was due to budget cuts, but also due to not knowing if funding streams would change or whether they would receive the same funding. I am not arguing that EPs need to understand all the details of post-16 funding but having some understanding for this may assure that the correct packages are offered to them.

### **8.4 Implications and influences on myself as a practicing EP**

During the course of this research I reflected upon how the findings would affect my own practice. During the final months of writing this research up and looking at the findings relation to each other I concluded that the research had affected me, as a practising EP, in two parts; how I perceive my own role and how I interact with those that are my clients.

As a developing EP, I have always greatly reflected upon the role of the EP and the inherent vagueness therein was something that unnerved me. Looking back through my training portfolio I had had an idea about what being an EP would be, but had not thought much about what other education professionals' view of the role is and as such I had not anticipated the 'role strain' (Biddle, 1986 and Bitner, Booms & Mohr, 1994) that would come with the role. Since having conducted this research I have focused more on what I bring with me to situations that my clients present to me. I often ask myself "how can I use psychology to make sense of this for the people encountering this difficulty?" and "How can I use psychology to support others to solve the 'problems' that they have?". Reflecting upon this, I believe that I asked myself those questions before, but perhaps not in such an overt way and I was more anxious about what I did; i.e. what tools I used, and if that was what my client wanted me to do.

One of the findings from this research was to understand where post-16 providers were coming from; what their set up was, what their ethos were, their financial situations and so on. This is something that I not only will use in my practice with post-16 educational providers, but it will be something that I will think about more in my work with nurseries and schools as well. It will be an important part of my formulations, as well as when supporting my clients to think of how they can support children and young people. As a practising EP, the findings have supported me to think in a more systemic way and using Bronfenbrenner's (1992) eco-systemic theory in a different way than before. Previously I would often think of schools/educational settings in generic fashion, whereas I now attempt to understand them as individual settings.

### *8.5 Implications and influences on myself as a person*

The process of conducting this research and the findings from it has of course affected myself as a person in terms of my values and belief systems. Firstly, it has made me more aware of how, as humans, we all categorise and identify ourselves and others in order to make our social worlds make sense. Being aware of this has also made me more aware of the responsibility this comes with. I am now questioning how I categorise different professionals; am I putting them in a defined box and create role strain for them?

Secondly, the research has reaffirmed my belief in supporting others in order to make them feel more part of our community. However, previously I might have seen that in a simplified manner and the way different factors influence how much someone can take part in their community did not occur to me as readily as it does now. Even though parts of Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs has not had much support in terms of research evidence, the part that has had most support in the research community are the two base tiers in the hierarchy, e.g. Jerome (2013) and Jonas (2016) (see Figure Two), which would suggest that if people are not able to satisfy those two main needs they will not be able to feel part of the community as much as someone who has satisfied those basic needs. Jerome (2013) and Jonas (2016) also argue that their research has found Maslow's hierarchy (1954) to continue to be valid when it comes to our understanding of how humans can reach self-actualisation.

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## Appendices for phase 1 and 2

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## 11. Appendices (phase 1 and 2)

### *Appendix 1a: Certificate of ethical approval*

	<b>GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION</b>  St Luke's Campus Heavitree Road Exeter UK EX1 2LU <a href="http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/">http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/education/</a>
<b>CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL</b>	
<b><u>Title of Project:</u></b>	The development of the Educational Psychologists' role in post-16 education
<b><u>Researcher(s) name:</u></b>	Maria Vukoja
<b><u>Supervisor(s):</u></b>	Andrew Richards Martin Levinson
<b><u>This project has been approved for the period</u></b>	
	From: 01/03/2016 To: 01/04/2017
<b><u>Ethics Committee approval reference:</u></b>	D/15/16/26
<b>Signature:</b>	
(Dr Philip Durrant, Chair, Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee)	<b>Date:</b> 16/02/2016

Appendix 1b: Ethical approval form



Ref (for office use only)

D/15/16/26

COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AND INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

When completing this form please remember that the purpose of the document is to clearly explain the ethical considerations of the research being undertaken. As a generic form it has been constructed to cover a wide-range of different projects so some sections may not seem relevant to you. Please include the information which addresses any ethical considerations for your particular project which will be needed by the SSIS Ethics Committee to approve your proposal.

Guidance on all aspects of the SSIS Ethics application process can be found on the SSIS intranet:

<https://intranet.exeter.ac.uk/socialsciences/staff/research/researchenvironmentandpolicies/ethics/>

All staff and postdoctoral students within SSIS should use this form to apply for ethical approval and then send it to one of the following email addresses:

[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and postdoctoral students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

[ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and postdoctoral students in the Graduate School of Education.

Applicant details	
Name	Maria Vukoja
Department	Education
UoE email address	hdmv201@exeter.ac.uk

Duration for which permission is required		
You should request approval for the entire period of your research activity. The start date should be at least one month from the date that you submit this form. Students should use the anticipated date of completion of their course as the end date of their work. Please note that <u>retrospective ethical approval will never be given.</u>		
Start date:01/03/2016	End date:01/04/2017	Date submitted:22/01/2016

Students only
All students must discuss their research intentions with their supervisor/tutor prior to submitting an application for ethical approval. The discussion may be face to face or via email.

Prior to submitting your application in its final form to the SSIS Ethics Committee it should be approved by your first and second supervisor / dissertation supervisor/tutor. You should submit evidence of their approval with your application, e.g. a copy of their email approval.	
Student number	640046593
Programme of study	Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEdPsych)
Name of Supervisor(s)/tutors or Dissertation Tutor	Dr Andrew Richards and Dr Martin Levinson
Have you attended any ethics training that is available to students?	Yes, I have taken part in ethics training at the University of Exeter For example, the Research Integrity Ethics and Governance workshop: <a href="http://as.exeter.ac.uk/rdp/postgraduateresearchers">http://as.exeter.ac.uk/rdp/postgraduateresearchers</a> If yes, please give the date of the training: 15/10/2014

#### Certification for all submissions

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given in this application and that I undertake in my research 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 ethics proposal form.

Helena Daniela Maria Vukoja

Double click this box to confirm certification

*Submission of this ethics proposal form confirms your acceptance of the above.*

#### TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT

The development of the Educational Psychologists' role in post-16 education.

#### ETHICAL REVIEW BY AN EXTERNAL COMMITTEE

No, my research is not funded by, or doesn't use data from, either the NHS or Ministry of Defence.

If you selected yes from the list above you should apply for ethics approval from the appropriate organisation (the NHS Health Research Authority or the Ministry of Defence Research Ethics Committee). You do not need to complete this form, but you must inform the [Ethics Secretary](#) of your project and your submission to an external committee.

#### MENTAL CAPACITY ACT 2005

No, my project does not involve participants aged 16 or over who are unable to give informed consent (e.g. people with learning disabilities)

If you selected yes from the list above you should apply for ethics approval from the NHS Health Research Authority. You do not need to complete this form, but you must inform the [Ethics Secretary](#) of your project and your submission to an external committee.

#### SYNOPSIS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

*Maximum of 750 words.*



This piece of research will look at the development of the educational psychologist role in post-16 education. The role of the educational psychologist is something that has been discussed and considered for a long time. For instance Burden (1999) discusses this and it has been discussed more recently by Fallon, Woods & Rooney (2010), as well as other papers that examine the educational psychologist role (Ashton & Roberts, 2006; Cameron, 2006 and Burnham, 2013). As the transition for educational psychologist work begins from working with children and young people aged 5 to 19 years to working with children and young people aged 0 to 25 years, this debate has yet again surfaced.

Atkinson, Dunsmuir, Lang & Wright (2015), argue that; *"the extension of the role of educational psychologists (EPs) working with young people up to the age of 25 represents one of the most significant developments the profession has ever experienced."* (pp. 159). Although this is something that could be debated, it has to be acknowledged that the extension of educational psychologists working with young people up to the age of 25 is a significant development for the profession. It also has to be acknowledged that there could potentially be a gap in the knowledge and skills that current educational psychologists have about working with young people above the age of 16. This gap has been explored by Atkinson et al (2015) and attributed to the different structure of post-16 education, clients having different needs and a different legal framework. Hence examining what skills and competencies current educational psychologists think they have that will be useful in the post-16 educational environment. It will also be of interest to understand whether Atkinson et al's (2015) competency framework addresses the needs of post-16 providers. For this purpose, the study will be divided into two parts.

The first part of this research project will be explorative and will examine what current strengths and areas for improvement there are when educational psychologists work in post-16 education and whether the professional identity for educational psychologists working in post-16 is changing with the legislative changes.

The second part of the study will also be explorative and attempt to examine what support post-16 provisions perceive themselves to have. As such it will support to think about how EPs may attempt to address these needs and tailor their offer to them.

## INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH

N/A

The following sections require an assessment of possible ethical consideration in your research project. If particular sections do not seem relevant to your project please indicate this and clarify why.

## RESEARCH METHODS

Design

As mentioned above, the research project will comprise of two studies. Study one will comprise of semi-structured interviews with educational psychologists that have had experience of working in post-16, as well as educational psychologists that do not have any experience of working in post-16 education, exploring their perceived strengths and areas for improvement when working in post-16 education. The semi-structured interviews will be developed using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989) in order to explore the perceived strengths and areas for improvement, starting with open-ended questions and prompt questions if more information is needed. The interviews will also contain questions related to Atkinson's, et al (2014) competency framework and explore the levels of self-efficacy educational psychologists feel regarding these. A minimum of four and maximum of eight educational psychologists will be recruited and each interview will take approximately an hour. The different answers from educational psychologists who have experience and those who don't will be explored. This data might be pointing to policy change within the local authority and showing a need for a differentiated continuous professional development programme depending on what percentage of educational psychologists had concerns and what these concerns are.

