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**Sharing Voice, Becoming 'Us' and Finding 'Me': Exploring  
transition-to-school narratives of a child described as  
having additional needs and the adults around her**

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## **Abstract**

Whilst children encounter many transitions over their life, it is suggested that starting school is one of the most challenging early years experiences (Hirst, Jervis, Visagie, Sojo, & Cavanagh, 2011; Turnbull, 2006), especially for children described as having additional needs, for whom early support is prioritised nationally (DfE, 2014a). Indeed, within the UK, transition to school is specifically highlighted as a priority for future research (DfE, 2014b).

Adopting a social constructionist perspective and a narrative approach that seeks to prioritise voice, empower individuals and embrace subjective experience, this research explored individual narratives around transition - addressing a gap within the current literature. Within this I sought a broader, relational understanding of transition (Dockett, Perry & Kearney, 2012; Gergen, 2009) by exploring different perspectives; that of the child and also of the adults around them.

Participants included one child described as having additional needs, alongside her mother and teacher. Co-constructed narratives were facilitated for each during two semi-structured interviews conducted before and after starting school. Participants used journals to support accounts and further adaptations facilitated the child's voice (including classroom 'Tours' and *Talking Mats*<sup>TM</sup> resource).

The research employed narrative oriented inquiry (Hiles & Čermák, 2008) as its methodology, analysing narratives using six interpretive perspectives, including: the way narratives were told; holistic and categorical analyses of content and form; and also, critical analysis of wider issues, e.g. positionality, context and power. Rich, multi-layered interpretations were explored within and across participants' narratives.

Possible implications are presented relating to further research, alongside implications for the educational psychology profession and my own practice. The value of a narrative approach is suggested – in particular, a reflective narrative space when supporting transition.



## 1 Introducing this Research

Recognising I bring my personal background, drives, understandings and aspirations to this research, I seek to be transparent throughout, embracing research as co-constructed and so promoting the trustworthiness of this inquiry, of the stories presented (Guba & Lincoln, 1985; 2005).

It is as parent, early years teacher and trainee educational psychologist (TEP) that I approach this inquiry. Having experienced first-hand the challenges faced by children, families and professionals on transition to school, my interest in this area has grown. I have wondered what does transition look like and for whom? What does it mean for different people? How do we make sense of school transition?

A parent myself and also working in partnership with parents, I became interested in family experiences on starting the school journey. Also, having previously conducted research exploring children's motivation within Reception class, I was interested in first school experiences and future learning/transition (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

Guided by these aspects, my research focus took shape during 2014-15, alongside my practice as a TEP. This gave opportunity to work further with children described as having additional needs and their families on starting school, hearing stories of 'difficult' transition. I became interested in their narratives, especially the voice of the child and those around them, as perhaps marginalised voices. I was interested in exploring these voices in relation, transition in context.

I was also guided by national and local priorities. For example, UK national priorities highlight early intervention and family as central when working with children described as having special educational needs (SEN) (DfE, 2014a; HMSO, 2014) – a rationale for representing the voice of child and family in research. Additionally, school transition is highlighted as a research avenue (DfE, 2014b), with discourses around school-readiness dominant – apparent in schools I visited, in the press (The Guardian, 2015; 2014) and discourses at national level (Tickell, 2011).

The early years was also highlighted as a local educational psychology service (EPS) priority, with data suggesting 'poor' outcomes for children described as having SEN and on-going discussion around the early years educational psychologist (EP) role. Thus, I considered research could add clarity to the EP role, alongside insight around school transition for children, parents and professionals. Hoping to inform and reflect on my practice (Brookfield, 1998), I considered research would support my professional relationships and understanding of transition.

Seeking to empower diverse, possibly marginalised voices, a narrative approach and relativist perspective was used, exploratory in nature. I sought to co-construct understanding around school transition with a child described as having additional needs, her mother and teacher. I share this research story, seeking to privilege the voices of Evie, Cindy and Kate through the interpreted stories presented.

## **2 Critical Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

I consider firstly, what do we mean by transition? Moving on to review research in this area, I ask where has been the focus of research, for whom and guided by which theoretical perspectives? Alongside this, I consider wider discourses and cultural implications, identifying gaps within the literature. I move on to consider psychological theory supporting further study around transition and close with a summary, describing the focus of this research and the questions it asks.

### **2.2 Transition: What do we mean and why is it significant?**

According to Fabian & Dunlop (2007, p 3), transition is "the process of change of environment and set of relationships that children make from one setting or phase of education to another over time." Described as periods of challenge, research links transition to emotional well-being, ability to learn (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007), feeling settled (Broström, 2000) and a range of positive outcomes (Hirst et al., 2011).

In England supporting key transition points (starting school, primary-secondary, across key stages) is highlighted for children described as having additional educational needs or disabilities within statutory, professional and research documentation (DfE, 2014a,b,c; DfES, 2004; DCFS, 2008b; Janus., Lefort, Cameron & Kopechanski., 2007; Russell, 2003; Taggart et al., 2006).

### **2.2.1 Transition to school**

Although children encounter many transitions over life, starting school is suggested as one of the most challenging early experiences (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Hirst et al., 2011; Turnbull, 2006) - a time of potential stress involving the negotiation of change (Dockett & Perry, 2005; 2012; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Hirst et al., 2011; Margetts 2008). The way children experience transition is suggested to influence early and longer term learning, with initial school 'success' leading to 'a virtuous cycle of achievement' (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007, p 1).

Given the suggested link between school transition and well-being, future transition and early academic success (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Margetts, 2003a; Schulting, Malone & Dodge, 2005), there is a focus on supporting transition to school within English and international literature.

Australian literature, particularly, includes a large transition-to-school focus, perhaps reflecting the cultural make-up of this country and initiatives involving Aboriginal and Torres communities (Dockett & Perry, 2008; Hirst et al., 2011). Therefore, Australian literature could represent a perspective from which to broaden understandings.

Within English literature there is focus upon continuity across the early years (DCFS, 2008a; DfE, 2012a; Sylva et al., 2004) and transition is highlighted as an area for further research within *Early education and childcare: Research priorities and questions* (DfE, 2014b), identifying a need to investigate:

the best means of reinforcing the continuity with, and transition to, primary schooling (p 8)

Also important, is recognising the range of prior family and pre-school experiences children have before starting school, legislation in England

requiring school attendance from the term after children's fifth birthday (DfE, 2012a; DfE, 2014d). Some may not enter educational settings until four-five years old, whilst others may attend nursery from birth, two, or three years old. This highlights the contextual nature of transition.

### **2.2.2 Perspectives**

Literature around school transition adopts a range of theoretical perspectives, asking a variety of questions. For some, this is about measurement, factors or statistical data, including research reporting percentages of children having 'problems' on transition (Hausken, & Rathbun, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, Pianta & Cox, 2000), or identifying factors impacting on transition: age, gender, skills, language, socio-economic status, employment and parenting (highlighted by Hirst et al., 2011).

However, I would caution against over-simplistic representations attempting to reduce experiences to a number of universal factors. Instead, perhaps indicating the complexity of this area, my review suggests a range of understandings and different perspectives towards its research. It is to these I now turn.

### **2.3 Transition as readiness**

According to Dockett and Perry (2008; 2009), much debate around school transition is around children's readiness, described by Boethel (2004, p 17) as the "focal point of readiness", emphasising children's competencies on entering school. In US studies especially, 'school readiness' assessments seek to quantify children's 'readiness' (Daily, Burkhauser & Halle, 2010), emphasising preparatory reading, writing and arithmetic skills, alongside: social/emotional and language development; learning approach; physical well-being/motor skills; and knowledge (High, 2008; Kagan, 2003). Emotional management, coping with stress, following directions and cooperating are also suggested as important to school readiness (Gillan, 1997; High, 2008).

A large proportion of transition-to-school research adopts this understanding, with Dockett and Perry's (2013) review of Australian and international research finding over half the studies reviewed considered school readiness. The focus appears to be on 'within-child' skills in preparation for school.

However, broader understandings of 'readiness' consider family influence, learning approach, teaching environment and socio-cultural characteristics (Commadari, 2013; Halle, Hair, Wandner & Chien, 2012; Wesley & Buysse, 2003), including 'family readiness' measures and an assumption that pre-school or home settings promote 'school readiness'. In quantitative research by Halle et al. (2012) school readiness is a 'multi-dimensional measure,' associated with age, family, classroom quality and parent/teacher attainment. Similarly, research by Brooks-Gunn, Fuligni, & Berlin (2003) suggests high-quality early education and caregiver relationships improve school-readiness and outcomes for disadvantaged children.

From this perspective, readiness is not located purely within-child. Instead, context has bearing. Although seen as measurable and generalisable factors, a holistic understanding around school preparation is introduced. Similarly, a holistic perspective seems consistent with early years pedagogy as preparation for school - a dominant theme within UK literature.

### **2.3.1 Quality early years: Preparation for school?**

A focus for politicians and legislation, England has seen a drive towards quality early education, continuity across settings and early identification of needs (DfE, 2011; 2012a; 2014a; Tickell, 2011). This has included the introduction of the *Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage* (EYFS) (birth to five years) (DCFS, 2008a; DfE, 2012a), aiming to direct consistent practice, reduce provision variation and emphasise continuity.

Initiatives clearly prioritise early preparation for children/families, including Children's Centre services (DfE, 2012b; DfES, 2007), *Two-Year Old Entitlement* to free nursery education for children described as having special educational needs, disabilities or social deprivation (DfE, 2014d) and initiatives like *Every Child a Talker* (DCFS, 2008c). Furthermore, projects including the *Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project* (Sylva, Melhuish, Sammons, Siraj-Blatchford & Taggart, 2004) focus on early education as preparation and 'early identification of SEN' as supporting transition (Taggart et al., 2006).

Early years rhetoric clearly positions quality early years provision as promoting school readiness. Children's Centre core purposes are described

as improving outcomes, decreasing inequalities in development/readiness and improving parenting, self-esteem, health and life chances (DfE, 2012b; DfES, 2007). Similarly, Tickell's (2011) report states that high quality early years provision itself may aid transition into school-based provision.

Parallels are seen between 'school readiness' literature and EYFS guidance, which seeks 'expected levels' of development, through enabling environments, differentiated learning, positive relationships and parental involvement (DfE, 2012a). By implication, early years provision itself could be seen as transitional in nature and this understanding has fuelled debate within the literature.

Drawing on a systemic perspective and Bronfenbrenner's (1979; 1999) bioecological model, we might ask, not only are children ready for school, but also, are schools ready for children? Bronfenbrenner's model suggests children develop within a context – through bi-directional relationships between the child and their family, classroom environment, school, community and culture. Thus, an opposing discourse questions the notion that readiness lies solely within-child, challenging schools instead to be responsive.

### **2.3.2 Children ready for school, or schools ready for children?**

In her government report, Tickell (2011) explains:

“Some people interpret school readiness as implying that children should be pressurised into learning to read and write at inappropriately young ages. Others have wider concerns about leaving children free to enjoy their early years without pressure, arguing that schools should be ready for children and not the other way around. Others feel that we do our children no favours if we fail to prepare them for the realities of the school environment, where skills such as literacy are important.” (p 20)

This may be especially pertinent in England, where children begin compulsory school (including reading, writing and mathematics) at five years old, earlier than 23 other European countries, where compulsory starting age is six years or older (NFER, 2013).

In England, Whitebread and Bingham (2012) suggest drives to raise standards result in measuring children against inappropriate 'readiness'

standards, with performativity and inspections (Office for Standards in Education, OfSTED) leading to practice driven by data/performance agendas and competing policy levers (Wood, 2004; Wood and Bennett, 2001). Top-down performance pressures and preparation for formal teaching are suggested to cause EYFS discontinuity between Nursery and Reception. Indeed, the *Early Years Foundation Stage Review* (DfE, 2011), suggests potential difficulties on transition to school-based curriculum, noting:

some children find these transitions difficult. Some children are particularly vulnerable to the impact of stricter routines, less open environments and more formal pedagogy (p 29).

Similarly, Australian literature highlights challenges around readiness, where accountability and formal approaches may change the perceived role of settings (Dockett & Perry, 2008; Snow, 2006). Alternatively, Broström (2002) introduces the notion of child-ready schools. The suggestion is that children develop within settings, families and communities, which should feature in considerations of school readiness (Dockett & Perry, 2008; 2009; 2012).

Thus, from a systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), two competing readiness discourses emerge - one focused on within-child skills, possibly influenced by outcome agendas, and another focused on enabling provision and child-ready school (Broström, 2002; Wood, 2004).

Continuing the systemic perspective – a paradigm emerging as a dominant alternative to within-child approaches in the literature – transition could also be understood as interaction between systems, between pre-school and school systems (Fox, 2009; Pelligrini, 2009). Supporting continuity and practices across systems is a focus within much research.

## **2.4 Continuity and discontinuity**

Continuity of key curriculum elements across pre-school and school settings is seen as supporting transition, a drive evident in England through statutory guidance and discourse (DfE, 2012a; 2011; Tickell, 2011). Similarly, Danish research (Broström, 2002) gives examples of schools and nurseries working closely to ensure curriculum continuity.

However, seen also as discontinuity, research suggests transition can be accompanied by different expectations relating to behaviour, competence

and modes of communicating (Rous, Hallam, McCormick & Cox, 2010). It is suggested that children and families need information and support (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Rous et al., 2010; Tickell, 2011) as they negotiate changes in: learning and physical environments; rules and routines; identity and relationships, including adapting to higher child-adult ratios and new friendships (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Griebel & Nielson, 2000; 2009; Margetts 2002; 2008).

According to Fabian (2002), three areas of discontinuity are physical (class environment/size), social (social networks) and philosophical (practices/pedagogy), with 'difficult' transition associated with discrepancies between teaching practices (Fabian, 2002), parent/teacher expectations and expectations versus reality (Dockett & Perry, 2007; Di Santo & Berman, 2012). Fabian & Dunlop (2007) highlight negotiating change as a skill in itself, suggesting aspects contributing positively as: learning across transition, socio-emotional well-being and communication. Dockett and Perry (2009) suggest creating connections between children, families and schools, rather than replicating curriculum.

#### **2.4.1 Practices**

Rous et al. (2010) note four categories of practice: individualised and whole class practices; before and on-entry, although they suggest limited evaluation of practices. 'Good' practices include communication with parents, open sessions, home visits and school visits (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Rous et al, 2010).

Participating in transition activities is linked with positive outcomes (LoCasale-Crouch, Mashburn, Downer & Pianta, 2008; Schulting et al., 2005). LoCasale-Crouch et al. (2008) suggest when children attend more transition activities, teachers report 'positive social competencies and fewer behavioural problems' (p124). They emphasise 'the dynamic nature of relational and informational linkages' (p 125) using a developmental-ecological model (Rimm-Kaufmann & Pianta, 2000), emphasising practices like discussing curricula or children with pre-school teachers.

Links, continuity and progression are also highlighted by Dunlop (2002), citing an *Apprenticeship Model* whereby staff collaboratively planned

activities for children across four successive school visits, giving opportunities to develop links, confidence and familiarity. A further example described a nursery and school who developed a shared transition theme (growth and change), beginning at nursery, shared through stories at home and continued on school visits and starting school.

Looking at specific practices, Greenfield (2011) explored home visits, reporting mixed parental/staff views and variable practice, recommending training and time to reflect.

Drawing on localised, practice-based evaluation of transition, the Carousel Children's Centre (Ofsted, 2012) noted increases in children's communication and social/emotional skills, alongside greater parental involvement, following transition practices including visits and summer group activities.

Generally, pupil involvement, self-determinism (Deci & Ryan, 1985; 2002; Tickell, 2011), information-sharing (Tickell, 2011) and working with parents (DfE, 2014a; 2012a; 2011) are suggested to positively influence transition, with reference made to practice in Finland where parents are valued as pedagogical partners, involved in their child's learning (DfE, 2011).

Thus far, this review has focused on readiness, policy, pedagogy and continuity across systems. Whilst asking various questions of transition, what emerges as I reflect on the literature is a sense of professional view. Less apparent is a consideration of voice; that is of whom are questions asked? Consequently, I now consider the voice of child and family within transition research.

## **2.5 Children's perceptions**

Studies exploring children's perspectives are increasingly evident. Children describe peer relationships, knowing 'rules' and concerns around less play time during transition (Dockett & Perry, 2004; 2005; Margetts, 2006; 2008), suggesting social aspects are important for some children starting school.

Change in identity – becoming a 'school child' – is highlighted (Dockett & Perry, 2005; Margetts, 2008), with opportunities to talk suggested as key in developing ideas of what school is like (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

Research by Margetts (2008) suggests becoming a 'school child' involves interpreting information and constructing understandings about school, emphasising localised aspects (playground safety) and therefore the significance of eliciting views in context. Peer relationships, rules, procedures, academic skills, and emotions were important for these children.

Di Santo & Berman (2012) explored the school perceptions of 105 Canadian children (aged three-four) in qualitative research using focus groups, suggesting children begin formulating ideas about school before starting. Themes were: play versus academic studies; getting bigger and needing help; and rules, a need to adapt to 'school culture'. Themes highlighted expectations around continuity/discontinuity, some themes being consistent with previous research and others more individualised. Thus, personally relevant information may emerge through eliciting children's perspectives, positioning them as actively involved in planning transition.

This study suggested transition processes could mediate discrepancies anticipated at school, whilst also giving voice to pre-school children. However, it does not then explore experiences on transition to school, and therefore transition over time, highlighting an avenue for research. I ask how do children make sense of preparation and also, starting school?

## **2.6 Family**

According to Dockett, Perry and Kearney (2012), much research focuses on what families do *for* children on starting school, emphasising practices promoting child-readiness. Links are highlighted between parenting and children's adjustment, future success and attainment (Morrison, Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 2003).

In Australian research, Margetts (2003b) elicits parent and teacher views around 212 children (52-80 months). She argues, from an ecological model, that interacting personal and family characteristics (work patterns, childcare, family structure) influence adjustment to school settings, advocating practices that respond to children's diverse backgrounds, needs and abilities. However, it could be said to reduce transition to a set of factors, rather than embracing a rich experience. Being quantitative in nature, it studies how

several chosen factors interact, rather than exploring relationships, or detailed personal accounts.

Also of note is the age of children in this study (older compared to UK), highlighting difficulties in comparing transition-to-school research across cultures. The need to consider cultural and pedagogical differences between transition studies is highlighted, and therefore the relevance of further research conducted in England offering culturally specific understanding.

Systemic influence is suggested in terms of: parental coping (Elizur, 1985; Russ et al., 2012), maternal affection (Al-Yagon, 2007), teacher attachment (Commodari, 2013), parent perception of effectiveness and participation in children's learning (Pelletier & Brent, 2002), parents' own school experiences, alongside home resources, routines and home-learning environment, with home-school relationships being particularly key at transition points (Dockett & Perry, 2007).

Although, cultural implications may warn against comparisons with research above (located in Tel Aviv, America, Italy, Canada and Australia), an understanding of family transition is introduced. Such studies suggest a view that is more than strategies supporting continuity between settings, or associated with school/family readiness. Instead, it is shaped by families, "embedded within social contexts and enacted through relationships and interactions" (Dockett et al., 2012, p58).

Similarly, recent UK guidance focuses on keeping child/family central and involving parents as those knowing their child best (HMSO, 2014; DfE, 2014a; 2012a), with parent perspectives on their child's transition sought in studies (e.g. Sylva et al., 2004; Taggart et al., 2006). Additionally, parental involvement is highlighted in practice-based examples, including the *Early Years Foundation Stage to School Transition Project* (Ofsted, 2012), aimed at enabling parents' confident participation by developing parent skills, knowledge and understanding of school through group activities, visits and questions.

## 2.7 Transition in a broader sense

Whilst the view thus far is of interacting systemic factors, the emphasis seems on influences of parents, families and settings. However, the notion of *bi-directional* relationship implies an understanding of transition itself as *bi-directional*. That is, whilst I have hitherto asked how family and community may influence children's transition, may we not also ask, how does transition impact on family, or community?

Research adopting this perspective is more limited, most looking at how families support, rather than personally experience transition. However, Dockett et al. (2012), Griebel and Niesel (2009) and Walker and MacPhee (2011) suggests families experience changes in identity, responsibilities and relationships, often experiencing mixed feelings in response to change. Parents may be happy to involve another adult, but uncertain about sharing responsibility; happy at their child starting school, but unsure about looking outside the home. Furthermore, "for a parent, the transition of his/her child to school means supporting the child's transition, plus coping with his/her own transition towards becoming a competent parent of a school child (Griebel & Niesel, 2009, p 66).

The value of talk is suggested – transition as co-constructed between children, parents and teachers, clarifying expectations about school and changing roles (Griebel & Niesel, 2002; 2009).

Thus, Dockett and Perry consider transition in a broader sense, suggesting "starting school is a time of transition for children, families, educators and communities' (2008, p 280).

Addressing a gap in the literature, Dockett et al., (2012) explored family members' transition-to-school experiences. Qualitative in nature, interviews provided a base for 13 case studies, of which three were reported in the cited paper. All three mothers had 'complex support needs', with two caring for children described as having special educational needs.

All three mothers experienced changes at individual, relationship and contextual levels. They experienced changes in role (happy at starting school, but frightened of role outside the home). Past experiences were suggested to impact on present interactions with school, influencing

engagement with teachers. Starting school was associated with parental responsibilities. Additionally, mothers experienced loss of support as their children started school, an aspect highlighted as a difficulty for parents of children described as having special educational needs at school transition (Dockett et al., 2012; Janus et al., 2007).

Dockett et al. (2012, p 65) suggest changes families experience highlight the complexity of school transition, representing change for children and families that “combine processes of ‘becoming somebody’ personally, educationally and occupationally” (Ecclestone, 2010, pp 12-13).

Recognition of family as a major point of continuity during times of transition, suggests research in this area could be key, especially for vulnerable families where children are described as having additional needs.

### *Summarising*

Research in this broader sense highlights an area of further study, alongside the value of a qualitative approach, exploring transition through rich, personal experience, less evident within the literature. Lastly, the research introduces marginalised voices in that two participants in Dockett et al. (2012)’s study parent children described as having special educational needs. The voices of these parents and their children have little representation in current literature or in an English context. Therefore, an area of particular relevance to educational psychology practice, I ask, what does the research have to say about transition to school for children described as having additional needs and their families?

## **2.8 Transition and additional needs**

Increased challenges for children perceived as more vulnerable are highlighted within English literature (Bomber, 2008; 2011; DfE, 2014a; DfES, 2004; Stobart, 2013; HMSO, 2014; Taggart et al. 2006). The Bercow report (DFCS, 2008b) repeatedly mentions transition for children with speech language and communication needs, alongside early identification of needs – a point emphasised in research and professional guidance (DfE, 2012a; 2014a; Taggart et al., 2006).

Thus, transition is constructed as a potentially difficult time for children described as having special educational needs. However, consistent with observations in Janus et al. (2007), studies exploring school transition for these children are less evident. I reference two studies here.

Canadian research by Janus et al. (2007) investigated parent and professional perceptions of school transition. Parents' perceptions were elicited through surveys. Parents of 2,624 children completed surveys, with 729 described as having special needs or accessing intervention programmes. Five professional views were elicited through interviews.

Regarding satisfaction with practices, no difference was reported between parents of children 'with or without special needs' (p 641), most finding transition activities helpful. However, parents of children described as having special needs were less satisfied with the change and availability in services. Professionals saw transition for all children positively, but reported negative perceptions around administration, information flow and funding continuity.

Janus et al. describe an increasing advocacy role for parents of children described as having special needs – active drivers in processes. They highlight the need to support parents and integrate services.

Whilst the study gives insight around professional and parental perceptions, there is little exploration of reasons or sense-making around experiences, suggesting an avenue for future research. An in-depth study by Russell (2003) gives further insight.

### **2.8.1 Expectations of parents of disabled children**

Russell (2003) explores 'the expectations of parents of disabled children' (p 1) using a social model - society as disabling, where non-disabled people impose restrictions that may prevent inclusion. She seeks to empower parental voice and consider policies or practices that are barriers to realistic parental expectations and partnerships with professionals as their child starts school. Russell explores 17 parents' expectations over three interviews using a participatory research methodology and drawing upon Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model.

She suggests parents' experience of coming to terms with their child's disability can be of confusion and uncertainty, suggesting parents adjust to their new situation by developing new expectations. She describes the different transition experience parents of disabled children may have, as they experience others' negative reactions towards their child and negotiate SEN processes or support services, described as difficult to understand (Sloper, 1999) and stressful (Read, 2000) despite being designed to support.

Expectations most important to parents were that their child would make progress and staff would have expertise. Lack of information, experience of disability and opportunity to express views were suggested barriers to developing expectations leading to positive outcomes.

The research suggests the importance of: parents accessing information, parent-professional partnership based on negotiated outcomes rather than needs, parental involvement in processes and awareness of perspectives that enable or disable.

Russell offers the perspectives of marginalised voices and highlights the value of sharing voice as supporting transition, relating that parents valued opportunities to share views as supporting future considerations. Further directions suggested by the study are exploring voices of disabled children and comparing parent/professional expectations. Thus, the voice of children described as having additional needs, their parents and teachers are clearly indicated as a further research area.

## **2.9 Further directions and theory**

Having highlighted further directions within the literature, I now consider theoretical perspectives that may help to make sense of school transition. I close the chapter with a summary, giving a rationale for my chosen focus of inquiry and the questions my research asks.

I begin by considering a systemic perspective, emerging as a contrasting paradigm to more positivist perspectives within literature reviewed.

### **2.9.1 Systemic perspectives**

Systemic perspectives emerge strongly within the literature, also embraced within educational psychology practice (Fox, 2009) as an application of

psychology to learning contexts. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model specifically (1979; 1999) is a preferred approach of the educational psychology profession (BPS, 1999) (Fogg, 2014, p45), seeming particularly relevant to transition between systems on starting school.

Similarly, the notion of interaction across systems, with different rules, pressures and changes in one system impacting on another, may offer a helpful perspective for making sense of change (Fox, 2009), perhaps reflected in research exploring continuity across systems (Rous et al., 2010).

From a systemic paradigm, the notion of bi-directional interaction between systems around the child (family, school, local, wider community discourses), to some extent captures the multiple associations that seem apparent within the literature. However, it is criticised for its lack of account of time (introduced later, Bronfenbrenner, 1999). Indeed, building on Bronfenbrenner's model, Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000) propose an *Ecological and Dynamic Model of Transition*, describing a 'dynamic network of relationships' influencing children's transition to school and emphasising relationship-change *over time*. They suggest such relationships influence children's adjustment to 'kindergarten' and predict future relationships.

However, whilst systemic theory offers some helpful ways of making sense of transition, still, there is something about the dynamic and multi-storied nature of 'truth' that remains unexplored within the literature and perhaps more closely linked with a social constructionist perspective from which I approach the current research.

### **2.9.2 Relational Being**

In his book, *Relational Being* (Gergen, 2009), Gergen draws on a social constructionist paradigm, introducing a 'new enlightenment' challenging the notion of a 'bounded self;' that is, an individual, separate 'self', suggesting instead 'self' constructed through social context – relational 'being'.

He embraces a relational and fluent understanding of a person created by relationships, rather than bounded; of thoughts as products of social minds, rather than true or false; of words as relational, with meaning arising through experiencing concepts and their contrast. There is the understanding of

relationships as fluid, continually transforming ('relational flow') and of agency as 'co-action', collaborative action.

The notion of 'truth' and 'being' as socially constructed resonates strongly with me in terms of my own ontological and epistemological assumptions, an aspect considered further within Chapter 3.

Given that transition is described as a change in context and relationships (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007), considering the voices emerging from and constructed through such social change seems to be particularly relevant to research in this area. Therefore, what are the particular fluid and relational voices arising through times of school transition? How do individuals, relational beings, make sense of this?

Through this lens we might expect personal accounts to give a window onto the social nature of transition – onto relational aspects of context, language and discourses that shape a particular transition. Additionally, the *how* of the telling becomes key, given its relational context - as told to *this* researcher at *this* time. Therefore, how are accounts constructed; *how* is transition told? Moreover, what is gained from hearing different voices side by side - the voice of child, parent and teacher in relation? What does transition mean for this group of people, personally, collectively and in this context?

Considering voices around transition in this way could be especially enlightening, offering localised insight and embracing on-going sense-making, an approach I adopt within the current research.

Aligning myself with this perspective, whilst I continue to refer to 'self' and 'individual' throughout, it is important to clarify that within this use of language is a valuing of the narrators' telling, and also an understanding of 'self' and voice as socially constructed, a point to which I return (Chapter 3).

### **2.9.3 Being and Becoming**

Arising from the 'relational flow' posited by Gergen, is the notion of Becoming, an aspect that also seems relevant to a study of transition, being concerned with encountering change.

John Shotter (2012) describes this as he considers Gergen's 'turbulent relational ontology' (p134), positing two aspects of claims about who we 'are':

(1) besides an account of our beliefs and values and why we believe them to be of importance; we also need (2) an account of the world in which it is possible for us to become whom we already believe ourselves to be (Shotter, 2012, p 139).

He describes a mismatch between conceptions of self and Becoming in the 'larger world' within individualist perspectives that fail to consider relational flow – of actions determined by what is anticipated or possible within the flow of events – suggesting:

we must contemplate the possibility of a world that is *still coming into being*, a world within which the many different flowing strands of different activity intertwine, become entangled with each other, and then, sometimes, separate, a turbulent, not-yet-settled, dialogically-structured world, a world that is still-in-the-making (Shotter, 2012, p 140).

Thus, notions of Being and Becoming, of 'possible worlds' (Bruner, 1986), 'possible selves' (Dickson, 2009; White & Epsom, 1990) drawn from a narrative paradigm also emerge as constructs with which the study of transition may be usefully concerned.

There is the suggestion that through social interaction emerges a new 'world', a 'dialogically-structured' world, negotiated through relationship, Becoming, especially relevant to a study of transition - a point where worlds change, other worlds are co-constructed and new versions of 'self' may emerge (Bruner, 1986).

Also of import are issues of power and positioning within social interaction (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; 2009), explored further in chapter three and particularly relevant to discourse around disability.

#### **2.9.4 Discourses around disability**

Given that transition experiences of children described as having additional needs are highlighted for further research, Goodley and Runswick-Cole's work seems particularly enlightening.

In their paper *Reading Rosie*, Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) explore different stories practitioners and researchers may tell about disabled children with whom they work, namely, children given 'impairment labels' (e.g. Down syndrome, autism, cerebral palsy p 56).

Drawing on Foucault, they describe impairment as located within discourse, rather than outside, suggesting reading from different 'discursive repertoires' reveals different understandings. They highlight this by 'reading Rosie' from four different discursive repertoires or lenses: through a lens of impairment, specifically 'the autism canon' (disability as biological deficit); through an orthodox social model (a product of disabling society, social oppression); from a Nordic relational model (as mismatch between person and environment); and through 'socio-cultural' lens (prioritising culture) (p 56, 59).

Highlighting different interpretations rather than 'truths,' they warn against readings that 'pathologise, other and separate disabled children from their peers, their families and the wider community' (p 53, 56).

Thus, how do we as researchers make sense of transition for children described as having additional needs? – a question less evident in the literature and particularly relevant to professional practice. In so asking, I am mindful of at once suggesting this experience may be *different* in some way, 'other.' Aware of this, I suggest reflecting on the lenses through which we make sense of disability could support interpretations.

Goodley and Runswick-Cole ask:

how are common sense ideas about impairment influenced by professionals and scientist? What possibilities are there for disrupting these ideas and offering more enabling alternatives? (p 53)

Similarly, one might ask, what are the 'common sense' and professional ideas around school transition for a child described as having additional needs and would eliciting such views highlight further understanding or offer more enabling alternatives?

Eliciting different voices around transition – child, parent, professionals – highlights the focus of my inquiry. Considering the lenses through which disability is told suggests an interesting perspective on which to draw.

## **2.10 Summary and research questions**

Within the UK, research focusing on transition to school is specifically highlighted as a future priority, asking:

what factors best support an effective transition and continuity from early education and childcare into school? (DfE, 2014b, p 9).

This review of the literature has asked how future study might best inform this area, considering the questions answered, questions still to be asked and useful theoretical perspectives.

A range of hypotheses and theoretical perspectives are evident; from more 'within-child' and potentially reductionist notions of school readiness, or 'family readiness', to more systemic and interactional views of transition, including continuity across settings and relational aspects, alongside personal experiences, role and identity. The quality of early years provision and pedagogy within school settings are suggested to influence transition. Furthermore, there are conflicting discourses around school readiness, described on the one hand as preparing children for school and on the other, as schools being ready for children (Broström, 2002; Wood, 2004).

The literature asks a range of questions about skills/readiness, pedagogy, continuity, identity and relational aspects. It also highlights gaps, giving rise to further questions.

For example, what is transition like for a child described as having additional needs and their family? Whilst recent UK literature focuses on keeping child and family central, especially relating to children described as having special educational needs (HMSO, 2014; DfE, 2014a), little research has elicited the voices of these children. Additionally, research has sought parents' and teachers' perspectives on *children's* transition, rather than *their* experience.

Drawing on Australian research, I considered a broader view of transition represented less widely within the literature - not only the child's experience, but also, the parent experience – transition as family, community, relational experience, highlighting an avenue for further research within a British, rather than Australian context. I ask what is transition like for the parent or teacher?

Additionally, how do we make sense of the literature and which theoretical perspectives suggest useful ways forward?