The second study will be an action research project, drawing on the information from study one it will be used to develop the local educational psychology service's continuous professional development (CPD) programme. How this will develop will differ depending on what concerns were highlighted in study one. I hypothesise that there will be concerns of some kind as these have been highlighted to me during team meetings, informal discussions with colleagues and the principal educational psychologist, as well as part-taking in the local authority's post-16 working group. The development of the CPD programme will be geared towards the concerns highlighted in interviews in study 1 and open to those who feel that they are in need of further knowledge and experience in these areas. This will enhance the service's skills base and I hypothesise that it will enhance current educational psychologists' self-efficacy levels. Doing this in the form of an action research project, evaluating the CPD programme and changing it to improve it for the next time can possibly change the policy for work in post-16 education.

### Sampling

The interview questions will be piloted with trainee educational psychologists to ensure that they are easily understood and well worded. Trainee educational psychologist will be recruited through TEPNET (an online forum for trainees) and through my doctoral course.

Participants for study one will be sampled through contacts at the local educational psychology service. An e-mail will be sent out to all educational psychologists who are working in the post-16 sector with information about the research project and my contact details. Those interested are urged to contact me and will be given more information and information sheets. If they are happy to take part in the study they will be provided with consent forms in order to give informed consent.

Participants for study two will be different members of staff for different post-16 providers. These will be contacted via e-mail and by phone in and will have to be members of post-16 providers registered with Ofsted. Participants in study two will be reminded of what the study is about, given information sheets and will have to sign consent forms in order to give their informed consent.

#### Procedure

Participants who have agreed to be part of the research project and given informed consent, will then be approached individually and a time convenient to them and within the frames of the research project will be arranged in order to conduct and interview. Interviews for both study one and two will be conducted in a private and quiet room in order to ensure confidentiality. The interviews will be recorded using a digital recorder and conducted using hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989), which will aid asking questions as well as with prompting participants to explore the subject more. The participants will be firstly be reminded of what the project is about, be reassured that they will remain anonymous and that no answers are right or wrong.

Interviews will be transcribed within a week of interviews and will be anonymised at this time. Participants will made aware of this and will be able to withdraw from the study by contacting myself and quoting their participant number. After transcription the interviews will be analysed using Braun & Clark's (2006) form of thematic analysis in nVivo (computer programme).

## PARTICIPANTS

This qualitative piece of research will involve a minimum of four and maximum of eight educational psychologists. It will involve a minimum of three and a maximum of 6 staff from post-16 providers.

Participants are not expected to have any additional needs, however if they do have such and disclose this, information sheets and consent forms can be provided in large font and questions can be simplified for ease of understanding. Appropriate volume when asking questions will be provided in case participants have hearing impairments.

## THE VOLUNTARY NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

For both studies participants in my local authority will be contacted via e-mail containing information about the nature of the project and what their participation would involve. My contact details will also be given for potential participants to be able to contact me with further questions or to inform me that they want to participate. The project will also be advertised at an appropriate team meeting. If participants decide that they want to participate they will be provided with a consent form where they will be able to sign in order to give their informed and written consent.

All participants will be informed that they can withdraw at any time, through using their participant number, provided on their consent form after the data has been anonymised.

All consent forms will contain information about the project, that the information they provide is confidential and will be anonymised, and their right to withdraw at any time without any disadvantage to themselves will be reiterated.

#### SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

Due to the nature of this project participants are not expected to have special needs, however if they do require special arrangements information sheets and consent forms will be available in large font, adequate speaking volume and/or a voice amplifier will be provided in case participants have hearing impairments. Extra time will be given to anyone who needs it.

#### THE INFORMED NATURE OF PARTICIPATION

Participants will be given an information sheet (see attachment) and a verbal description of the research project. They will be allowed to ask further questions and will be provided with my contact details in case they want to ask further questions at a later date.

#### ASSESSMENT OF POSSIBLE HARM

For participants

Participants might feel inadequate in their skills for this new area of work and might question how to acquire these new skills in a relatively short space of time.

To counteract this I will reassure all participants that there are no right or wrong answers and that the services I am enquiring about are not in place and nothing that they could have done earlier. I will also ensure that all participants will be made aware that my research will lead to new CPD opportunities and help the service focus on what skills educational psychologists feel they need to acquire. Participants will be made aware of this in the information sheet provided.

#### DATA PROTECTION AND STORAGE

Confidentiality and anonymity

In order to keep confidentiality and anonymity the interviews will be conducted in a separate room where participants cannot be overheard. Participants will be given a participant number (e.g. participant 1) and a list of participant number linked to participant name will be kept separately up until anonymisation.

How security of data will be guaranteed

All data will be saved on password-protected files, which in turn will be saved on a USB-memory stick that also is password-protected. All data will be encrypted.

What will happen to material after the project has ended?

All material will be destroyed after the project has finished and the dissertation has been written up and submitted. This will be explained to the participants and included in the information sheet.

Voice, video or personal identifiable data  
No voice, video or other personal identifiable data will be published or shared outside the research team. Certain statements/answers from the interviews might be used as examples, however, everything possible will be done so that no one else will be able to identify who has stated/answered that (no real names will be shared and no statements/answers that contain locations or other identifiable factors will be used).

#### DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest for this piece of research as it is part of my doctoral course and is not receiving any additional funding from anywhere else.

#### USER ENGAGEMENT AND FEEDBACK

Participants will be given contact details so that they can contact me and receive information about the outcomes of the research. I will also ask participants for feedback on the interview process.

#### INFORMATION SHEET

See attached information sheet.

#### CONSENT FORM

Written consent will be obtained. A consent form is attached.

#### SUBMISSION PROCEDURE

Staff and students should follow the procedure below.

In particular, students should discuss their application with their supervisor(s) / dissertation tutor / tutor and gain their approval prior to submission. Students should submit evidence of approval with their application, e.g. a copy of the supervisors email approval.

This application form and examples of your consent form, information sheet and translations of any documents which are not written in English should be submitted by email to the SSIS Ethics Secretary via one of the following email addresses:

[ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-ethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and postdoctoral students in Egenis, the Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies, Law, Politics, the Strategy & Security Institute, and Sociology, Philosophy, Anthropology.

[ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:ssis-gseethics@exeter.ac.uk) This email should be used by staff and postdoctoral students in the Graduate School of Education.

## *Appendix 2: Information sheet and consent form*

### **The development of the Educational Psychologists' role in post-16 education**

#### **Details of Project**

*My name is Maria Vukoja and I am a trainee educational psychologist, this research project is part of my doctoral thesis and therefore used to complete my training as an educational psychologist.*

*This project is divided into two parts. The first part is exploring what perceived current strengths and areas for improvement there are by educational psychologist working in post-16 education currently. It will also examine how the professional identity of educational psychologist is changing by moving into this new area of work. The second study will explore what strengths, challenges and support needs post-16 staff have.*

*The purpose of the research is to see how the role of the educational psychologist is developing in this new context of post-16 work and what supports educational psychologists in order to work effectively, if any, and what service would be appropriate for post-16 staff. I will be available to discuss any aspects of the research that you wish to explore further. You will be able to contact me on my contact details below in order to arrange a time that is suitable to discuss this. This will be available after you have completed your interview up until the time that the research has been submitted in the form of a thesis (May 2017).*

#### **Contact Details**

For further information about the research, please contact:

Name: *researcher: Maria Vukoja, contact person: Andrew Richards:*

Postal address: *Office 2.21, Haighton Library, St Luke's Campus, Heavitree Road, Exeter EX1 2LU, UK.*

Telephone: 00 44 (0)1392 724 445.

Email: *Researcher: [hdmv201@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:hdmv201@exeter.ac.uk) Contact person: [A.J.Richards@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:A.J.Richards@exeter.ac.uk) or [m.p.levinson@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:m.p.levinson@exeter.ac.uk)*

If you have concerns/questions about the research you would like to discuss with someone else at the University, please contact:

Andrew Richards, Programme Director, see e-mail address above.

#### **Confidentiality**

*Interview recordings and transcripts will be held in confidence. They will not be used other than for the purposes described above and third parties will not be allowed access to them (except as may be required by the law). However, if you request it, you will be supplied with a copy of your interview transcript so that you can comment on and edit it as you see fit (please give your email below so that I am able to contact you at a later date), if you do change the transcript I would like to contact you to explore the changes with you in order to gather further understanding of how you perceive the concepts explored in the interview.*

*Please keep this information sheet and consent form as it has your participant number on it. The participant number will allow you to request your interview transcript after it has been anonymised. Your data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act.*

**Data Protection Notice**

*The information you provide will be used for research purposes and your personal data will be processed in accordance with current data protection legislation and the University of [local city2]'s notification lodged at the Information Commissioner's Office. Your personal data will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties. The results of the research will be published in anonymised form. The data will be encrypted and securely stored on a password protected USB-stick. Data will be shared in an anonymised form with my research supervisor and only used for the purposes of this research as stated above.*

**Anonymity**

*Interview data will be held and used on an anonymous basis, with no mention of your name, institution/workplace or your region.*

**Consent**

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

- there is no necessity for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may withdraw at any stage;
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations;
- If applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form;
- all information I give will be treated as confidential;
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity.

.....  
(Signature of participant)

.....  
(Date)

.....  
(Printed name of participant)

.....  
(Email address of participant if they have requested to view a copy of the interview transcript.)

.....  
(Signature of researcher)

.....  
(Printed name of researcher)

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

Your contact details are kept separately from your interview data.



*Appendix 3: Competency framework for trainee educational psychologists (TEPs) working with young people aged 16-25 (Atkinson et al, 2015)*

<b>Section 1: Context</b>	
1.1a	Demonstrate knowledge about the types of curricula, courses, programmes and pathways available to young people aged 16-25
1.1b	Understands the key professionals in supporting young people aged 16-25.
1.1c	Demonstrates awareness of how educational psychologists can support young people aged 16-25 in achieving outcomes (including employment, health, community inclusion and independent living).
1.1d	Understands the socio-political context and pressures faced by young people aged 16-25 accessing further education (FE) and higher education (HE) including social and learning issues, mental health issues.
1.1e	Understands systems, services and resources to supports young people aged 16-25, including Educational Health and Social Care and Criminal Justice systems.
1.2a	Verbal and non-verbal communication that are appropriate to the professional context, including in challenging interactions.
1.2b	Respectful of beliefs and values of colleagues within other professional sectors, even when inconsistent with personal values and beliefs.
1.2c	Working knowledge of multiple and differing world views, professional standards and contributions across different professional roles, contexts and systems.
1.2d	Appreciates and integrates perspectives from multiple professions.