Given the numerous associations suggested, it seems likely that transition to school is diverse in nature and attempting to 'discover' generalisable factors

may be unhelpful. Nonetheless, my review highlights a large proportion of positivist research identifying, measuring and comparing factors or characteristics. Instead, I suggest research using an exploratory, qualitative psychological approach could add rich detail and an alternative perspective to the body of research. Eliciting personal accounts, less evident currently, would offer insight around transition in a localised way, especially relevant within an English context, where research appears focused on provision and continuity practices (Sylva et al., 2004; Taggart et al., 2006; Tickell, 2011).

Lastly, whilst systemic theoretical perspectives may to some extent explain associations suggested within the literature, a social constructionist perspective and a relational understanding could bring new insight and a critique to current research around transition, drawing on notions of relational being, Becoming, and also the discursive lenses by which we read disability.

Consequently, this inquiry addresses a gap in the literature, exploring transition as constructed through relationship and over time (on-going, becoming), through the marginalised voice of a child described as having additional needs and the adults around them. Personal narratives, including *how* transition is told, are explored in context - the voices of child, parent and teacher considered side by side, in relation, so offering perspectives not currently apparent within the literature.

Thus, the research sought insight around localised transition and on-going sense-making, of particular relevance to educational psychology practice, teaching professionals and the research community generally, by asking the following primary questions:

1. Making sense of transition to school: What are the narratives of a child described as having additional needs, her parent and teacher?
2. What can we learn from considering these narratives in relation to each other?

A secondary question asked:

3. What do these narratives have to say about topics and discourses in the literature?

### **3 Methodology**

Approaching this inquiry it was important to consider the paradigm or worldview adopted (Blaikie, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 2005; Mertens, 2010; Thomas, 2013), namely, my position 'on the best way to think about the world' (Thomas, 2013, p 110) or the 'basic set of beliefs that guide action' (Guba, 1990, p 17).

The need for logic, consistency and coherence (Blaikie, 2000; Thomas, 2013; Carter & Little, 2007) has driven decision-making throughout and I clearly locate this research within a set of beliefs relating to: the nature of reality (ontology), the nature of knowledge (epistemology), how knowledge may be obtained (methodology) and the nature of ethics (axiology) (Lincoln & Guba, 2005).

This chapter considers positionality and theoretical underpinnings, followed by methodological choices, quality in this research, ethical issues and pilot study considerations.

#### **3.1 Positionality**

I locate the inquiry within a relativist approach (Crotty, 1998; Mertens, 2010), embracing multiple realities and individual interpretation. Based on an assumption that social reality is constructed - relative, subjective, different for each person - I take a social constructionist perspective, moving away from methodology associated with natural sciences, as perhaps reductionist and less appropriate for studying complex social phenomena (Crotty, 1998; Moore, 2005). Instead, I adopt an interpretive approach, focusing on depth, and meaning-making, with no expectation for objectivity, causation, or generalisation (Thomas, 2013).

This approach aligns with my beliefs about the nature of reality and the aims of this inquiry - exploring unique perspectives of a child described as having additional needs and those around her. Like Moore (2005), I feel this ontology 'prepares the ground for working with difference' (pp 112-113) or additional needs. As Blaikie (2000) suggests, "the issue is whose construction of reality should inform the foundation for understanding social life?" (pp 196-197).

My positionality also relates to my practice as trainee educational psychologist (TEP), echoing the 'paradigmatic shift' within this profession from cognitive, developmental or social learning theory approaches, towards systemic-ecological or social constructionist perspectives (Kennedy, 2006; Fox, 2009; Moore, 2005). Whilst educational research has traditionally valued objectivity, rationality, and 'expert' practice (Gage, 1989; Moore, 2005; Schön, 1991), like Moore (2005), it seemed important to 'adopt a degree of ontological and epistemological relativism' (pp 112-113) when exploring social phenomena, difference or 'otherness' - a position that prioritises voice, empowers individuals and embraces subjective experience, aspects discussed later in this chapter.

### **3.1.1 Further considerations**

Locating the research within social constructionist and relativist paradigms gives rise to further considerations.

A criticism of the relativist position includes possibilities of over interpretation, multiple truths, leading to 'a relativist set of equally valid interpretations' where 'it can seem that there is no place to stop the interpreting and no way to judge between interpretations, all of which may be 'truthful' in their own contexts' (Squire, 2013, p 62). Thus, there is no attempt to generalise findings, confirm hypotheses or build theory. Whilst I relate accounts to topics within literature, the aim has been to present my (one) interpretation of unique, *localised* sense-making around transition.

Another challenge relates to 'subject' - whose voice is the subject of this inquiry? Whilst seeking to empower and privilege narrator's voice (Arden, 2014; Fogg, 2014; White & Epston, 1990), within this inquiry voice is regarded as constructed within the space between people; co-constructed (Mishler, 1986), influenced by context and culture, as indeed, transition itself.

Furthermore, Martin and Sugarman (2000) describe social constructionism as static, ignoring possibilities of an agentic 'self' engaged in change and creativity, and instead, focusing on discourse outside of 'self'. However, I am struck by the possibility for agency and change negotiated through interaction. I draw on Gergen's idea of co-action and relational flow (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012) and on Stetsenko's (2009) description of Being and

Becoming, where individuals are 'agentive beings who develop through embeddedness in sociocultural contexts and within relations to others' (Stetsenko, 2009). Thus, agency is seen as relational, collaborative and transformative. Far from static, there is co-construction and re-construction through social interaction, with new understandings created between individuals or groups. This seems particularly appropriate to exploration of transition as process - sense-making over time. I embrace a dynamic understanding of self and agency created within the space between myself and narrator, over time, seeking a methodology reflecting this position.

### **3.2 Why case study?**

Focusing inquiry around one 'case' facilitated an exploration of unique experiences within one specific social context, aiming to generate in-depth understanding around transition to school in context.

I gave consideration to the use of focus groups (children, parents and professionals) as an alternative approach. However, whilst this would elicit more perspectives, it would lack focus around a particular family or school system and would generate accounts of less depth.

Alternatively, focusing on individuals positioned around one child, the approach relates well to relational and systemic perspectives underpinning this inquiry and the questions asked. Furthermore, understandings arising would be relevant to the individuals and school concerned, leading to shared, deeper understandings, potentially informing future transition practices.

Mindful of applicability to my practice, a case study approach also relates well to educational psychology practice and professional guidance (DfE, 2014a; HMSO, 2014), which emphasises centrality of child and family, alongside joint professional working around families.

It is important here to clarify that the child in this study was described as having communication needs relating to verbal dyspraxia, finding difficulties communicating verbally rather than understanding talk (see Glossary, Appendix A; sections 3.9 and 4.3). I introduce this as it informs decision-making around methodology. It was vital that my chosen methodology was adaptable enough to facilitate and analyse both the adult and child voice at

the centre of this study, being also consistent with social constructionist underpinnings.

### **3.3 The search for method**

“the search for method becomes one of the most important problems of the entire enterprise of understanding the uniquely human form of psychological activity”

(Vygotsky, 1978 [1930], p 65)

Cited by Hiles and Čermák (2007) this quotation highlights ‘finding’ a method aligning with one’s ontological and epistemological position, embracing the human subject matter of psychological inquiry.

Being descriptive and exploratory, rather than hypothesis-testing or confirmatory, the questions my research asked required rich, nuanced and reflective qualitative data. Therefore, a qualitative methodology was used to elicit ‘thick’ descriptions, embracing complexity, rather than reducing to simplistic interpretations (Warham, 2012, p 79) and adding to more limited qualitative research in this area.

Coming to know the methodology that would best facilitate this inquiry was a highly considered aspect of my research process. Seeking to explore individual meaning-making consistent with theoretical underpinnings of my research questions and recognising the importance of adaptability to the specific needs of a diverse group, a narrative methodology was adopted.

### **3.4 A narrative methodology**

Hiles and Čermák (2007), echoing Mishler’s position (1986; 1999), suggest ‘narratives can powerfully reflect one of the crucial means of knowledge production that goes on in our everyday lives’ (p 4). Indeed, many references within literature reflect this view, with life described as inherently storied (Bruner, 1986), humans as natural story-tellers (Polkinghorne, 1988; Bruner, 1986) and narratives as a principal mode of understanding our lives and expressing meaning (Polkinghorne, 2004).

According to Squire (2013), narrative approaches do not always provide methodological guidelines, but, as Riessman observes, offer a ‘conceptual technology’ (Squire, 2013, p 48). This could be seen as a criticism, but also

gives flexibility and a methodological creativity helpful to this inquiry, dealing with diverse perspectives, ages and communication.

Approaches include interviews, diary entries, visual images, media, body language, social context (Andrews, Squire & Tamboukou, 2013) - a methodology able to explore various narrative forms, particularly appropriate for child and adult narrators in this research. Furthermore, there are many examples where narrative method is used to explore accounts of experience (Arden, 2014; Callwood 2013, Fogg 2014; Labov, 1972; Patterson, 2013; Riessman, 1993; 2000; 2008; Squire, 2013).

Additionally, there are various understandings of 'narrative' within the approach and I considered how narrative would be understood within this inquiry. What understanding of 'narrative' would support this exploration?

### **3.4.1 Narrative and this inquiry**

Various understandings of 'narrative' include personal, sociocultural, event-based, or experience-centred narratives, alongside 'small', 'big,' and multiple narratives (Andrews et al., 2013). For Riessman (1993; 2008) 'narrative' is the individual's entire given response, within which smaller narratives may be embedded.

Patterson (2013) argues for an understanding that embraces experience (Riessman, 1993; 2008), alongside events (Labov, 1972). Riessman reconceptualises 'narrative' "as including on-going or enduring states of being and of present, future or hypothetical experience" (Patterson, 2013, p 40). Whilst a Labovian approach provides rigorous structural approach, it can reduce accounts to core, event-based narratives, prioritising events over experience and neglecting non-event-based talk that may be significant to the narrator's story (Patterson, 2013). Furthermore, it can neglect context; narratives co-constructed through interactions between teller and listener (Squire, 2013).

Consistent with broader understandings of 'narrative', within this inquiry I embrace the telling of events, alongside experience - 'who they are' within this (Squire, 2013, p 47), including past, future, things wished for. I adopt an understanding of narrative as co-constructed (Mishler, 1986) and

transformative (Stetsenko, 2009); a collaborative space of Being and Becoming (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012) within context, through telling and performance of story to others.

### **3.4.2 Context, positionality**

Narratives can be seen as performed and positioned, serving a function (Hiles & Čermák, 2008; Patterson, 2013; Squire, 2013, p66) - a mode of presentation chosen by individuals, not real, true, nor absolute (Schafer, 1992), but 'how narrators want to be understood' (Patterson, 2013, p 36). Furthermore, narratives may be both constructed and re-constructed – multiple stories changing across context and time, with conversations re-authored, re-remembered (Dickson, 2009, p 9; White & Epston, 1990) and re-evaluated as a means of making sense of life (Bruner, 2004), alongside 'unspoken narratives', or those yet to be voiced (Fogg, 2014).

Exploring transition as experience over time, these aspects were especially interesting to consider. It was important that my methodology embraced the possibility of sense-making through the *telling* of story within context and recognised 'unspoken narratives' (Fogg, 2014), valuing the interpretive act of researcher in uncovering narratives, adding depth, richness and understanding of how individuals make sense of transition.

### **3.4.3 Alternative methodologies**

Other approaches considered included interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) (Smith et al., 1999; 2009) and thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

However, whilst IPA could seem appropriate for studying transition, sharing phenomenological and hermeneutical assumptions with experience-based narrative approaches (Squire, 2013), it is suited to a homogenous sample, rather than the diversity within this inquiry. Furthermore, a criticism of methodologies like IPA and thematic analysis is that they reduce narratives to a set of themes (Squire, 2013; Hiles & Čermák, 2007; Riessman, 2008), failing to embrace a holistic picture or consider *how* a story is told in context (Patterson, 2013), aspects I valued in an exploration of sense-making around transition to school.

Discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987) could explore the way meaning was negotiated and constructed through talk. However, focusing solely on language could be very limiting, reflecting only an aspect of individuals' stories. Recognising context and positionality through analysing dialogue, the methodology acknowledges the socially constructed nature of narrative. However, it does not embrace the more holistic understanding of transition valued within this inquiry.

#### **3.4.4 Choosing a narrative methodology**

Given the range of narrative approaches, a challenge was around choosing a specific narrative methodology for this inquiry. Some research combines aspects of methodologies flexibly. Arden (2014) combines a holistic content perspective (Hiles & Čermák, 2008; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998), with Labov's (1972) structural analysis and Emerson and Frosh's (2009) critical narrative analysis. Similarly, Callwood (2013) combines Gee's (1991) poetic method with aspects of Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998) and critical narrative analysis (Emerson & Frosh, 2009).

However, in Hiles and Čermák's (2007; 2008) model of narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) I found a range of perspectives from which to interpret transition narratives, relating to their content, form and context, also recognising the *how* and *what* of the telling. Furthermore, this approach emphasised narrative as "not merely a distinct form of qualitative data or a particular approach to data analysis", but a rigorous methodological approach (Hiles and Čermák, 2007, p 3).

#### **3.5 Narrative orientated inquiry (NOI)**

The NOI model is described as "firmly rooted in a psychological approach", with a rigour that "relies upon making its underlying assumptions and procedures fully transparent" (Hiles & Čermák, 2007,p2), an approach lacking within the literature. A sequential model for the collection and analysis of narrative data, it begins with the research question, moving to narrative interview, followed by listening, transcribing and reading text, and culminating with data analysis.

Narrative is understood as interaction between self and context, recognising the dynamic, creative and agentic nature of performed narratives. According to Hiles and Čermák (2007, p 4)

the primary paradigm assumption that lies behind a narrative approach is the synthesis of a situated-occasioned action perspective together with a view of the individual as actively and creatively engaged in processes of meaning-making, organisation and agency.

Acknowledging co-construction, the approach maintains both researcher and participant voice within transcripts and facilitates flexible interviewing, whereby minimal direction or specific topic-based questions may guide.

Hiles and Čermák (2007) suggest “a story cannot be simply reduced to a set of themes, although it can be seen as a set of themes where each must be seen in relation to the whole” (p 4). Overarching stories are considered, as well as smaller stories within, with turning points and unusual or significant smaller stories being particularly key, throwing light on overarching stories.

NOI requires one to take a step backwards, seeking a rich understanding derived from multiple perspectives, including narrative as *what* is told and the *way* it is told (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001), narrative as holistic and also categorical (eg themes within) (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber, 1998) and narrative as critical perspective, performed and positioned (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; 2009) (further description in section 4.6).

I considered this approach would elicit stories of breadth and depth. A critical perspective would support understanding of how narrators positioned themselves through story – what their stories had to say about self, society and discourses/topics, transition in social context. The approach seeks to be ‘explicitly inclusive, pluralistic and transparent’ (p4), offering a rich, multi-layered understanding around a specific transition.

### **3.6 Interviews that facilitate and empower**

Given this inquiry explores transition through the *telling* of story and *within* the space between interviewer and interviewee, facilitating voice becomes key. Embracing co-construction and agency as co-action (Gergen, 2009; Stetsenko, 2009), notions of power and voice arise.

According to Hiles and Čermák (2008), narratives ‘promote human empowerment’ (p 149), presenting challenge to suffering, discrimination and oppression. Similarly, core to my research was a desire to ‘make heard’ the narratives of those involved and particularly the young child, so often unheard. I was mindful of the potential influence of professional power within conversations (BPS, 2009; HCPC, 2012; Hollway & Jefferson, 2002) and the need to minimise this in order to empower narrators as “privileged authors” (White & Epston, 1990, p 83), generating narratives they could ‘own.’ Within the interview space I wanted narrators to lead content as much as possible and did not want to overly influence this, arriving at several ways of empowering.

One method was inviting individuals to keep on-going journals to share during interviews. Diary/journal-use has been widely employed in narrative studies, noted by Andrews et al. (2013) and Hiles and Čermák (2007). Additionally, within early years foundation stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2012a), a journal is commonly used and familiar to individuals within this inquiry. I hoped it would help narrators remember experiences, supporting them to share *their* story more fully, rather than being a series of questions and answers. Valuing transparency and narratives as co-constructed also prompted me to continually reflect upon on my own role within conversation.

I aimed to share power by feeding back initial transcripts and reflections to narrators to check and comment upon, alongside giving opportunities within second interviews to return to ideas (used in research by Arden, 2014; Callwood, 2013; Hollway and Jefferson, 2000).

Further, I aimed to empower individuals by developing familiarity through pre-interview meetings and conducting interviews in a relaxed environment of the narrators’ choosing. This issue was also addressed ethically, through informed consent and respecting confidentiality (section 3.8.4).

### **3.6.1 Adult voice**

Seeking to facilitate participant-led narratives, I planned to begin interviews in an open way, stressing my interest in *their* story and in the way *they* chose to tell it, asking ‘where would that begin for you? alongside prompts (‘can you give an example?’) (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Squire, 2013).

However, aware that facilitating detailed narratives may require me to be more flexible and active in the co-construction, I also considered topic-based questions - an option suggested by Hiles and Čermák (2008) which could elicit data relating to topics in the literature (a secondary research question).

### **3.6.2 Child voice**

Particularly pertinent to this inquiry was how to facilitate the child's voice - how would she communicate her views or feelings about transition, how would I elicit detail and address issues of power and agency?

Since the child in this inquiry was described as having additional communication needs (see sections 3.9; 4.3), I drew on my experience as an early years teacher and TEP, alongside relevant research, to guide my thinking before drawing together several facilitating approaches.

#### *Guiding thoughts*

The importance of listening and starting from a point of equality is stressed (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014; Ranciere, 1999). It was important to promote equal relationship through opportunities for the child to lead, to choose, to talk within familiar contexts and to share methods of communication.

I considered parental and professional influence with regard to views shared by the child. Whilst home 'interviews' with the parent present could help her feel comfortable, relaxed and able to communicate more equally, I was mindful that this could influence her responses. To address this, Sheard (2013) suggests asking children for two responses – 'how do you feel?' 'how else?' It was important to give opportunity to tell *her* story in the way *she* would like.

Whilst the literature highlights a range of methods to facilitate child voice, some depend heavily on verbal communication skills. Therefore, seeking to address linguistic barriers and elicit as much detail as possible, I drew on my experience of working with young children alongside creativity evidenced in research, where approaches include drawing, puppets, play, visual symbols, classroom tours, observation, photographs (Beaver, 2011; Clark and Moss, 2001; Moran, 2008; Murphy, 1998; Mitchell & Sloper, 2011). Thus, I adopted a creative approach, drawing together several facilitating activities, guided by

the needs of this inquiry, using them flexibly to support talk about feelings, likes and dislikes during transition to school.

I describe here my decision-making around choices, whilst detail relating to the 'tools' employed is described later (section 4.5). In order to support transparency (Hiles & Čermák, 2008) and trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 2005) please see a detailed account of my decision-making in Appendix B. Below I give a summary.

### ***Why a journal?***

- An 'EYFS profile' or journal is commonly used within early years practice, recording the child's learning journey through photographs, drawings, emergent writing, adult observations/annotations.
- Methods used to elicit views in professional practice and research include drawing (Beaver, 2011; Moran, 2008) and photographs (Clark & Moss, 2001; Riessman, 2008)
- Using a similar journal could support the child to share a fuller narrative and in preferred ways, using drawing, craft, pictures, photographs, parent scribing. Also, facilitating a child-led opportunity.
- A limitation could relate to parent influence of journal content. Addressing this, I acknowledge co-construction, aiming to privilege child voice by explaining the facilitating parent role clearly when introducing journals and drawing on strategies, like asking 'how did you feel'? 'how else?' (Sheard, 2013).

### ***Why 'tours' and photographs?***

- *The Mosaic Approach* (Clark & Moss, 2001) uses classroom 'tours' and photographs in its holistic approach to research with young children /young people with additional needs, cited widely in research.
- Comparable to the participant-led beginning of adult interviews, it seemed a helpful way of facilitating communication, whereby the child takes me on a classroom tour, actively showing me likes/dislikes and taking photographs to communicate this.
- It suggested a flexible approach, responsive to wishes and context.

### ***Why emotion cards and Talking Mats™ ?***

- My experience of working with children who communicate non-verbally suggested visual resources as a primary support.
- Emotion cards could support her to tell me how she was feeling (eg smiley/sad face cards, pictures representing different emotions)
- Aware that the child in this inquiry did not currently use other communication aids, *Talking Mats™* (Murphy, 1998) was appropriate.
- Designed by specialist speech and language therapist, Joan Murphy (1998), *Talking Mats™* could facilitate communication through picture symbols designed for a range of abilities and ages (Rabiee et al., 2005), used widely within speech and language therapy practice.
- Especially appropriate was the set of symbols developed for the early years age-range
- It is supported by research with children described as having communication needs (Boa, 2005; Cameron, 2015; Cameron & Murphy, 2000; Coakes & Murphy, 2006; Hooton & Westaway, 2008; Mitchell & Sloper, 2011; Murphy, 2009; 2005; 1998).
- It would facilitate an understanding of the child's views relating to skills, support and change during transition.
- Possible limitations could be in eliciting fixed responses. However, I considered there was flexibility to add to the bank of picture symbols and also, using as a starting point to explore particular responses (Mitchell & Sloper, 2011).

### ***Summarising***

I considered that the journal, 'tour', photographs, emotions cards and *Talking Mat™* resources would facilitate child voice (see section 4.5.2). I aimed to promote an equal relationship by giving opportunities for the child: to lead (during classroom 'tours' and journal-sharing); to choose and reflect ('how do you feel'/'how else?') and to use communication methods supporting equality (non-verbal, picture-based resources, *Talking Mats*, journals) –

communication methods in which both the child and myself were skilled (Ranciere, 1999).

### **3.7 Narrative interviews and this research**

The questions my research sought to answer required rich, qualitative data generated through interviews, alongside a variety of considerations. I reflected particularly on the on-going nature of transition, quality and diversity, and topics in the literature.

#### ***Transition as on-going***

I was interested in transition as process *over time* (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Shotter, 2012), not merely at the point of starting school, and wanted to facilitate reflection across transition. I considered this might be facilitated by two interviews (July and September), as used in various narrative inquiries (Arden, 2014; Callwood, 2013; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000), alongside keeping an on-going journal to share during interviews (Andrews et al., 2013; Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008; Russell, 2003). Squire (2013) talks of one interview informing the other, citing Hollway and Jefferson (2000), where a second interview allows a return to significant ideas.

In this way, I aimed to generate rich and detailed data reflecting the process of transition to school.

#### ***Quality and diversity***

It was important to consider how interviews would value the diversity of this inquiry, but also the quality of individual accounts. Aware that a range of professional perspectives around the child could reflect diversity and breadth around school transition, I was also mindful of the need to elicit and analyse narratives of depth. In this I was guided by Squire (2013), who suggests a smaller sample size for experiential narrative research, relating to the number of interviews rather than the number of participants.

In order to reflect this respectfully and as fully as possible, conversation with various professionals (nursery teacher, assistant, school SENCO and EP) gave context to an exploration of three core narratives around transition – those of the child, parent and school teacher. By focusing on three core

experiences at two points in time, the inquiry could explore transition over time and from different perspectives across the system, whilst also valuing the richness of each narrative (Squire, 2013; Hiles & Čermák, 2008).

### ***Topics within the literature***

I was interested in exploring topics highlighted in the literature, considering it helpful to include questions within interviews aimed at generating qualitative data around topics in the literature (Hiles & Čermák, 2008), should narrators wish. However, I did not seek to direct reflections in a prescriptive manner. The primary aim of the research was exploratory and sought principally to explore sense-making around transition, as narrators chose to recount it.

## **3.8 Ensuring quality through NOI**

According to Hiles and Čermák (2007, p 2) 'there are considerable problems arising out of the rapid proliferations of different qualitative methods'. Given the diverse nature of qualitative approaches and the variability of procedures associated with narrative methodology, it was important to consider what would determine quality within this inquiry. Throughout, I was mindful of guidance relating to conducting research within the educational psychology profession (BPS, 2009; HCPC, 2012). Furthermore, I was guided by principles associated with my chosen methodology, describing those especially key below.

### **3.8.1 Transparency**

Narrative orientated inquiry (NOI) (Hiles & Čermák, 2007;2008) places an overarching focus on transparency and critical reflexivity that has ensured quality and rigour within this research.

According to Hiles and Čermák (2007),

the rigor of NOI relies upon making its underlying assumptions and procedures fully transparent. Indeed the major implication of our position is that transparency should be recognized as the basic requirement of all qualitative research, and indeed, all scientific research (p 2)

They emphasise transparency in making choices explicit, rather than implied, particularly regarding ethical decisions or compromises, emphasising transparency and reflexivity around theoretical perspective, values and conduct. Similarly, Goodley and Smailes (2011) stress richness and transparency.

Seeking qualitative rigour, rather than scientific method, I attempt to be fully transparent across all aspects of the research, including paradigmatic assumptions, methodological procedures and interpretations. Within this, I was guided more specifically by notions of authenticity, trustworthiness and fittingness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; 2005), alongside critical and ethical reflexivity throughout.

### **3.8.2 Authenticity, trustworthiness and fittingness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985; 2005) describe qualitative rigour in terms of authenticity, trustworthiness and fittingness. I was guided by these principles in transcribing accounts verbatim, following established analysis methods, seeking interpretations closely describing narratives, and valuing fullness through multiple interpretive perspectives. Feeding back transcribed accounts to narrators and facilitating continuing conversations through second interviews, I sought to reflect and empower voice, valuing trustworthiness and authenticity (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Howitt, 2010; Riessman, 2000; 2008). Through on-going reflection and transparency, I also sought trustworthiness and authenticity, aiming to make methodology, rather than findings, replicable.

Whilst representing analysis clearly as my own interpretive perspective, I sought fittingness by sharing initial reflections with narrators and analysis with my research supervisors. I also sought rigour in terms of internal consistency between epistemology, methodology and method (Carter & Little, 2007; Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008).

Given the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of this research, there was no intention to generalise findings, although I envisaged, as Erickson (1986) suggests, that localised understandings of transition could bring about small, local changes, supporting thinking around transition practices for individuals and schools concerned.

### **3.8.3 Critical reflexivity**

There is the acknowledgement of my positionality (Willig, 2008) and engagement in reflexivity regarding my interpretation (Goodley & Smailes, 2011). Additionally, I include my own voice in transcripts, alongside those of narrators (Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008) making explicit my role in co-construction. Throughout I reflect on actions and interpretations within the research (Brookfield, 1998).

### **3.8.4 Ethical considerations**

Throughout, I was guided by ethical principles upheld by the University of Sheffield, by which this inquiry was approved following submission of ethics application and research proposal (Appendix C). Additionally, I followed professional guidance, including principles of respect, competence, responsibility and integrity (BPS, 2009) and issues of informed consent, confidentiality, competence and general conduct (HCPC, 2012).

There has been transparency around decisions made, seeking to value and respect individuals' wishes, needs and contributions. Key considerations have been around sample, informed consent, confidentiality and respecting needs. (Section 4.3.1 describes ethical procedures).

#### ***Considerations around sample***

Two ethical considerations relating to sample are described in detail in Appendix D, with a summary below.

The first was the decision to recruit around two cases initially, being aware that should a participant be unable to complete second interviews, research would be compromised. This brought ethical dilemmas around how to value contributions from both cases. I decided to be open about this with participants and indeed, was unable to complete second interviews around one case.

The second was the decision to focus on three core narratives. I was torn by a desire to reflect diversity through a variety of professional perspectives and also the desire to explore narratives in depth, valuing the fullness of accounts. Again, talking (with consent) to professionals involved with the

child I was mindful of transparency, communicating clearly that research would focus on three core narratives.

### ***Informed consent, confidentiality and respect***

Throughout, there was the need to respect others, recognising power issues and self-determination rights, including informed and on-going consent, the right to withdraw and rights to respect and confidentiality (BPS, 2009; HCPC, 2012). Thus, I reflected on ethical considerations and procedures adopted, including contacting the narrators and sharing information openly - through writing, personal contact and in a way that ensured individuals felt consent was truly informed, on-going and voluntary (Appendices F, G, H).

Particularly pertinent to this inquiry, and often neglected in research within this age-range, was how to ensure the child was informed and happy to take part. I chose to use simple verbal explanations supported by pictures and smiley/sad face cards (Appendix H).

Guided by ethical principles of respect and responsibility, the research valued each individual's right to confidentiality, adopting procedures to ensure this throughout, alongside respecting individuals' emotional needs with steps taken to support and safeguard.

I reflect in detail around these considerations in Appendix D, coming to decisions regarding specific procedures within this inquiry (section 4.3).

### **3.9 Pilot Study and preparation**

During May 2015 I conducted a pilot study to clarify research decisions and practice interview techniques. This included interviews with a nursery child described by school as having communication needs, his parent and another reception child parent. I include detailed reflections in Appendix I, whilst summarising below.

Each parent interview was different, with the following reflections informing my final approach:

- In the nursery parent interview little talk was generated through open-ended invitation, whereas prompts/questions created depth

- Supporting with a journal prior to conversation may have helped generate more detailed narrative
- The reception parent interview generated rich detail through an open-ended start, with questions flowing naturally
- Asking the reception parent if she *wanted* to answer further questions allowed her to maintain control of how her narrative was shaped, telling *her* story, rather than overly-led by questions
- Differences may reflect conversation before starting school (nursery) compared with after (Reception), when individuals could have more to say. Drawing flexibly on prompts/questions may be particularly appropriate for initial interviews
- Responding flexibly to individuals was highlighted. Meeting with individuals in the main study prior to interview would be key
- A question about additional needs and pictures of school routines were suggested to support interviews, alongside home context

The child 'interview' provided opportunity to practice classroom 'tours' and picture-based activities, including Talking Mats™ within nursery. Reflections informing my final approach were:

- The child enjoyed giving a 'tour' and taking photographs, supporting child-led narrative and familiarity between us
- Locating interview activities at home may have put him at ease.
- Having the tour at a separate point would give time to print photographs I could use within further home activities
- The child interview would be in two parts – a tour of class and further activities at home, as preferred
- How could activities elicit narratives of greater depth?  
E.g. using a journal could have supported him to tell of school visits through drawings/photos, using the 'tour' photographs within further activities could have developed thicker narratives. Understanding individual preferences/likes would support my approach

Further preparation included meeting with Evie, the child at the centre of the main study, her mother and teachers. Reflections were:

- Evie's 'likes' (drawing, pictures, ICT) would inform my approach
- Conversation with parent and teacher confirmed a preference to split the child interview across home and school contexts
- Observations in setting and conversation with parent, teacher and school EP highlighted Evie's strengths in verbal understanding, whilst she was described as having additional needs around communicating verbally, through a label of verbal dyspraxia (see Appendix A and section 4.3)
- The above confirmed that 'tours' and visual activities may facilitate Evie's narrative and that verbal prompts may also support
- Adults would value opportunities to lead the telling of their story and *also* answer questions
- Individuals were happy to use journals to record experiences in an on-going way

Thus, pilot interviews and initial meetings with individuals in the main study supported my thinking and informed procedures used within the final research approach.

### **3.10 Summary**

This chapter presented the narrative of my research, describing my journey in coming to methodological decisions. It aimed to give an overview of my methodological choices, being clear and transparent in communicating decisions made and reasons for making them. A description of specific procedures used is given in the following chapter.

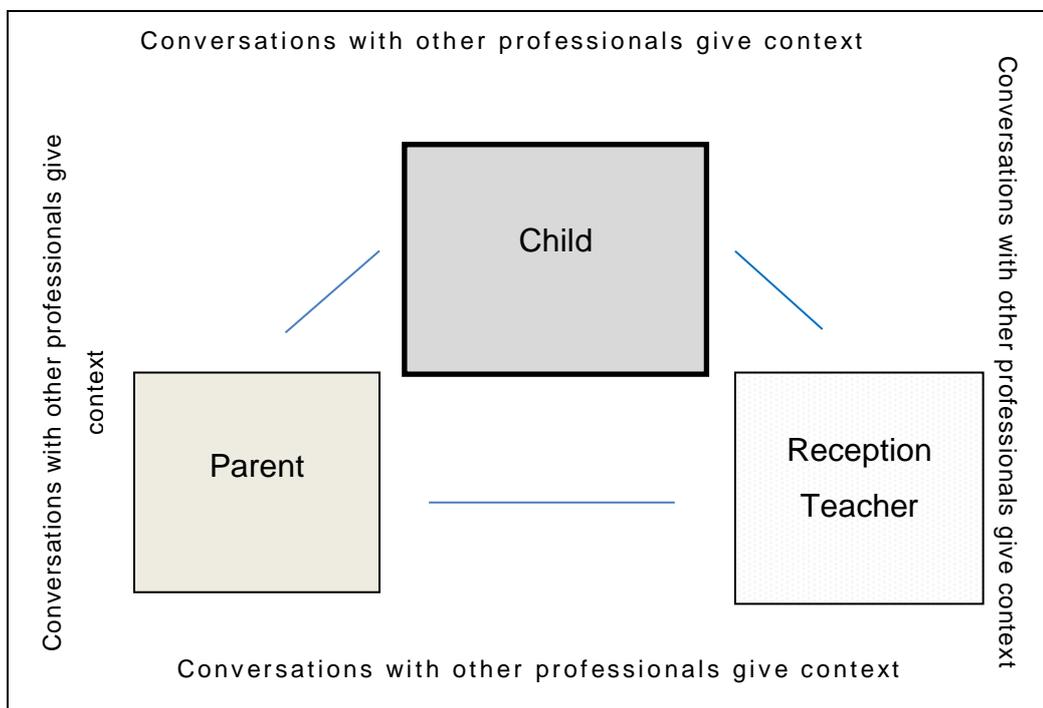
## 4 Procedures

### 4.1 Chapter introduction

Within the previous chapter I described my journey in coming to methodological choices. This chapter describes specific procedures followed.