1.3	Other areas to be addressed via an extension to existing curricula: Commissioning of services and provision mapping for 16-25 year olds; Working with families – understanding cultural differences in expectations of adulthood and issues of interdependence between young adults and parents.
<b>Section 2: Legislation</b>	
2.1	Demonstrate awareness of key legislation relating to the needs of young people aged 16-25. Including the Mental Capacity Act (2005) and Disabled Students Allowance (DSA).
2.2	Spontaneously and reliably identifies complex ethical and legal issues, analyses them accurately and proactively addresses them.
2.3	Other areas to be addressed via an extension to existing curricula: Knowledge of legislation such as the Autism Act (2009), and Autism Strategy (2010); Equality Act (2010); Children and Families Bills, Education Health and Care (EHC) plans and tribunals; disability legislation (e.g. Carers and Disabled Children Act, 2000); Learning and Skills Act (2000); Children and Leaving Care Act (2000); Mental Health Act; Consent and decision making – good practice guidance; guidance on safeguarding and sexual exploitation; Rose Review (2009); Valuing People (2010).
<b>Section 3: Assessment</b>	
3.1a	Able to select and use a broad range of psychological assessment methods, appropriate to the young person, environment and the type of intervention likely to be required.

3.1b	Demonstrates awareness of appropriate methods and protocols for assessing the mental health of young people aged 16-25.
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3.1c	Understands additional responsibilities which may arise within the context of assessing post-16 learners (e.g. capacity to learn; diagnosis of a specific learning difficulty).
3.2	Selection of assessment tools reflects a flexible approach to exploring hypotheses about the needs of the young person in relation to achieving outcomes (including employment, health, community inclusion and independent living).
3.3	Other areas to be addressed via an extension to existing curricula: Specific/general learning difficulties, dyscalculia, autistic spectrum condition (ASC), profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), complex learning difficulties and disabilities (CLDD); mental health; adaptive behaviour assessments; dynamic assessment; client voice/young person's perspective; consultation and observation; assessing resilience, vulnerability and risk.

#### **Section 4: Interventions and outcomes**

4.1a	Understands the principles of consent and shared decision making, including the Mental Capacity Act (2005)
4.1b	Understands the principles of person-centred planning.
4.1c	Demonstrates awareness of how interventions should support young people in achieving outcomes (including employment, health, community inclusion and independent living).
4.2a	Acts in the best interest of the young person and maintains a professional duty of care.
4.2b	Communicates clearly and effectively with clients.

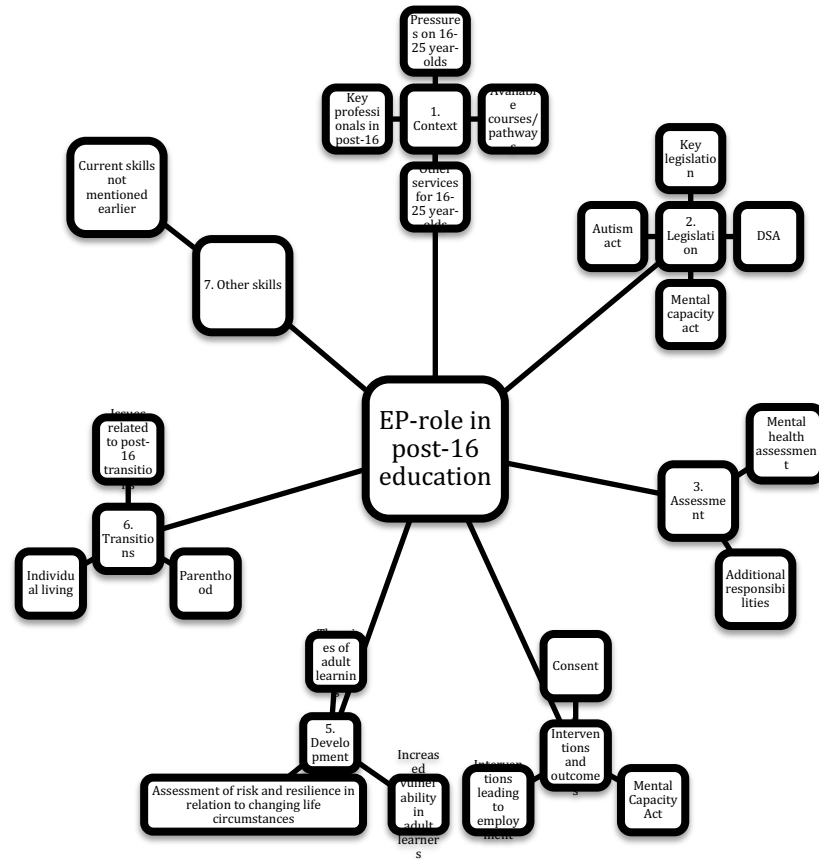
4.3	Other areas to be addressed via an extension of the curricula: coaching: goal-based outcome measurement; use of technology to support learning and independence; life skill development; behaviour, social and emotional development and management (including motivation); development of basic skills (reading
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	and numeracy) in adulthood; systemic interventions and strategic planning in FE and post-16 services.
<b>Section 5: development</b>	
5.1a	Demonstrates knowledge of theories of adult learning
5.1b	Recognises circumstances or behaviours which may be potentially challenging for young people aged 16-25 (including parenthood, development of sexuality, drug and alcohol use, chronic ill health) and which can increase vulnerability.
5.1c	Demonstrates knowledge of how to assess risk and resilience in relation to changing life circumstances.
5.2a	Demonstrates awareness of the effects of oppression and discrimination on young people and their families.
5.2b	Recognises ethical or safeguarding issues, knows how to address these appropriately and when to seek supervision.
5.2c	Recognises and discusses limits of own professional and legal knowledge.
5.3	Other areas to be addressed vi an extension to existing curricula: developing independence; neuropsychological development; social and emotional development; vocational skills.

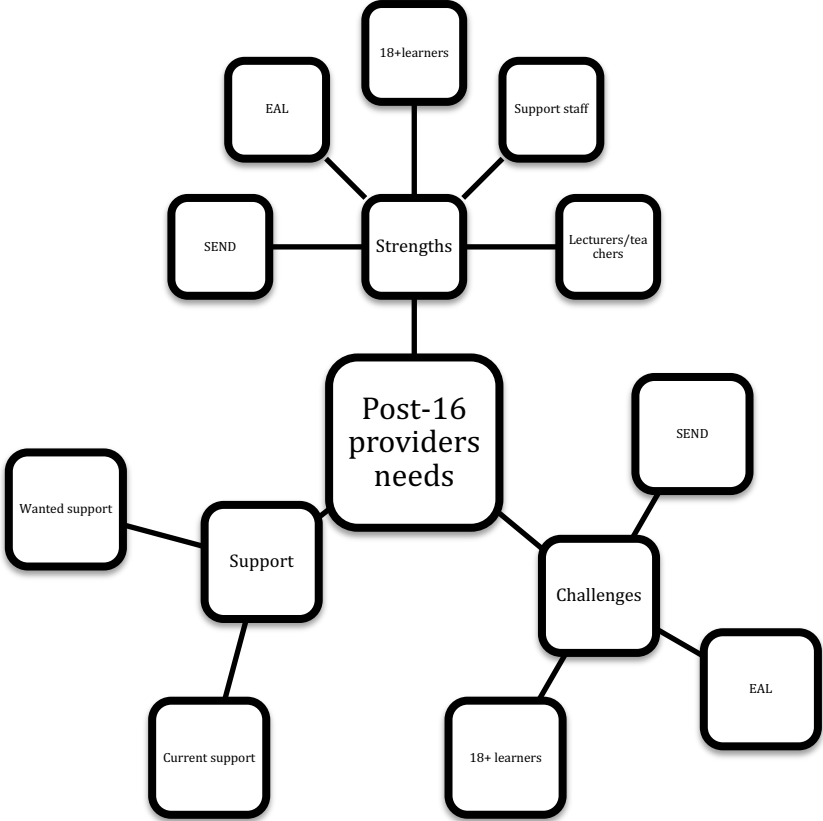
<b>Section 6: Transitions</b>	
6.1a	Understands issues which might arise within the context of young people aged 16-25 making transitions between educational and/or vocational institutions, or into employment.
6.1b	Understands issues, which might arise as a result of other life transitions (e.g. to independent living; parenthood; adulthood).
6.2a	Works collaboratively with others to support transitions made by young people aged 16-25.
6.2b	Within multidisciplinary settings can work with other professionals to incorporate psychological knowledge into transition planning and monitoring.

6.3	Other areas to be addressed via an extension to existing curricula: professional roles and responsibilities.
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Appendix 4: Development of areas to explore for phase 1 interviews



Appendix 5: Development of areas to explore for phase 2 interviews



*Appendix 6: Interview schedule, phase 1 and 2, before piloting*

<b>Interview with educational psychologist (w. experience of post-16)</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Main question</b>	<b>Prompt 1</b>	<b>Prompt 2</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Prompted</b>
1. Professional identity then and now	Tell me about your educational background?				
		EP-training?			
	When did you qualify as an EP?				
		How do you think this has affected your view of what it means to be an EP?			
			Do you think you would have seen the role differently if you had/had not done the doctoral course?		
	How long have you worked as an EP?				



*Appendix 6*

	Could you tell me what it means to be an EP to you?				
	When did you start working with post-16?				
		How was this different to working with the pre-16 population?			
			Did this change your view of what being an EP is?		
	What new responsibilities did the move to post-16 work bring?				
		How did you find these new responsibilities?			
2. Challenges for EP practice	What has been challenging when working in post-16?				

Appendix 6

		How has this been different to challenges working with pre-16 education?			
3. Strengths of post-16 education/areas that work well for EPs	What has worked well while working in post-16?				
		Structure/Flexibility?			
			Independence of young people?		
4. Difference to pre-16 education	How has your experience in post-16 been different to the one in pre-16 education?				
		How is 6 <sup>th</sup> form different?			
		Further Education colleges?			
		Other providers?			
	How has this affected your way of working as an EP?				

*Appendix 6*

		Broader practice?			
5. Legislation around post-16 education	What do you know about the legislation that surrounds post-16 education?				
		How does this affect your practice?			
			DSA?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
			Autism Act?		
6. Post-16 context	What other services do you work with when working with the post-16 population?				
		Which would you say are the key professionals that you deal with in post-16?			
			How has this affected your practice?		

*Appendix 6*

	Have you had to support post-16 to implement interventions for future employment?				
		How confident did you feel doing this compared to when supporting the implementation of other strategies in pre-16 education?			
	Do you think that the pressures on 16-25 year olds changes the way you work?				
	What transitions have you had to support with in post-16?				
		Employment?			
		University?			
		Parenthood?			

*Appendix 6*

7. Self-efficacy/confidence	How confident would you say that you are when working with post-16?				
		Is this different when it comes to working with post-16 staff compared to post-16 students?			
		Does this include confidence understanding the legislative context around post-16?			
			Autism Act?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
	What areas do you think you need to develop in order to become more confident in working with post-16?				

*Appendix 6*

<b>Interview with educational psychologist (w/o experience of post-16)</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Main question</b>	<b>Prompt 1</b>	<b>Prompt 2</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Prompted</b>
1. Professional identity	Tell me about your educational background?				
		EP-training?			
	When did you qualify as an EP?				
		How do you think this has affected your view of what it means to be an EP?			
			Do you think you would have seen the role differently if you had/had not done the doctoral course?		
	How long have you worked as an EP?				
	Could you tell me what it means to be an EP to you?				

*Appendix 6*

		What do you think has influenced this view the most?			
	Do you think this might change when you start working with the post-16 population?				
		Do you feel that there might be challenges to your practice that will change your view of who you are as an EP?			
2. Challenges for EP practice	What do you think will be challenging when working in post-16?				
		How do you think this will be different to challenges working with pre-16 education?			

*Appendix 6*

3. Strengths of post-16 education/areas that work well for EPs	Is there anything that you think might be easier working in post-16?				
		Structure/Flexibility?			
			Independence of young people?		
4. Difference to pre-16 education	How do you think post-16 will be different to pre-16?				
		How do you think 6 <sup>th</sup> form different?			
		Further Education colleges?			
		Other providers?			
			Structures?		
			Understanding of your role?		
	Do you think this might affect your EP practice?				
		Broader practice?			



*Appendix 6*

5. Legislation around post-16 education	What do you know about the legislation that surrounds post-16 education?				
		Do you think this might affect your practice?			
			DSA?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
			Autism Act?		
6. Post-16 context	What other support services are you aware of that are involved with post-16?				
		Do you think that working with different professionals to your pre-16 work might affect your role?			

Appendix 6

	What type of interventions do you think you will be supporting to implement in post-16 education?				
		Interventions for employment?			
		Transitions?			
			Transition to parenthood?		
	Do you think that the pressures on 16-25 year olds might change the way you work?				
		How?/Why not?			
7. Self-efficacy/confidence	How confident would you say that you feel about working with post-16 in the future?				

Appendix 6

		Is this different compared to working with pre-16 students?			
		Does this include confidence understanding the legislative context around post-16?			
			Autism Act?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
	What would you say your best skills are to date?				
		Do you think these skills will be useful in the post-16 context?			
			How come?		
			If they will be used differently, how?		

*Appendix 6*

	What areas do you think you need to develop in order to work effectively in post-16 when you do get the chance to do so?				
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*Appendix 6*

<b>Interview with post-16 staff</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Main question</b>	<b>Prompt 1</b>	<b>Prompt 2</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Prompted</b>
1. Strengths	What strengths would you say that the college/provider/6 <sup>th</sup> form has?				
		What are these strengths when it comes to students with SEND?			
		What are these strengths when it comes to students with EAL?			
		What are these strengths when it comes to students with adult learners?			
	What strengths would you say that your lecturers have?				

*Appendix 6*

	What strengths would you say that your support staff have?				
2. Challenges	What challenges would you say that the college has?				
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with SEND?			
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with EAL?			
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with adult learners?			
3. Support	What support do you receive currently?				
		What types of support do you use the most?			
			How effective has this support been?		

Appendix 6

	If you could choose any type of support for your students that you do not already have, what would this type of support be?				
		Speech and language?			
		Mental health?			
		Pinpointing learning need?			
		Have you tried to get this support in the past?			
			Was the service satisfactory?		

*Appendix 7: Interview schedule, phase 1 and 2, post piloting*

<b>Interview with educational psychologist (w. experience of post-16)</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Main question</b>	<b>Prompt 1</b>	<b>Prompt 2</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Prompted</b>
1. Professional identity then and now	Tell me about your educational background?				
		EP-training?			
	When did you qualify as an EP?				
		How do you think this has affected your view of what it means to be an EP?			
			Do you think you would have seen the role differently if you had/had not done the doctoral course?		
	How long have you worked as an EP?				
	<i>Do you think you have a professional identity?</i>				



Appendix 7

		Could you tell me more about _____ (what participant has mentioned)?			
			Has it changed since you started working in post-16?		
	Could you tell me what it means to be an EP to you?				
	When did you start working with post-16?				
		How was this different to working with the pre-16 population?			
			Did this change your view of what being an EP is?		
	What new responsibilities did the move to post-16 work bring?				

Appendix 7

		How did you find these new responsibilities?			
2. Challenges for EP practice	What are the challenges you face as a professional EP over the next two years?				
	What has been challenging when working in post-16?				
		How has this been different to challenges working with pre-16 education?			
3. Strengths of post-16 education/areas that work well for EPs	What has worked well while working in post-16?				
		Structure/Flexibility?			
			Independence of young people?		

*Appendix 7*

4. Difference to pre-16 education	How has your experience in post-16 been different to the one in pre-16 education?				
		How is 6 <sup>th</sup> form different?			
		Further Education colleges?			
		Other providers?			
	How has this affected your way of working as an EP?				
		Broader practice?			
5. Legislation around post-16 education	What do you know about the legislation that surrounds post-16 education?				
		How does this affect your practice?			
			DSA?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
			Autism Act?		

*Appendix 7*

6. Post-16 context	What other services do you work with when working with the post-16 population?				
		Which would you say are the key professionals that you deal with in post-16?			
			How has this affected your practice?		
	Have you had to support post-16 to implement interventions for future employment?				

Appendix 7

		How confident did you feel doing this compared to when supporting the implementation of other strategies in pre-16 education?			
	Do you think that the pressures on 16-25 year olds changes the way you work?				
	What transitions have you had to support with in post-16?				
		Employment?			
		University?			
		Parenthood?			
7. Self-efficacy/confidence	What skills do you feel are important to have as an EP?				

Appendix 7

		How competent do you feel to carry out the tasks you believe to be important and that are demanded of you?			
	How confident would you say that you are when working with post-16?				
		Is this different when it comes to working with post-16 staff compared to post-16 students?			
		Does this include confidence understanding the legislative context around post-16?			
			Autism Act?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		

*Appendix 7*

	What would have to happen in order for you to increase your confidence when it comes to working in post-16 education?				
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Appendix 7

Interview with educational psychologist (w/o experience of post-16)					
Area	Main question	Prompt 1	Prompt 2	Spontaneous	Prompted
1. Professional identity	Tell me about your educational background?				
		EP-training?			
	When did you qualify as an EP?				
		How do you think this has affected your view of what it means to be an EP?			
			Do you think you would have seen the role differently if you had/had not done the doctoral course?		
	How long have you worked as an EP?				
	Do you think you have a professional identity?				



Appendix 7

		Could you tell me more about _____ (what participant has told me)?			
			Do you think it will change in the next two years? How?		
	Could you tell me what it means to be an EP to you?				
		What do you think has influenced this view the most?			
	Do you think this might change when you start working with the post-16 population?				
		Do you feel that there might be challenges to your practice that will change your view of who you are as an EP?			

*Appendix 7*

2. Challenges for EP practice	What challenges do you think you will face as a professional EP over the next two years?				
	What do you think will be challenging when working in post-16?				
		How do you think this will be different to challenges working with pre-16 education?			
3. Strengths of post-16 education/areas that work well for EPs	Is there anything that you think might be easier working in post-16?				
		Structure/Flexibility?			
			Independence of young people?		

*Appendix 7*

4. Difference to pre-16 education	How do you think post-16 will be different to pre-16?				
		How do you think 6 <sup>th</sup> form different?			
		Further Education colleges?			
		Other providers?			
			Structures?		
			Understanding of your role?		
	Do you think this might affect your EP practice?				
		Broader practice?			
5. Legislation around post-16 education	What do you know about the legislation that surrounds post-16 education?				
		Do you think this might affect your practice?			

Appendix 7

			DSA?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
			Autism Act?		
6. Post-16 context	What tasks/skills do you think will be important to have when working in post-16?				
		How competent do you feel to carry out these tasks that you think will be demanded of you?			
	What other support services are you aware of that are involved with post-16?				
		Do you think that working with different professionals to your pre-16 work might affect your role?			

*Appendix 7*

	What type of interventions do you think you will be supporting to implement in post-16 education?				
		Interventions for employment?			
		Transitions?			
			Transition to parenthood?		
	Do you think that the pressures on 16-25 year olds might change the way you work?				
		How?/Why not?			
7. Self-efficacy/confidence	How confident would you say that you feel about working with post-16 in the future?				

*Appendix 7*

		Is this different compared to working with pre-16 students?			
		Does this include confidence understanding the legislative context around post-16?			
			Autism Act?		
			Mental Capacity Act?		
	What would you say your best skills are to date?				
		Do you think these skills will be useful in the post-16 context?			
			How come?		
			If they will be used differently, how?		