### 4.2 Design overview

A case study approach was adopted, whereby transition-to-school narratives of a child, her parent and teacher were elicited using semi-structured interviews in July and September 2015 (figure 1).



**Figure 1: Case study design**

The research sought to answer the following primary questions:

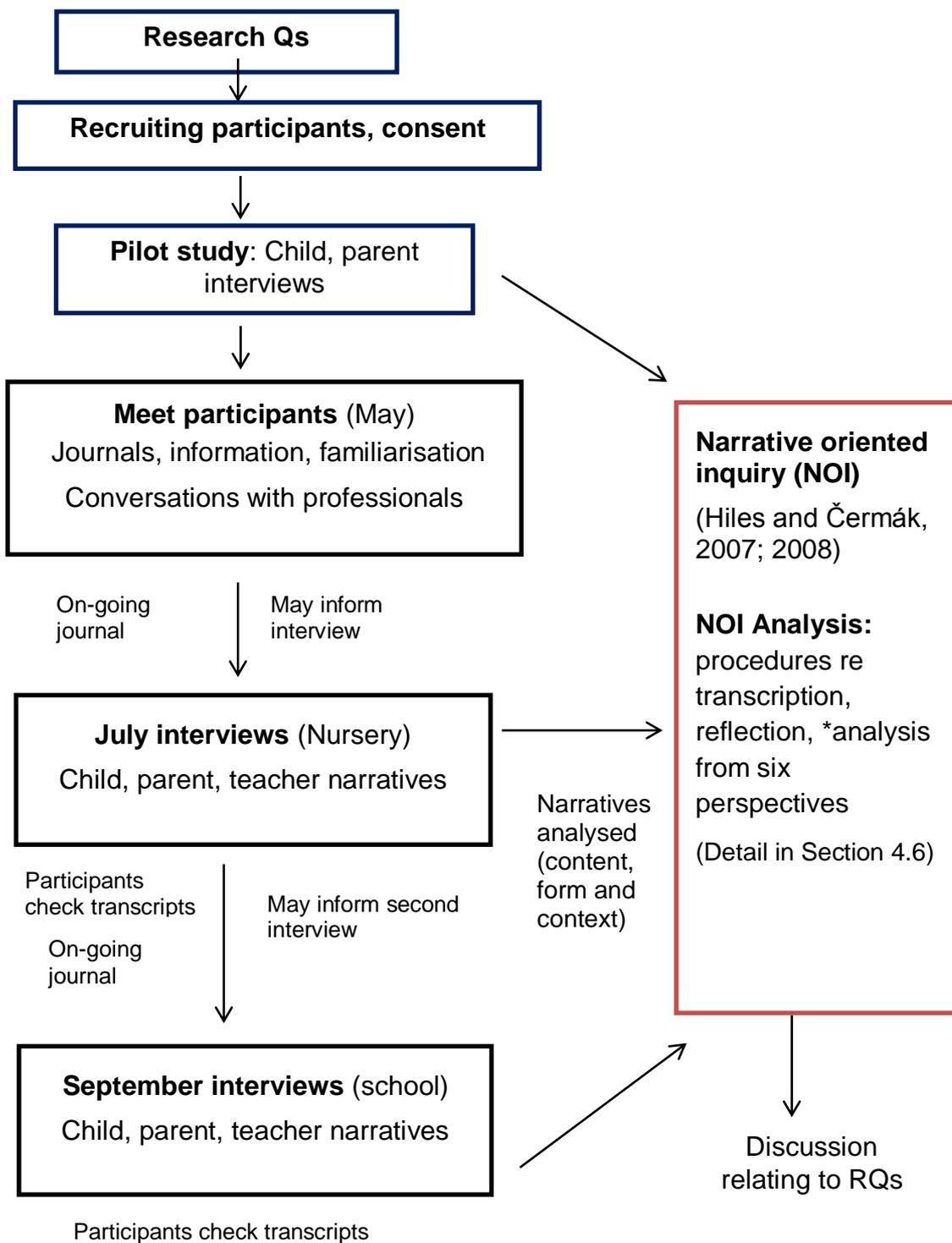
1. Making sense of transition to school: What are the narratives of a child described as having additional needs, her parent and teacher?
2. What can we learn from considering these narratives in relation to each other?

A secondary question asked:

3. What do these narratives have to say about topics and discourses in the literature?

To answer these questions the research employed narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) (Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008), seeking 'thick' descriptions and embracing complexity, rather than reducing experiences to simplistic interpretations (Warham, 2012, p 79).

Figure 2 gives an overview of the research design, followed by further detail relating to interviews in Table 1.



\*

- (i) Sjuzet & fabula (fabula, outline of events/ sjuzet, “way” told)
- (ii) Holistic–content (Lieblich et al., 1998)
- (iii) Holistic–form (Lieblich et al., 1998)
- (iv) Categorical–content (Lieblich et al., 1998)
- (v) Categorical–form (Lieblich et al., 1998)
- (vi) Critical narrative analysis (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; 2009)

**Figure 2: Overview of research design**

**Table 1: Details of the interviews/ tours undertaken**

<b>July Interviews</b>	<b>Individuals present*</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Duration**</b>
Evie's July Nursery Tour	Evie Miss G (Evie's support assistant) accompanied her first tour [Miss D (Nursery teacher) did not accompany, but was in class]	Nursery Class	20 mins.
Evie's July Home Interview	Evie Cindy (Evie's mother)	Evie's home	50 mins**
Cindy's July interview	Cindy	Cindy's home	50 mins.
Kate's July interview	Kate	School office	40 mins.
<b>Sept. Interviews</b>	<b>Individuals present*</b>	<b>Context</b>	<b>Duration**</b>
Evie's Sept. Reception Tour	Evie [Mrs P (support assistant) did not accompany, but was in class] [Miss S (Kate, reception teacher) did not accompany tour, but was in class]	Reception Class	35 mins.
Evie's Sept. Home Interview	Evie Cindy (Evie's Mum)	Evie's home	50 mins**
Cindy's Sept Interview	Cindy	Cindy's home	50 mins.
Kate's Sept Interview	Kate	School office	50 mins.

*\*As the conductor of each interview, I am implicitly including myself as present at each of the above. In all cases the interview was with the key narrator indicated in the title. Other individuals present are included for transparency.*

*\*\*I did not place a time restriction on the length of the interview, with duration guided by the participant. Additionally, short breaks occurred between the three activities comprising Evie's home interviews.*

### **4.3 Sample**

I recruited a small sample since it is suggested that quality, over quantity of interviews should guide sample choice for experiential narrative research (Squire, 2013). Therefore, this inquiry focused on one case study, comprising

a child and two adults around her. Two interviews were conducted with each individual (six interviews in total), giving necessary depth and richness.

Participants for two cases were initially recruited (should one withdraw prior to September). Indeed, individuals around one case did withdraw and were not included in this inquiry (explanation in section 3.8.4; Appendix D).

The following criteria were used to identify participants:

- The child was moving to Reception class in September 2015, currently attending Nursery
- There had been additional EP involvement around the child during nursery
- The child's setting was interested in transition practices, increasing the study's relevance and applicability to practice.

Initial contact was made as follows:

- I shared research information, including the above criteria, with EPs in my Local Authority
- EPs contacted me regarding potential participants and we discussed whether they met the criteria
- For those meeting the criteria, EPs contacted the setting SENCO
- Interested SENCOs contacted the parent and teacher with information sheets (Appendix F) and opportunity to participate if wished.
- Interested individuals contacted me via email or telephone
- We arranged to meet to share further information/ give consent, if wished

#### **4.3.1 Informed consent**

I met potential participants at their chosen setting, sharing information sheets and explaining the research, confidentiality, anonymity and consent (Appendix F). Consent forms were given to read and sign if wished.

Giving consent indicated they agreed to participate in audio-recorded interviews. For parents, this also signified they were happy for their child to

take part and for the use of anonymised photographs of non-verbal views (Appendix G).

Following adult consent, I also sought child consent, using photographs ('I'd like to find out what it's like to move from nursery [show nursery photograph] to school [show school photograph]') and giving the child smiley/sad face cards to indicate current/on-going consent (or not) (Appendices H). Adults were only involved if the child was also happy. Copies of consent were given, stressing they could withdraw at any time (further detail in section 3.8.4; Appendices E, F, G, H).

Thus, three individuals, wishing to share their stories in July and also September, became the focus of this inquiry. They were:

- Evie (the child at the centre of the study, aged four in May 2015)
- Cindy (Evie's mother, aged 40) and
- Kate (Evie's Reception class teacher, aged 25)

(Pseudonyms given)

Evie was described as having additional needs through a label of verbal dyspraxia, communicating primarily non-verbally, with strengths in verbal understanding, as clarified through meeting (section 3.9; Appendices A & I).

#### **4.4 Meetings and journals**

Meeting with Evie, Cindy and Kate (May 2015) gave opportunities for repetition of information, questions and familiarisation, alongside clarifying interview approaches (section 3.9; Appendix I). Time in the setting gave context to the three core narratives and, having introduced the narrators, I give further context through pen portraits the reader can find in Appendix J.

A date and venue was arranged for the interviews. Additionally, journals were explained and given. I explained to Cindy and Kate that they could use the journal to help tell their story when we met in July and September, suggesting the journal could include diary entries, drawings, photographs and/or messages from home/school. Further suggestions were linked to research questions and literature topics (e.g. *'What were school visits/meetings/first day like for you?' 'You may like to comment on skills, teaching, relationships, role'*). However, I stressed individuals should use

journals as *they* preferred, as described on page one of each journal (Appendices K, L).

I also gave a journal to Evie, explaining “*you can draw about what you like and what you don’t like (show smiley/sad faces),*” “*you can take photos (show camera)*” and “*you can ask a grown-up to write things down (show pencil).*” This was also explained to Cindy, alongside child journal information sheet (Appendix M).

#### **4.5 Narrative interviews**

Semi-structured interviews elicited stories in settings of choice. Cindy’s interview took place at home, Kate’s in a quiet room in school and Evie’s in two parts - her classroom and at home.

Two interviews (July and September, 2015) were conducted for each narrator, recorded verbatim using a Dictaphone. Narrators used journals to facilitate the telling of detailed, on-going stories, shaped by them. A transcript of each was shared, ensuring they were happy with content and inviting feedback. I reflected with Evie on picture choices at the end of interview.

Initial interviews informed questions in September - a process supported by research (Callwood, 2013; Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Squire, 2013), enabling reflection and continuation of conversations, alongside narratives of transition over time.

##### **4.5.1 Adult narrative interview guide**

Seeking ‘thick’ personal narratives, as required by primary research questions, the narrative interview guide (NIG) began in an open, empowering manner, interested in *their* story and the way *they* chose to tell it, asking ‘*where would that begin for you?*’ alongside exploratory prompts (‘*Can you tell me more?*’ ‘*So you mean ..?*’ ‘*Can you think of an example?*’).

Additionally, I included possible topic-based questions arising from my literature review (‘*what have visits/meetings been like for you?*’ ‘*how would you describe your role?*’). Some questions occurred naturally through interaction, whilst opportunities to answer further questions were also given if wished. (Appendix N).

The September NIG gave opportunities to continue conversations/themes (*'When we last talked, you spoke of ... can you tell me a bit more about that and what it means for you now?'*). Additionally, the research may have influenced transition through focus and reflection, therefore I gave opportunity to reflect asking *'Can you tell me what it's been like for you participating in this research project?'* (Appendix O).

#### **4.5.2 Child narrative interview guide (NIG)**

Echoing the adult NIG, Evie's followed a similar pattern, with initial child-led opportunities followed by questions asked through topic-based activities. Modifications were necessary and, following pilot activities, my revised child NIG used facilitating activities - classroom 'tours' (Clark & Moss, 2001), photographs, journal, emotion cards and *Talking Mat*<sup>TM</sup> (Murphy, 1998) iPad resource. Part one included a classroom 'tour' and part two, a home 'interview', described below (also, Appendices P, Q, R).

##### ***Part 1: 'Tour'***

Following consent, Evie communicated her likes/dislikes by taking me on 'tours' of nursery (July) and reception (September) class, taking photographs (camera) to tell her story, alongside emotion cards (Appendix R) and some talk (Dictaphone).

I asked, *'Can you show me what you like in nursery/school?'* [showing smiley face], *'Would you like to take a photo? What do you like doing here? How does it make you feel? How else?'* [emotion fan].

Further possible questions were, *'can you show me what you don't like? [sad face]'* *'Can you show me who helps?'* or (September) *'can you show me something different to nursery?'* I used the approach flexibly, responding to Evie's wishes, an opportunity also to observe context and talk to staff.

##### **4.5.2.1 Part 2: Home**

I explained, 'I'm trying to find out what it's like moving from nursery [nursery photograph] to school [school photograph]'. After consent, I invited Evie to participate in three activities: sharing her journal, photo-sorting and *Talking Mats*<sup>TM</sup>. The interview was recorded (Dictaphone) and photographs taken of

visual responses. Prompts eliciting detail and empowering voice included 'What is it like?' 'How did you feel?' 'How else?' [emotion cards].

- *Sharing the Journal*

I started the interview by inviting Evie to share her journal narrative with me by pointing to photographs and drawings, alongside talk, use of emotion cards and further prompts, as appropriate.

- *Photo-sort activity*

Evie looked at the photographs she had taken during her class 'tour'. I used these creatively, alongside emotion cards, talk and pictures of nursery/school buildings. For example, I placed Evie's 'tour' pictures beneath a photograph of nursery, asking which was her favourite and which would she like to do at school, encouraging her to point. I asked 'How do you feel about starting school? How else?' prompting her to place an emotion card beneath the school picture.

- *Talking Mats iPad activity*

Through *Talking Mats*<sup>TM</sup> (Murphy, 1998) (TM) I asked topic-based questions relating to skills and support. Evie chose from topics represented visually as icons on the left side of the iPad and used the touch screen to select and then position them on screen beneath 'like', 'not sure', 'dislike' headings. TM early years symbols were used ('my body and skills', 'what I do and my support') through which Evie expressed her views about skills and support during transition (Appendix R). Comparison of July and September highlighted changes.

*'My body & skills' (What do you do/like at school?)*

Evie chose from symbols representing activities (e.g. drawing, writing, talking, listening, looking) and placed each beneath 'like', 'not sure', 'dislike' headings. Talk arising was recorded. The session was reviewed with Evie to check she was happy with responses and a photograph was taken of the TM.

*'What I do and support' (What helps starting school?)*

Evie chose from pictures representing activities (e.g. playing, visiting friends, sleeping) and support (e.g. teacher, friends, mum, dad) and placed them

beneath 'happy', 'not sure', 'not happy' headings. Talk was recorded, the session reviewed with Evie and a photograph taken of the TM.

### **September**

The September NIG included the same four activities, with opportunities to continue conversations (e.g. *'Last time we met you told me about (show picture), can you show/ tell me about that?'*). I said, 'So, you've moved from Nursery (show picture) to Reception class (show picture)', asking *'what was that like? What did you feel like? How else? On your first day/now? Is anything different?'* Additional symbols were added to the *Talking Mats* session relating to new routines (e.g. playtime, lunchtime, circle-time, register, group-time) suggested through pilot activities. Symbols were accessed (Boardmaker™, Twinkl.com) and added to the *Talking Mat* session (details, Appendices Q, R).

## **4.6 Analysis**

Further to procedures outlined in the design overview (section 4.2), detailed steps in analysis are described in Appendix S. I summarise this below (figure 3), alongside examples.

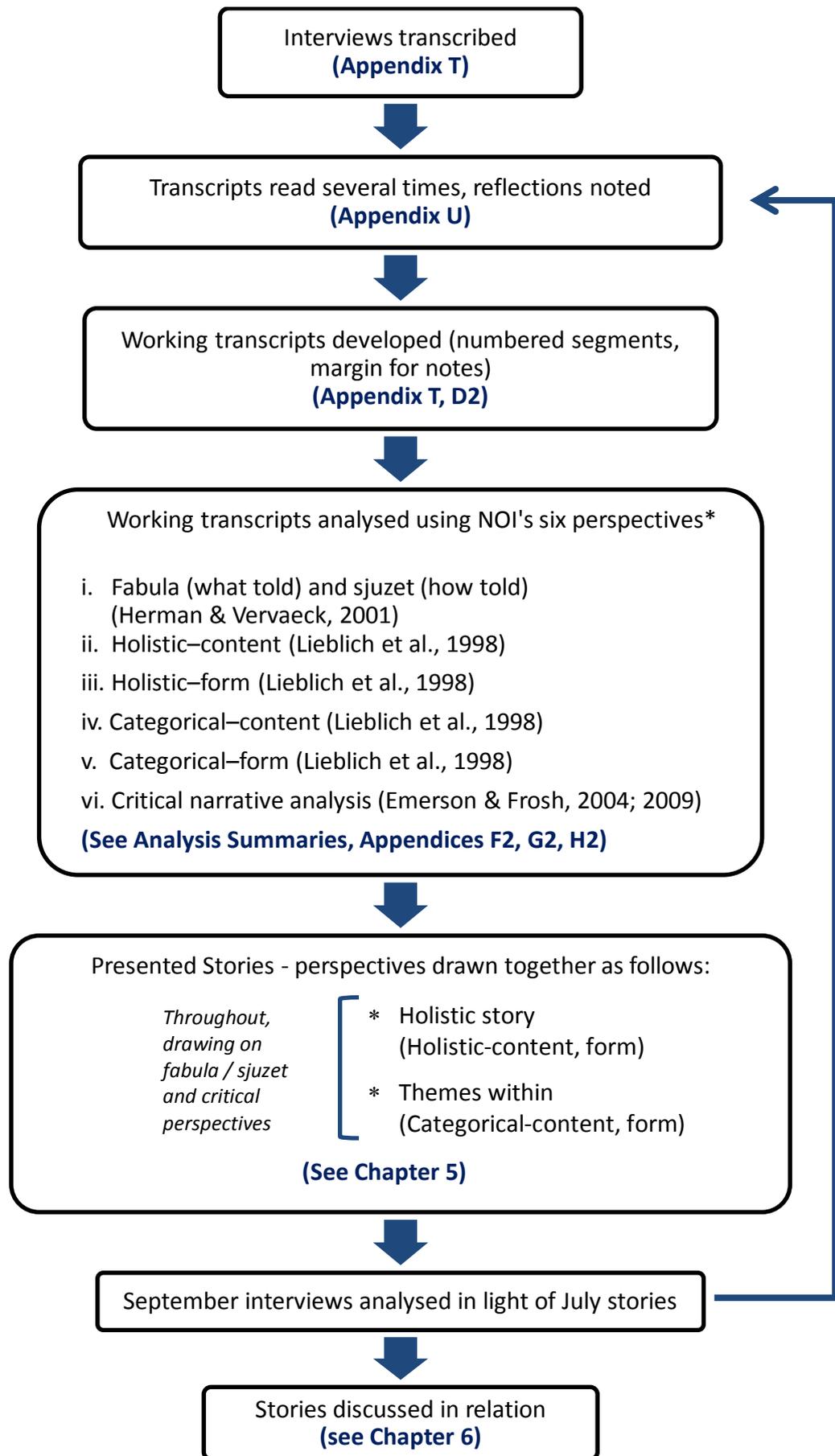


Figure 3: Analysis procedures (adapted from Hiles & Čermák, 2008; also Arden, 2014)

\*See detail in Appendix S, alongside Hiles & Čermák (2007; 2008) and referenced sources. I summarise below.

*i) Fabula and sjuzet* (Herman & Vervaeck, 2001)

Distinction was made between fabula (*what* is told) and sjuzet (*how* it is told), underlining sjuzet – ‘single words, phrases and sometimes entire segments that are concerned with emphasis, reflection, asides, interruptions, remarks and various expressions representing the sequence/causality/ significance of events being related in the story’ (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 156). This informed perspectives below, rather than separate analysis (Appendix D2).

*ii) & (iii) Holistic-content and form* (Lieblich et al., 1998)

A holistic-content picture was described through a ‘global impression’, aiming to ‘identify the core narrative, i.e. a theme that is vivid, permeating the entire text, and is meaningful’ (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 157). I gave titles to narrators’ overarching stories and smaller narratives within, noting turning points or unusual parts. Holistic-form primarily considered story progression, tracing story pattern/outline through its smaller narratives, turning points and climaxes (see Appendices S, W, X, Y, Z, A2, B2 & C2).

*iv) & (v) Categorical-content and form* (Lieblich et al., 1998)

Categorical-content was described by defining themes within narratives, assigning text segments to each (as content analysis, Riessman, 1993; focus on fabula). Categorical-form explored *how* themes were told (the sjuzet) through ‘adverbs (e.g. *suddenly*), mental verbs (e.g. *I thought*), denotations of time and place, past/present/future forms of verbs, passive and active verbs, intensifiers (e.g. *really, very*), disruptions of chronological and causal progression, repetitions etc’, alongside on-verbal (extra-linguistic) features (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 159) (see Appendices S, D2, E2).

*(vi) Critical narrative analysis* (Emerson & Frosh, 2004)

Focusing on the narrative telling, the constructing processes by which individuals take account (Emerson & Frosh, 2004), I considered functionality; the *sort* of transition account offered, with focus on sjuzet – how narrators

negotiated and positioned themselves towards self, others, events, or topics/discourses (see analysis summaries, Appendices F2, G2, H2).

### *Interpreted stories*

Drawing these perspectives together, a nuanced and multi-storied interpretation was reached – an interpretation that embraced story as a whole alongside themes within, capturing development over time and recognising both the *what* and *how* of its telling.

As noted by Hiles and Čermák (2008)

The point is that in narrative analysis we must focus on both the *what* and the *how* of the re-telling, upon both the story that is being told as well as the way in which it is being retold (p 156)

It is this understanding that has guided my research as I present Evie, Cindy and Kate's stories, before discussing them in relation to each other.

## 5 Interpretation and Discussion

### 5.1 Chapter introduction

In this chapter I present narrators' July and September stories. Stories emerge through both content and form; through fabula and sjuzet. Therefore, in presenting my interpretations, that is, the co-constructed narratives, I do not separate the 'what' and 'how' of their telling, but move between the two, presenting first holistic and then, categorical perspectives of narrators' July and September stories. I integrate critical analysis throughout and summarise each overarching transition narrative alongside further critical reflection (see section 4.6; Appendix S).

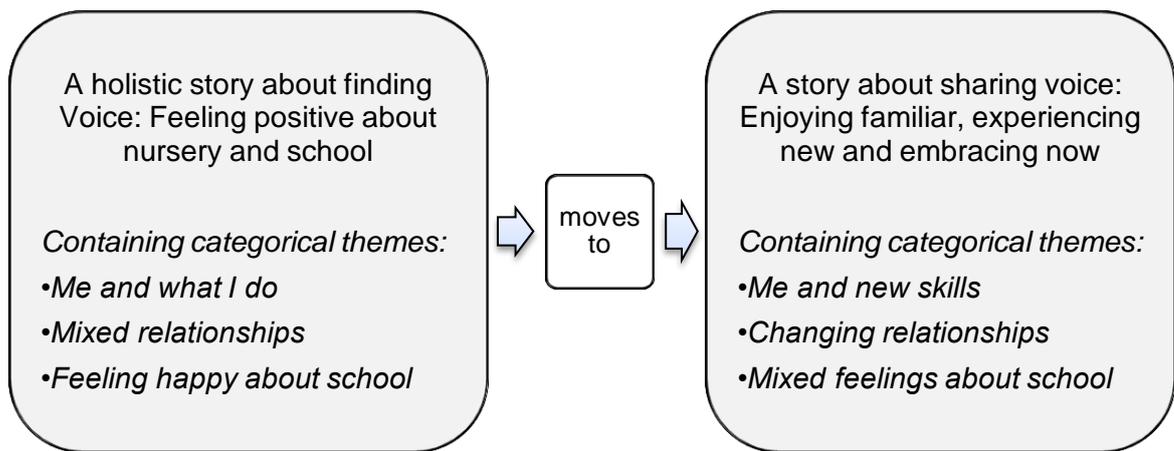
The reader may refer to pen portraits (Appendix J) and working transcripts (Appendices WT1-8) to support their reading of following interpretations.

### 5.2 Evie's story

A story of various parts, I present holistic and categorical perspectives of Evie's July narrative (nursery tour and home interview) and then, September narrative (reception tour and home interview).

Evie tells her story through talk, actions, drawings, visual cards and sorting activities, with content linked closely to her manner of telling. Aiming to reflect both story content and *how* it is told, I consider all voices, including my comments, within her narratives, as suggested by Hiles and Čermák (2008).

Figure 4 gives an overview helping the reader locate themselves within Evie's overarching story, before moving to July and September interpretations (see Appendices F2, WT1-4).



**Figure 4: Evie's story overview**

## 5.2.1 Evie's July story

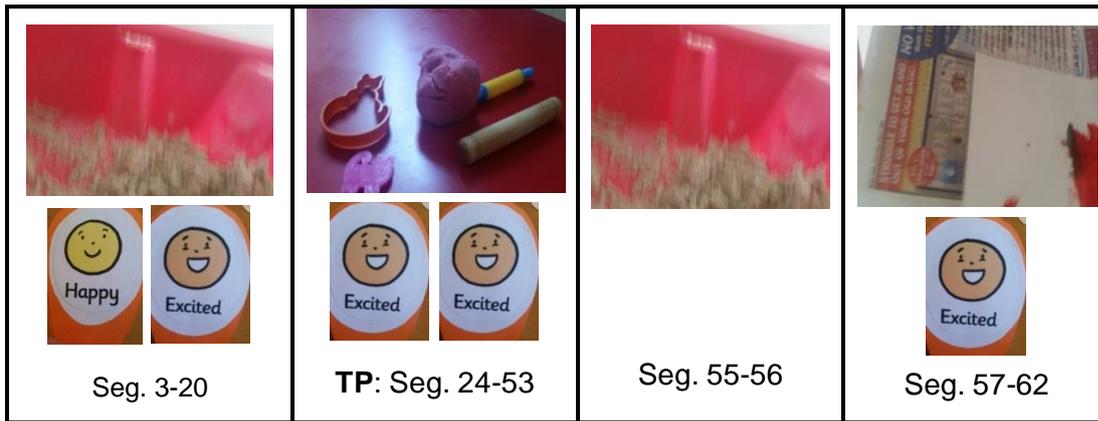
### 5.2.1.1 A holistic perspective

*A story about finding voice: Feeling positive about nursery and school*

Key to Evie's holistic story is the form of its telling. Based around facilitating activities, her story is co-constructed through her engagement with overarching activities that give form to her narrative. Her story is traced through smaller narratives and turning points within her tour and then home interview, outlined below (Appendices V, W, WT 1-2).

#### *Tour Outline*

Evie's transition story begins with her nursery tour, within which she guides content, showing me her nursery 'likes'. She tells her feelings through words, cards, photos and actions, communicating positive feelings about sand, playdough, sand especially, and painting with Miss G.



She chooses not to tell her dislikes, disengaging from the activity, although Miss G describes train and roleplay 'dislikes'. Later, Evie photographs her drawing.



Turning points occur during her playdough story, above (interacting more) and a story I title *I choose likes, not dislikes* (seg. 63) (a definite choice to disengage), preferring to show what she *can* do (Appendix V).

### *Home Interview*

Evie chooses to begin her home narrative by sharing her journal, before photo and *Talking Mat*<sup>TM</sup> (TM) activities, guiding content through journal drawings, words, cards, actions and TM choices. Thus, Evie tells of playing at nursery with Miss D, with sand her favourite, and of school open-day, enjoying playdough, sticking and painting:



Seg. 6-22



TP: Seg. 23-44; 47-57



Mum tells me Evie was initially upset on her school visit, but came out smiling, whilst Evie stresses feeling happy at school. I interpret this as a turning point (emerging voice, looking ahead). Evie volunteers additional information about favourite colours, her voice continuing to emerge (seg. 60-72). She expresses happy feelings about her uniform, looking forward to drawing, playdough and all the things she likes at school, telling me she'll feel happy:

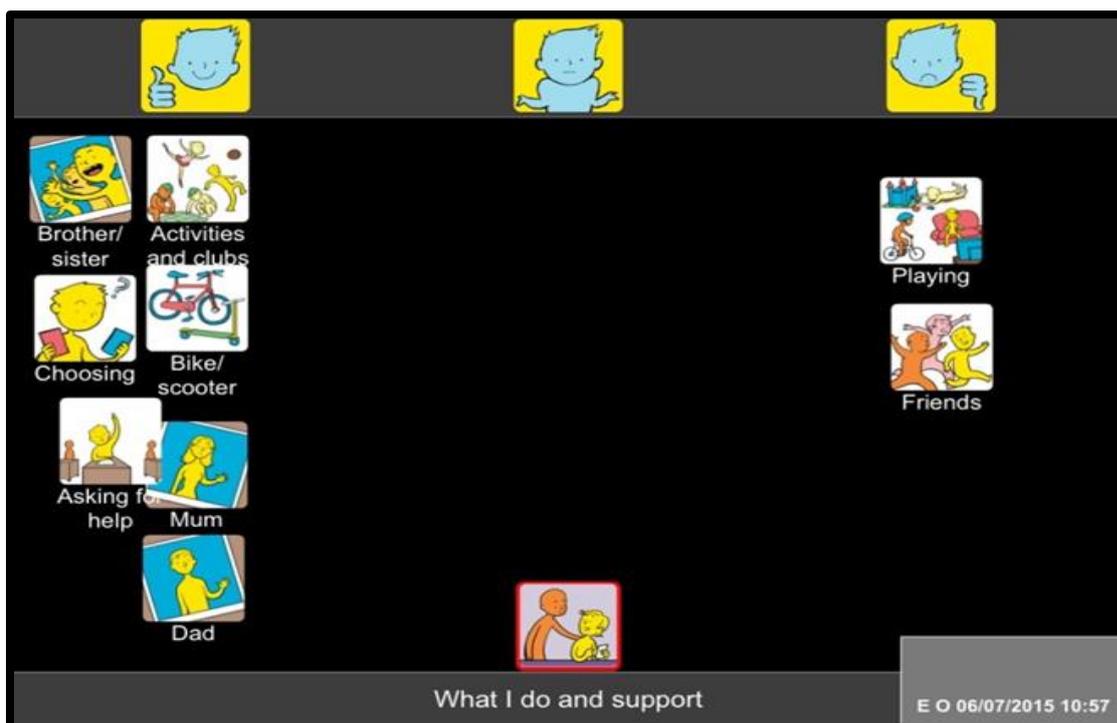
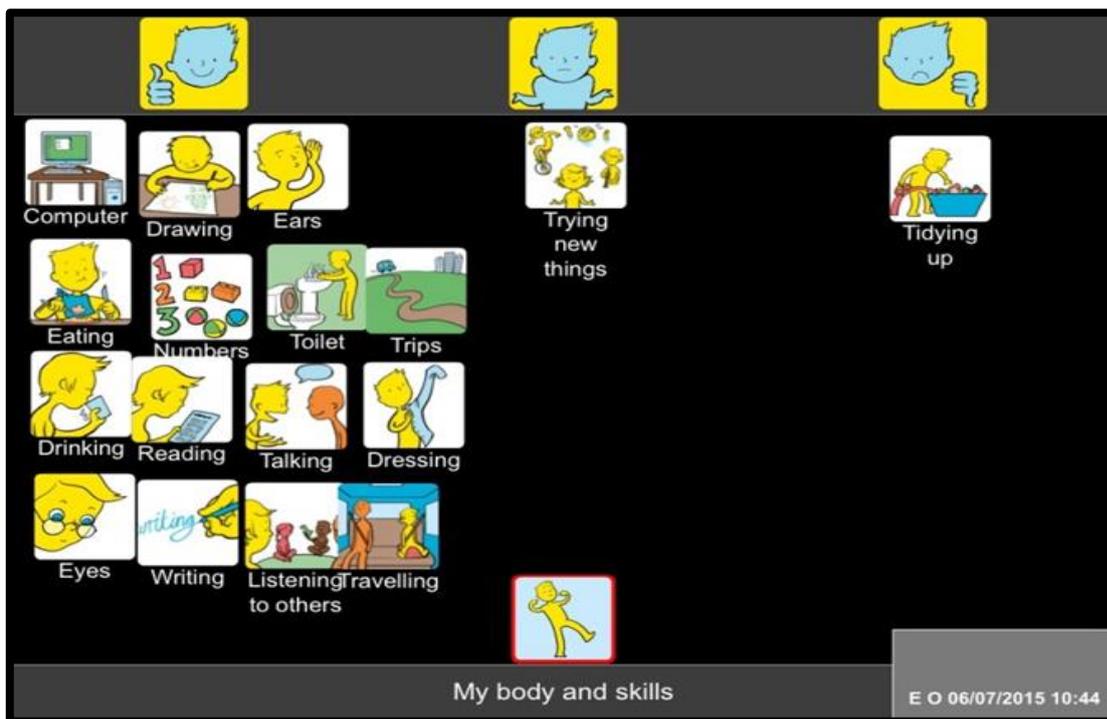


TP: Seg. 60-72



Seg. 73-109; 110-25

Evie tells positive stories through TMs about activities and support at school:



Seg.127-143. (See also Appendices R and WT2)

*Overarching impression and how it is told*

Whilst several key themes emerge (categorical perspective, section 5.2.1.2), here I sought a core narrative permeating the entire story (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). Through listening, transcribing, reading and re-reading the material, a

pattern emerged within Evie's July stories (Hiles & Čermák, 2008; Lieblich et al., 1998). My interpretation is a story of Evie's 'likes' and also a story about voice. Positivity, choice and 'what I *can* do' emerges. Very much a co-constructed story empowering voice, I feel it is summarised through the following global impression:

- *A story about finding voice: Feeling positive about nursery and school*

This captures the positivity of Evie's narrative whilst also embracing a sense of empowerment emerging as her voice becomes more evident.