*Appendix 7*

	What areas do you think you need to develop in order to work effectively in post-16 when you do get the chance to do so?				
		What would have to happen for you to feel more competent in these areas?			

*Appendix 7*

<b>Interview with post-16 staff</b>					
<b>Area</b>	<b>Main question</b>	<b>Prompt 1</b>	<b>Prompt 2</b>	<b>Spontaneous</b>	<b>Prompted</b>
1. Strengths	What strengths would you say that the college/provider/6 <sup>th</sup> form has?				
		What are these strengths when it comes to students with SEND?			
		What are these strengths when it comes to students with EAL?			
		What are these strengths when it comes to students that are adult learners?			
	What strengths would you say that your lecturers/teachers have?				



*Appendix 7*

	What strengths would you say that your support staff have?				
2. Challenges	What challenges would you say that the college has?				
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with SEND?			
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with EAL?			
		Do you have any challenges when it comes to students with adult learners?			
3. Support	What support do you receive currently?				
		What types of support do you use the most?			

*Appendix 7*

			How effective has this support been?		
	If you could choose any type of support for your students that you do not already have, what would this type of support be?				
		Have you tried to get this support in the past?			
			Was the service satisfactory?		

## *Appendix 8: Extract from interview with EP (phase 1)*

### **Professional identity then and now**

- Tell me about your educational background?  
I did a degree in psychology and it was an unusual degree at the time because it involved two years psychology, then one year following a postgraduate certification in psychology course and then one year back in psychology but with an educational bent. So at that stage I really was thinking about being an EP. Then I worked as a teacher for four years and then I did a masters degree in educational psychology at the university of east London (UEL) in, ehm, quite a few years ago now, 1989.
  - EP-training?
  - My MEd was 1989 to 1990.
  
- When did you qualify as an EP?  
Qualified in 1990 as it was only a years training, the masters degree.
  - How do you think this has affected your view of what it means to be an EP?  
Ehm, all of this seems a long time ago now. So my view of it means to be an EP has really been informed by my practice since then. I can't really remember a huge amount of what I did on my training, but I still remember about my teaching experience, and that does still inform some of my perceptions and my empathy with teachers.
    - Do you think you would have seen the role differently if you had/had not done the doctoral course?  
I think I would have probably felt better qualified because a years course wasn't really long enough and there was a lot of learning to be done subsequent to that, in fact it is still going on, I think. It would have been interesting because I wouldn't have necessarily been a teacher.
  
- How long have you worked as an EP?  
Since 1990, apart from career breaks to have my children.
  
- What would you say your professional identity is currently?  
I would say that I'm a psychologist and that I am applying psychology in education. I think that probably, in the way that we work in the current context, in fact actually largely in the way that I always have had to work in local authorities has meant that we have had to be relatively solution focused and brief in some of our interventions. But I see myself as a consultant and I see myself as a joint problem-solver. I do think it is important to recognise the information that we bring from our knowledge base, so I don't think

consultation can be content free. I think consultation to be effective you have to have more than just the process.

- Has this changed since working in post-16?  
Well, my view of myself as a psychologist has not changed. But the context is different. I've had relatively little experience in working with post-16 in comparison to the years I have had with working with school aged children. But one of the difference is that I am working with somebody that is an adult and I am not in the same way involving their parents or carers, although their parents or carer are still involved, it depends on the needs of the young person. I am also broadening, I think we all need to broaden, our focus for post-16 so that we not necessarily just focus on educational attainment or skills to learn, I think we should be looking more at life skills. Enabling the young person to access what they need to in order to move forward in life. So we're looking at how they can problem solve to overcome barriers. It might be in the work place, it might be with friends, relationships.
- What new responsibilities did the move to post-16 work bring?  
Yes, there are new responsibilities. I think that there are new responsibilities due to the new age range, so we have to ensure that we have the new knowledge to work with that age range. There are also CPD implications. We have responsibilities to the young person in a way that is different to when we work with younger clients, because with a younger client we are much more working with the parent, we do still work with the child and we are child-centred but I think that working with an adult, the responsibility is perhaps more focused on that young person and we need to ensure that we are meeting the needs of that young adult and carefully thinking about if a parent has an opposing view how to deal with that. This can become difficult depending on the young persons capacity.

### **Challenges for EP practice**

- What would you say are the challenges you face as a professional EP over the next two years?  
Well, one challenge will be about maintaining funding so that we can carry on working. That pattern of funding might change, it might be from different sources, it might be from different commissioning groups. That's probably going to be a challenge in the future. The other challenge in the future is about needing to be really flexible, in terms of the shifting in raft of services and provision for young people in the 16+ age range. Keeping abreast of what's on offer to them and what is not on offer to them is really important if we're actually going to jointly problem solve with people and provide this package. The other challenge is following on from the age of austerity and perhaps a change in society. We have a widening gap in the have's and the have's not and the support for the most

vulnerable people in our society at 16+ which is a crucial transition for young people, particularly those who are vulnerable, like those in the care system or those with special needs or those experiencing very high levels of poverty.

- What has been challenging when working in post-16?  
First of all, trying to establish what is the purpose of my involvement, because with the recent legislations

At a personal level it is important to establish what my role is, because there might be so many other role assigned to me by other people. There might be those thinking that an EP does this or that or other who want certain thresholds to be met for involvement and there might be another perspective from the young person. They might just want some help in terms of how to plan and negotiate their future. But at a more systems level there is also a challenge in joining up with commissioners for services aimed at young people aged 16+ and working through and try to navigate the different assessment and support pathways and how we as EPs can fit into that and how we can influence it for greater good, through consultation and improving services as a whole. A whole range of things really that local authorities are in the process of trying to plan. The timing of transitions from people from one service to another, for instance from CAMHS to adult mental health services, how do we fit into in supporting that transition. So I think we still have a role very much as a consultant on an individual and systemic level.

- o How has this been different to challenges working with pre-16 education?  
Pre-16 education is much more established and there have been statutory frameworks and guidance for a long time and although we now have statutory framework and guidance for post-16 it is all very new. The devil is in the detail of who does what and how it should be done. How do we establish which young people we will be working with and which ones we aren't, because that in a sense is our work. We might like to work more flexibly with a broader range of people, but there might not be funding for us to do that. There might only be funding for us to work with young people who are subject to education, health and care plans.

### **Strengths of post-16 education**

- What has worked well while working in post-16?  
For me personally I have been able to clarify the needs of young people, within post-16 settings and helping to develop a robust planning framework around them, which is much improved on what was the old learning difficulties assessment. That is definitely an advantage and we have been able to liaise with other professionals

and make connections as part of that process. The other things is that the young people themselves think that it has been an advantage to them to actually have someone that they can talk to and discuss their needs, discuss their aspirations with someone who can, and sometimes I think that can be the EP, someone who can be an advocate for them in terms of ensuring that the work around them is person centred. We have also been able to provide advice to settings and who might have bought in psychology services for specific things like access arrangements but who clearly benefited from work when consulting with them on other areas and on other psychological aspects related to education. So for example how do they support a young person on the autistic spectrum, do they really understand how to problem solve from an autistic perspective. So that is working at the next level up in terms of helping providers developing skills.

- Structure/flexibility?

In one of the college the structure was an advantage but in another not so much. This is a process for them too. One of the things that we have been able to do, and it is about identifying possible roles of which I did not think I would have had, in one case was actually bridging the gap of college and the world of work. How can a young person a profile to take with them to use when they're discussing with careers advisors?

- Independence of young people?

### **Difference to pre-16 education**

- How has your experience in post-16 been different to the one in pre-16 education?

This really varies according to the individual setting, it varies massively anyway, schools can be like different countries, can't they? I have had one experience where the SENCO of a post-16 college has been really on the ball and has a raft of support staff, understands what EHCPs are and early help and I have had an experience of another person in another setting who did not know the first thing about it, who somehow had fallen through the net and failed to attend the local authority training and there was really a job of work to be done there in terms of ensure that basic rights were adhered to. I think there is more of a difference between institutions rather than pre and post, and it is about the quality of the people, the quality of the staff involved.

- How is 6<sup>th</sup> form different?

I think that 6<sup>th</sup> forms and post-16 in established schools, in special schools for example, are going to be far more clear about the educational frameworks in terms of applying the code of practice because they will have a SENCO that has

always done that. They'll know, they'll have in place systems for liaison with parents/carers and support as well as linking directly with the young person

- Further Education colleges?
- Other providers?

I think there are so many post-16 providers now who vary hugely and it is really difficult to keep a handle on them. In fact I have been asked recently to go to an alternative provider to inspect if they meet the needs of the young person with an EHC. That's not really my job! But it's commissioned as part of a package so it's definitely a role there for somebody to look at and see whether a young person's needs are being met and the EP might well be a part of that.

Somebody has to devise a system that is robust to ensure that young people are actually provided with what they should be according to their plans, especially if the local authority is funding it.

### **Legislation around post-16 education**

- What do you know about the legislation that surrounds post-16 education?

I know about the Children & Families Act, the code of practice, and links to equalities act. I'm not sure whether I know them on the top of my head, because what I would do is to be clear on what's statutory and what is guidance. That's always at the back of my mind. If I must do a piece of work, because in this LA we are talking about discrete pieces of work, we do not have a seamless provision, which allocates EP time post-16 outside special schools. So it is about looking at individual casework. So that, in some respects limits what you can do what you can do at a preventative level although you can advise and you can consult regardless in those individual cases, but there is a piece of work to be done in advising those settings and training them. There is another team within the local authority responsible for doing that. One of the difficulties we've had has been breaking into that within the local authority and having ourselves included in some of those discussions rather than just being perceived as the people who assess individual children.

- How does this affect your practice?
  - DSA?
  - Mental Capacity Act?

I have a guide to the mental capacity act on my desk and at the moment something I have thought about the fine line between representing the aspirations of the young person and the parents. What I would see myself doing is to really be sure of my ground and liaising with other professionals within health and

social care when appropriate when unsure of issues that might arise as a result of this. I don't think I would try to grapple with a difficult case on my own.