#### *Positive feelings about nursery and school*

Evie's July story seems particularly positive. Her tour narrative progresses from showing likes (sand, playdough, back to sand and painting) to a turning point when she dis-engages (*I choose likes not dislikes*), returning later to show her drawing – what she *can* do. There is a definite choice to show what she can do or likes.

Further evident in her home narrative progression, she shows me her journal first, again what she *can* do, progressing to positive feelings about school and TMs reflecting numerous happy/like choices. Thus, Evie positions herself positively towards transition, school and what she does, suggesting perhaps a positive construct of herself as a learner, or alternatively, a preference to focus on positive aspects of herself. There is a sense of agency in communicating a preferred self (Bruner, 1986). It could be important to Evie that others see her positives on starting school – the lens through which she is 'read' (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012).

There is progression from now (nursery, journal) to the future (feelings about school). However, it strikes me that the co-construction of '*now*' is initiated by Evie, whilst I initiate the looking forwards. Thus, whilst positive about school, a sense of now, familiar, seems important for Evie (returning to the sand in her tour, sharing her journal first at home, happy about school but anticipating familiar activities, and unsure of 'trying new things', seg. 143). A window into Evie's thinking about change, the future seems grounded in 'now', in familiar likes and continuity across settings (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010; Tickell, 2011).

This left me with a sense of anticipation about the direction Evie's journey would take. Was there a sense of 'rose-tinted glasses'? How would expectations be managed? However, Evie's positive feelings were likely based around experiences of visiting school, therefore processes bridging familiarity across settings may have supported expectations (DiSanto & Berman, 2012).

### *Finding Voice*

Alongside *what* Evie tells, *how* she tells her story and how she positions herself through her telling seems particularly relevant to a holistic understanding. It is especially interesting to note Evie's emerging voice as positioning and power are negotiated through the co-constructed narrative.

This is apparent in her tour. There is a cautious progression (taking time, repetition), as she gradually offers her views in response to my lead, communicating feelings by pointing to cards, taking photos of 'likes'. As her tour progresses, she offers more frequent, sometimes verbal, responses. However, this halts when I ask about her dislikes, engaging more cautiously afterwards.

Evie's voice emerges further during the home interview. Whilst she initiates journal-sharing, turning pages herself, her mother talks *for* her initially (seg. 17-22). Evie's voice emerges as she participates with increasing frequency through drawings, pointing, photos and verbal responses, progressing from sharing open-day activities and feelings about school (seg. 23-59) to offering additional information (seg. 63) and finally, independently sharing TM responses.

This is particularly apparent through co-construction at turning points in her story, e.g. her playdough tour story, becoming increasingly communicative. Firstly, she gives quiet responses to Miss G/myself:

Carol: What's here Evie? [Evie has moved to another area]  
Miss G: What do we play with here?  
Evie: Playdough [quietly] (seg. 24-26)

This builds to a sense of finding voice as she responds to me, pointing, taking photos, speaking:

Carol: Ohh, what are those Evie?

Evie: Er, er, pullyca

Miss G: Pussy cats

Carol: Oh lovely, do you want to take a picture of your favourites then? Remember which button to press?

Evie: [Takes photo]



Carol: Clever you, so now I know that Evie likes playing in the sand, and Evie likes playing with playdough (1)

especially with [anticipating] (1)

what were these ones again? [pointing to cutters]

Evie: P-cats (seg. 38-44)

There is growing certainty around choices, twice telling me she feels excited about playdough (seg. 46-53).

Particularly striking within Evie's home narrative is the movement from Mum's mediating voice to Evie's, especially apparent when moving towards Evie's *At school I felt happy* story (seg. 47-59), representing a turning point in voice. Leaving Mum's narrative around Evie's drawing, I attempt to empower Evie, eliciting her feelings:

Carol: So, when you went, when you went to school, how did you feel? [getting emotion cards]

I've got all sorts of pictures to help you tell me [cards]

So did you feel worried [showing card], happy [shows card], excited [shows card] (1), sleepy [shows card], scared [shows card], sad [shows card]?

Evie: [Looking]

Carol: Which one? Do you want to point and tell me?

Evie: [Points to happy]

Mum: Ooh

Carol: You felt happy. Let's put that there then, and how else did you feel? (1)

Did you feel happy all the time or did you feel another feeling? (1)  
One of these?

Evie: [Points to happy] (2)

Carol: None of those? Just happy? (1) [pointing]

Right, let's put that away and take a picture, a picture with the happy face next to it.

Then I know that when you went to X school, you felt [anticipating]

Evie: Happy [quietly]

Carol: Happy, okay [taking photo]



(seg. 47-57)

Evie's voice emerges through co-construction as I promote equality in communication (Ranciere, 1999) anticipating responses, using visual cards, sentence starters and further choices ('how else?') to address power differentials and demand characteristics within our conversation, strengthened further in her next story, where she offers additional information:

Carol: Right, so I've learnt something else then, so Evie likes yellow and pink

Evie: And purple [quietly]

Carol: Purple

Mum: I heard that, well done (seg. 68-71)

Relationship and positioning within co-constructed narratives seem key. It is also interesting to note Mum's responses to Evie's shared voice, an aspect considered further in section 5.3.2.2 and chapter 6.

### **5.2.1.2 A categorical perspective**

*A story of: me and what I do; mixed relationships; and feeling happy about school*

Three themes run throughout Evie's July narratives as she prepares for school. What emerges is a story of her likes, relationships and feelings about school. I introduce each theme, including sub-categories, followed by interpretation and discussion.

#### ***Me and what I do***

- *My choices: likes and dislikes*
- *Familiarity*

#### ***My choices: likes and dislikes***

What emerges is a sense of *Evie* – what she likes and the way *she* wants to tell me. Within her tour I initiate this by asking to see her likes. She tells of creative and sensory preferences, with sand a favourite (returning to this, seg. 55):



Seg. 3-20; 55



Seg. 24-53



Seg. 57-62

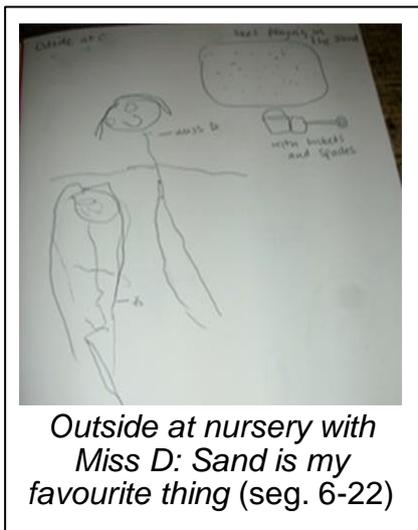


Seg. 67-68



Evie clearly links these with happy feelings [ Happy Excited ] and through her manner of telling, there is a sense of *her* choice and in *her* time. For example, within her tour narrative she shows me the playdough when *she* is ready, chooses to return to the sand rather than showing another 'like' and chooses not to show her dislikes.

Evie's home narrative further reflects her creative 'likes' through several smaller stories and the titles I give. In journal stories she emphasises her love of sand:



She describes creativity during her school visit and nursery topic:

*School open-day: I liked playing playdough, sticking and painting (seg. 23-44)*



*Drawing butterflies and telling you my favourite colours (seg. 60-72)*

Further emphasised through her manner of telling, she actively participates (pointing, showing pictures) and offers additional verbal information during school open-day and butterfly stories (above) suggesting agency and pride within creative activities.

Furthermore, her expectations are to do all her creative likes at school (seg. 81-109). Thus, choice and creative opportunities seem important for Evie as she transitions to school.

Additionally, Evie's TM stories give insight around expectations of school (and possible discrepancies in September, DiSanto & Burman, 2012).



Confidence in practical school skills (travelling, drinking, eating, toileting, dressing) is suggested, alongside enjoyment of reading, writing, numbers, drawing, and looking/listening skills.

I observed confidence in these choices, placing items decidedly and choosing not to alter choices. The theme links strongly with the positivity and voice of holistic interpretation, in that Evie positions herself positively towards school activities, choosing many likes, perhaps suggesting Evie sees herself as ready for school and linking to school-readiness skills in the literature (Kagan, 2003).

Contrary to her nursery tour, her TM story is not all about 'likes'. When placing the 'talking' picture she appeared initially undecided. She places 'trying new things' and 'tidying up' under 'not sure' or 'dislike' headings, putting 'behaving' and 'sleeping' pictures in the 'bin' (Appendices R; WT2, seg. 136).

It was unclear whether Evie was telling me she *disliked* some activities, that she did not *like* them, or simply that she did not want to tell me about them. However, it suggested that Evie was less certain about some things at school (talking, trying new things, behaviour). I was interested in how they would feature in Evie's story on starting school.

## Familiarity

There is a strong sense of gaining security or comfort from activities and people familiar to her. Within her tour she plays in the sand until ready to move, returning to the sand. She feels excited about painting and playdough, but in the context of relationship with Miss G.

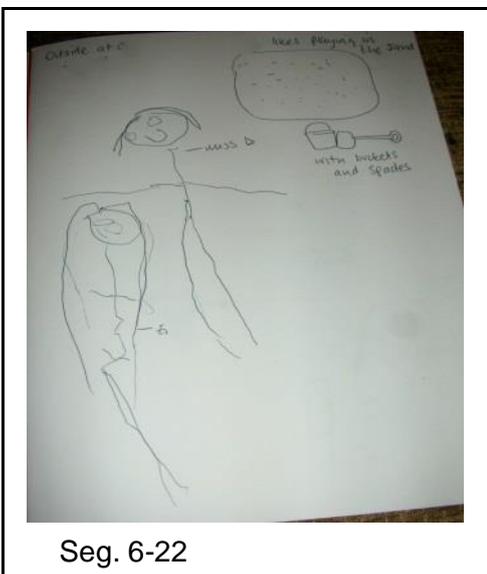
This links to the sense of 'now' emerging in holistic interpretation, continuing in her home interview where she enjoys familiar activities on her school visit, looking forward to familiar activities, whilst unsure of trying new. Thus, Evie positions herself positively towards familiar, suggesting continuity across settings (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010) and readiness through early years provision (Sylva et al., 2004; DfE, 2012a) may support transition.

### **Mixed relationships**

- *Relationships as important*
- *Mixed feelings*

### *Relationships as important*

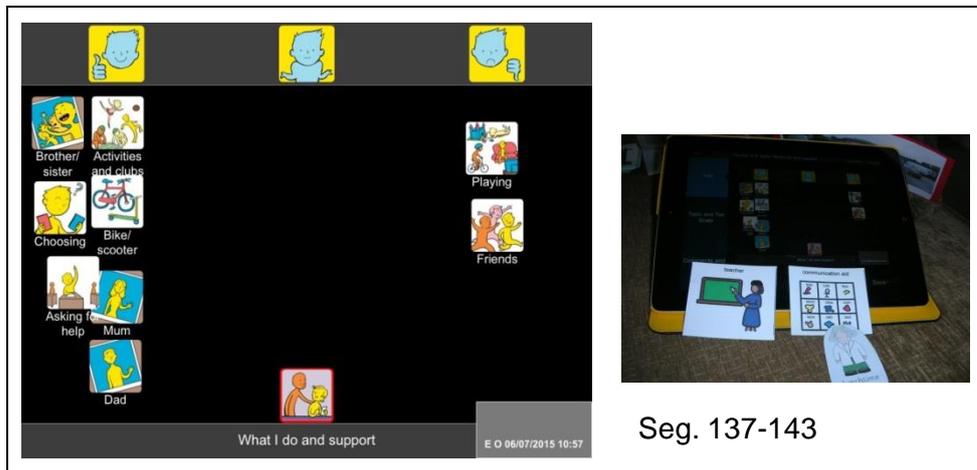
Evie's narratives suggest relationships are important during transition. As noted previously, she enjoys play in the context of relationship with her support assistant, Miss G (seg. 29, 33-37, 57). There is also a sense in which Evie's tour is about developing her relationship with me, creating a base from which we can then explore her transition story together.



Similarly, relationships emerges through her home narrative, telling of 'likes' in the context of relationship with Miss D (nursery teacher, a sense of shared family experience when Evie draws in her journal with mum (seg. 62) after her school visit.

### Mixed feelings

However, Evie's *Talking Mat* suggests mixed feeling towards others. Whilst family, teacher and interactive activities (clubs, asking for help) make her happy about school, 'friends' and 'playing' do not. Similarly, she is unsure about lunchtime staff or pictures (supporting interaction).



Seg. 137-143

I was interested in choices regarding 'playing' and 'friends', checking this:

Carol: What about friends, friends at school  
Do they make you happy [pointing] are you 'not sure' [pointing] or do they make you 'sad'? [pointing]  
Evie: [Positions 'friends' under 'Thumbs Down'] (3)  
Carol: What does that one mean? [pointing to 'thumbs down'] (1)  
That's the sad one (1) Do friends make you feel sad?(1)  
Evie: [Chooses not to move 'friends']  
Carol: or are you 'not sure' [pointing] or do they make you 'happy'? [pointing] (1)  
Is that where you want to put it, Evie? (1)  
friends make you sad?  
Evie: [Chooses not to move 'friends'] (seg. 137-142)

I also ask Mum about Evie's responses, who feels, although Evie has a best friend out of school, Evie may be referring to 'friends' generally. Relating to playing, Mum suggests Evie could mean playing in the playground, something she does not enjoy.

Thus, whilst Evie adopts a positive position towards school/school activities, she is less sure of social aspects. She tells a positive story of familiar relationships, but one of uncertainty about friendships, new relationships and perhaps the unknown (lunch, trying new things, behaving). I was interested to learn how this would unfold within the next part of her story (September).

### ***Feeling happy about school***

- *Feelings about school*
- *Firsts: first visit, uniform*

#### *Feelings about school and firsts*

Evie consistently tells of happy feelings about school when I ask during her home interview – enjoying her school visit (seg. 46-59), happy about her uniform (seg. 73-80) and looking forward to doing the things she likes (seg. 81-109). There is a sense of ‘firsts’, especially positive first experiences.

Looking ahead, she thinks she will feel happy at school (seg. 110-125), with positivity strengthened by her manner of telling – through repetition, participation and definite choices:

Carol: Will you feel, will you feel happy [pointing to card], will you feel (1) a little bit worried [pointing to card], sad [pointing to card], or  
Evie: [[Selects happy card]  
(seg. 112-113)

When I ask ‘how else will you feel?’ (giving further options), she chooses ‘happy’ again, not feeling worried:



This builds anticipation and excitement within her narrative about starting school, particularly positive in its performance. It is possible that her positive first experiences have been important in constructing her feelings about the future (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

### **5.2.1.3 *Evie's story so far***

As Evie prepares for transition and change, her story is about finding voice and feeling positive about nursery and school. It is a story about what she does, her relationships and feelings about school. Within this, themes emerge around creative 'likes,' familiarity, mixed relationship experiences and happy first school experiences.

Considering critical perspectives, the functionality or sort of account offered, Evie positions herself with agency, her voice empowered and negotiated – co-constructed through relationship or co-action (Gergen, 2009).

Evie positions herself positively towards transition, school and skills, especially familiar 'likes' or continuity across settings (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010). A positive construct of herself as a learner is communicated: a preferred self (Bruner, 1986). It seems particularly important to Evie that others see her in this light (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012). Her expectations are of a happy transition, possibly drawn from past experience (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

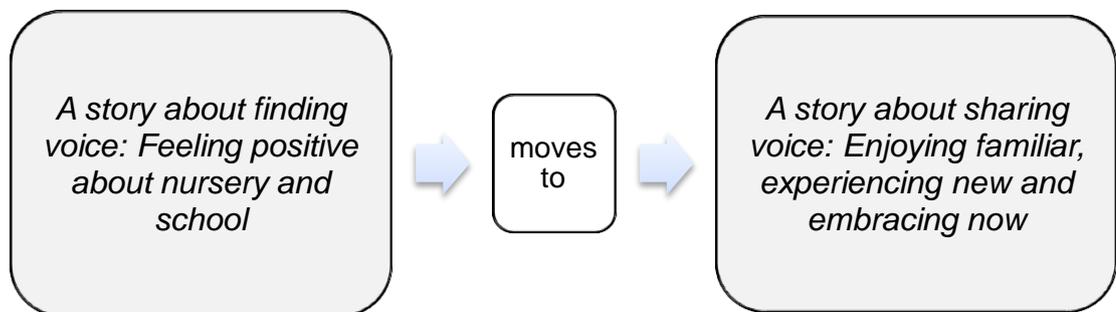
Whilst relationships seem important, she adopts mixed positions – positively towards family/teachers, less so towards friends/new experiences – perhaps suggesting tension between academic and social skills, between familiar and

new skills, as she prepares for school. I expand on these aspects as I move on to consider Evie's continuing (September) story in the light of her July narrative.

## 5.2.2 Evie's story continued

I present Evie's continuing story in light of the first part of her story. Thus, I consider holistic and categorical perspectives in the context of what precedes and from this gain a sense of Evie's overarching transition story.

### 5.2.2.1 A holistic perspective



Evie's holistic story continues through the September tour and home narratives, outlined below (Appendices X, Y, WT 3-4).

#### *Tour narrative*

From the positive note on which her July story ended, my initial observations were that she appeared happy in her new setting, relating to others, making choices, seeming pleased to see me and engage in the tour. Her tour begins as she tells of feeling excited about school, having friends and liking inside and outside, alongside familiar 'likes', including sand, craft and playdough:



She remains unsure about showing dislikes, although when I ask about roleplay, says she does not like it, taking a photograph:



Seg. 87-103

Moving from familiar activities, Evie shows new and different 'likes' – writing, shapes, magnetic letters and bricks:

			
			
TP: Seg. 74-86	Seg. 104-111	Seg. 112-119	Seg. 120-122

Spending a long time tidying up the water area, she takes a picture telling me it is 'okay' before joining in carpet-time routines (seg. 137-139).



Seg. 123-119

I highlight two turning points: one, a story I title *Feeling excited about school* (seg. 4-13) representing the increased positivity I sense as the tour starts. Another, is a story I title *The writing table is exciting and different* (seg. 74-86), representing new direction, new activities.

#### *Home narrative*

In the next part of her story Evie shares her journal, describing mixed feelings, new experiences, on her first school day:



A turning point and unexpected part of her narrative is a story I title *Now feelings: Feeling sad and worried today* (seg. 97-115), followed by a return to school 'likes' – craft being favourite (seg. 124-133).



TP: Seg. 97-115

Seg. 124-133

Her story becomes positive from this point, as Evie describes feeling happy about school but also sleepy:



Seg. 134-147

She tells of change – feeling happy about friends and lunchtime, although previously unsure; highlighting writing/letters as different at school.

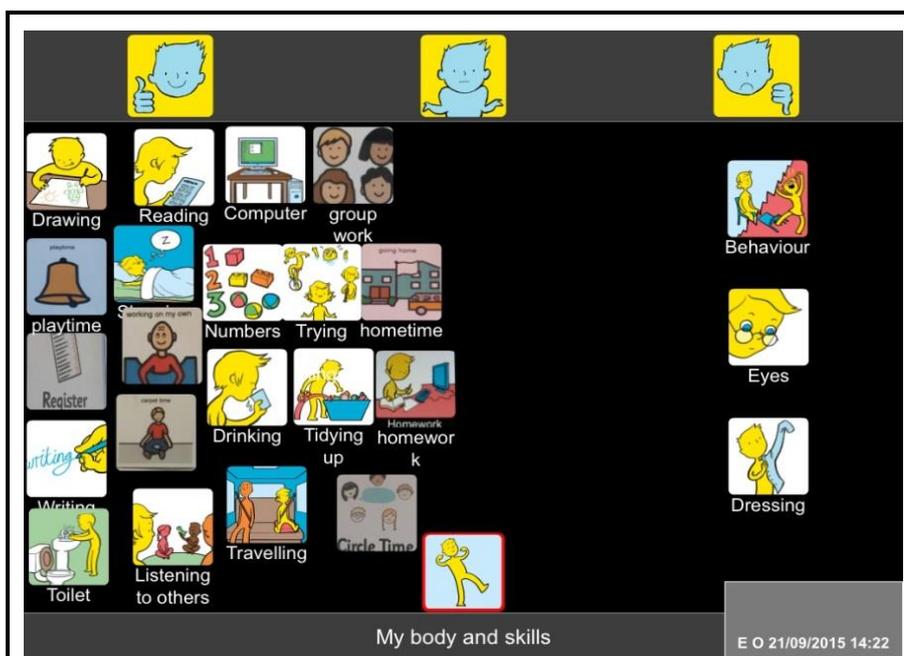


Seg. 148-155

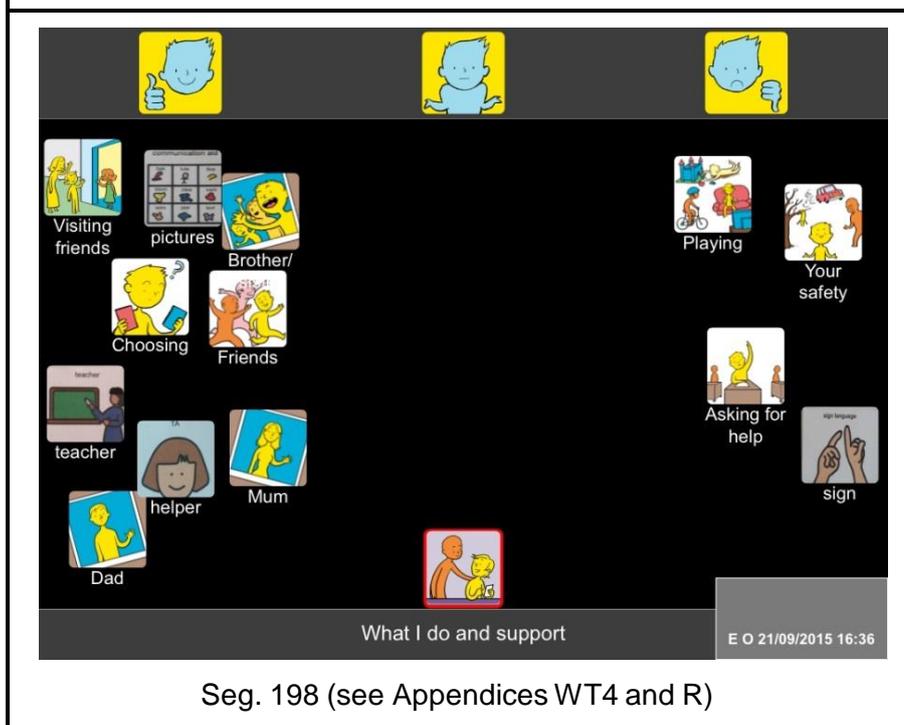
Seg. 156-164

Seg. 167-173

Ending her narrative, she describes many school likes, alongside several uncertainties, through TM stories:



Seg. 176-197 (see Appendices WT4 and R)



Seg. 198 (see Appendices WT4 and R)

*Overarching impression and how it is told*

From finding voice in her July story, a sense of Evie's voice continues, alongside movement from familiar to new experiences. Particularly striking is the change between her engagement in nursery and reception tours, as well as contrasting feelings about school in September tour and home narratives. I make sense of this by considering the 'now' of her narratives, understanding

that her feelings may change from day to day. I summarise this through the following global impression:

- *A story about sharing voice: Enjoying familiar, experiencing new and embracing now*

This captures the sense of change as Evie embraces new and now, alongside continuing empowerment and sharing of voice.

### *Enjoying familiar, experiencing new, embracing now*

Movement from familiar to new is highlighted through July, then September narrative progression, alongside her manner of telling.

From positive expectations ending her July story, her Reception tour quickly progresses to increased positivity and shared voice (*feeling excited about school*, seg. 4-13), communicated through content, but also her *telling* - positioning herself positively towards me, school and choices (responding immediately, smiling, keen to show me, quickly verbal (seg. 6, 12, 14, 16)).

As July, there remains a sense of her preferred self: 'what I *can* do' and 'likes' (not dislikes). It remains important that others see her in this light (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012).

However, Evie describes *different* likes, such as writing/letters, at her tour turning point (*the writing table is exciting and different*, seg. 74-86). A new sense of Evie and how she sees herself in school emerges. Furthermore, she tells her tour confidently, with agency, wanting to show me her class, responding frequently, engaging with others, enjoying routines (seg. 123-136). Thus, she positions herself positively towards 'new' in terms of self and new class; part of the group, a group identity (Dockett, 2005; Margetts, 2006; 2008).

*Familiar to new* continues through Evie's September home narrative, beginning with new first-day experiences (Journal, seg. 7-31) and continuing with focus on her new writing interest (*Lots of writing at school*, seg. 32-43; *The writing table is exciting and different*, seg. 74-86), again suggesting change in how Evie sees herself and perhaps that continuity across settings has helped her move to new experiences (e.g. Rous et al., 2010).

Whilst the steady, positive progression from familiar to new activities continues through Evie's remaining narrative, the progression of her feelings follows a differing pattern.

From feeling excited about school during her tour, Evie's home narrative moves to mixed feelings (first-day journal entry, seg. 7-31) and a low point (feeling sad and worried about school today, seg. 97-115) – feelings new to her story. Her feelings then follow a steady upward path (sleepy/happy, then happy feelings about lunchtime, friends and activities/support, seg. 176-198).

Viewed as temporal progression, the September story I hear is not chronological in nature, starting with the 'now' of her tour (third school week), and following with Evie's interview (tracing her story from first school day to the 'now' of the interview). Noticeably, this is a different 'now' to that of the tour. Although I expected a return to the positive 'now' of her tour, I learn that 'now' for Evie can be happy, and sometimes sad, worried or sleepy, shifting between yesterday and today.

There is perhaps less 'rose-tinted glasses' about Evie's overarching holistic story, but rather, adjusting expectations (Di Santo & Burman, 2012) and new positioning with respect to feelings about school, embracing the mixed experiences of her 'now.' I interpret this as something new within her story.

### *Sharing voice*

A story of shared voice continues, empowered through relationship and context within co-constructed narratives. Particularly apparent is the contrast between her cautious July tour and more confident, lengthy September interactions (recognising me, choosing immediately, wanting to show, engaging, smiling and interacting through letters/shape play (seg. 5, 14, 19, 21, 108)). She seems to position herself with greater agency towards her new setting and to sharing voice with me.

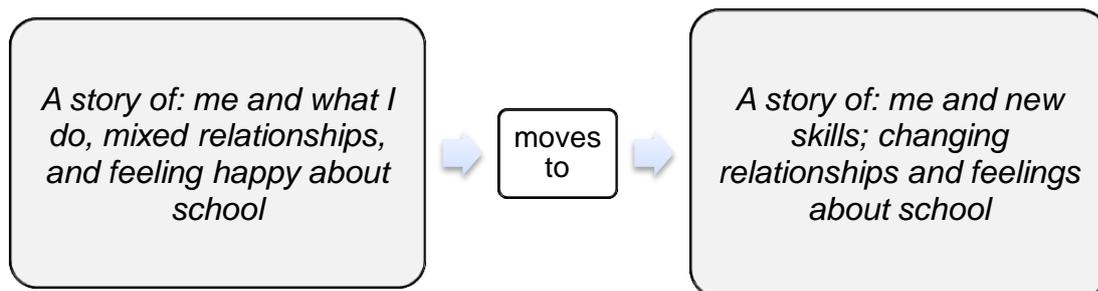
I reflect that my comments are occasionally leading in nature ('Is that because you preferred it *inside*? (seg. 23); 'Ooh, this is different (2) I didn't see you doing this at nursery' (seg. 76)). Additionally, there are times when Mum talks for Evie (seg. 64-71). However, what emerges across Evie's overarching story is a sense of shared voice, with Evie volunteering different,

sometimes unexpected information and where understanding is co-constructed through the narrative space (discussed further, section 5.2.2.2).

I am struck by the power of sharing voice – its impact on others, seen through Mum’s responses to Evie’s shared views across July and September interviews. Mum feels empowered in her understanding of Evie’s feelings about school – a space for Evie, too, to clarify her thoughts (parting discussion, Appendix WT4).

Evie’s is a story of sharing voice, empowered by others who in turn are impacted and empowered by her – transition as relational (Dockett, 2012; 2013), constructed through relationship (Gergen, 2009).

### 5.2.2.2 A categorical perspective



Three themes emerge through Evie’s September narratives on transition to school. Each is presented below, including sub-categories, and interpreted in the light of those in July.

#### ***Me and new skills***

- *My choices: Familiarity and change*
- *Sense of self*

#### *My choices: familiarity and change*

As in July, the sense of *Evie* continues in September stories – *her* choices, *her* way of telling. She tells of familiar ‘likes’, showing me the same creative activities she enjoyed in July:



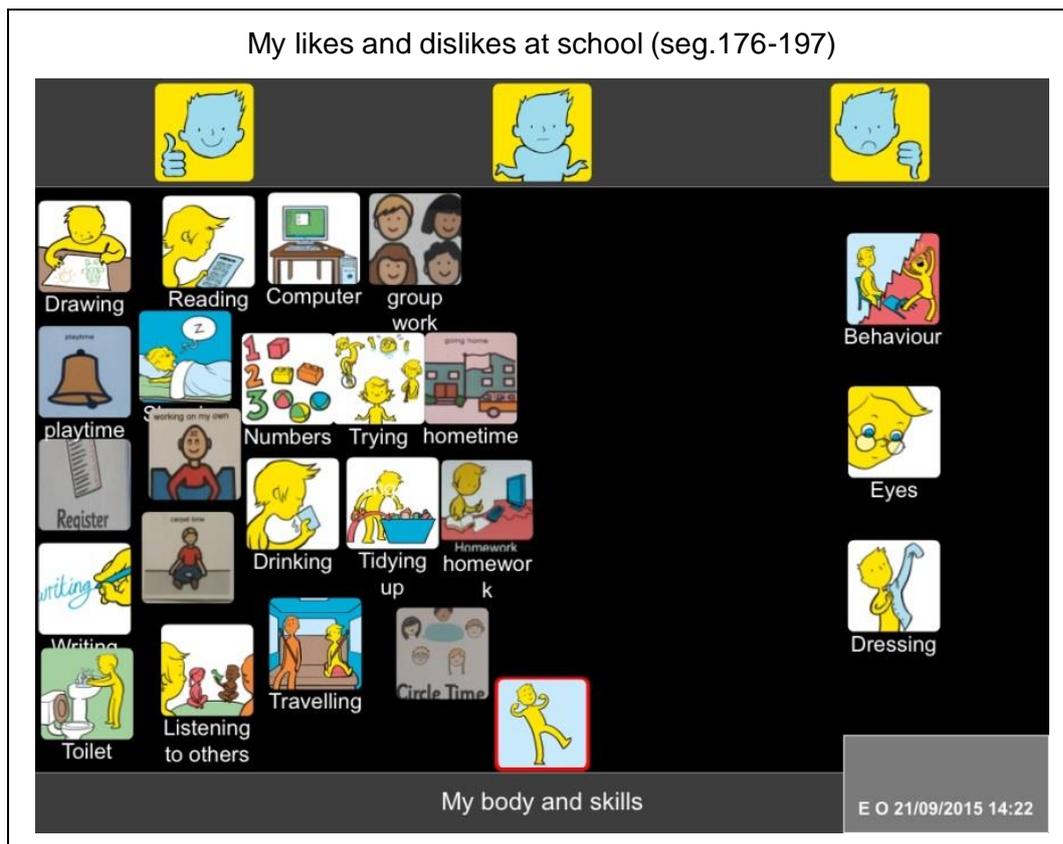
Enjoying familiarity and perhaps gaining security from familiar 'likes', is further emphasised in her manner of telling – beginning her Reception tour with a nursery favourite, the sand, choosing to remain there before showing further 'likes' (*I still really like playing in the sand*, seg. 47-52) and beginning her home narrative with drawings, another favourite (above).

When uncertain of a request, she turns to a favourite 'like' - the playdough (seg. 91-97). Craft, another favourite, is an activity she enjoyed during summer open-day, an activity she also chooses during home interview as thoughts turn from sad and worried feelings about the day - a familiar 'like' associated with feeling happy:



Thus, she positions herself positively towards familiar 'likes', suggesting that continuity across settings has supported transition (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010).

Her story is also about new skills representing change for Evie – writing, letters, shapes, bricks, routines and lunchtime (unsure of this in July). The theme is illustrated through her TM story, where she performs a positive story of new 'likes':



Whilst mindful that her choices represent a ‘snap shot’ – how she chooses to perform her story on this day, this context – nonetheless, it was interesting to note changes between July and September.

Alongside the familiar, Evie’s TM story tells of enjoying new routines (circle-time, carpet-time, register, group/individual work, homework). She chooses ‘tidying up’, ‘trying new things’ and ‘sleeping’ as activities she now likes – a change from July and further supported through observation, discussion with Mum and elsewhere in narratives.

Her September TM, as July, is not all ‘likes’. The ‘behaviour’ symbol (which I explain as ‘how you behave’) continues as a ‘dislike’. ‘Dressing’ and ‘looking’ (eye symbol) are no longer ‘likes’, whilst ‘talking’ and ‘P.E.’ are placed in ‘recycle’ (see also Appendix R). Through our co-constructed narrative I am unsure if these are ‘dislikes’, but feel sure they are not ‘likes’:

Evie: [Chooses 'talking' symbol]

Carol: That one says, talking, that's two people talking to each other.

So do you '*like*' talking to your friends [pointing] or are you '*not sure*' [pointing] or do you '*not like*' talking? [pointing to headers]

Evie: [Puts in recycle bin]

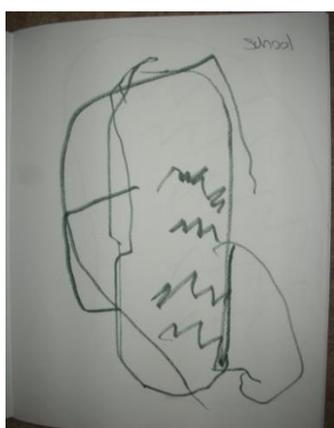
Carol: No, not something you like that one? (2)

Okay so talking. you're not too sure about (seg. 176-180).

Thus, transition for Evie involves new activities, being previously uncertain of some. As in July, she seems to position herself positively towards skills associated with school readiness (Kagan, 2003). Consistent uncertainties over July and September stories ('talking' and 'behaviour') suggest areas of further exploration with Evie, especially at times of change.

### *Sense of self*

Alongside new 'likes', there is a sense of Becoming; how Evie sees herself seems to be changing. She seems to construct an understanding of school around writing, and herself within school as a writer, particularly evident through the space she gives in tour and journal stories, devoting several pages to writing, something different at school:



Seg. 7-46



Seg. 167-173

The *how* of her telling suggests emotional investment – leading, journal-sharing, turning pages, actively engaging, taking photos and showing what she *can* do. Furthermore, Mum describes Evie's excitement at writing and drawing after her first school day.

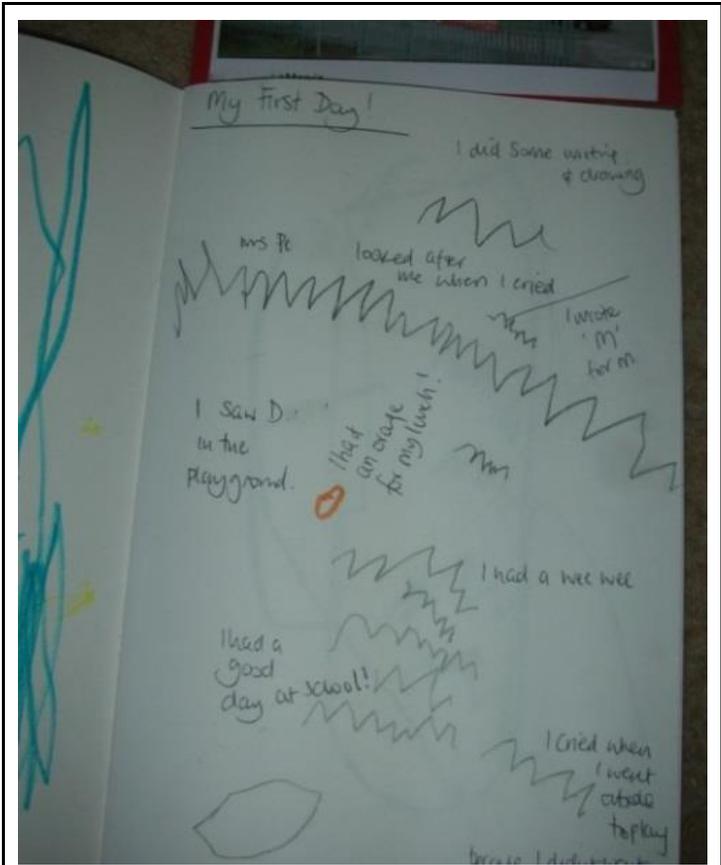
Thus, Evie not only positions herself positively towards learning, but specifically towards writing and perhaps an identity position as a writer in school. She tells a positive story around her new group context, as discussed within holistic perspectives. Thus, a changing sense of self and also a group identity, an identity as school child (Dockett, 2005; Margetts, 2006; 2008), emerges through the content and form of Evie's narratives.

**Changing relationships**

- *Enjoying family*
- *Developing new relationships*

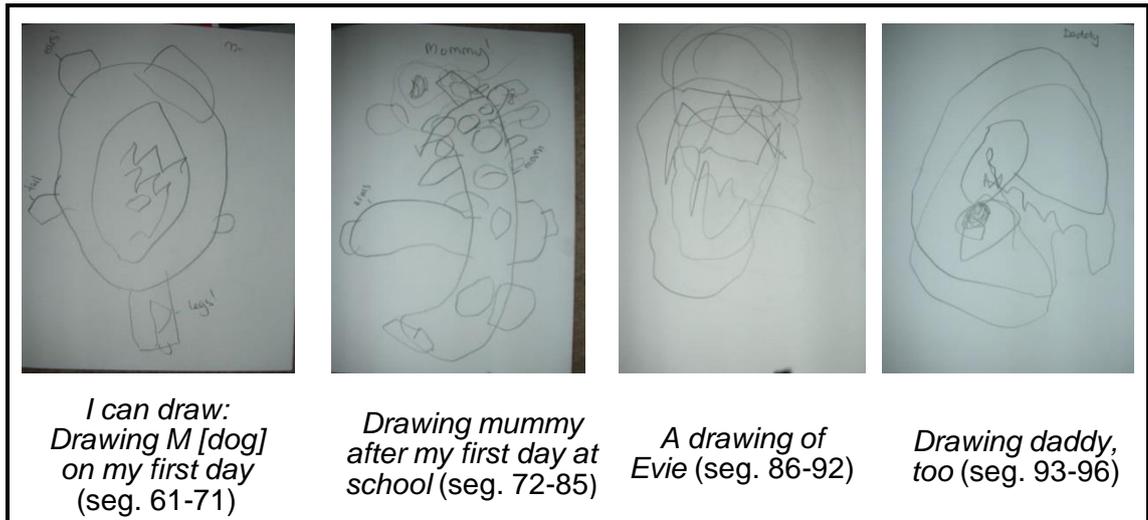
*Enjoying family*

A major theme across Evie's transition story, relationships remain key. Whilst she tells of family in July, this becomes more apparent within her continuing story. She tells of seeing her brother, D, outside and writing 'M' for [dog's name] through her first day journal entry:



Seg. 7-31

Family is further emphasised through first-day journal stories, as below:

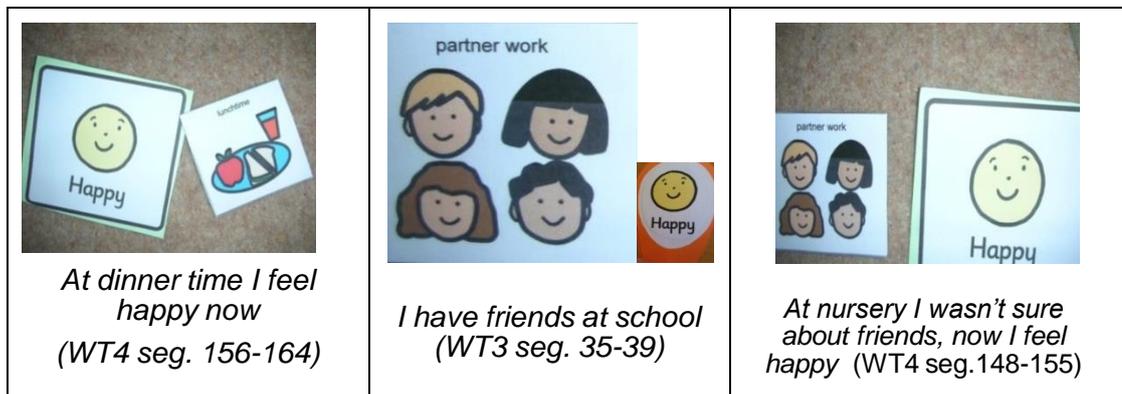


This is also apparent through July and September TM stories (family make her happy at school), suggesting Evie finds family supportive and a sense that for her transition is in the context of family (Dockett et al., 2012).

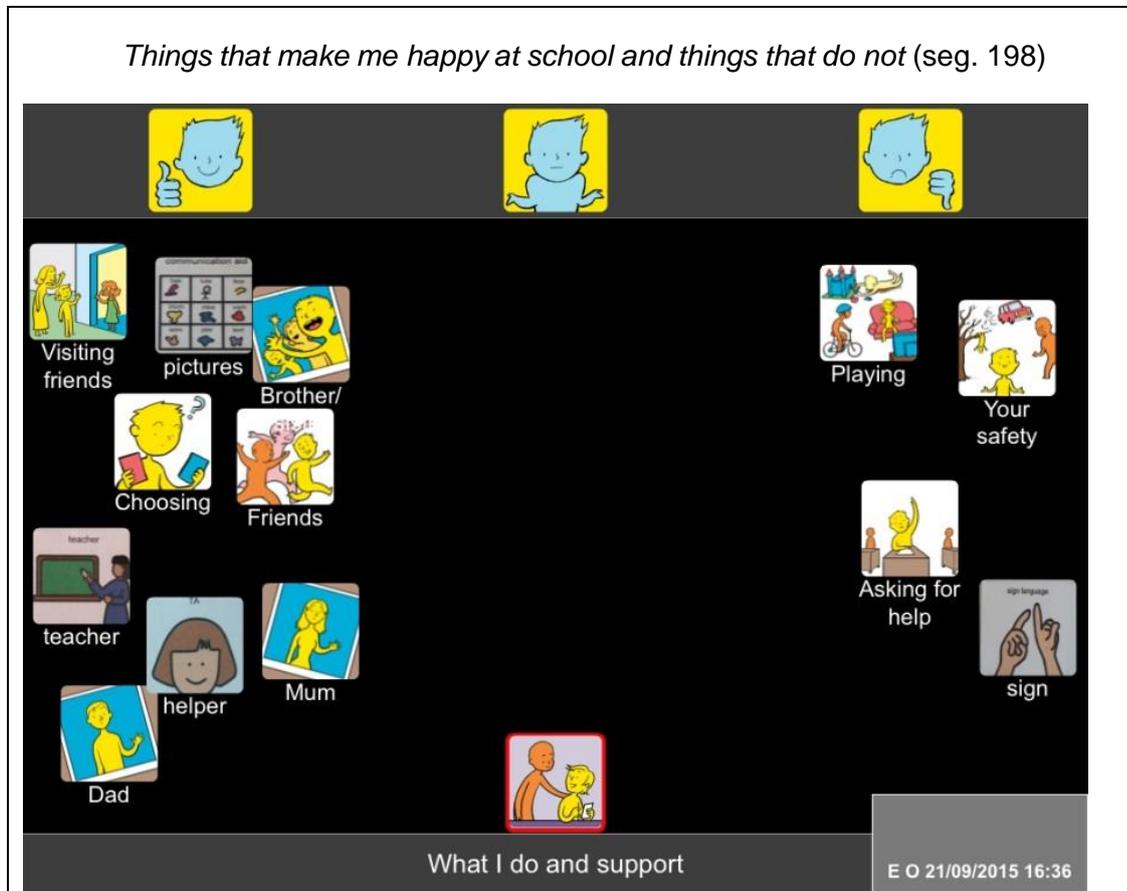
### *Developing new relationships*

Evie's continuing transition story is of developing relationships. Whereas in July she enjoyed relationships with teachers and family, she was unsure about friends, an aspect I was interested to follow during her continuing story. What emerges is a story about positive relationships with family and new relationships with teachers and friends; a change in her positioning towards others from mixed feelings to positioning herself positively.

Her tour and home narratives suggest relationships with new staff and peers, being comforted by Mrs P on her first day (seg. 9) and happy about her teachers (TM story), alongside feeling happy about friends and lunchtime, a previous uncertainty in July:



This is communicated through the *how* of her story, choosing the ‘happy’ card twice, playing with others in the sand (seg. 14; 36), helping peers tidy (seg.123), participating in routines and further suggested by Mrs P (Appendix WT3). Her positive September positioning towards others is also evident through her TM, describing people, social activities/ interactions that support:



Particularly interesting in the light of her July story are choices remaining the same (family, teachers, choosing, playing) and those she places differently (friends, pictures, asking for help).

This suggests Evie continues to value family and teacher relationships, with new relationships (friends) becoming part of her school story. ‘Choosing’ continues to support her interactions, with pictures supportive. However, ‘playing’ remains an uncertainty, alongside asking for help (possibly related to her ‘dislike’ of talking). Again, Evie may be highlighting what makes her happy, rather than unhappy, although putting ‘playing’ under ‘thumbs down’ on both TMs suggests a definite choice. Given that she tells me friends make her happy, her choice may be more about disliking outdoor playtimes, as her first day journal and Mum’s comments suggest.

## ***Changing feelings about school***

- *More firsts*
- *Mixed feelings, now feelings*

### *More firsts*

Continuing from her July story, Evie describes more 'firsts', including her first day (seg. 7-31), tour of new class and new school experiences, including routines, lunchtime and writing. Whilst previous narratives described primarily positive feelings about school, in September her feelings are mixed, which in itself could be seen as another 'first' within Evie's story; the first time I hear her embracing mixed feelings.

### *Mixed feelings and now feelings*

From feeling happy about school, first visit and uniform in July, there is a shift to embracing mixed and 'now' feelings. Through her journal she communicates pride in writing and drawing, whilst Mum's annotations of first day suggest mixed feelings ('I had a good day at school'; 'I cried when I went outside to play' (seg. 9, 19, 21)). Her stories describe happy (lunchtime, friends) and less happy feelings (playing), excited about school during her tour, but sad and worried the following day at home.

As previously considered, I make sense of this by considering the 'now' of Evie's experience. However, of interest here is her sense-making – how she comes to embrace mixed emotions through *telling* her story.

Within her home narrative she tells a story of unhappy feelings (*Now feelings: Feeling sad and worried today*, seg. 97-115), moving to 'likes' (*craft is my favourite: It makes me happy*, seg. 124-133), and then mixed feelings (*Moving to school: Feeling happy and sleepy*, seg.134-147). The telling of her narrative, co-constructed with myself and Mum, seems to help her make sense of her feelings and, perhaps in the re-telling, construct a different understanding where being both tired and happy describes how she feels.

It is likely that the timing of Evie's interview (after school) could help explain her mixed feelings and that – as Evie suggests – whilst still enjoying school, tiredness is part of her transition story.

### **5.2.3 Evie's story: A summary and further critical reflection**

Evie's overarching story is about finding and sharing voice; enjoying familiar, exploring new and embracing now. It is a story about Evie and her new skills, changing relationships and feelings about school. Across her stories, there is familiarity and change – exploring different whilst enjoying familiar – where continuity across settings seems supportive (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010).

There remains a sense of 'what I *can* do', of agency in performing her 'likes'. Transition appears to have supported exploration of a preferred self (Bruner, 1986), a sense of Evie as a learner not someone who plays, linking to a changing role or identity. More specifically, she seems to see herself as a writer, school-ready, positioning herself positively towards skills associated with school readiness (High, 2008; Kagan, 2003). It seems important to Evie that others see her in this light (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012).

Relationships remain important and for Evie transition is told in the context of family (Dockett et al., 2012; Griebel & Niesel, 2009). There is a shift from mixed relationships as Evie positions herself positively towards others, towards peer relationships and social skills (trying new) – a time of new friendships and emerging group identity (as a school child), suggested in research by Dockett (2005) and Margetts (2006; 2008).

She moves from a purely positive narrative to embrace changing feelings, the 'now' of her experience, suggesting an adjusting of expectations (Di Santo & Burman, 2012) and also transition as relative, changing, socially constructed. This experience could impact positively on future transition (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

Her voice and agency continue to emerge through the co-constructed narrative and this seems to empower Evie's sense-making, embracing new understandings and new feelings through the telling of her story within the narrative space. Evie's is a story of sharing voice, empowered by others, in

turn impacted by her – transition as relational, constructed through relationship or co-action (Dockett, 2009; 2012; Gergen, 2009; Griebel & Niesel, 2009; Shotter, 2012).

### 5.3 Cindy's story (parent)

I begin with an overview (figure 5) to help the reader locate themselves within Cindy's overarching story. See analysis summary (Appendix G2) & working transcripts (WT 5-6).

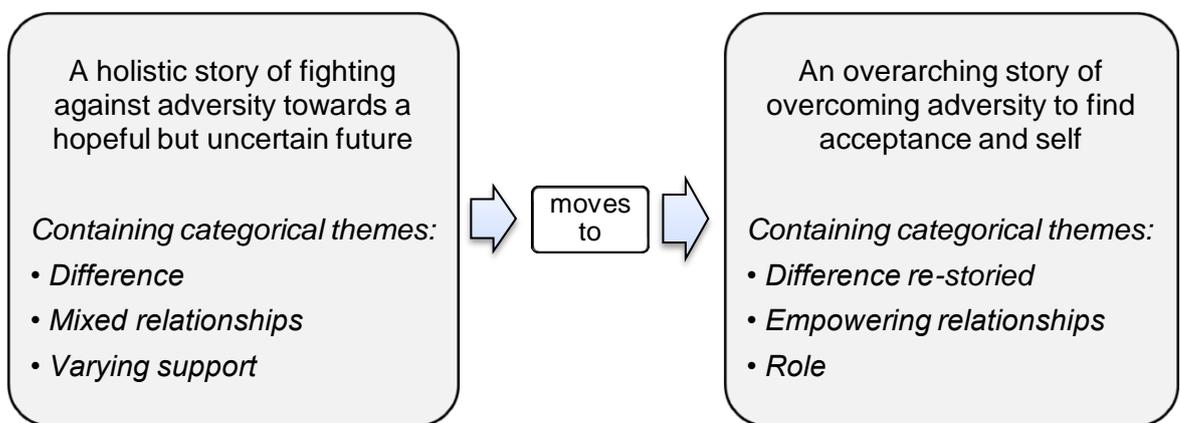


Figure 5: Cindy's story overview

#### 5.3.1 Cindy's July story

I present holistic, then categorical perspectives around Cindy's July story, beginning each section by highlighting key aspects to be discussed.

##### 5.3.1.1 A holistic perspective

*A story of fighting against adversity towards a hopeful, although uncertain future*

Cindy's holistic story emerges through content and form, traced through smaller narratives and turning points, summarised below (see outline and transcript, Appendices Z, WT5).

### *Story outline*

Cindy's transition story begins as Evie starts playgroup, coming to realise 'school's gonna be hard' (seg. 11, 17), a turning point in her narrative. She feels different, judged and embarrassed at playgroup, feeling the impact on family relationships. After a 'break-through' start to nursery, representing another turning point ('for once I could say, 'oh, really good, it's going really well,' seg. 55), Cindy feels positive about school, with no worries, although this is countered by her nursery sports day story, where feelings of difference and uncertainty resurface (seg. 78). She describes positive experiences of school (open evening, open morning) and a home visit. The remaining narrative vacillates between positive and negative. She describes frustration around speech and language therapy support, feels judged about her family role and concerned about her children's future. This is interspersed with stories of breakthrough, positive relationships and nursery/school support, ending by reflecting she is 'in a good place, really' (seg. 565).

### *Global impression and how this is communicated*

Through listening, transcribing, reading and re-reading, a pattern emerged within Cindy's story, I summarise as:

- Fighting against adversity towards a hopeful although uncertain future

This captures the positive narrative around breakthrough moments, nursery and school experiences, whilst embracing Cindy's sense of struggle against frustration, difference, uncertainty and set-back.

It is further communicated through Cindy's manner of telling, by her choice of words, emphases and repetitions – suggesting hope ('for once,' '*really* good,' 'I would *never* have believed you,' '*genuinely*', '*no* worries'), or emphasising difficulty/adversity ('oh god,' '*wow*', '*really*', '*literally* wouldn't', 'I *can't*' 'unfair', 'frustrated' and 'like no child's ever screamed before' or 'It makes you *feel*, like a *freak*'). She communicates a sense of fight or taking control through language like 'right then,' 'I'm gonna,' 'it's make or break', 'work on this' 'give them the opportunity to surprise you.'

Although Cindy gives space to stories of difficulty, upset and frustration, there is a sense of fighting against this and whilst not necessarily triumphing over adversity, a 'getting there', or positivity in face of difficulty.

This emerges through the form Cindy gives to her story, progressing towards an initial low point at playgroup, from which her narrative traces an upward journey beginning with a story I title *Breakthrough start to Nursery*, a turning point where difficulties seem resolved. However, there are dips and set-backs along this journey, reflected within contrasting stories – sports day (*Difference again*, seg. 78), role (*Feeling judged/conflicted*, seg. 339) and speech and language therapy (*On-going frustrations*, seg. 242, 518). Thus, Cindy's story follows a U-shaped pattern, encountering adversity and seeming headed towards resolution. Through this she positions herself positively towards transition. Positivity seems important for her, focusing on 'breakthrough' nursery experiences despite set-backs and frustrations.

This is reflected in a story I title, *Nursery Sports Day: Difference again?* (seg. 78-124), which I interpret as a contradictory part of her narrative, since it follows positive narrative around nursery breakthrough. However, the way Cindy performs this story – narrating, then re-narrating – throws light upon her sense-making during transition. She describes her feelings as her daughter very publicly refuses to join in sports day, commenting:

I know it sounds awful, to say that about your child, but I was really embarrassed (seg. 95) ...

Cindy: and that's the first time I've seen *that* in a long, long time

Carol: Yeah

Cindy: But then it made me a little bit anxious 'cos we were **back to that**. You know, this is a situation she's not comfortable with and this is how she's reacted, and again, not, that's not the norm now. So it was a bit upsetting really (seg. 115-117)

Although her overarching narrative seems forward-looking, positive, this incident represents a significant point for Cindy, charged with emotion. There is a sense of 'back to square one', with anxieties re-surfacing. However, particularly interesting is the way Cindy revisits this narrative, reframing her sports day story in a positive light, commenting:

Cindy: but as I say, it was just one of those things

Carol: Yeah

Cindy: It's a shame, but, at least we went, at least we tried  
[laughs]

And the *whole new* situation I think threw her. It was a morning session not an afternoon

Carol: Yeah, mm

Cindy: all the parents were there, like, 'what the heck' she must have been thinking (seg. 230-235)

There is a sense of re-understanding, of having experienced this before and of positivity alongside on-going struggle, echoing the performance of her story as a whole.

- *Transition as relational, emotional and readiness*

Cindy's holistic story also tells transition as relational, emotional and about school readiness.

On-going sense-making pervades her story, as she narrates and re-narrates through self-reflection and response to questions. Thus, much of her story occurs through sjuzet, in reflective comments which continually place her within a social context, making sense of her experience in relation to others' views and in context (e.g. her son's transition). She tells how she is seen by others and how this makes her feel, seeking to understand herself within social systems. Thus, her story is relational in nature (Dockett et al., 2012; Gergen, 2009). A sense of 'them' and 'me' emerges as she seems to position herself, or feels positioned as different, 'other' (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003).

Further, Cindy describes herself as 'on a bit of an emotional roller coaster' (seg. 27), highlighted throughout in the content of her narrative as she describes her feelings. It is also communicated in her manner of telling: through direct speech, emotion-laden language ('Oh my god', 'gosh', 'like no child has ever screamed', 'she *wouldn't*', '*such* a difference', 'for *once*') and extra-linguistic aspects [voice wavers, laughing, sighs], emphasising the emotional nature of experiences as school approaches.

Lastly, Cindy frames her whole narrative within the context of pre-school as preparation (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; DfE, 2011; Sylva et al., 2004), establishing that for her transition began as her daughter started playgroup, ending with her own reflective interpretation of her story:

I think well, the nursery in a school environment for me, has given her *everything* she needs to start (seg. 451)

### 5.3.1.2 A categorical perspective

*A story of difference, mixed relationships and varying support*

Themes of difference, mixed relationships and varying support emerge. I begin by highlighting sub-categories within themes followed by interpretation.

#### **Difference**

- *Seeing difference, difficulty*
- *Feeling different, judged*
- *Different futures*

#### *Seeing difference, feeling different, different futures*

The theme of difference emerges strongly through Cindy's narrative, beginning as Evie starts playgroup, feeling she needs 'to really sort of like work on this' (seg. 2), and linked firmly with thoughts of school:

So that was really when I first started thinking 'wow, school's gonna be hard' [laughing], 'it's not gonna be as, straight forward' (seg. 11)

She tells of difference from the onset commenting that 'D had been a little bit behind, but not as much as Evie' (seg. 5), describing Evie's Verbal Dyspraxia diagnosis, learning and late walking 'issue' (seg. 26). She makes comparisons at sports day (described earlier), at playgroup ('oh my god, my child's so behind', seg. 26) and home ('cos it got really bad, at that point, and then with Evie almost being worse, seg .27).

Cindy positions herself and Evie as different, for example through speech and language therapy (seg. 242, 518) and home-visit narratives, noting:

It was the opposite of how yours went. She just literally sat there ... she still wouldn't talk ... she literally wouldn't open her mouth and the only thing she would do is draw them a picture (seg. 209, 211, 213)

She also narrates her own feelings of difference at playgroup:

Cindy: Like I'd go and make a coffee, this is like, you know like five metres away from her, I'd walk into the kitchen to make a coffee,  
Carol: Mmm  
Cindy: and, she wouldn't notice for about thirty seconds and I'd be like, 'ooh, this is going well', and she'd look, and like scream, **like no child's ever screamed before**, and they'd literally pick her up and hand her to me [laughs]  
R: [Laughs]  
Cindy: So it was like at that point they were like 'yeah, maybe you, we've got an issue' [questioning] (seg. 18-20)

The magnitude of her feelings is communicated through her language, emphases and expressions ('*five metres*', '*like no child's ever screamed*', [laughs]), seeming positioned, 'othered' ('you, we've got an issue'). This is further communicated in language describing *her* feelings in social contexts:

It makes you **feel, like a freak**, because, you think people are judging you for not being able to separate from your child (seg. 24)

Feeling different or judged also emerges at nursery Sports Day, alongside conflicted feelings ('it sounds awful, to say that about your child, but I was *really* embarrassed', seg. 95), commenting:

I was like '*oh my god*,' and at *this point*, I hadn't felt like that for a long time, you know where you're the one the odd person out [questioning] (seg. 115)

Recurring in stories about her stay-at-home role, Cindy feels 'embarrassed that other people are gonna start judging me for being at home still' (seg. 337), noting 'there's a lot of, difference between their lives, and mine (seg. 358) and feeling 'constantly judged, about the kids, about being at home, especially by family' (seg. 409). This leads to concerns about her children's education (seg. 541) and different futures:

I worry about, you know, will Evie ever get married? You know 'cos I don't know how, how [becoming upset, voice wavers] (seg. 375-377)

The theme begins early in Cindy's narrative, lessening at times of 'breakthrough', following nursery transition (seg. 71), and recurring when describing sports day, role and Speech Therapy. Less 'difference' occurs at Cindy's school parents' meeting when the SENCO role is explained to *all* parents and Cindy feels included, relating:

it was *nice* to feel like that was an **important part** of the learning in that year, and that they've mentioned it. It made me feel **not as much of an outcast**' (seg. 127)

For Cindy 'difference' seems thrown into sharp relief at times of change or transition, magnified within social contexts – both relational and emotion-laden. In these contexts Cindy tells of the power of others to position her as different or included (Gergen, 2009; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003).

## *Mixed relationships*

- *Family experience*
- *Role*
- *Supportive and unsupportive relationships*

### *Family and role*

Transition as family experience emerges strongly. Indeed for Cindy transition cannot be easily separated from family, with stories interspersed with sjuzet in the form of reflections about her son:

Cindy: So that for me is, different to D

Carol: Mm

Cindy: There was a lot of anxiety all the time with D. With Evie, there's *no* anxiety now (seg. 67)

She devotes large parts of narrative to her son (interpreted as sjuzet, 'asides' to *this* transition), but continually relates these to current experience. For example, reflecting on her *son's* sports day ('*all* races, in front of *all* the parents lined up', seg. 119), she re-considers feelings:

and then I'm looking and thinking 'oh god', she's going to that one next year, and it was the first time, actually I tell a lie, that I was anxious about next year, thinking 'oh god, this time next year what's she gonna do?' (seg. 119-121)

Having felt on 'an emotional rollercoaster', she describes family dynamics around starting school:

cos it got *really* bad, at that point, and then Evie almost being *worse* [questioning]. I was a bit like, I wanted to talk to him a *lot* on a night time and he just didn't want to hear it (seg. 27)

It is within this context that Cindy talks of her role – a story of changed role, altered expectations and adapting to Evie's needs, beginning at playgroup

(staying at sessions, seg. 7, 24) and continuing with changes around work plans, instead adopting a stay-at-home role:

It's like, you know how you've done a full 360 from where you thought your life was (seg. 323)

It is interesting *how* Cindy re-tells her role, embracing changes and finding agency ('working on this', 'right, it's make or break' (seg. 4; 33)), framing her role as empowering:

if you don't give them the opportunity to surprise you, you know, y-your holding them back, aren't you? (seg. 61)

Thus, she positions herself positively towards herself and her role, storying a preferred self as facilitator, advocate, stay-at-home mum. However, told in context of societal views and perceptions, she also feels positioned by others, emphasising the relational nature of experience:

Cindy: I feel like, come September, I will be able to be the housewife that I *want* to be, finally [laughing]  
Carol: [Okay, so that'll be a change for you?  
Cindy: Yeah, that will be the change, but then you think, is that really a job? (1) It doesn't seem to be a job anymore, so I feel a bit like, have I got off lightly? (seg. 371-373)

### Supportive and unsupportive relationships

Cindy highlights supportive relationships as key, describing a close friendship formed at playgroup:

That, was like a *real* positive, I mean that was probably one of the best things that happened there (seg. 44)

Her language communicates its value for Cindy, through emphases ('*that*', '*real positive*') and elaboration (not just positive, but 'one of the best things'), suggesting that this friendship has supported transition:

Erm, so I was a bit nervous, so at least I had somebody to talk to about what was happening at nursery (seg. 46)

Similarly, she places value on positive school relationships, reassured by Evie's school teachers at the home-visit (seg. 210) and especially valuing nursery relationships, linking these directly to positive feelings about transition:

I just think for me, I think it fundamentally comes down to that Miss D has broken through (seg. 499)

However, some relationships are less supportive, feeling let down by speech and language therapy professionals (seg. 142) and judged by others ('difference' theme), appreciating times when she 'got to help with the kids and it made me feel a little bit, like people stopped judging me' (seg. 51). She describes 'transparency and not comparing' as valuable skills (seg. 470-483).

Thus, family, role and supportive relationships seem key for Cindy at this time, locating her story clearly within social context, reflecting throughout on the relational nature of her experience (Dockett et al., 2012; Gergen, 2009). Her story is of changed expectations regarding her role (Dockett et al., 2012; Russell, 2003), giving rise to mixed emotions, not easily separated from her relationships or feelings of difference. She positions herself ambivalently towards others – judged versus accepted; feeling both supported and unsupported by professionals.

## ***Varying support***

- *Nursery as breakthrough*
- *Supported by school*
- *Frustrations around speech and language*

### *Nursery breakthrough and school support*

Cindy tells of pre-school as supporting transition, emerging at playgroup (as Evie ventures further and friendships form) and continuing in stories of nursery breakthrough, where starting nursery represents a turning point:

And that was a *really*, good thing, I mean a *big* positive, and **everyone kept** saying to me ‘oh, how’s Evie doing at, at nursery?’ and it, for once I could say, ‘oh, *really* good, it’s going *really* well’, which I hadn’t been able to (seg. 55)

Evident here is the impact on Cindy, emphasised through her language (‘*really* good’, ‘*really* well’, ‘*big* positive’, ‘everyone kept saying’, ‘for once’), and within social context, with opportunity to relate differently, positively, to others. Reflecting further, there is the idea of alternative futures (Bruner, 1986) as she relates:

if you’d have told me how she was gonna be *now*, last year, when I was thinking about starting XNursery, I would *never* have believed you, I mean I wouldn’t, I just thought, that’s not gonna happen. So, yeah, *really* good (seg. 63)

Although there are set-backs (sports day, feeling judged), nursery seems key for Cindy in preparing for school (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2003; DfE, 2011; Sylva et al., 2004), highlighting opportunities to participate, experience routines and develop relationships, reflecting that ‘nursery in a school environment for me, has given her *everything* she needs to start’ (seg. 451)

Cindy also tells of school support – supportive relationships, alongside open evening, home visit and open morning experiences, all contributing towards positive feelings about school transition and trust in staff:

Yeah, she's been in school, she's had routine, she knows teachers help her (1) Erm and, yes, she's gonna be upset like all the other children'll be upset cos it's like, a bit scary, but, she'll be absolutely 100% fine, and they *know* what she's gonna be like when she gets there, so that for me is, different to D (seg. 67)

### *Frustrations around speech support*

Whilst positioning herself positively towards school, Cindy is frustrated at access to speech and language therapy services at her preferred school compared to support she could access through an alternative school choice, relating:

it's all just a little bit much for me. I just feel very, I feel (2) [exhales] what's the word? (1) frustrated by the Xprimary school issue, because I feel it's unfair, that other children, are maybe getting more help than mine just because they're willing to go to a different school (seg. 247-249)

She communicates injustice and powerlessness through her word choice ('unfair', 'just because', 'really', 'all just a little bit much', 'frustrated', 'more help'), with frustration emphasised through pauses, word-searching, extra-linguistic features [exhales] and repetition ('feel very, I feel'). Alongside this is a sense of 'them' and 'me' ('*me*', '*other*', '*mine*'), positioning herself against the system as 'victim' within this story and devoting considerable space within her narrative (seg. 242-295).

The theme returns as she highlights this as 'the *whole* fundamental problem' (seg. 518). In contrast to 'amazing' speech and language therapy earlier at clinic, she tells of injustice, feeling 'it's all just stopped' (seg. 520-522), as suggested in research (Dockett et al., 2012; Janus, 2007; Read 2000; Russell, 2003). There are feelings of anger, frustration and of not feeling understood, positioning herself negatively towards this professional support (seg. 524; 534).