- **Autism Act?**

No. If I have I'm not aware of the implications of the act and that is probably a gap in my knowledge.



## *Appendix 9: Extract from interview with post-16 provider*

### **Challenges**

What challenges would you say that the college has in terms of supporting students?

Ehm, the challenges are usually around funding in that we never know how long we're going to have funding for the funding streams which change. We can only work yearly, or two years at a time. So that has a knock on effect when you are hiring people, looking for premises and trying to get any form of grants and loans. So one of the challenges is how to [inaudible. Brave?] that funding and make it sustainable.

Challenges when it comes to SEND?

We would like to have, ehm, more support professionals that can help us mentor and coach, help us with staffing, eh, not staffing, student issues. The challenges working with people with EHCPs that's, we need... Perhaps they can be quite complex. If we're not on the systems, because we're not on a school system because we're an independent provider we are sometimes handicapped with knowing what is on the intelligence systems and different things like that. Something that we would like to improve is to be able to connect with other departments, for example we have some learners here in [local city] who are looked after, cared for, and social care wants to have information on those and we have just managed to get a PEP system and do the PEP reviews, but we weren't before. So this is where we are as an independent provider, because we don't qualify for some of the benefits that some of the colleges would benefit for. So it is a bit isolated. I did have a good relationship in [local town] and obviously I now had this contact with you, in [local town] I worked with an educational psychologist there when we were doing an education, health, care plan for one of the learners that had been with us and when identified the need, which our tutors needed to understand even more. We can look at general training and things like that, but when an educational psychologist really knows our learners and some of our learners that we've had have gone through the system and been known to the educational psychologist, they were then able to come in and work with us when we had a problem around that particular individual, which was very, very much mentoring around the learners which helped us remove some of the barriers. So when you have standard training, people can come in and say 'this is what typically happens', we already know a lot of that, but what you don't know is how to work with that person's issue. So that would be really helpful.

Challenges when it comes to adult learners?

Again, it's not being part of systems and multiagency working, so we can be working with an individual who has multiple barriers and unless we ask the right questions we don't know whether there is any probational needs, any other agencies, we ask them directly and then we have to join up the dots and different departments don't all work with one another. You might find that it's not the same with children services as adult services and you can't assume that talking to other people and they will now. In [local town] I had a child in need meeting for one of our learners and the social worker did not

know what an education, health, care plan was. So, I had to explain to her what that was, you just assume that SEND talk to child services. I mean, she might have been new, but some of these issues that some of our learners are facing, if everyone had better insight we could work together in a better, more, in a community way that means that we can better support the person. If all just have little bits of information that could be quite dangerous.

### **Support**

What support do you receive currently?

Hmm.... We don't actually get support, but we work with ehm the SEN team in [local town] and the SEND team in [local city], it'll be SEN in [local town] and SEND in [local city]. We work in [local city], [local town] and [local area] and it's all, they all have slightly different working arrangements, so we work in partnership with people. Obviously within those partnerships people do support us if we've got queries or questions, but I can't say it's actually support support, we have to ask if we can maybe have the educational psychologist in [local town] who came in to have a look at our learners and did a little bit of work with them around, ehm, eh, possessions and ownership and attachments and things like that, and that helped that situation, as we had been dealing with some problems. Again depending on which area we're in, [local city] I don't know if we have any support with [local city].

The career south west, obviously, but they're just there to collect data, they're not actually support. Ehm, then in [local town] we don't get any support. [local area] have, they can have, they can work with Babcock and I have been on few of their training, especially safeguarding and communication and interaction. But I have to say that I work in [local area], as soon as I say that I also work in [local town] and [local city] they haven't got funding for that, so again that's one of the challenges, how do I play clever to get what I want from people.

If you could choose any type of support for your students that you do not already have, what would this type of support be?

Well, it hasn't been. Ehm.. I think... One of the challenges is to balance what the local authority offer and that bit, because we know, for example, I shouldn't perhaps be saying this, but we have more support for safeguarding, if you want to go through to any of the MASH team, then [local area] and [local city2] are very good, [local city] is okay, but [local town] would sooner bypass that and go another direction. I think it's the systems that they are adopting. It's different areas have different systems.

If you could choose any type of support for your students or your organisation, that you don't already have, what would that be?

Dealing with, ehm, social emotional behaviours. Ehm, we can work with, ehm, obviously the next part is the cognitive and learning. Ehm, we don't tend to have many people, we can cope with disabilities, physical things that's not a problem. But the social emotional and mental health is the main area where we would need support.

Have you tried to get any similar support around that in the past?

Ehm, in [local city] I would like to start. In [local town] I would I had a number of people who have come in and helped train us. But , the training has been a little bit, as I say standard training, hasn't been... adapted itself for classroom settings.

I think, a lot, ehm, the things I would like to bring around people's attention is more around the multiagency working working, to get circles of support for individuals and this is so key to making things work. Having the flexibility with learning, because it is the education bit that you are particularly interested in, the learning programmes that are governed by law, to be able to provide and the amount of learning hours... We understand that the education and funding agency obviously want money for, or their bucks for money so to speak, so limited in helping people to make transitions into environments and if we could have some flexibility to work with people and not put such strict guidelines into place and to offer more flexibility for example to get people to attend for longer, you know they have to attend for so many hours of their guided learning hours a day over a week, if we could be flexible around that and the requirements for doing maths and English, because as soon as we, we obviously understand the importance for those skills, but it can be a real barrier. As soon as we mention those words to some people, as soon as you mention that to some people that we try to work with on their maths and English without realising that that is what they're doing, there comes a time where they do have to take an assessment or an exam or have some form of certification and that can be very challenging in the way that we are meant to work them towards their GCSE levels, where for some people, they might have that capability eventually, but not in that academic year and with that we then get penalised as we then haven't met the statistics that we're meant to meet, so we you know then get marked down as a provider as they're too focused on statistics and achievement rates, when there are softer outcomes that we are after. We'd like to capture those softer outcomes and putting almost equal value on them as the academic outcomes, we don't want to fail to recognise the importance of maths and English, we don't want it to be such, becoming a barrier to people and not helping them to move on in life.

[local city] systems:

We are working on what we can offer people and we don't want to say we can offer this and then not be able to offer that. It's so person centred that it differs on a case-to-case basis. We have worked with 'higher functioning' people who have wanted to go to university and we have worked with them on how to teach themselves, how to cope with self-directed study and coping with their own behaviours in classroom settings. That's been a course in itself, we helped, there is a learner in Torquay, who was at South [local area] college actually, he was working in a, with the team that dealt with autism, he had quite high functioning autism, he got so stressed and unfortunately the tutor put himself between him and the door and she was in the way and he literally grabbed her by the throat and pinned her up against the room and got expelled from the college. Career South West brought him to us and asked if we could work with him and we put risk assessments in place, there were always exits for him. He was able to get around on bus

and transport and if he wanted to leave he could and we would be contacting his mother to say if he left. So there were all these risk assessments put in place for him. He completed his year, he got access to university, he did not leave us once, he was totally focused and is now learning on a full time masters degree up in, ehm, Nottingham somewhere or up north somewhere. We were able to work through with him, not about coming in, but out in the community, going in to looking at sports and sports fitness and training, and using things that he was interested in to be able to understand his own needs and behaviours and coping strategies to be in new situations and that was a really good outcome for us and for him obviously and his parents were pleased.

*Appendix 10: Examples of codes for phase 1*

Name	
▼ <input checked="" type="radio"/> Changes	
<input type="radio"/> Change for the better	
<input type="radio"/> Changing practice	
<input type="radio"/> Changing systems	
▼ <input checked="" type="radio"/> EHC process	
<input type="radio"/> EHC good system fo...	
<input type="radio"/> EHC in post-16 post...	

Name	^	Source
▼ <input type="radio"/> EP role and identity		
▼ <input type="radio"/> EP identity		
<input type="radio"/> Able to see pros and...		
<input type="radio"/> Age impact on prof....		
<input type="radio"/> Ambitious		
<input type="radio"/> Base confidence		
<input type="radio"/> Community Psychol...		
<input type="radio"/> Confidence		
<input type="radio"/> DEdPsy		
<input type="radio"/> Education prior to b...		
<input type="radio"/> Gap between formal...		
<input type="radio"/> Good grounding		
▼ <input type="radio"/> Learning new things		
<input type="radio"/> Peer work or peer...		
<input type="radio"/> Self-directed lear...		
<input type="radio"/> Wanting to improve		
<input type="radio"/> Maturity		
<input type="radio"/> MEd		
<input type="radio"/> Multi-layered		
<input type="radio"/> New and novel situa...		
<input type="radio"/> Pre-qualification det...		
<input type="radio"/> Psychologist first		
<input type="radio"/> Reflecting on own vi...		
<input type="radio"/> Reflective psycholo...		
<input type="radio"/> Role and identity int...		
<input type="radio"/> Route into psychology		

- ▼ ● EP role (theme)
  - ▶ ● Challenge to our role
    - Consultation
    - Defining the role in...
    - Demonstrating use...
    - Determination
    - Empowering
    - Empowering young...
    - EP role
  - ▶ ● EP skills
    - Extending responsib...
    - Love of learning
    - New responsibilities
    - Other's understandi...
    - Post-16 change in r...
    - Solution-focused
    - Varying role
    - Work based experie...

- ▼ ● Improving EPS
  - Adding to knowledge b...
  - Appreciating pros of n...
  - Biased towards own pr...
  - Broadening practice
  - CPD opportunities
  - Current knowledge base
  - ▼ ● Expanding frameworks
    - YP making own deci...
  - ▼ ● Legislation and suppor...
    - Code of Practice
    - Filling in gaps of kno...
    - Understanding legisl...
    - Understanding legisl...
    - Vagueness about le...
  - Sharing knowledge
- ▼ ● Post-16
  - ▼ ● Challenges to work in...
    - Low confidence
    - Narrow experience
    - Not a lot of opportu...
    - Uncertainty about p...
    - Understanding new...
    - Understanding profe...
  - ▼ ● Differences or challeng...
    - Different concerns a...
    - Different providers s...
    - Different transitions
    - Different types of tr...
    - Different understan...
    - Involvement of pare...
    - Pre-16 more establi...