### **5.3.1.3 *Cindy's story so far***

As Cindy prepares for transition, her story is about fighting against adversity towards a hopeful but uncertain future. It is a story about: difference and future concerns; mixed relationships and changing role; alongside mixed perceptions of support. I interpret a relational and emotional narrative (Dockett et al., 2012; Gergen, 2009), valuing readiness through quality nursery provision (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; DfE, 2011; Sylva, 2004).

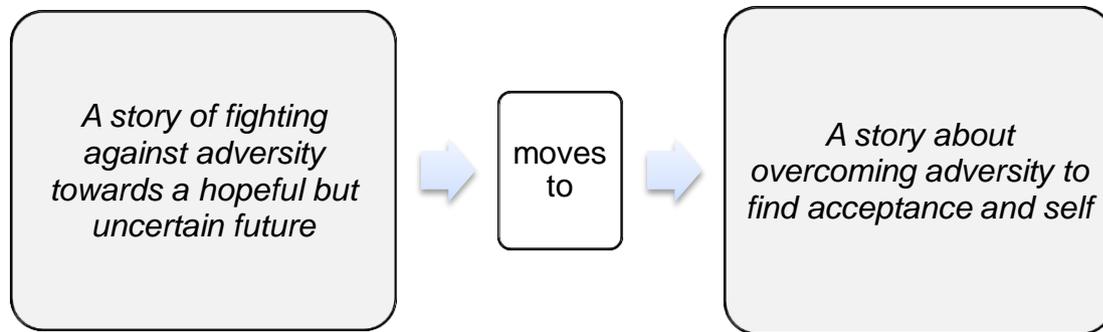
Her narrative emphasises movement from adversity to nursery breakthrough ('we did it', 'we're getting there'), re-framing stories of difficulty in a more positive light ('at least we tried', 'positive place really'), suggesting a desire to tell a preferred self and to be seen in a positive light (Bruner, 1986; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012).

She positions herself as facilitator, advocate, stay-at-home mum, but also tells of feeling positioned, judged or 'othered'. Thus, Cindy adopts ambivalent positions towards others, self and support, highlighting conflicting narratives: powerless versus empowering; victim versus fighter; 'different' versus 'normal'; judged versus accepted. Additionally, there is the power of sharing voice, suggested through on-going reflection and also hearing her daughter's voice through the research.

I expand on these aspects as I move on to consider Cindy's continuing (September) story in the light of her July narrative. I share further reflections as I summarise Cindy's overarching story at the close of section 5.3.

## 5.3.2 Cindy's story continued

### 5.3.2.1 A holistic perspective



From fighting against adversity towards a hopeful but uncertain future, Cindy's holistic story continues, as outlined below (see Appendices A2, WT6).

#### *Story outline*

Cindy notices Evie seems ready for change, encouraged by her independence on holiday, buying uniform and postcards. She describes an 'amazing' first day, which I interpret as a turning point story and title *First morning drop off: taking control and breakthrough – 'I was on cloud nine, you know'* (seg. 59-96).

Feeling she now handles things differently, Cindy describes an exception, a contrasting story, where 'difference' returns, though re-storied, celebrated (seg. 163-4). Cindy tells of positives around parenting, school relationships, Evie's independence and friendships – feeling empowered, included, supported – before telling more of herself, developing hobbies and happiness.

Interested in her positive re-telling, I ask what has supported. Here, Cindy asks to suspend recording briefly whilst telling of a personal issue, resuming with sense-making around positives – a story I interpret as a climax (*Supported by others: feeling understood, accepted and learning to let go*, seg. 438-486).

Closing, Cindy reflects positively on speech and language support, skills and transition, feeling it couldn't have been better (in contrast to July). Describing

transition as 'positive', 'surprising' and 'breakthrough', supported by talk and past experiences. She reflects positively on sharing voice through the research.

#### *Global impression and how this is communicated*

Emerging strongly, in light of the story shared in July, is the change from fight - me against them - to overcoming. From fighting adversity, an overarching impression emerges within her continuing narrative:

- A story about overcoming adversity to find acceptance and self.

This captures the positivity and breakthrough, alongside a sense of feeling understood, supported, connected, empowered and finding purpose.

#### *Overcoming adversity*

A change in the critical positioning of her narrative is apparent, moving towards a positive positioning of herself within social context. Cindy frames this at the start and end of her narrative, beginning with positive feelings on leaving nursery, 'Erm, so, when we left nursery, er (1) I think I was feeling really positive, because we'd had a really good experience' (seg. 2).

Ending her story she reflects, 'I don't think **anything** really could have been better cos obviously it's worked out really well (seg. 569) and:

Erm, I think **breakthrough** is the word I would use, we've had a lot of breakthroughs

Carol: Mmm, you used that word last time didn't you?

Cindy: Yeah

Carol: I remember that, yeah

Cindy: Yeah, so at home, at school, in my relationship with the kids, in my, in my way of looking at things, in every element we've had like a massive step forward (seg. 535-539)

Her language highlights her positive telling ('*really* good', 'really positive', 'really well') and also *how* positive ('obviously', 'anything', 'breakthrough', 'a lot of breakthroughs', listing one thing after another, building to 'every element' and 'a massive step'). Overcoming across many areas is

suggested, clearly reflected in the narrative progression and turning points, where, in contrast to July, she gives little space to stories of difficulty.

From the positive, although uncertain, ending of her July narrative, her story follows a rapid upward progression from her turning point story, *First morning drop-off: taking control and breakthrough*. She begins with anticipation, building to breakthrough, success and elation:

I thought Cindy, just **stop** worrying about it, it'll be *absolutely fine*.

So (1) we went straight after drop-off, and *the most amazing thing happened*, she just **walked** in, like *really confidently* (1) (seg.74-75)

...

Yeah and gosh I was so happy. I was **on cloud nine**, you know (seg. 94)

The upward progression continues with only a brief story of uncertainty I title *Changes in routine: Different again, difference celebrated* (seg. 148-165). I interpret this as a contradictory point in her narrative, but, as captured in the title, a point where difference seems re-framed, re-storied, echoing her July Sports Day narrative (discussed further in section 5.3.2.2).

#### *Finding acceptance and self*

Her story progresses towards a climax (*Supported by others: feeling understood, accepted and learning to let go*, seg. 438-486), where overcoming is not just about her daughter's transition, but also about Cindy's relationships and who *she* is:

Cindy: It was really surprising, and I just feel like I've got a group of friends now, who can support me and can make me feel like, do you know what, there's a big plan out there, you're **not** gonna be able to control it

Carol: [Mm

Cindy: So the best you can do, is get yourself in a positive place, so that when those children come home from school, you'll be what they need, which is a happy supportive mum (seg. 44-46).

She presents support and acceptance from others as pivotal in her story of overcoming. Furthermore, her telling communicates agency around what she *can* do, accepting what she cannot and discovering a proactive, preferred self ('right, Cindy,' 'just *stop*', 'do you know what', 'get yourself in a positive place', 'a happy supportive mum').

- *Transition as relational, emotional, readiness*

Transition as relational continues (Gergen, 2009). However, her September narrative is less about comparing herself to others and more about connectedness. She makes sense of experiences as interlinked with others, especially Evie ('because she was happy, I was happy', 'she knows I'm on board', seg. 96-98; 180), valuing communication (journal, home-school diary, feedback) and shared voice ('signs' from Evie (seg. 30, 39, 40), hearing Evie's voice through the research). There emerges a sense of *us*, rather than *them* (apparent in July).

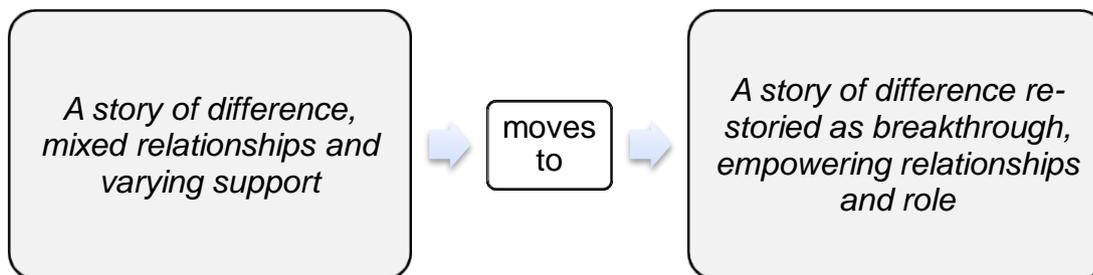
Transition continues as emotional, but not the 'emotional roller-coaster' of July. Her story is emotion-laden, communicated in the *sjuzet* of excerpts above, but through positive emotions, support and handling things differently.

As July, Cindy frames her narrative in the context of pre-school as preparation, emphasising Evie's readiness – ready for change, ready to move on, feeling prepared. Interestingly, the major low point in progression across her overarching narrative occurs in July playgroup stories prior to nursery breakthrough, suggesting perhaps that encountering change/transition earlier has prepared Cindy (and Evie) for school transition (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

#### *Further reflections*

Transition as breakthrough and successful emerges through Cindy's overarching story. Particularly interesting is how Cindy constructs this as movement from fighting adversity to finding acceptance. Breakthrough for Cindy seems to be about feeling accepted, not different – included, 'normal', like other parents, part of 'us' – perhaps suggesting that relationship and how she is seen has supported a positive transition for her (Dockett et al., 2012; Gergen, 2009; Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003).

### 5.3.2.2 A categorical perspective



Although three themes emerge, July themes of *difference*, *relationships* and *support* do not all continue, highlighting changes in Cindy's sense-making around school transition. Whilst *relationships* continues, there is a noticeable lack of *difference* in her continuing story, alongside emergence of Cindy's supportive role, rather than support received, as a dominant theme.

#### ***Difference re-storied as breakthrough***

- *Difference re-storied; reframed, celebrated*
- *Breakthrough as readiness and inclusion*

#### *Difference re-storied; reframed, celebrated*

There is little talk of feeling different, judged or embarrassed, with instances seeming contradictory to her narrative. The main recurrence is a story I title *Changes in routine: Different again, difference celebrated* (seg .125) where Cindy feels changes in morning routine caused Evie to feel different:

I said to everybody, 'just need to go to the toilet and it's assembly, so do you mind if I come to the front' [lowered tone] and they were like 'yeah,' which obviously I never thought about what it was like for her, 'what's going on, why am I special?' and she **didn't** like that (seg. 138)

This leads to Evie crying and sitting with her teacher in assembly (parents and priest watching). However, although Cindy's emotional telling ('I don't

know [inhale], 'So I was like "Arghh, why didn't I remember?"', seg. 144; 148) describes difference again, there is no feeling of judgement or public embarrassment. Echoing her July reframing of Sports Day, she positions herself positively, seeming to celebrate difference:

'Oh, only Evie', like that [laughing]. But then she was fine, and she just sat on Mrs P's knee, as good as gold for the whole of assembly' (seg. 163-4)

Similarly, hearing Evie only ate bread one lunchtime ('I know it's a bit embarrassing', seg. 300), she again reframes positively ('So then, the day after that, she cleared her plate apparently' seg. 304).

Cindy also gives normalising context, emphasising inclusion, not difference – starting school is difficult for *all* children, *other* children cry, *all* parents give feedback:

And other parents do it as well, not just me, other parents'll say 'oh, so and so's had a bit of a bad morning this morning' (seg. 207).

Thus, difference is noticeable by its absence, told partly through re-framing and partly through replacement stories of breakthrough.

### *Breakthrough, readiness, inclusion*

Cindy's continuing narrative is characterised by breakthrough, captured in first-day and personal breakthrough. From playgroup, where Evie screams 'like no child has ever screamed', Cindy's story moves to school where 'the most amazing thing happened, she just walked in, like really confidently' (seg. 75) and:

Yeah and gosh I was so happy. I was **on cloud nine**, you know like a lot of the mums went 'ooh I'm dropping my daughter off, ohh like that, and I was like '**yes**' [raised tone, then laughing] (seg. 94)

Interesting here, is the feeling of success and surprise communicated ('just walked', 'most amazing', '*really* confidently', 'on cloud nine' and 'yes'), commenting:

I wasn't sad at all, I was like, to think that we'd got to *this* stage, this is like (1) this is (2) **amazing**. I was *really* really happy (seg. 96)

Letting go seems elating for Cindy, linked with personal success, perhaps 'successful parent', reflected throughout and in closing reflections of transition as 'Erm, really positive and really surprising' (seg. 529).

Rather than difference, breakthrough is about Evie's readiness for change (seg. 6), signs of readiness ('that's a good sign' seg. 30), feeling prepared (seg. 53; 56-57) and 'absolutely fine' (seg. 79) having done this before. She is encouraged by Evie's participation in school-related tasks (uniform, school postcard, homework) and Evie's development (progression to school routines (seg. 220-227), physically stronger (seg. 246-248), managing steps (seg. 359), trying new food (seg. 306-319), eating tea and, a 'big change', encouraging her brother (seg. 336, 338)). Breakthrough is also about inclusion – home-school diary work Evie *can* do and can share with peers in *her way* (seg. 278).

For Cindy breakthrough is about letting go and feeling included, accepted, 'normal' not different on transition. Linked with this, Cindy seems to position Evie as school-ready and herself, in turn, as a 'successful parent'.

### ***Empowering relationships***

- *Family experience*
- *Supportive others*
- *Power of sharing voice*

Relationships remain key, as captured in the relational nature of holistic perspective. Grounded in family experience, her continuing story is not of mixed, but empowering relationships and within this, the power of sharing voice. Thus, transition sees a shift in relationships for Cindy

### *Family and supportive others*

As July, transition continues as family experience, with a sense of 'we' in stories of shared school tasks ('she wanted to do the same as D', seg. 39), joint homework or outings, and family discussion around friendships (seg. 349). Bi-directional, relational aspects (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Gergen, 2009) are emphasised, interlinking family (Dad home, routine changes) with school (seg. 130), highlighting the positive impact of Evie's independence on family mealtimes (seg. 333-334) and her own role positivity on her husband:

He's got like a little bit excited, for me about, what I can get done now, about being my own person and **who** I am as a person (seg. 412)

From feeling at times judged or frustrated in relationships with family, parents and SALT professionals, Cindy positions herself positively. There is a sense of trust, partnership, 'us', highlighted in supportive school routines and care ('always, they're *always* being helped', 342) and relationships with parents that empower decision-making and reassure (seg. 272, 371).

Communication between people/systems seems supportive (Bronfenbrenner, 1998; Rous et al., 2010) highlighted in her story, *Meet and greet: Relationships with teachers and feeling included* (seg. 197), where Cindy values feedback:

Miss S is always there and you always feel like, you can say 'oh this has happened this morning (seg. 203).

However, she narrates her support group as pivotal. Through a story climax I title *Supported by others: feeling understood, accepted* (seg. 438), she constructs these relationships as empowering future thinking:

That's gonna be what *that's gonna be*, and having talked to these people that, *that get it*, and there are a lot of similar situations they've been in.  
A lot of *their* children have got learning disabilities, it was really interesting (seg. 439-40)

She values equality and feeling understood (they 'get it'), gaining new perspective and recognising this changes the way she relates to her children:

I'm handling them in a different way, in a way that's more understanding  
Carol: [Mm  
Cindy: And I'm getting better behaviour, I'm getting D come up to me and saying 'I love you mummy' (seg. 449-452)

Making sense of this, she thinks talking to friends with similar experiences has influenced her perceptions:

Cos you see your kids from a more positive place, rather than being on your own and thinking everybody else's kids are perfect  
Carol: That feeling, yeah  
Cindy: You *think, you think (1)* they're not really (seg. 465-467)

Feeling similar, not different, but connected is key. Through her re-telling and talking with others, that is through relationship (Gergen, 2009), she embraces *now* and imagines a more positive future (Bruner, 1986).

### *Power of sharing voice*

Transition supported through talk emerges (support group, husband, friends, journal, 'not keeping it in', seg. 547). There is the power of 'hearing' Evie's voice through observation and journal-sharing, enabling Cindy to learn more about her first day (seg. 385-400).

Seeing Evie communicate with professionals is new, as 'she's *never* communicated with anybody before, she's always just sat next to me' (seg. 581), and for Cindy:

Because, she was proud to show you her pictures wasn't she, she was **proud** to like go on the computer and, give you **her** assessment, which was a first, so I think for me, for a child who, we weren't getting a lot from in terms of how is she feeling, we knew how she felt (seg. 583)

She describes how this supported her own feelings around transition:

So that really made **me**, feel positive about starting, 'cos I knew that she'd told you she was excited  
Carol: Yes, yes she did  
Cindy: And she'd never told me that  
Carol: Yeah  
Cindy: I knew she liked the uniform, but she hadn't told me she was excited about starting so for me that little gem, sort of stuck with me through the holidays, I thought well I know you're excited (seg. 585-89)

## **Role**

- *Empowering role*
- *Reflectivity: Second time around*
- *Self*

From positioning herself ambivalently towards support in July, her continuing narrative describes supportive relationships and *her* role in this – a movement from supported to supportive role forming a dominant theme. Cindy devotes space to her role in terms of empowering others and also, who *she* is, or is becoming, as Evie starts school.

### *Empowering and reflective role*

Cindy describes an empowering parenting role, positioning herself as facilitator, making decisions about first-day start times (seg. 68), adopting an empowering role even in unexpected situations:

So I thought right, Cindy, just don't rush this, we we're gonna be late for school but it **doesn't** matter, the important thing here, is to get Evie back to **not** being upset (seg. 107)

There is a sense of 'successful parent' as she positions herself positively towards her parenting decisions, emerging further as she describes doing things differently and learning from past experiences:

so, yeah, I think that's what I've learnt is to *take* your time, er, and *allow* them the time, to be distracted back into being happy again (seg. 115)

...

that's why this morning, I thought 'no, I'm not rushing'(seg. 164)

She communicates agency through her telling, through emphases and direct speech where she commands herself ('just don't rush', 'it *doesn't* matter', 'get Evie back to', 'don't let her', '*take* your time', '*allow* them time'), alongside language suggesting perspective ('we're late, but').

Her proactive role continues through facilitating routines, homework and 'giving opportunities to surprise' (seg. 337), a recurring note from July. Speech and language frustrations are replaced, seeing instead her partnership in support (seg. 510, 523, 527), valuing her developing skills and active role in arranging SALT privately ('I'm in control of that, I've made that happen' seg.509).

There is a reflecting back, relating different parts of her experience and learning from past situations (leaving Evie at nursery, visits). A sense of 'second time around' seems to have supported her parenting. Indeed, she reflects that other parents may benefit from prior transition experiences and talking to others, suggesting the benefit of narrative space.

Cindy talks of enjoying the breakthrough and 'now' of her current role (seg. 539, 545) linking this specifically to supportive relationships. Indeed, she continually makes sense of actions in context of relationships or past experiences; that is within social context. Thus, whilst she narrates herself as

agentic within the parenting role, it is in the context of enabling relationships. We could suggest that to talk of agency outside of supportive environments or facilitating 'others', is impossible; that social context facilitates action and could be interpreted as co-action (Gergen, 2009).

### *Self*

Cindy's September story is the first glimpse I gain of Cindy herself - *her* likes, *her* skills. This emerges late in her narrative within a story I call *Developing interests in the garden and feeling happy*. A positive positioning towards self emerges, not only her parenting role, but a positive identity position, a sense of Cindy not apparent in July. She describes feeling '*really positive*' in her stay-at-home role, with excitement shared by her husband about 'being my own person and *who* I am as a person' (seg. 412)

She tells of gardening interests, feeling 'like so you know what, that could be a *really positive, keep me buoyant, interest*' (seg. 413). For the first time I hear her aspirations ('So for *me* (2) that's made my day, 'cos I never thought we'd get to keep the garden, seg. 421), describing her happiness as impacting positively on her marriage. There is a sense of different future selves (Bruner, 1986), new purpose, new 'me,' but also new 'us':

It's like me being satisfied and relaxed, and thinking *this* is my job, I'm gonna get this done, it's really helping *us* (seg. 434)

Thus, a sense of self emerges through and constructed by relationship (Gergen, 2009) – an empowering and reflective parenting role and also an emerging sense of who she is within this.

### **5.3.3 Cindy's story: A summary and further critical reflection**

Emerging across Cindy's overarching story is a sense of overcoming, through movement from fighting adversity to finding acceptance and self.

From 'difference', mixed relationships and varying support, her story moves to breakthrough, empowering relationships and developing role. Whilst family remains key (Dockett et al., 2012), transition as a changing set of

relationships emerges (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Cindy's continuing story is about supportive others and sharing voice. Notions of difference, judgement and future concerns are re-storied as breakthrough, readiness and inclusion. A story of varying support is replaced by Cindy's own supportive role.

Interpreting this change, it seems that relationships and nursery preparation have been pivotal. Cindy's positive telling of pre-school as preparation, suggests quality early years provision and continuity across settings was supportive (Brooks-Gunn et al., 2003; DfE, 2011; Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Rous et al., 2010; Sylva et al., 2004). She positions herself positively towards school-readiness discourses, as within-child skills (Kagan, 2003) but also, as child-ready school (Broström, 2003; Dockett, 2009; Wood, 2004).

Earlier frustration around SALT support is consistent with research highlighting difficulty and stress in accessing services on transition (Dockett et al., 2012; Janus et al., 2007; Read, 2000; Russell, 2003). However, Cindy seems to make sense of this through relationships and emerging role, suggesting for Cindy transition is both relational and Becoming (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012). Thus, Cindy makes sense of transition reflectively and in relation to others, telling an emotional story, moving from 'emotional rollercoaster' to positive, 'breakthrough' emotions.

Whilst seeking to perform a positive narrative in July, there were times she felt 'othered', positioning herself and Evie as marginalised, a position causing anxiety. How others see or 'read' her (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012) seems particularly important. Striking within her continuing story is her positive performance – the lack of 'difference' and instead, success and breakthrough – linked with feeling accepted, seen positively by others.

Thus, from earlier ambivalent positions towards others, Cindy positions herself positively. Feeling accepted is key - not different, but included, 'normal', like other parents, part of 'us'. For her this seems to make transition 'positive', 'surprising' and 'breakthrough'. A sense of group identity, 'us', seems particularly supportive.

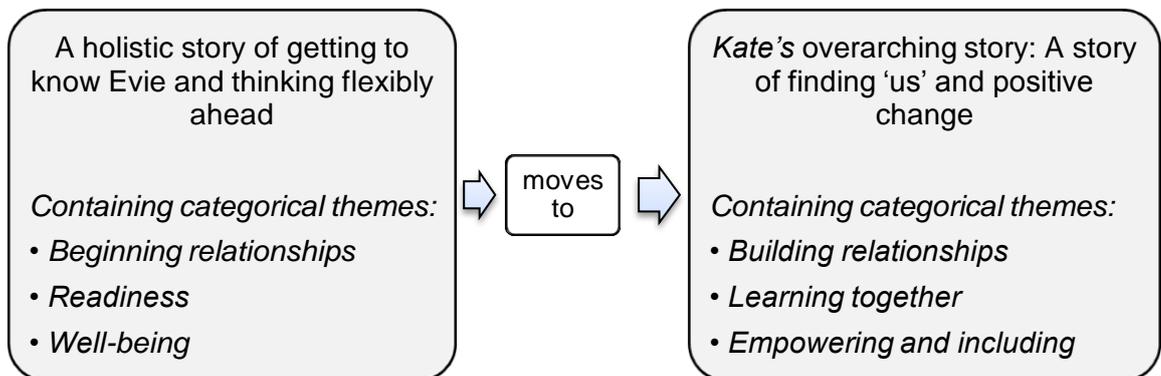
Transition has been a time of changing role and adjustment, feeling empowered and gaining a sense of who *she* is (Dockett et al., 2012; Russell, 2003). Adopting a positive position towards herself in context (successful

parent, facilitator, stay-at-home mum, 'me'), Cindy clearly links her understanding of this change with supportive, inclusive relationships; relationships through which new purpose, alternative possible futures emerge (Bruner, 1986), in turn influencing the way *she* relates to others.

The value of sharing voice during transition also seems particularly powerful, through relationships, co-construction and the research itself (Griebel & Niesel, 2009; Russell, 2003).

#### 5.4 Kate's story (Reception Teacher)

I begin with an overview (figure 6), moving on to July and September narratives. (See also Appendices H2, WT7-8).



**Figure 6: Kate's overview**

##### 5.4.1 Kate's July story

Kate's holistic and categorical perspectives are presented, beginning with key aspects to be discussed.

##### 5.4.1.1 A holistic perspective

*A story of getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead*

Kate's story is outlined below. (See Appendices B2, WT7)

### *Story outline*

Kate begins by telling of transition planning – ‘such a big thing’, taking ‘so many weeks’ (seg. 7) – and making links with family and staff, prior to transition visits. At the home visit Kate does not feel she gains a picture of Evie’s needs, although providing opportunity to build familiarity. Evie’s school visit marks a turning point in their relationship, where Kate becomes more positive about transition.

Visiting Evie’s nursery is an opportunity to gain information and build confidence. However, she reflects on the contrast between school and nursery contexts, seeing Evie as withdrawn in nursery. I interpret this as a contrasting point, with uncertainty emerging.

Kate tells of preparation through stories about seeing the person behind the paper, communication, nursery targets and processes supporting familiarity. Of importance are social and emotional skills, professional connections, flexibility and keeping Evie central. Feeling Evie is ‘school-ready,’ Kate reflects that the school visit was most helpful in supporting transition, but a full day, including lunch, may have helped preparation.

### *Global impression and how this is communicated*

A pattern emerges which I summarise as:

- Getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead

This captures the on-going nature of Kate’s narrative, the sense of discovering, responding, preparing, anticipating and looking forward (the ‘ing-ness’) of stories. Positive and hopeful, it is a narrative about multiple possibilities; a story beginning and becoming.

This is communicated through the progression of her story, a journey of getting to know Evie, starting with planning and a home visit, progressing to Evie’s school visit (*School visit: Getting to know Evie, giving comfort and building relationships*, seg. 56-82), representing a turning point – the beginning of relationship and positive feelings:

So then we just kind of sat down and did it together and she was like really happy ... since then when she's been going past to pick D [brother] up, she kind of sticks her head in the shutters (seg.79)

... Um, so she does **seem** a lot more confident with us now, and I think she will settle quite quickly, which I'm quite happy about (seg. 82)

Her story progresses to what seems an unusual point, a story I title *Observing Evie within different contexts: responding reflectively* (seg. 105-112), where Kate sees a different side to Evie:

But she did, she did, I can see what they meant, she wasn't as lively as she was in the classroom when she came *here*

Carol: [Mm

Kate: Erm, she was a little bit more, I don't know, I guess you would say withdrawn

She was, you know a little bit in herself (seg. 105-107)

Alongside positive feelings, a sense of uncertainty is introduced and a reflectivity that characterises Kate's narrative as she further considers her role, twice returning to Evie's school visit story, constructing and re-constructing her understanding of Evie in context.

There are multiple directions her story could lead. Whilst there is anticipation of change and expectation of a positive resolution, Kate's is a story about responding flexibly to Evie, positioning herself positively but also flexibly towards her role.

#### *Discovery and reflectivity; professional rather than personal*

Whilst Kate's narrative prioritises relationship and responsiveness, there is a definite sense of being at the beginning of her story – starting to know Evie, considering possible approaches and initial thinking. Her story is about discovery and reflectivity as she prepares Evie and her peers.

This is reflected through Kate's telling, in her choice of words ('she does seem', 'I think', 'I can see what they meant', 'I guess'), emphases ('I don't

*know*, 'I guess you *would* say') and repetitions suggesting she is still processing information ('she did, she did', 'she was ... she was, you know'), alongside descriptions linked by 'and', suggesting on-going discovery (excerpts above).

A professional rather than personal story emerges, with content focused on Evie rather than Kate and her telling emphasising professional reflectivity ('she could probably, maybe', 'hopefully', 'it'll change so much', 'at the *moment*', 'won't try *yet*', 'maybe we'd try later on', 'I think it is going to be a bit like trial and error').

Kate's is a story beginning, where building relationships, preparation and well-being are key, emerging through the categorical perspective following.

#### **5.4.1.2 A categorical perspective**

*A story about beginning relationships, readiness and supporting emotional well-being*

Themes emerge around: beginning relationships, readiness and emotional well-being, presented below.

#### ***Beginning relationships***

- *Getting to know the person behind the paper*
- *Connections and context*

#### ***Getting to know the person behind the paper***

From the onset, relationship with Evie is important, telling stories of home, school and nursery visits focused on getting to know Evie.

Her relationship begins uncertainly, concerned about lack of interaction at the home visit when 'Evie was kind of just there' (seg. 36), noting 'it was all just

very physical and me asking questions and her nodding or shaking her head' (seg. 43). Use of 'just' perhaps suggests concern around lack of verbal interaction, with desire to engage further:

It was only **twenty** minutes so, erm, I didn't really feel like I fully got to see much of her then cos she was so shy and she was laying down on the sofa a bit and you could see she was feeling a bit sleepy, so we left (seg. 47)

Kate's language suggests disappointment ('only *twenty* minutes', 'didn't really feel', 'fully', 'much', 'so shy', 'so we left'). However, she re-frames her understanding through our co-constructed narrative ('were there positives of that meeting?' seg. 49), re-telling as an opportunity to build relationship with Mum, for Evie to see this, and as supporting the school visit:

We were able to say 'oh remember when you showed us your dog? (seg. 51)

The school visit turning point gives the opportunity to interact, comfort and learn Evie's likes/dislikes, triggering on-going interaction where 'she kind of sticks her head in the shutters' when collecting her brother (seg. 79). Similarly, visiting nursery, Kate prioritises their relationships ('so we just went straight to her', seg. 89), positioning herself as a befriender.

She highlights a difference between when 'you just see on *paper* someone's needs' (seg. 119) and getting to know Evie through connecting and seeing her in context.

### *Connections and context*

Valuing her own relationship skills (seg. 118), Kate's story is about connecting with Evie, family and staff across contexts, supporting preparation:

as soon as you have those **visits** and you talk to Mum and you talk to the one-to-one at nursery, it does just make you feel like 'yeah, that's fine. I know I'm going to be able to, she'll settle really well'  
Yeah, and they'll all fit in quite nicely with the classroom routine (1) 'Cos she is so lovely, she's just so, has a real calmness when she's around like (seg. 119-120)

Her reflective language suggests she understands experience as interrelated in nature (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gergen, 2009) – connections as supporting Evie, her own role in transition and also Evie in context. Indeed, it can be difficult to separate stories of Evie's transition from family and class contexts.

She describes her relationship with Mum as supporting Evie:

showing that, you know me and mum are, 'look at how friendly we're being', so it's okay this (seg. 196)

Similarly, seeing Evie at school supports Kate's feelings ('I think she will settle quite quickly, which I'm quite happy about' seg. 82).

For Kate context seems key, especially the chance to see Evie in the school environment with peers:

I think the school visit was **brilliant** 'cos erm, it is alright seeing her at home when she's in an environment where she's really comfortable and then seeing her in nursery where she's grown to be more comfortable with, but you just want to see her where she's going to be (seg. 250)

What strikes me is the beginning of relationship and sense of looking for 'us'.

### **Readiness**

- *School-ready: Assessing needs*
- *Responding flexibly*
- *Planning ahead*

### *School-ready*

Transition for Kate begins by gaining a picture of Evie's 'needs' on hearing she will have a child 'with' special educational needs (SEN) in class (seg. 11). Using the term 'with SEN', she perhaps communicates an initial 'reading' of Evie through a deficit lens, an 'impairment' requiring support (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). However, Kate is keen to transfer 'paper' knowledge to an understanding in context, telling her journey towards a clearer picture of Evie's needs, and also skills.

From description that seems deficit-based, where 'we didn't really get to hear her speak' (seg. 34) and 'there was still no (1) no **verbal** communication, she wasn't **trying** to say anything' (seg. 42), Kate notices skills during the school visit, engaging in learning, relating to others, using non-verbal skills (seg. 60).

A sense of figuring Evie out emerges that compares and contrasts – unsure about Evie's nursery shyness compared to animation at school, but encouraged by her writing ('she kept writing 'E's everywhere', seg. 97) and especially her speech:

so she's obviously said some things to Mrs P then which I was really happy about 'cos she just hadn't spoke at all  
seg. 103

From noticing needs, to seeing skills, Kate feels Evie is 'school-ready' (seg. 177), describing this as ready to learn, take things on, accept challenges and cooperate – 'it's the personal social and emotional, it really is, seg. 179-181). Reflecting on Evie's approach and responses during the school visit seems to help Kate construct this understanding:

but, yeah she did seem to, everything we did you could just give her a direct instruction and we knew that she understood what we were saying, so it was good to see all that (seg. 263)

### *Responding flexibly and planning ahead*

Kate tells of transition planning as a major focus, 'always at the back of your mind' (seg. 6), explaining 'cos it is such a big thing in Reception, it takes up so many weeks (seg. 7). Stories about planning ahead include liaising with professionals, planning visits, parent meetings and holiday tasks.

Gaining an understanding of Evie's skills in context enables her to plan transition flexibly, expressed with strength of language:

Yeah definitely, 'cos it's alright people *telling* you it and you know 'this report says this' you know like *no*, I want to see her in my classroom, actually what I need to put in place for her, so I did feel quite comfortable that everything we had was completely accessible to her (seg. 255)

Again, she is beginning a journey, considering various teaching possibilities around teaching, assessment and peer work, and flexible responses to Evie – 'so it's just like adapting like trying to read the situation' (seg. 193). As Kate considers assessment, she seems to be processing thoughts, emerging through pauses, re-starting phrases and repetitions:

Erm (2) because *obviously* it'll be, everything she's gonna have to do she's gonna have to [sigh], it's quite *hard* because if she's not going to *verbalise* things just yet it's all going to be putting things in place so she can, can like *show* me sort of thing so (seg. 230-32)

Her language suggests both flexibility and difficulty, through extra-linguistic features [sigh] and emphases (*hard*, *show*), suggesting early thinking; an on-going, flexible process for Kate, as 'it'll change so much' (seg. 229).

There is perhaps the suggestion of school getting ready for Evie, alongside Evie ready for school (Broström, 2002; DfE, 2011; Wood, 2004). Kate adopts a positive positioning towards social-emotional readiness and herself as facilitator.

## ***Emotional well-being***

- *Supporting happiness, comfort*
- *Supporting familiarity*

### *Supporting happiness, comfort and familiarity*

Throughout, Kate describes supporting Evie to feel happy and comfortable, emphasised through a focus on relationship, alongside social-emotional readiness.

Ensuring Evie is happy and relaxed at the home visit (seg. 37), she reflects 'you don't wanna, make her feel uneasy or uncomfortable so' (seg. 48) and notices when Evie is upset at the school visit, comforting her. Happy that Evie seems more confident, she encourages her to say hello as she passes by when collecting her brother. Additionally, she considers Evie's comfort within teaching approaches, 'seeing what she's comfortable with and what she isn't' (seg. 241) and highlights lunchtimes and toileting support as important to her role.

Telling of professional skills, she highlights:

just showing her that, you know we're here to help and make everything **warm and welcoming** for her, 'cos I do think she needs that little bit of security'(seg.196)

Additionally, she devotes large sections of narrative to supporting Evie's familiarity with school and herself, telling of sharing a book at the home visit including photos of staff, classroom, activities and trips (seg. 40) and drawing on aspects of the home visit to help settle Evie in school.

Alongside processes that support familiarity across settings (contact, visits), Kate devotes a story to well-being at lunch time, recognising the difficulty of this new experience, stressing:

It's that lunch time, the first half term of lunch time, that it's just, it's **hard** 'cos they're all eating round each other and they've got to choose their own food and (1)  
Its **huge** and I think, if we could incorporate that some way into transition, it would be good but I know, it's hard 'cos then I'd have 60 children for a full day but, yeah (seg. 270-1)

An area that is 'huge' and where familiarity may support transition, Kate emphasises the importance of practical care. Her stories communicate that Evie's emotional well-being matters to her (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; High, 2008) and through this positions herself not only as 'facilitator' but also as 'carer'.

#### **5.4.1.3 Kate's story so far**

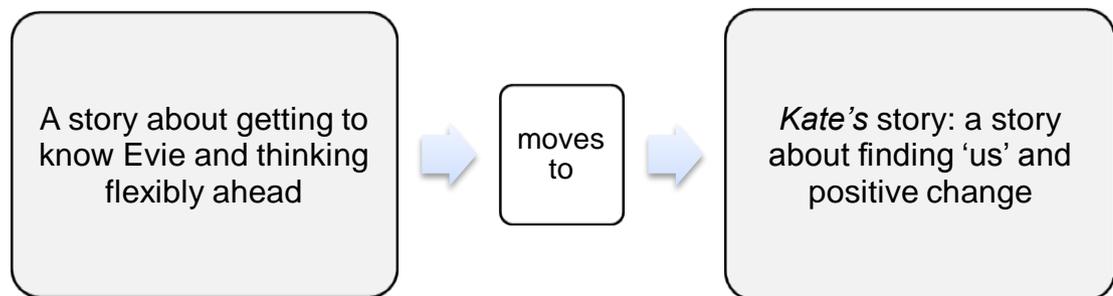
Kate's is a story of getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead; a story of discovery and reflectivity, representing the beginning of her sense-making around this transition. She tells of beginning relationships and looking for 'us,' rather than difference, where getting to know Evie, making connections and context are interlinked (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gergen, 2009). Kate's is also a story of readiness, a journey from seeing Evie's 'needs' on paper to beginning to understand her through a different lens (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012), responding to her skills in context. Her story is of supporting well-being and familiarity across settings (Broström, 2002; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; Rous et al., 2010).

Kate offers a narrative that is professional rather than personal. There seems less of Kate, perhaps reflecting how her story is just beginning and also, perhaps how she sees her role – as facilitator, befriender and carer. In respect to readiness discourses, she positions herself positively towards social-emotional readiness (High, 2008) and also school as ready for Evie (DfE, 2011; Broström, 2002; Wood, 2004).

I expand on these aspects as I move on to consider Kate's continuing (September) narrative, sharing further reflections as I summarise her overarching story at the close of section 5.4.

## 5.4.2 Kate's story continued

### 5.4.2.1 A holistic perspective



From getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead, Kate's holistic story continues, outlined below (see Appendices C2, WT8).

#### *Story outline*

Kate tells her continuing story during the third school week, reflecting initially on Evie's positive 'tour' interaction with me. Describing first-week difficulties, she moves to current breakthroughs, encouraged by Evie's carpet-time responses, in a story I interpret as a turning point, *Breakthroughs this week: 'I could've just cried with joy'*.

Kate moves between stories of first-week concerns contrasted with current positives, expanding on breakthrough in a story I title *Relationship breakthrough and thinking positively ahead – 'everything just, fell into place you know'*. She describes her role – facilitating, providing routine, prioritising well-being, supporting lunchtime, getting to know Evie and two-way communication.

Frustrated at nursery communication, Kate feels this could have better-supported Evie's first week. However, it helps her see Evie 'as she is', telling of positive transition and partnership – a climax to her story I title *Transition as home-school partnership and 'nothing like I expected'*.

Reflecting that more visits may help in future, she is nonetheless pleased with positive relationships and how Evie settled, valuing the research as an opportunity for reflectivity and verbalising practice.

### *Global impression and how this is communicated*

Emerging strongly, in light of the story shared in July, is a sense of finding relationship and breakthrough. An overarching impression emerges that is:

- *Kate's story*: A story of finding 'us' and positive change

This captures the breakthrough and progress around which Kate reflects and a sense of 'us' not apparent in July, with stories of relationship dominating smaller narratives. Additionally, from a professional July story, there seems a change to *personal* story which I capture by referring to *Kate's story*. These aspects are further communicated through the progression of her narrative.

From beginning relationships and looking flexibly ahead, Kate's continuing narrative moves flexibly between stories - this time not between the different possibilities of July, but between stories of initial concern contrasted with current breakthrough, emphasising positive change. Turning point and climax stories are around relationship – this time not about 'getting to know', but about positive interaction, progression in relationship and sense of 'us'.

She narrates first-week concerns that 'if *this* is what she's going to be like in school, I need to put a *lot* in place' (seg. 18), feelings similar to Cindy's first narrative, further expressed through her emotional language describing lack of interaction:

Cos even little things like, she still won't answer the register, which she just, like I even wave at her and she won't give me any sort of communication or eye contact or anything, which I just think [adopts quiet tone] something **just dies a little bit inside** when I say her name, it's just like 'oh thank goodness' [whispering] (seg. 23)

However, she contrasts this with a turning point story, *Breakthroughs this week*, emphasising the extent of change through her language, when:

this morning she gave me a tiny wave, it was kinda like a [gesture] (1) which I thought was a massive step because she's, you know she's identifying with me in that massive group of thirty children (seg. 30-31) ... I could've just cried with joy (seg. 44)

Revisiting this, she further emphasises contrast and change as Evie participates at carpet-time ('I was so excited', '*such* a massive step, it was just huge, so I was *really* happy', seg. 73, 77).

The progression of her narrative continues in this vein, contrasting concerns with recent breakthrough. *First day worries around well-being and relationships* (seg. 113) is followed by *Relationship breakthrough and thinking positively ahead* - '*everything just fell into place you know*' (seg. 129). This is echoed in lunchtime stories ('then', 'whereas now') and comparative language ('she was', 'until this week' 'since then' 'this week'). Frustration with nursery relationships contrasts with *Transition as home-school partnership*, '*nothing like I expected*' (seg. 370). Reflecting that more visits may have helped, she closes with stories of pleasure at how Evie has settled, of positive school relationships and of participating in the research.

Thus, Kate's manner of telling highlights where she is *now* compared to where she has come from - a story of positive change and progression. She offers a positive performance, emphasising current success and the extent of progression, perhaps suggesting looking for positives and seeing progress are important to her.

#### *Discovery and reflectivity; a personal story*

As July, Kate tells a reflective narrative, embracing on-going discovery – re-constructing, re-telling and re-considering, changing between the initial week and now, making sense of current in the context of past and whilst looking to the future. The on-going nature (the 'ing-ness') of Kate's narrative continues. There is a sense of 'relational flow', a story still Becoming (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012).

Emerging from the multiple possibilities of her July story, it is likely that Kate is making sense of the progress she sees by reflecting on change, in turn supporting her construction of the future:

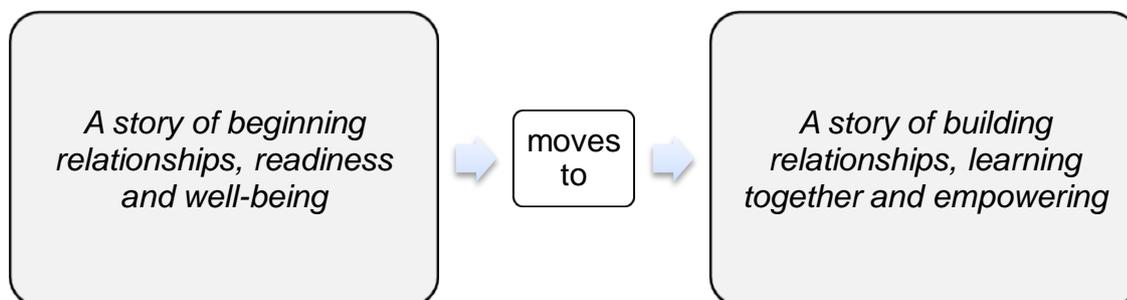
So I feel a lot calmer now and I feel like if these are the steps that she's made, in just these few weeks, then by the end of the half term I think, she'll be so well settled (seg. 149)

Kate seems emotionally invested, perhaps reflecting her developing relationships, her story of 'us' in which she is personally involved. This emerges through her telling, with her language emphasising strength of emotion and extent of change ('even little things', 'oh thank goodness', [whispering], 'something just dies a little bit inside', 'she's just completely changed', 'a massive step', 'so well', 'she *did*', 'I could've just *cried* with joy'). As Evie settles, Kate feels 'a lot calmer now', her feelings seeming interrelated:

So just, that was such a massive step, it was just huge,  
so I was really happy (seg. 77)

Kate's is a story of relationship and change that becomes personal and emotional on transition. This perhaps suggests how she sees her role – facilitator of progress, but also connected, relational and personal – explored further in categorical perspectives.

#### 5.4.2.2 A categorical perspective



I interpret July themes as developing through the togetherness and 'us' of Kate's holistic story into *building relationships, learning together and empowering*, with Kate's empowering role particularly evident on transition. Each is presented below and an overview of her story closes this section.

#### ***Building relationships***

- *Developing relationship with Evie*
- *Further connections*
- *Evie in context of family and class*

### *Developing relationship*

For Kate finding connection with Evie seems key, emerging through the holistic 'us' and positive change of her story. An on-going relationship, Kate is 'still *really* getting to know her' (seg. 52), moving from feeling Evie 'didn't seem to want to have any sort of communication with me at that point, I think she felt quite close to Mrs P' (seg. 129), to feeling 'everything just, fell into place you know, so she approaches me now' (seg. 138).

She refers specifically to points marking the beginning of relationship, where 'this morning she gave me a *tiny* wave', noting 'she's identifying with me in that massive group of thirty children' (seg. 30-31) and later stories of her role as she responds to Evie's writing interests, 'so I spent loads of time and that's when she started really, trying to talk to me (seg. 144).

Kate participates emotionally in Evie's 'difficulties' ('something just dies a little bit inside', '*oh* thank goodness [whispering]') and successes ('*massive* step', 'I could have cried with joy', 'I feel a lot calmer now'). *Personal* connection seems key:

And I think it's nice that she's started to look to me as well, erm because before it was very much, you know kinda cuddling behind Mrs P, like hiding behind her (1) whereas now she's really into asking me, like 'no, you're the one that's going to tell me what to do actually' (seg. 301)

Thus, Kate's role seems rooted in connection with Evie, relational in nature (Gergen, 2009). Positioning herself as connected – carer, befriender – suggests a preferred construct of her role and preferred 'us', perhaps a possible world Kate is beginning to realise (Bruner, 1986).

### *Connections and context*

Throughout, Kate emphasises connections with Evie, her family, colleagues, nursery and class. Her stories value professional connections, Evie's friendships and communication with parents, describing relationship with Cindy as 'really open both ways' and mutually supportive (seg. 243).

She locates Cindy in the context of other parents and Evie in the context of family/peers, with stories of class activities – diary-sharing 'that wasn't

different for Evie, that was just how they asked things' (seg. 76) and class routines that haven't changed for Evie 'obviously for the benefit of other children I've got in the class' (seg. 94). I interpret this as Kate's normalising of transition for Evie, locating within a social context, suggesting an understanding of experience as socially constructed through unique, negotiated relationships (Gergen, 2009).

However, whilst communication with Cindy and Mrs P 'has just been amazing' 'fantastic' (seg. 393) nursery communication has been less so. From a nursery visit that was part of a positive July story, she positions herself less positively, devoting space to this in a story I title *Frustration at nursery relationships but seeing Evie as she is* (seg. 318). Finding visits difficult to arrange and accessing files/information 'just really frustrating [sighing] (seg. 333)', in future her role would be more proactive (seg. 364).

However, this enables her to see Evie as she is, rather than on paper, leading to a story I interpret as a climax around connectedness, *Transition as home-school partnership and 'nothing like I expected'*:

It's been a total two-way thing with us, with home and with school  
You can see mum's doing a lot at home to make her settled and we're doing a lot here and there's all those home-school links and relationships between us and mum  
Carol: Yeah  
Kate: I think it's been difficult from the side of previous settings  
Carol: Mm  
Kate: But then everything we've done here I've just, enjoyed seeing her **flourish** in the classroom, it just makes me so happy (seg. 372-377)

Thus, inter-connectedness, information flow and context are highlighted for Kate (Janus et al., 2007; Russell, 2003), perhaps also a preferred 'us' as supporting transition.

### ***Learning together***

- *Understanding Evie and responding flexibly*
- *Celebrating breakthrough*

### *Understanding, responding and celebrating*

Echoing July, Kate's initial 'reading' of Evie seems to be of impairment (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012) describing first-week concerns, where 'if **this** is what she's going to be like in school I need to put **a lot** in place' (seg. 18) and 'she still just wasn't, wasn't answering me' (seg. 36). However, her reading does not appear static or defined by label, emerging instead as adaptable and dynamic. She responds flexibly, deferring baseline assessments and individual planning until she feels Evie has settled (seg.20). Concern subsides and she tells stories of responding flexibly throughout her narrative, seeing Evie's skills in context and celebrating success. The theme is perhaps best illustrated through a turning point story, *Breakthroughs this week*: 'I could've just cried with joy', where Kate relates:

And this week, so even yesterday in phonics I could've just cried with joy [laughs]  
Carol: [Laughs]  
Kate: Cos I gave her the opportunity to say something in phonics and she **did**  
We were identifying the sounds and I said 'Evie would you like to share a sound?' and she told me three sounds (1)  
So she said 's' 'a' 't,' 'cos we had them all lined out  
Carol: [Yeah yeah  
Kate: She said 's' 'a' 't,' and I was like [Gasp, expression], you know, didn't wanna make a big deal out of it but I was like 'well done' [exuberant tone, laughing] (seg. 44-50)

Reflecting on successes supports her to plan flexibly, not rigidly, but in an on-going manner, seeming to reveal a different Evie:

And now, already this week I'm thinking of next week, 'cos she showed me so much this week and I'm thinking okay maybe we could get a little bit more next week (seg. 71)

There is the suggestion perhaps that learning is facilitated within Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development - space where Evie demonstrates what she *can* do with mediation. A sense of learning together emerges as Kate and Evie negotiate experiences/successes together, such as the opportunity

to share her home-school diary, where Evie comes ‘across the whole carpet’ to the front of class, nodding and shaking her head in answer to questions:

So just, that was such a massive step, it was just huge, so I was really happy (seg. 78)

Further, she responds flexibly to Evie’s changing lunchtime needs, positioning herself as mediator and carer (seg. 196-8), and reflects flexibly on the future, considering pictures to support lunch routines (seg. 203, 207) and more visits (seg. 263).

However, when I ask about the adaptability she described in July, she describes a changed role on starting school, which is not purely about adaptability, but about ‘strict routine’ (seg. 281), a facilitating role:

So you are adaptable to what their *needs* are and how you do things, but now you’ve done all the adaptability and it’s like, you know right this is what we’re going to do [laughs], like the facilitator of the day (seg. 283)

Thus, Kate narrates herself as responsive towards Evie’s needs and interests, but also as ‘facilitator of the day’, again the sense of mediator of leaning (Vygotsky, 1978). There is a sense of on-going participation in Evie’s achievements, learning together, offering insight into how Kate sees her role in transition.

### ***Empowering and including***

- *Emotional well-being*
- *Giving opportunities*
- *Sharing voice*

### *Emotional well-being*

Kate continues to devote space to emotional well-being, telling an overarching story prioritising feelings, safety and inclusion (seg. 88; 134; 155) and her role in supporting this:

Yeah, 'cos I think those home visits, going back to there, you're already thinking about that erm, you know well-being and involvement, making sure you've got the happiest transition you can (seg. 172)

Kate's positive positioning towards social-emotional skills continues as she describes her sociable, nurturing lunchtime role ('just (1) mothering [laughs] mothering them' (seg. 216)), positioning herself as carer, mother figure.

Further emphasised as school priority through the choice of baseline assessment tool, Kate considers if this changed her approach, explaining:

No, it's just that's **why** we chose that one, because the emphasis is put on that, so I just liked the fact that the priority, they won't even let you access baseline before the children are happy and settled and involved  
I just think that's best practice  
Carol: Mm  
Kate: That's just core early years isn't it? (seg. 177-181)

Thus, from a systemic perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; 99) Kate's narrative suggests local and national early years pedagogical influences, towards which she positions herself positively. Interestingly, notions of top-down pressures deriving from outcomes-based pedagogy (Wood, 2004) are not evident. Instead, emphasis is on social-emotional readiness, perhaps also linked with the ethos of this school.

### *Giving opportunities*

Kate describes an empowering role, seeking to give opportunities. She positions herself as inclusive teacher, not wishing Evie to feel uncomfortable, but nonetheless mediating opportunity (Vygotsky, 1978):

Yeah, so I think I always want to try and push, not push her but give her the opportunity, like not take that opportunity away from her but then always have the back-up in case  
Carol: Mm  
Kate: Just so she doesn't feel that I can't do that, you know there is another way so it doesn't have that feeling of 'oh I haven't joined in there'  
Carol: Mmm  
Kate: I **never** want to make her feel that way, so (seg. 65-69)

There is a sense of giving opportunities for Evie to surprise, echoing aspects of Cindy's story and the 'what I *can* do' performance of Evie's stories. Her narrative seems less about noticing difference and more about enabling, where context empowers, normalises (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012).

### *Sharing voice*

The power of sharing voice is emphasised, through methods that empower, normalise and include, like Evie's participation in journal questions:

So she was picking someone that had their hand up, they were asking sort of a yes or no question which, that wasn't different for Evie that was just how they asked things, and she was shaking her head or nodding her head to answer them (seg. 77)

Similarly, Kate reflects on seeing Evie share with me through her 'tour:'

It was really interesting seeing you with Evie actually.  
Just the way that, 'cos she was so shy with us for such a long time  
Carol: Yeah  
Kate: And it's only maybe now, this last week that she's really starting to be getting more involved and  
Carol: Mm  
Kate: it was really nice seeing that interaction with you as well, just how calm and relaxed  
Carol: I know, and that was lovely for me as well because, I thought, obviously she's seen me in nursery, and she's seen me at home, but you know just, a long time ago  
Kate: Mm  
Carol: And erm, I just kinda, she was confident to show me round and that was so nice  
Kate: Yeah, and even saying things verbally as well  
Carol: Yeah  
Kate: Oh it was fantastic, really (seg. 2-13)

What strikes me is the power of sharing Evie's voice and also the relational nature of the research experience, whereby we construct a shared understanding and my own feelings of pleasure as well as Kate's are evident.

Additionally, Kate values the opportunity to share voice through the research, commenting on the opportunity to verbalise practice:

Obviously you reflect on your practice constantly, but then to have that professional dialogue, it really does make you so much more reflective (seg.429)

Kate's reflections perhaps suggests that having space to share with others, as well as participating in the sharing of others' voice may be supportive to processes around transition.

#### **5.4.3 Kate's story: A summary and further critical reflection**

From getting to know Evie and looking flexibly ahead in July, Kate moves to a story of finding 'us' and positive change - a performance that emphasises current breakthrough and progress. Kate's is a story that has become personal on transition, her feelings closely associated with Evie.

An on-going, developing story, there is a sense of 'relational flow', a story still Becoming (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012). It is also a reflective story, comparing, re-telling and re-considering allow Kate to make sense of change, in turn supporting her construction of the future and suggesting the importance of talk in making sense of on-going experience.

Relationships are key. Kate's is a story of beginning relationships, readiness and well-being that moves, through a sense of togetherness and 'us', to a story about building relationships, learning together and empowering.

Kate's role seems rooted in connection with Evie, relational in nature (Gergen, 2009). Similarly, inter-connectedness and communication across systems is highlighted (Rous et al., 2010; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Kate locates Evie within social context, which I interpret as normalising transition for Evie.

Positioning herself positively as connected to others –befriender, facilitator, carer – suggests a preferred construct of her role and preferred 'us', a possible world Kate is beginning to realise (Bruner, 1986). Her less positive position towards nursery-school relationship perhaps suggests the idea of a preferred 'us' that is partially but not fully realised.

It is a story of learning together (Vygotsky, 1978) through celebrating success, understanding and responding flexibly. Her story is also of a changing role – 'facilitator of the day', providing strict routine, an aspect of school transition observed by children (Dockett, 2005).

Empowering and including, there is the notion of co-action emerging (Gergen, 2009). Evie's emotional well-being and inclusion remain important during transition, seeing her role as supporting social-emotional skills as 'good early years practice', suggesting the systemic influence of national early years pedagogy (DfE, 2011; 2012a; Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Top-down pressures deriving from outcomes-based pedagogy (Wood, 2004) are not evident, perhaps linked with the ethos of this school. Instead, she positions herself positively towards discourses around socio-emotional readiness and well-being (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; High, 2008), rather than academic readiness (Kagan, 2003) and also child-ready school (Broström, 2002), bi-

directional in nature and responding to needs in context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Positioning herself as carer, mother figure, inclusive teacher, Kate's story is less about noticing difference or impairment and more about empowering, where context empowers, enables, normalises (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012).

Lastly, there is the power of sharing voice through observing Evie's interactions and telling her own story through the research.

## **6 Further Discussion**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This inquiry has explored transition-to-school narratives of a child described as having additional needs and the adults around her, answering the following research questions:

1. Making sense of transition to school: What are the narratives of a child described as having additional needs, her parent and teacher?
2. What can we learn from considering these narratives in relation to each other?
3. What do these narratives have to say about topics and discourses in the literature?

In the previous chapter I answered these questions, and specifically, questions 1 and 3, by presenting multi-layered interpretations and discussion around each narrator's transition story, relating to research, topics and discourses within the literature. In so doing, and not claiming to have discovered 'truths' around transition, I encourage the reader to construct their own understandings, having presented thorough narratives supported by full transcripts (Appendices WT1-8).

In presenting each co-constructed narrative separately I seek to value each story, rather than reduce narratives to a set of collective themes. By placing them side by side, I present a broader understanding around a unique transition – three stories, not in isolation, but in relation to each other.

In this chapter I explore how these narratives, when viewed together, might give further understanding of transition in a broader sense, suggesting an overarching interpretation across stories in answer to research question 2. Aspects arising from individual narratives are discussed further in relation to literature and also in relation to each other, considering how this might inform educational and child psychology theory and practice.

### **6.2 Transition in a broader sense: Stories in relation**

Seeking a holistic perspective across stories, an overarching impression emerges to me which I summarise as:

- Sharing voice, becoming 'us' and finding 'me'

For each narrator, transition means different things, but for each I also interpret shared meaning: there is the power of sharing voice, emerging sense of 'us' and from this, a changing sense of 'me'.

Rather than conducting further comparative analysis, my intention here is draw together aspects of the three interpreted stories and discuss further in relation to research and theory.

What can I draw from considering these stories in relation to each other (RQ2) and how might they inform practice?

### **6.2.1 Sharing voice**

For all narrators what emerges strongly is the impact of sharing voice and this could be particularly key given the context of this transition; that is Evie's communication 'needs', suggesting the importance of hearing and being heard. Multiple stories emerge and there is something about sharing these stories with others that is powerful and that seems to support understanding and sense-making around transition. This is consistent with research by Russell (2003) who notes that the parents she interviewed valued the opportunity to reflect. As suggested in narrative therapeutic approaches (Dickson, 2000; White & Epsom, 1990), there is power in sharing preferred self and imagining possible worlds (Bruner, 1986), also perhaps the suggestion that sharing voice and narrative approaches promote emotional well-being.

#### ***Hearing and sharing voice***

The research seeks to elicit marginalised voices and indeed different and unique voices emerge through each story. Hearing and sharing these voices seems powerful in two ways. The first is from my perspective of hearing and sharing the narratives through this thesis - unique stories, offering insight and which I felt privileged to hear - engaging me emotionally and causing me to reflect on transition. The second is the nature and value given to sharing story through the narrative space.

Referred to positively by Kate and Cindy, is the power of communicating how they feel and of reflecting through narratives. This also strikes me through Evie's participation and the *how* of her narratives; hearing and being heard.

The socially constructed nature of this transition appears key, where understanding is constructed dynamically through relationship (Gergen, 2009), where sharing voice in turn empowers others and where sharing through the narrative space supports on-going sense-making – constructing, re-constructing, making sense of transition dynamically – as narrators come back to topics, revisit and reflect during first and second interviews.

As discussed within individual interpretations, especially the *how* of stories, co-construction appears to empower voice and equality (BPS, 2009; Ranciere, 1999). There is a real sense of hearing each narrator's voice and my part in facilitating this through dialogue, resources and negotiated positioning.

Especially powerful is the sharing of Evie's voice in the presence of others. For example, in Evie's July home narrative Cindy is encouraged by Evie's increasing participation and contribution of views and this influences her own transition story. Similarly, Kate is encouraged by watching Evie's positive interaction with me during her September 'tour'. This influences Kate and Cindy's sense-making around transition and we might also wonder how this in turn influenced Evie's transition. Furthermore, this resonated strongly with me. Particularly striking in terms of my own practice was the empowering of Evie and her voice through the research – hearing *her* views on transition – which in turn has influenced my professional practice.

Adding to the body of research, this inquiry emphasises the power of sharing and facilitating voice during transition, prioritising child and family (DfE, 2014a; HMSO, 2014) – consistent with social justice agendas, EPS professional practice priorities and narrative approaches seeking to empower (Dickson, 2000; Mitchell & Sloper, 2011; Moore, 2005; Russell, 2003; Squire, 2013).

### **6.2.2 Becoming 'us'**

Across all three interpreted stories, there is a sense of becoming 'us' in terms of relationship, environment and pedagogy. I deliberately use the word 'becoming' to capture the on-going nature of stories – relationships that develop and change dynamically through transition. Cindy overcomes adversity to find acceptance and partnership with others; Evie moves from familiar to new relationships with others and her environment, and Kate moves from a distanced story to a personal story of finding 'us' in terms of relationship with Evie. I consider relationships, acceptance and continuity across systems.

#### ***Relationships***

Relationship emerges as a key theme for each narrator – the focus of numerous smaller stories, turning points and overarching narratives. This is particularly apparent within Kate and Cindy's stories, where turning points are around relationship breakthrough. For each, this empowers and supports, making sense of 'successful transition' in terms of relationship. From mixed positioning towards others where Cindy feels 'othered', different, she moves to the climax of her transition story – her support group story – leading her to feel accepted and empowered in relationships with Evie, school and her own role. For Kate, social and emotional skills are prioritised within her practice (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007). Additionally, feeling initially unconnected with Evie, breakthrough is about connecting with her and this empowers her role. For Evie, relationships are important, changing from mixed feelings to positive feelings about peers, group identity and family. From all, there emerges partnership, 'us'.

Within all narratives there is the sense of family transition and wider relationships (Dockett et al., 2012; Griebel & Niesel, 2009), with Kate and Cindy constantly describing events in the context of family, other parents or class, and Evie enjoying family and developing new relationships.

There is also some dissatisfaction with professionals. For Cindy, accessing local authority SALT services is stressful (Dockett et al., 2012; Janus et al., 2007; Read, 2000; Russell, 2003). For Kate, lack of nursery relationship is

frustrating, suggesting discontinuity across settings (Fabian & Dunlop, 2007; LoCasale-Crouch, 2008; Rous et al., 2010).

Relationship is illustrated well through each narrator's first-day stories. For example, on the first day Evie's stories are about new relationship (Mrs P) and family connections (journal drawings), Kate's focus is on developing relationship and Cindy tells of breakthrough and letting go.

What occurs to me as I reflect on this is the notion of inter-connectedness. Drawing on Gergen's idea of co-action and relational flow (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012), I consider whether Cindy could have experienced breakthrough and letting go, had Kate and Evie's responses not facilitated this. I also consider that Evie's story of new relationship and family, alongside Kate's focus on developing relationship, do not occur in isolation. Thus, Gergen's relational perspective seems helpful in making sense of transition – relationship that can empower or disempower.

Kate summarises this well when she notes:

you can see that [Evie's] really pushing to do things and, you know it's been a total two way thing with us with home and with school  
You can see that mum's doing a lot at home to make her settled and we're doing a lot here and there's all those home-school links and relationships between us and mum (seg. 373)

### **Acceptance**

Acceptance, rather than difference, emerges across narratives. Evie performs positive narratives, positioning herself in terms of what she can, rather than cannot, do. Similarly, Cindy's stories move from feeling different, positioned, 'othered'. Re-storying difference as breakthrough, she values feeling understood, 'normal', 'like all the other parents.' Kate's story is about inclusion and wellbeing, understanding and responding flexibly, offering routine. Again, this is illustrated through turning points in narrators' stories and first days, where Evie shows what she *can* do, her writing skills, and Cindy 'could have cried for joy', feeling like all the other parents as Evie

enters school happily. In contrast, Kate's first day is about responding to Evie and giving feedback to Cindy, moving from Evie's *needs* (deficit) to skills and empowering relationships.

For the parent and child in this study there is a strong sense of not wanting to be seen as different, but to be seen in a positive light. For the parent, being seen as different, 'other' was disabling and distressing, suggesting that the *nature* of relationships, particularly enabling relationships, may be key at times of transition and change.

Telling Evie's and Cindy's stories through the lens of a social model (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003; Mitchell & Sloper, 2011) could explain feelings of being 'differented', disabled by others, but empowered or enabled by environment (Kate's flexible, mediating approach, Vygotsky, 1978).

This could present a dilemma for the EP, balancing a practice focused on supporting needs and change – recognising the enabling impact of lenses that normalise and the disabling impact of lenses that read impairment or need (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003); thus, the potentially disabling impact of needs-based policy guiding EP practice (DfE, 2014a; Russell, 2003).

### ***Connecting across systems***

Stories also describe continuity across systems (Broström, 2002; Rous et al., 2010) – from nursery to school – and we could suggest that this also supports transition to new relationship, the narrative of becoming 'us'. Within narrators' stories, connecting across systems is seen through visits, meetings and communication, featuring mainly in July stories and leading to familiarity in September. Narrators' stories throw light on personal experiences of these processes, which are suggested to lack evaluation in the literature (Rous et al., 2010).

For Cindy and Kate the home visit is presented less positively than school visits, consistent with the limited home-visit research found (Greenfield, 2011). For Kate, the school visit is particularly positive, recurring throughout July and September narratives. Evie does not tell of her nursery or home visit

– for her continuity is about enjoying familiar activities during the school visit and then school, moving from known to unknown, familiar to possible (Bruner, 1986).

For Cindy, nursery preparation and past experience emerge as key aspects of continuity. Alongside prior experience with her son, having transitioned to nursery and experienced a nursery setting seems to have supported her move to the new ‘us’ of school. UK early years pedagogy is consistent with this, where continuity and relationship are key (DfE, 2012a) and continuity is stressed in discourse (DfE, 2014b; 2011). Quality early years provision is seen as preparation for school, a transition in itself, bridging across systems to support new relationships (Brooks-Gunn, 2003; Sylva, 2004; Tickell, 2011).

### **Finding ‘me’**

Also emerging strongly across narratives is a sense of ‘me’, a new or changed sense of ‘self’. I discuss this deliberately following the sense of ‘us’ considered previously, since I suggest that emerging from becoming ‘us’ is an empowerment from which narrators seem to gain agency, role and purpose. In this I consider ‘self’ as in some way defined socially by relationship – constructed, facilitated, understood in context and in relation to others (Gergen 2009). Again this is different for each narrator.