- ▼ ● Work pre 2014 change
  - Post-16 work started b...
  - Potential of working wi...

*Appendix 11: examples of codes for phase 2*

- ▼ ● Strengths
  - ▼ ● Catering to different ne...
    - Equal opportunity
    - Wide variety of cour...
    - Wide variety of needs
    - Working around nee...
    - Working in the com...
  - ▼ ● Current support
    - IT support for EAL
    - People who work in...
    - Private Psychologist
    - Specialised support
    - Support for EAL or E...
    - Support with exam s...
  - ▼ ● Professional knowledge
    - Autonomy over teac...
    - Different profession...
    - Experienced staff
    - Training lecturers to...
    - Training of staff
  - ▼ ● Staff
    - Great expertise for s...
    - Low turn over of staff
    - Understanding stud...

- ▼  Systems
  - Adapting quickly
  - Feedback on support
  - Flexibility
  - Good practice pre-C...
  - Large number of stu...
  - Managing risk
  - Offering alternatives...
  - Person centred ways

- ▼ ● Barriers and Challenges
  - ▼ ● Funding challenges
    - Challenges in funding
    - Cuts to extra curricu...
    - Financial challenges
    - How to make servic...
    - Pressure on tutors t...
    - Use of resources
  - ▼ ● Systems
    - ▼ ● Access to support s...
      - Barriers to inform...
      - Barriers to multia...
      - Not knowing wher...
      - Saying the right t...
    - Best use of support
    - Large groups
    - Organisation of sup...
    - Prioritising
    - Scarce support
    - Strict guidelines on...
  - ▼ ● Understanding or Kno...
    - Differentiation
    - Differentiation in ass...
    - Greater understandi...
    - Inadequate training i...

- ▼  Misinterpretations
  - ▶  Dyslexia
    - EHC = LSA
    - Great EP support
    - Insufficient support
    - Language from s...
    - Pressure from par...
    - Understanding st...
  - Support for SEMH n...
  - Understanding use...

- ▼  Support wanted
  - Group consultation on...
  - Improve multiagency w...
  - Peer mentoring
  - Support if no specific n...
  - Supporting parents to...
  - Training on specific ne...
  - Wanting consultation t...

Appendix 12: coding process from raw data to findings, phase 1 and 2

Transcribed text	Pre-coding notes	Codes	Sub-themes and smaller sub-themes within those	Themes
<p><i>Phase 1</i></p> <p>M: What would you say are the challenges you face as a professional EP over the next two years?</p> <p>P: Well, one challenge will be about maintaining funding so that we can carry on working. That pattern of funding might change, it might be from different sources, it might be from different commissioning groups. That's probably going to be a challenge in the future. The other challenge in the future is about needing to be really flexible, in terms of the shifting in raft of services and provision for young people in the 16+ age range. Keeping abreast of what's on offer to them and what is not on offer to them is really important if we're actually going to jointly problem solve with people and provide this package. The other challenge is following on from the age of austerity and perhaps a change in society. We have a widening gap in the haves and the have not's and the support for the most vulnerable people in our society at 16+ which is a crucial transition for young people, particularly those who are vulnerable, like those in the care system or those with special needs or those experiencing very high levels of poverty.</p> <p>M: What has been challenging when working in post-16?</p> <p>P: First of all, trying to establish what is the purpose of my involvement, because of the recent legislation.</p>	<p>Funding to be able to carry on working. Changes in funding. LAs not having enough funding/resources? Where will funding come from? YP affected by no funding. Need to be flexible/think outside of box? A lot of post-16 service, new keep coming. Transitions to other services.</p> <p>EPs need to establish their own purpose of involvement with</p>	<p>- Austerity - Keeping on top of provision - Changing society - Flexibility - Transitions</p> <p>- Purpose of involvement</p>	<p>- Challenges in post-16 education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Young people in post-16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Higher risks</li> <li>▪ Vulnerability of YP</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>- Ways of working</p> <p>- Differences and challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Different transitions</li> </ul>	<p>- Post-16</p> <p>- EP-role</p> <p>- Post-16</p> <p>- EP-role</p>

<p>At a personal level, it is important to establish what my role is, because there might be so many other roles assigned to me by other people. There might be those thinking that an EP does this or that or other who want certain thresholds to be met for involvement and there might be another perspective from the young person. They might just want some help in terms of how to plan and negotiate their future. But at a more systems level there is also a challenge in joining up with commissioners for services aimed at young people aged 16+ and working through and try to navigate the different assessment and support pathways and how we as EPs can fit into that and how we can influence it for greater good, through consultation and improving services as a whole. A whole range of things really that local authorities are in the process of trying to plan. The timing of transitions from people from one service to another, for instance from CAMHS to adult mental health services, how do we fit into that in supporting that transition. So, I think we still have a role very much as a consultant on an individual and systemic level.</p>	<p>client(s). Other people assigning roles to EPs. What do YPs need from EPs? Wanting to work systematically in order to influence 'higher up' systems. Using consultation. Transitioning to other services.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EP-role</li> <li>- Young peoples' wants and needs</li> <li>- Consultation</li> <li>- Systemic work</li> <li>- Transitions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Defining EP-role</li> <li>- EP skills</li> <li>- Differences and challenges <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Different transitions</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EP-role</li> <li>- Post-16</li> </ul>
<p>M: How has this been different to challenges working with pre-16 education?  P: Pre-16 education is much more established and there have been statutory frameworks and guidance for a long time and although we now have statutory framework and guidance for post-16 it is all very new. The devil is in the detail of who does what and how it should be done. How do we establish which young people we will be working with and which ones we aren't, because that</p>	<p>Pre-16 and EPs have had more time to understand legislation and guidance and what each service does. Need to start establishing who to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Pre-16 more established</li> <li>- Who should we work with and how?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Differences and challenges</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post-16</li> <li>- Post-16</li> </ul>

<p>in a sense is our work. We might like to work more flexibly with a broader range of people, but there might not be funding for us to do that. There might only be funding for us to work with young people who are subject to education, health and care plans.</p>	<p>work with in post-16 education as EPs can't work with everyone.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negatives around post-16</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Transcribed text</b></p>	<p><b>Pre-coding notes</b></p>	<p><b>Codes</b></p>	<p><b>Sub-themes and themes within those</b></p>	<p><b>Themes</b></p>
<p><i>Phase 2</i>  M: What strengths would you say that the college/provider/6th form has?  P: I think we're really flexible, ehm, with regards to learning support specifically across the college, yeah I think we're very flexible. We know that we have to adapt to each year to the support needs of the students that come in. We're a very small team for a large FE college, I mean we've got 15 000 students as an average year after year, so that includes something, on average again, around 6 000 new 16-18 year olds every year. Approximately, between 9 and 15 per cent year of students make a disclosure of having learning support needs, disabilities or difficulties across the college and we support on average 6-700 a year. We have to prioritise, that's my biggest job, so every year we start off with the students with an EHC and our support is allocated to those areas and we have to support students that come in and are more mature and have needs such as, ehm, ehm, visual impairments, severe visual impairments or hearing impairments and ehm we've got signer communicators here, level 2 and level 3 BSL, we've got a whole plethora of staff that are assessing</p>	<p>Being flexible is very important and seen as big strength. Very large number of students and the logistics working out support are palpable. Being able to adapt to this appears important. They have to prioritise in order to manage. Knowing what type of support needs to go where is important. Having specific knowledge about e.g. ASD is important.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Flexibility</li> <li>- Large number of SEN students</li> <li>- Prioritising</li> <li>- Specialised support</li> <li>- Higher education support</li> <li>- Organising different support</li> <li>- Wide age-range</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Systems</li> <li>- Catering to different needs</li> <li>- Current support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengths</li> <li>- Support</li> </ul>



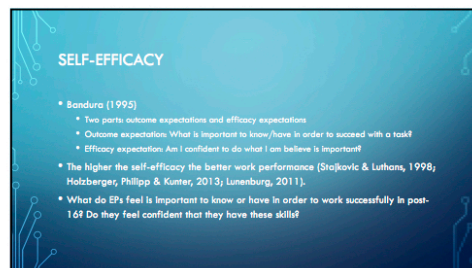
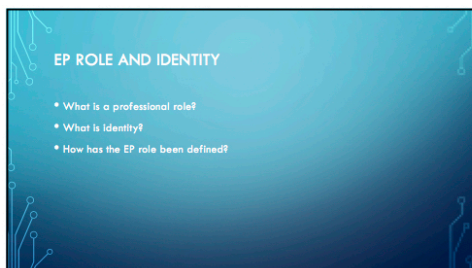
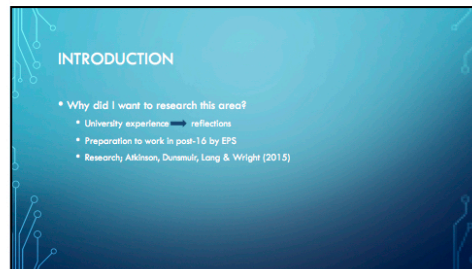
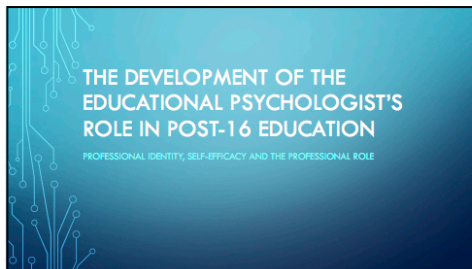
<p>for exam concessions and dyslexia. We offer more formalised assessment, ehm, initial assessments as well, so checking people's English and maths. Sorry if I am spelling! Ehm, we've got a complete breakdown of where these learning support assistants need to go. You might come here and have ADHD for example, so the biggest thing for you is that you get exam concessions so that you can have a prompt, i.e. somebody that can, that we've done the paperwork so that they can have a rest break or a prompt or something like that. For students with autism and global developmental delay we organise one-to-one mentoring, because a lot of those students are very bright, but they have spiky profiles, so quite often they will have, eh, support outside the class on a one-to-one basis. Lots of level 3 students and our access students have that because their issues are not necessarily their intellectual abilities but actually it's about that their other engagement. That they're engaged, even though they've got other outside difficulties. But we have a student liaison team as well that deal with attendance and low-level behaviour, ehm, etc. But we also get involved through the team we get involved with higher education courses as well, so we support higher education courses. Now the disabled students allowance has changed a lot, so the institution is largely responsible for organising the bands 1 and 2 support from the institution that you're in. So we oversee that as well, and we're working with students from 14 to 69, so that's a massive scope.</p> <p>As a rule, we won't go into practical courses, but we might go into practical courses if it's catering or</p>		<p>- Equal opportunities</p>	<p>- Catering to different needs</p>	<p>- Strengths</p>
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<p>woodwork. Because if you have dyspraxia we might go in there and support you so that you're not sawing into your armpit. We might write a risk assessment if you have something like epilepsy and you need some support, ehm, or a risk assessment written that still allows, not allows you, but enables you to be on ordinary courses. But if you want to be a plumber and you've got to be able to hold a blow torch then you're going to need a risk assessment, and we don't want you in a cubicle around the corner working on your own, we need you in line of sight. So as much as possible, we try and make sure that people with varying disabilities are able to do the courses they're on. There's very few courses, and that will come under advice and guidance which we also get involved in, but there's very few courses actually that we would say to somebody "you need to rethink that". I'm thinking about the realism of, if you were in a, using a wheelchair and you wanted to be a kitchen porter, everybody knows that kitchens are fairly small and the realistic thoughts about are you going to get a job? Ehm, or would somebody who was very, very disabled we would need to think about access arrangements so I would get involved in that.</p>		<p>s on practical courses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Managing risk</li> <li>- Thinking about how to give young people access.</li> </ul>		
<p>M: What are your strengths when it comes to EAL students?  P: Yeah, we support students, so the way it works, we call them ESOL students here, the way to prioritise here is not so easy, ehm but we would start with the obvious, have they got physical disabilities, ehm, quite often a lot of the European students will come and say that they have got dyslexia, but dyslexia is... It's very difficult to</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prioritising physical disabilities for EAL</li> <li>- Difficulty of dyslexia</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current support</li> <li>- Systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengths</li> </ul>

<p>assess somebody whose English a second language, who's from Hungary for example, because how can you assess because their language is so different and the make-up of dyslexia is such that English needs to be your first language. Ehm, but we will support anybody with a physical or severe disability if you like or impairment, ehm, if, this doesn't happen very often, but if I have some spare people, okay, we will go and support these students in the classroom. Because most students have some sort of, I'm not talking about Europeans now, come from quite harsh backgrounds. They've got a lot on their plate, and just having that extra person other than their teacher is important, ehm, it's not a huge amount of support that we provide, but I think it is important. If I said to somebody, "okay on Tuesday morning we've got a class and they're pre-entry sort of students, so they're, ehm, they can't even speak English, of course we're going to go and support" and I don't really need a title, I don't need to know that Harry and John have got this or the other, I know that they will need that support, so we'll go in there.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Special support for EAL students</li> </ul>		
<p>M: What strengths would you say that your lecturers/teachers have?</p> <p>To be frank, I think it's really difficult in FE, it's really different from schools, and more and more we're working closer and closer and the collaboration has gone better and better. It's always been quite, you know, this is the school if you like and this is post-16, the FE. For me, I think, in school people are teachers first and I think if you're a brickie, if you need to be taught how to bricklay it's important that you have a</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different professional backgrounds of lecturers to teachers</li> <li>- Training lecturers to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Professional knowledge</li> <li>- Staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strengths</li> </ul>

<p>brickie that's a specialist brickie and then alongside that a lot of them are learning to be teachers, or alongside being teachers. Do you know what I'm saying? If you want to go into IT you need someone who is a software developer, with that expertise and not someone who is a teacher first. FEs strive to have well experienced lecturers in that area, but also ehm, eh, lecturers that understand pedagogy and the, ehm, and the education needs of students. When I think about students with special educational needs, I think its, we've been going around training staff so that they know that they have students with special educational needs and that it's not down to the students, and it's largely down to them. I guess beforehand people thought that if someone's got a disability that's down to the learning support department to oversee much of their existence, not their teaching, their learning, however more so now we're saying to people, it's the law, you need to know about these kids with special educational needs, what is that you're providing, what kind of alternative assessments, reasonable adjustments etc. are you providing? That goes a long way really.</p>		<p>understand students with SEN better.</p>		
<p>M: What strengths would you say that your support staff have?  Oh, I couldn't do this work. As I said we've got a really small team, they're not, they're not well-paid, that's the truth of it. I'd say that to anybody including the senior learning team, senior management team here. But the strengths, I may have somebody that is an ex-teacher, I might have somebody who has spent many of their</p>		<p>- Great expertise of staff</p>	<p>- Staff</p>	<p>- Strengths</p>

<p>years in primary school for example and then they've moved to FE, I've got staff that are level 7, eh, qualified in dyslexia and detect visual stress assessments as well. Most of my staff are level 3, eh, qualifications in whatever background they had previously. So that might be health and social care, it might be learning support or the higher learning support. But they tend to be, learning support training seems to be much more based on schools, but we are trying to change that. From a training perspective, we've had people who have been paid to do part of their masters, we've had people that have been trained to do BSL three, so they're signing. Good experience, good experience and I'm lucky. I think I'm, I think that happens in FE, staff tend to, and I've got young staff, middle aged staff, we have a whole plethora of people, because it's so diverse within FE so it is really interesting being part of that. We don't have a massive turnover of staff either, and of course people get laid off, yeah they do, 'cause there's no money in FE, but that's improving slowly. But actually, given that it is poorly paid, I've got, the CVs of my staff are excellent.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Diversity of staff</li> <li>- Low turnover of staff</li> </ul>		
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### AIMS, RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Phase 1 research questions
  - How do EPs perceive their professional role and identity?
  - How has the EPs' professional role and identity developed/changed when working in post-16/how do they anticipate it to change?
  - How confident are EPs with and without post-16 experience in using skills they deem necessary for such work?

### AIMS, RESEARCH DESIGN AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Phase two
  - What strengths do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
  - What challenges do post-16 providers see themselves as having?
  - What type of support do post-16 providers perceive themselves to be in need of?

### METHODOLOGY

- Ontological stance: Interpretivism
- Epistemological stance: social constructionism
- Knowledge is not 'out there' to be discovered – varies through societies
- Reality happens in the interactions between people
- Role and identity development happens within social contexts – understanding post-16 context therefore important (Pratt et al 2006; Beijaard et al 2004; Ibarra, 1999).

### PHASE ONE

- Participants
  - 6 EPs
- Materials
  - Semi-structured interviews
    - Hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989)
- Analysis
  - Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis

### PHASE ONE FINDINGS

“As an EP I use psychology to enhance understanding for adults and children. To me, it means that I maximise the outputs of systems. I like to think systemically and if I increase adults' understanding of what is happening, I can make the outcomes for children better, as adults are the systems around a child.”

### PHASE ONE FINDINGS

“But my practice must change... Yeah, you will need to do more of a negotiation. You have to work with their agenda, because what they decide to do is what they do.”

### PHASE ONE FINDINGS

"I think that one of the things we need to look at are the things around the Mental Capacity Act, about Gillick competences and Fraser competences. Because traditionally you see those more in line with health and CAMHS type of roles but there are issues around that."

### PHASE TWO

- Participants
  - Three post-16 providers
- Materials
  - Semi-structured Interviews
    - Hierarchical focusing (Tomlinson, 1989)
- Analysis
  - Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis

### PHASE TWO FINDINGS

"We have observations of our learning support assistants, we don't just observe curriculum and academics, which I think is really, really important. And we give feedback! So I might observe somebody from a line management perspective, but equally another LSA might observe an LSA."

### PHASE TWO FINDINGS

- "The challenges are usually around funding in that we never know how long we're going to have funding from the funding streams, which change."
- "...quite often a lot of the European students will come and say that they have got dyslexia, but dyslexia is... it's very difficult to assess somebody whose English is a second language, who's from Hungary for example, because the make up of dyslexia is such that English needs to be your first language."

### PHASE TWO FINDINGS

"They [EPs] are then able to come in and work with us when we've had a problem around that particular individual, which has been very, very much mentoring around the learners which helped us remove some of the barriers. So when you have standard training, people can come in and say 'this is what typically happens', we already know a lot of that, but what you don't know is how to work with that person's issue. So that would be really helpful."

### DISCUSSION

- Are we defining the EP role correctly?
  - Suggestions that we are not doing that – it's not about tasks that we do, it's about the knowledge we apply to education.
  - Does this mean less individual case work and more systemic work, or vice versa?
    - Most likely neither – if we're defining the role by what area of knowledge we're applying then both can be done in tandem.
  - What does this mean for the EP role in post-16 education?
    - The role will not dramatically change, EPs will still continue to apply psychology to educational contexts.



**DISCUSSION**

- Do EPs not need to learn anything new?
  - I would argue that EPs need to learn about the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and Autism Act (AA) as at least a basic understanding of these acts will be paramount in post-16 education.
  - Are young people/adults capable of making their own decisions? How do we know?
  - Do we know what we are legally obliged to provide those diagnosed with ASC?
  - How can we ensure that we follow that?

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE**

- EPS
  - Think about how we promote/explain role to post-16
    - Post-16 providers wanted "consultation-style" support
  - Developing understanding of Mental Capacity Act and Autism Act
  - CPD around adult learning theories and adult assessment and implications of those

**THANK YOU FOR LISTENING!**

- Any questions?