For Evie the sense of ‘me’ emerges through stories about what she *can* do – activities and skills where she positions herself as learner and writer, alongside sharing mixed feelings, which I interpreted as embracing a new self. Her narrative is a positive story about skills and activities at school, becoming more positive about social aspects. I interpreted this as a story of a preferred self (Bruner, 1986; Dickson, 2012) as ready for school (High, 2008; Kagan, 2003), echoed in ‘school ready’ stories told by Cindy and Kate.

What I find interesting in terms of readiness discourses, is the relational nature suggested through seeing narrators’ stories side by side. For example, whilst there emerged a ‘within-child’ notion of readiness, there was also a story of school adapting to Evie (Broström, 2002), with an emphasis on PSED readiness and no mention of Top-down school pressures around performance and measure (Wood, 2004).

Seeing Evie in context – in relation to her environment, her teacher’s story – I wondered to what extent Evie’s sense of self, readiness or agency, is constructed through relationship and what would this have looked like given a different context?

Regarding school readiness, what might be the influence of an adaptable, enabling school context and nursery preparation? Might we not suggest that the particular relation of aspects of this transition story have empowered and facilitated the ‘Evie’ emerging through the stories told? (Gergen, 2009)

Preferred self (Bruner, 1986) and changing role during transition also emerged through Cindy’s story of new role – stay-at-home mum, gardener and school partner – consistent with research by Dockett et al. (2012), a changing role for parent as well as child. Again, I consider to what extent is Cindy’s new ‘me’ facilitated through supportive relationships, friendships and school partnerships. There is a sense of co-action and proactive partnership (Gergen 2009) around agency and empowered self.

For Kate similarly, a sense of ‘me’ emerged through her emotionally invested September story where she positions herself as facilitator or mother figure, providing responsive learning opportunities, routine and well-being priorities.

Three things strike me: the first is a sense of unique transition in that this group of stories can be seen as a unique combination of relational stories that give a broad understanding of a particular transition. The second is the sense of changing self, alongside opportunities that enable individuals to make sense of this change. Opportunities to consider future selves through a narrative space could be particularly supportive at transition times for parent child and teacher. The third is around readiness discourses and the contribution of this research, suggesting the notion of readiness in context, in relation (Dockett et al., 2009; 2012; 2013).

### **6.3 Learning and this research**

Although not the aim of this research, what also seems to emerge is a sense that learning has occurred. It is not my intention to claim that learning has arisen solely or directly through transition from Nursery to Reception Class, being mindful of the systemic and relational nature of experience

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Gergen, 2009) and that narrative approaches adopted may also support on-going sense-making, understanding, re-understanding and therefore learning. Rather, the suggestion is that through interpretation of the narratives elicited, there is a sense that change has occurred – learning for this group of narrators and also for each individual.

Holistically, it strikes me that social and emotional learning has occurred. An understanding emerges around what it means to become ‘us’ in this situation; a learning of new ways of being in relation to others (Gergen, 2009). There is also a sense of learning the power of sharing voice and being changed through this, a particularly powerful aspect of learning for myself.

For Evie, what strikes me is the sense of emotional learning across this transition. She comes to new understandings about her feelings (for example, learning to embrace mixed feelings about school). She learns who she is and what she likes in this new situation, communicating a changed and perhaps preferred sense of self (identifying as a learner and writer within her new class). From familiar experiences, she embraces new activities and new relationships. She also becomes empowered to share her views (including mixed feelings) and to lead interaction through tours, photographs, pictures and *Talking Mats*<sup>™</sup> – new ways of being in relation to others.

Cindy learns to feel accepted, able to share and rely on others. She seems to learn the fluid nature of Becoming, of relational flow (Gergen, 2009; Shotter, 2012), and that the future’s ‘gonna be what *that’s* gonna be’ (WT6, seg. 439). This leads her to discover a new sense of self, learning to ‘get [herself] in a positive place’ (WT6, seg. 46) which in turn supports and changes her relationships with others as she embraces an agentic and empowering role.

Cindy develops an understanding that her role can be different; that difference can be reframed and celebrated, seeming to see her daughter and herself through a new lens. She learns the power of sharing voice, personally and collaboratively – the value of a narrative space to construct, reconstruct and reflect, and also, the power of sharing her daughter’s communication with me, learning that Evie can interact positively with the wider world.

Learning for Kate seems rooted in relationship and how to support the person ‘behind the paper’. At the core of her narratives is a sense of learning about

relationship with Evie – becoming ‘us’ and learning to make connection – that in turn, empowers her in her role as teacher. Through on-going reflection, considering and re-considering, she learns Evie’s skills and strengths – what Evie *can* do, not deficits. She comes to understand what provision looks like in context, a sense of *this* transition, *this* provision. Again, there is the power of sharing voice, developing an understanding of her role and relationships through the narrative space (for example, constructing her role as mother figure and facilitator, alongside the importance of links with nursery). There is also the power of sharing Evie’s voice with me, seeing Evie in a new light during her tour interaction – learning as socially constructed.

As for myself, I have developed a deeper understanding about what transition means for this group of people within this specific context. Furthermore, engaging in this research has impacted considerably upon me, leading to personal learning that I feel has influenced my practice, as I summarise below.

Whilst not intending to generalise findings, interpretations arising from the research have informed my practice when supporting transition in schools and with groups of individuals. I describe this further when considering implications arising from the research (section 6.4).

Also, through engaging with the methodological approaches employed, I have learnt skills and gained experiences that have resonated strongly with me, informing my practice more generally in terms of hearing, facilitating, empowering and interpreting voice. For example, using a narrative approach, I have learnt the value of story – of giving narrative space and of listening to individuals’ narratives in the way they choose to tell them. Through the specific narrative methodology employed (NOI) I have learnt to listen to the *what* and *how* of stories, including how individuals position themselves, whilst also being mindful of holistic and categorical content. I have sought to embrace these ways of listening to and interpreting story within my practice, finding that they facilitate a depth of voice that I value.

Further, there has been self-reflection, consideration of the lenses by which one can read disability (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012) and insight into perspectives that disable or alternatively empower others. I am struck by a

recognition that in choosing to focus on a child described as having additional needs within this research, to some extent I position them as different, 'other' or in need of research, a point to which I return in section 6.4.

Lastly, I have been struck by the power of sharing voice. I have learnt ways of addressing power differentials and facilitating more equal relationships through approaches that facilitate communication and empower, especially during child interviews. The power of telling and re-telling through co-constructed narratives has become apparent to me. I have learnt the impact of hearing and being heard, of sharing a preferred self, and perhaps most powerfully, of facilitating Evie's voice in the presence of others.

## **6.4 Implications**

In presenting rich, multi-layered transition stories, it has not been my intention to reduce these to a set of recommendations. My hope is that the research has been meaningful for the individuals and school involved, facilitating specific, localised understandings around this transition through the sharing of stories – a starting point for further thinking and sharing, from which implications specific to this transition may inform individual meaning-making, school transition practices and future transition (Entwisle & Alexander, 1998; Margetts, 2003a).

Here, I suggest possible overarching implications around sharing voice, becoming 'us' and finding 'me', intended as a basis for discussion. As Erickson (1986) notes, qualitative research may suggest localised implications. Additionally, in empowering marginalised voices – alternative narratives to dominant discourses around school transition (Emerson & Frosh, 2009) – aspects for further consideration are highlighted, relating to individuals, school, educational psychology practice and wider community. Thus, I suggest consideration of the following implications arising from stories of sharing voice, becoming 'us' and finding 'me':

### *Sharing voice*

The power of sharing voice emerges strongly through this inquiry, suggesting a narrative space – opportunities for hearing and sharing, co-constructing

and facilitating, reflecting and meaning-making – may support transition to school:

- At individual level, a narrative space within which parent, child or teacher may engage in personal sense-making, reflection and consideration of possible futures could be supportive during transition. The benefit of sharing with others is suggested and individuals may like to use resources, such as journals, ‘tours’, pictures and/or *Talking Mats*
- Sharing of narratives, considered not in isolation, but in relation, may help to give a more in-depth, shared understanding of localised transition. Individuals may like to take opportunities to share their experiences and schools may consider how they could incorporate opportunities for hearing and sharing into current transition practices
- It will be important for individuals to recognise the value of *their* voice. Perhaps this might be communicated through transition meetings with children, parents and teachers. Additionally, this could form an important aspect of school ethos and policy documents, emphasised within professional practice at school and service-level
- Consideration of how to ‘use’ voice, avoiding tokenism, informing localised transition planning
- At school and service level, eliciting marginalised voices is highlighted. Considering *how* to facilitate voice during transition is key and methods that address power issues, such as narrative inquiry are suggested. The benefit is suggested of resources that seek to embrace equal communication (Ranciere, 1999), especially relating to child voice, including journals, ‘tours’ (Clark & Moss, 2001), pictures and *Talking Mat* resources (Murphy, 1989).
- From a professional perspective, dialogue within a narrative space may give opportunities for reflection and sense-making around transition, facilitating telling, re-telling, re-understanding and re-considering possible selves (Bruner, 1986; Dickson, 2012). This could be a helpful approach in school and educational psychology practice.

- *How* we listen is important – listening not only to the what, but the *how* of stories we hear, as suggested by the methodology employed in this inquiry (Hiles & Čermák, 2008). Additionally, how do we read stories, through which lens? (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003).
- This inquiry suggests the powerful nature of sharing voice, including opportunities for parent and teacher to observe Evie interact with the TEP. This could suggest an approach within professional practice.

### *Becoming 'us' and finding 'me'*

Relationship, acceptance and continuity across systems seem key to the sense of 'us' emerging across stories. In this context a new or changed 'self' seems to emerge for individuals in this inquiry; that is within the context of relationship (Dockett et al., 2012; Gergen, 2009). Thus, developing relationship seems key to supporting transition – relationship with others and in context, suggesting the following:

- Individuals may like to actively seek out relationship. For the parent of a child described as having additional needs it may be particularly important to develop relationships that are accepting, inclusive and not 'othering' (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012). Opportunities to share voice may also help to develop relationships in school context.
- For the parent and child in this study it was important that relationships were enabling, clearly communicating a wish to be seen in a positive light. For the parent being seen as 'other' was disabling and distressing, suggesting the *nature* of relationships may be key at times of transition.
- Therefore, developing understanding around the disabling and enabling lenses by which we read disability may be important for individuals, schools, educational and healthcare services and policy at local and national level (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003). It will be important to recognise the disabling impact that some approaches may have; that 'indeed some psychological knowledges threaten to essentialise and pathologise difference within children and leave untouched wider questions of cultures and societies that fail to tolerate difference' (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012, p 64)

- With regard to policy, whilst recent government legislation around children 'with SEN and Disability' (DfE, 2014a) has moved towards identifying outcomes/aspirations and involving parents as partners, it is still very much associated with identifying needs and necessary provision. Thus, it may be helpful to consider the impact of this.
- Schools may consider how they support relationship, prioritising this during transition planning. Using assessment tools that prioritise social and emotional aspects of development.
- Transition as a family experience and partnership with parents suggest a focus on family is key during transition
- For the teacher in this study developing relationship with the child in context seemed to facilitate her role. Thus, from a teacher perspective considering the number and nature of visits/activities may support the development of this relationship on starting school
- The importance of continuity across systems, including high quality early years provision is suggested. This may support children and parents to move from familiarity to new experiences.
- Consideration should be given to supporting positive relationships with services, suggested to be stressful for parents of disabled children (Janus et al., 2007; Read, 2000; Russell, 2003)
- An interpretation of 'self' as constructed, facilitated, in context and in relation to others (Gergen 2009) suggests the need for schools to both value and facilitate skills; to understand readiness as being responsive to children, as well as within-child skills - readiness as a product of environment (Dockett et al., 2009; 2012; 2013)
- An understanding of role and agency that emerges through relationship and co-construction suggests co-action (Gergen, 2009) – the importance of negotiating relationships that facilitate agency and partnership between child, parent, teacher.
- Given the suggested change in role for child and parent, the benefit is suggested of a narrative space by which to negotiate or make sense of change, of possible selves.

Professionals may consider how to include aspects of sharing voice, relationship and self within transition planning. What might be the role of the educational psychologist in this?

### *Implications for EP Practice*

I hope this inquiry will encourage EPs and teaching professionals to reflect on sharing voice through narrative methods and within a social constructionist paradigm, considering how it may support professional practice as it has supported mine.

EPs may like to consider the implications highlighted above when working with families and schools during transition. Further, the methodological approaches employed here could be used within research and practice to explore meaning-making during transition, thus supporting children, and the adults around them, as they move from Nursery to Reception Class.

Whilst methods used here are tailored around the specific needs of this inquiry, there are nonetheless key principles that could be helpfully applied to EP practice, as follows.

**A narrative approach (NOI):** Consider the *what* and *how* of narratives, including narrative positioning, what stories have to say about self, society and discourses/topics during transition. Explore holistic interpretation as well as themes within. Facilitate interviews that privilege the narrator and support the telling, re-telling and co-constructing of narratives (see chapters 3 and 4).

**An empowering approach:** Address power imbalances and facilitate voice by seeking more equal relationships, considering ethical issues and adopting approaches that empower. Methods used here are tailored specifically around the individuals concerned, particularly resources used to facilitate voice for the young child. Thus, EPs should take care to research and adapt approaches in order to best facilitate voice for those with whom they are working. This will involve: considering needs/preferences, researching methods of eliciting voice and developing the competence/ skills required.

**A relational approach:** Consider transition for the child and adults around them – for this group of people. Consider what transition might mean for

individuals in relation to each other – what can we learn from considering voices side by side?

**An approach that shares voice:** Give opportunity for hearing and being heard, space to talk and opportunities for key adults to share EP interactions with children, recognising the power of sharing voice.

The inquiry also suggests ways of indirectly supporting schools to facilitate school transition for a child described as having additional needs, their parent and teacher, as follows:

- Supporting schools to elicit unique, localised stories around transition, and resources to facilitate this
- This could be incorporated into the school's home visit package, using resources like journals, photographs, pictures and *Talking Mat* resources to facilitate voice. This may be especially helpful as research suggests that home visits are not always evaluated positively (Greenfield, 2011).
- Developing narrative interview techniques could support the SENCO role – supporting professional dialogue and reflective practice in school (Brookfield, 1998)
- Developing understanding around the disabling and enabling lenses by which we read disability (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003), recognising the disabling impact some approaches may have
- Supporting relationship, acceptance and continuity across systems, alongside an interpretation of self that is constructed, facilitated, understood in context and relation to others (Gergen 2009)
- Delivering training around transition based on the above, using a narrative approach and resources to elicit voice (to be shared with participating nursery and school, also an opportunity for future development).

There are also implications around the EP role in the early years and what this may look like in practice. Given the importance of this early stage of learning for a young child and their family, my hope is that this inquiry will generate further reflection around personal and service-level practice.

## 6.5 Reflexivity and cautions of the research

Engaging in the research caused me to reflect on a number of aspects.

I consider that my early years training and parental experiences have necessarily had bearing on my interpretation, leading me to engage emotionally and personally with stories and reflect on the nature of the EP role in the early years. Thus, I recognise that I bring a particular interpretation to the co-constructed narratives.

A deepening awareness around the different lenses by which I may read disability has developed (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012) and I am aware that, whilst I seek to empower the voices of those in this inquiry, in choosing this research focus I position them as 'different' or 'other', in 'need' of research. I consider whether Cindy's positive performance could reflect her desire to be seen as 'normal', rather than different, by myself. Thus, I am mindful of the power of professionals and whilst seeking equal relationships within interviews, there is the reflection that the stories within this inquiry are as told to me in the role of psychologist, in this context and at this time.

I reflect on the power I see in sharing and facilitating voice, especially Evie's voice, and the impact it made on me and on adults around her. However, I am also aware of my on-going reflection around my role in this, considering the structure of activities within which I framed Evie's voice and whether there were alternative ways I may have given Evie further control.

At times I consider whether I asked too many questions or in co-constructing narratives have occasionally asked leading questions. For example, in Kate's interview I ask 'and were there positives of that meeting?' (seg. 49). I recognise this may change the way Kate constructs the nursery visit. In being transparent about this (Hiles & Čermák, 2008), I acknowledge my part in the co-constructed narratives.

Lastly, I reflect positively on the methodology, giving a holistic picture and multi-storied account of individual sense-making around transition. I feel the approach has enabled me to consider *how* stories were told and positioned alongside content. In prioritising not only the *what* but the *how* of each narrative, I have become more aware of this within my practice more generally, leading I feel to a fuller 'hearing' of voice.

### ***Cautions and limitations***

Being a small, qualitative inquiry, I embrace subjectivity and there has been no attempt to generalise findings. It is likely that the inquiry itself has influenced transition and the stories told. This is also acknowledged. However by developing understanding around a specific context, the research may resonate with some. Through sharing interpretations within the settings involved, the research may create shared, different or localised understandings around transition for those involved.

Using a narrative approach, described as a conceptual model rather than a rigorous framework, is suggested by some as a limitation or criticism of the approach (Squire, 2013). However, I found the sequential model of interpretive perspectives in NOI gave a degree of structure but also flexibility that was helpful in allowing me to be creative in my approaches to the child interview particularly.

Reflecting on the research, I consider several ways I may have conducted the research differently. For example, it is likely that conducting the home interview with Evie in the presence of Cindy may have influenced her responses. This was suggested at the beginning of the interview where Cindy talked for Evie and also at points when Cindy gave positive reinforcement to Evie's positive responses about school. However, it was important that Evie felt comfortable and secure during our interview and furthermore, the opportunity for Cindy to see Evie finding her voice and participating in the interview through the resources used was an incredibly powerful aspect of the research.

In hindsight, more time prior to interviews to get to know Evie better and for her to become more familiar with resources may have been helpful. Sharing them with school to use beforehand could have been a possibility.

In terms of analysis and feedback, whilst I presented transcripts and reflections back to narrators and gave opportunities for changes and feedback, facilitating this to the same extent with Evie was difficult. Whilst *Talking Mats*<sup>™</sup> and photographs were shared and Evie could make changes if wished, this could be further considered if research was conducted again.

Additionally, whilst I aimed to give narrators influence over their story by beginning with an open-ended invitation, use of journals and influence over questions they chose to answer, giving more participation in analysis may have given different interpretations (Howitt, 2010).

Lastly, a difficulty I experienced using this methodology was how to address both diversity and depth. Whilst it could have been interesting to consider a broader range of voices around Evie (EP, nursery teacher, SENCO), in seeking depth of inquiry I sacrificed some of the breadth. In so doing I highlight this as an area for further research.

## **6.6 Conclusion and future directions**

The research has addressed a gap in the literature by embracing personal and on-going sense-making around transition for voices that may be seen as marginalised by society and less evident within the literature. From a social constructionist perspective, embracing a relational understanding and adopting a narrative oriented inquiry, multi-storied narratives were presented, including the *how* as well as the *what* of their stories. The research has considered a broader understanding of transition to school – child, parent and teacher in relation.

Rich and nuanced multi-storied narratives have been discussed individually and in relation to each other, giving rise to stories that relate to sharing voice, becoming ‘us’ and finding ‘me’. There has also been discussion of topics within the literature, alongside discourses around disability and school readiness. Implications have been suggested and directions for further research are highlighted below:

- Further research using the approaches of this inquiry could be repeated. How would different individuals respond and in different contexts? What might emerge in situations where transition was not seen as positive?
- Expanding this research to consider multiple voices around the child for example the EP, nursery teacher, SENCO could explore a wider relational context

- Exploration of how transition is socially constructed between key individuals could elicit new understandings around this time of change
- Further consideration of the EP role in early years around transition
- Evaluation of strategies implemented in school following training around sharing voice and supporting transition using approaches in this inquiry

### **Final reflections**

As I conclude this thesis I reflect on my personal journey in which I have not only come to understand more about what transition means within this context, but also as a journey of discovery, of getting to know, and making sense of transition alongside narrators. Furthermore it has been a reflexive journey involving sense-making around the EP role and my personal practice. In presenting this inquiry I invite readers to view it as a story – my story of this research - one of many possible interpretations.

Goodley and Runswick-Cole (2012) talk of their hope that viewing ‘academic theorising’ and ‘expert discourse’ as:

nothing more than the telling of stories – some more plausible than others, some in need of rewriting – might encourage more reflexive analyses on the part of researchers and practitioners working with children and young people (Goodley & Runswick-Cole, 2012, p 64)

My hope is that this is an example of such; a story that promotes potential and indicates possibility rather than limits (Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2012).

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## 8 Appendices

### Appendix A: Abbreviations and glossary

- SEN:** Special educational needs
- EPS:** Educational psychology service
- EP:** Educational psychologist
- TEP:** Trainee educational psychologist
- SALT:** Speech and language therapy
- EYFS:** Early years foundation stage
- SENCO:** Special educational needs co-ordinator

**Early years:** A term describing stage of development from birth to 5 years

#### **Talking Mats™ (TM):**

Designed by specialist speech and language therapist, Joan Murphy (1998). A resource aiming to facilitate communication through picture symbols, designed for a range of abilities and ages, used widely within speech and language, health and educational practice.

Evie chose from topics represented visually as icons on the left side of the IPAD and used the touch screen to select and then position them on screen beneath 'like', 'not sure', 'dislike' headers. Talking Mats early years symbols were used ('my body and skills', 'what I do and my support')

#### **Verbal dyspraxia:**

'Speech may be immature or unintelligible in early years. Language may be impaired or late to develop' ([dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk](http://dyspraxiafoundation.org.uk))

According to the Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT, 2009, p 4), 'Developmental verbal dyspraxia (DVD) is a term used to distinguish those children with a severe speech disorder resulting from an underlying impairment of motor planning who have a persistent phonological impairment, characterised by inconsistency which is frequently resistant to traditional therapy approaches ... There is an impairment or immaturity in organisation of movement related to motor planning. DVD can manifest itself in early infancy with difficulty feeding, sucking, chewing followed by delay in expressive language, difficulty producing speech, reduced intelligibility of speech, and inconsistent production of sounds in familiar words'. (See also [www.rcslt.org](http://www.rcslt.org))

## Appendix B: Reflections on facilitating child's voice

Literature highlights a range of methods to facilitate child voice, some of which depend heavily on verbal communication skills. Others use non-verbal activities, sometimes with supplementary talk. For example, the use of visual support symbols (Murphy, 1998) and kinaesthetic activities (such as drawing, playing and sensory activities) (Beaver, 2011) are suggested to address linguistic barriers. I would draw upon some of these ideas to support the child interview.

I considered that whilst the use of a journal would be equally supportive for the child interview as for the adult interview, it was clear that adaptations and modifications would need to be made.

In order to support this I looked to practices within the early years foundation stage (EYFS) (DfE, 2012) where an 'EYFS profile' is commonly used; that is a journal to record the child's learning journey/ progress through photographs, drawings, emergent writing, adult observations and annotations. In a similar way I envisaged that the child could use a journal, with support from their parent, to record their on-going experiences of preparing for and then starting school in ways of their own choice. This would then be shared during the child interview.

This approach is also supported by methods used within educational psychology practice as a means of eliciting the views and experiences of children, involving drawing and supplementary talk annotated by an adult (e.g. *Ideal Self* (Moran, 2001), *Kinetic Family Drawing* (Beaver, 2011), *Feelings Maps*, or *Portrait Gallery* (Beaver, 2011)). Alongside this, is research using photo diaries (Riessman, 2008) and child photographs (Clark and Moss, 2001); ideas I used within the child interview more generally and also, to support the child journal.

- The research used an adapted journal to support the child interview

The adapted journal would support the child to share their experiences more fully and in ways preferred by them during the interview, such as drawing, craft pictures, photographs, and parent scribing, facilitating a child-led opportunity, rather than a series of questions and responses.

A limitation of this method could be suggested with regard to the parent role within this; that is, acknowledging their part and potential influence within the narrative presented through the journal. This could similarly be considered in relation to parent presence during the interview, or indeed to the particular context within which any interview is conducted. It relates to on-going considerations within this inquiry as to whose voice might be regarded as the 'subject' of narratives that are regarded as socially constructed.

In addressing this, the research acknowledges co-construction and positioning within the child's narrative, whilst also aiming to prioritise or privilege the voice of the child (White & Epston, 1990, p 83). I aimed to do this by explaining the facilitating role of the parent clearly to them when introducing the journal and also, by drawing on strategies discussed earlier (Sheard, 2013), such as asking 'how did you feel'/'how else?'

Further approaches to facilitating child's voice within this research are suggested in *The Mosaic Approach* (Clark & Moss, 2001), which uses classroom 'tours', photography, observations and discussions with staff to support research with young children and young people with additional needs. This approach is cited in a wide range of research.

As part of this approach the child is able to communicate their likes/dislikes by taking the researcher on a 'tour' of the classroom and also taking their own photographs. As such, I considered that this would be a helpful way of facilitating communication through actively *showing* me their classroom likes/dislikes and taking photographs as a way of telling me this.

This would be comparable to the participant-led beginning of the adult interview and could allow the child to say: what they liked in nursery and then reception, who or what supported them and what was different. It also suggested a flexible approach that could be responsive to the wishes and particular context of the child.

- Tours of the classroom and photographs were used to facilitate

Whilst the activities above would help to facilitate voice within the research, I considered that there could be little additional talk alongside these and in order to elicit a richer narrative, I considered additional ways to address this.

For example, how would the child tell me further detail about: how they felt, what they were looking forward to, or about particular skills and support during this time? Additionally, how could I support their understanding of my questions?

As such, my experience of working with children who find difficulty communicating verbally led me to consider the use of visual resources or prompts as a primary support during the child interviews.

For example, within the EYFS classroom I had seen the benefit of using pictures alongside text within the environment to augment and support children's understanding. Similarly, I had used pictorial and multi-sensory approaches, such as Jolly Phonics™, which uses pictures and actions to support the learning of letter sounds.

Furthermore, I had made and used visual resources as an early years teacher to support children to tell me how they were feeling (eg smiley/sad face cards and pictures representing different emotions) or pictures/photographs of different activities within the classroom, whereby children could select a picture card in order to describe what they liked or how they felt.

- Photographs, pictures of activities and emotion cards would further support the child interview

Lastly, and in addition to drawing upon practice-based evidence relating to the use of visual prompts, I was also familiar with a variety of communication aids within my practice which have a strong evidence-base to support their use, such as Makaton, PECS and *Talking Mats*™ (Murphy, 1998).

Being aware that my participant did not currently use additional communication aids such as Makaton and PECS, but was familiar with visual support more generally within the classroom, I considered the use of *Talking Mats*™ (Murphy, 1998) as a way of supporting communication.

Designed by specialist speech and language therapist, Joan Murphy, *Talking Mats*™ (Murphy, 1998), is described as a communication symbols tool designed for use with a range of abilities and ages and used widely within

speech and language practice, alongside a range of other professional practice within health, social and educational work.

Additionally, it is supported by a wide range of research with children and adults described as having communication needs and also, research exploring its effectiveness as a tool (e.g. Boa, 2005; Cameron, 2015; Cameron & Murphy, 2000; Coakes & Murphy, 2006; Hooton & Westaway, 2008; Mitchell and Sloper, 2011; Murphy, 2009; 2005; 1998). Additionally, it is described as flexible, and adaptable to different needs, abilities and ages (Rabiee et al., 2005).

Talking Mats is an interactive resource available in digital and print formats, whereby an individual can communicate their views by choosing topics represented visually in the form of a picture card or icon and place them on a scale (e.g. like, not sure, dislike). Especially appropriate to this research was the set of symbols developed for the early years age-range exploring 'my body and skills' and 'what I do and my support.' I considered that using this activity as part of the child interview would facilitate an understanding of the child's experience relating to questions around skills, support and change during transition. Additionally, based on my work with young children of this age, I felt using the version of the resource available on IPAD would also be appealing.

- *Talking Mats*<sup>TM</sup> (Murphy, 1998) IPAD activity would further support the child interview

Possible limitations within this approach, specifically with regard to the present inquiry, could be seen in its prescriptive nature in eliciting very fixed responses from the child (eg like, unsure, dislike) around set topics (eg skills and support). Such responses could lack the detail necessary for the narrative approach adopted in this inquiry.

However, I considered that there was some flexibility within this in that blank 'tiles' could be added to the bank of picture symbols and also, the resource could be used creatively, for example to further explore feelings about one particular response (Mitchell & Sloper, 2011).

Additionally, being one of a range of approaches to facilitate voice within this research, it would provide an interesting perspective.

In this way a selection of activities was highlighted to facilitate the child interview, with the intention that they would be used creatively and flexibly to support the child to talk about their feelings, likes and dislikes before, during and after starting school. As such, the child interview guide would draw on the following:

- Classroom 'tour' & photographs
- Journal
- Emotions cards
- *Talking Mat*<sup>™</sup> resource

These methods could be seen as facilitating more equal communication (Mercieca & Mercieca, 2014; Ranciere, 1999), that is, through methods in which both researcher *and* student are skilled.

## Appendix C: Ethics approval letter



Downloaded: 20/04/2015  
Approved: 15/04/2015

Carol Hatton  
Registration number: 130113506  
School of Education  
EDUR136 Doctor of Educational and Child Psychology (2013~14)

Dear Carol

**PROJECT TITLE:** Transition to school: Exploring the Experiences of Children, Parents and Professionals  
**APPLICATION:** Reference Number 003202

On behalf of the University ethics reviewers who reviewed your project, I am pleased to inform you that on 15/04/2015 the above-named project was **approved** on ethics grounds, on the basis that you will adhere to the following documentation that you submitted for ethics review:

- University research ethics application form 003202 (dated 30/03/2015).
- Participant information sheet 006910 (30/03/2015)
- Participant information sheet 006909 (30/03/2015)
- Participant consent form 006913 (30/03/2015)
- Participant consent form 006912 (30/03/2015)
- Participant consent form 006911 (30/03/2015)

If during the course of the project you need to deviate significantly from the above-approved documentation please inform me since written approval will be required.

Yours sincerely

Professor Daniel Goodley  
Ethics Administrator  
School of Education

## **Appendix D: Ethical considerations around sample**

One ethical consideration upon which I spent much time deliberating was the decision to recruit participants for two case studies, with the aim of writing up only one of these within this thesis.

I had decided that focusing the research around one case study would allow me to explore the rich, detailed accounts of participants' individual experiences at two points during transition. However, given the case study approach, I was also aware that should one of my participants drop out of the research or be unable to complete second interviews for any reason, the research would be compromised or its' nature changed (e.g. the focus could shift to an exploration of preparing for school, should second interviews not take place).

For this reason I decided to recruit participants for two separate case studies, each comprising of a child and the adults around them, with no intention at comparison between cases and with the intention of writing up one of these cases as part of my thesis. However, this decision also brought with it ethical dilemmas around how I would value the contribution of individuals within both cases whilst only writing up one case within this research. I decided that I would be open about this with my participants at the initial stages of recruitment/information (see participant information sheet, Appendix F). I was in fact unable to complete second (September) interviews for one of the cases, due to personal circumstances relating to one of the participants.

As such, the focus of the present research is around one complete case study. However, being mindful of ethical considerations and in particular the desire to value the experiences shared with me by individuals within the second case, with their consent I have also sought to feedback initial interview findings outside of this thesis to the individuals/settings involved.

A second consideration relating to my sample was around the decision to focus on three core individual experiences of transition to school within the research.

In coming to a decision it had been key to consider the needs of the research, which aimed to explore narratives of the child, parent and professionals around the child, so seeking to make sense of transition in a

much broader sense. However, there was clearly a wide range of professionals around the child who could all offer interesting accounts of their experience of transition to school, for example, the nursery teacher, nursery assistant, school teacher, school teaching assistant, school SENCO and the educational psychologist.

I had been torn by a desire to reflect the diversity and breadth of different professional perspectives around the child and also the desire to elicit and analyse narratives of depth, so valuing the fullness of my participants' accounts.

In order to reflect this as fully and respectfully as I could, I decided talking with a variety of professionals around the child would give context to the research, but I would focus on three core narratives of transition to school.

Whilst being a methodological decision relating to the question asked of this research, there were also ethical considerations around this. For example, in talking to a variety of professionals around the child, how would I value their contribution?

Again, I have been mindful of transparency around this decision and have communicated clearly with participants that the research would focus on three core narratives (child, parent and school teacher), whilst conversations with other professionals would give me context to the core narratives.

## **Appendix E: Ethical considerations – consent, confidentiality, respect**

### **Informed Consent**

Throughout, there was the need to respect others, recognising power issues and self-determination rights (BPS, 2009, p10), including informed consent and right to withdraw (HCPC, p 11; BPS, 2009, p14). Thus, information was shared openly, ensuring consent was truly *informed* (BPS, 2009, p 12 & 14).

Information would be shared with individuals (including children) in a way that ensured they really felt consent was voluntary and that they understood the research (Appendices F, G, H)

### **Contacting individuals**

Following reflection and discussion with the EP service in which I was placed, I considered influences of professional power could make individuals feel unable to refuse consent if an EP made initial contact.

Since the inquiry explored transition for a child described as having additional needs, I asked EPs within my service who had been involved with a child in their nursery year, to contact the setting SENCO. The SENCO would then contact the parent and teacher concerned giving participant information and an opportunity to become involved should they wish.

Although, power influences could relate to the SENCO, I felt this was lessened and also ensured that participating settings were interested. It was also important when meeting prospective participants give reassurance that participation was indeed voluntary and they could withdraw at any time without any adverse effects to themselves or child.

### **Information and consent**

Detailed information sheets (Appendices F) aimed to ensure all aspects of the research were explained, including the purpose of the research, consent, confidentiality and anonymity aspects. Additionally, it was important to include information about the nature of my involvement with the child, how *their* consent would be gained and resources that would support.

Additionally, to ensure consent was truly informed, I planned to meet individuals within settings, spending time giving information, becoming familiar, answering questions and giving further contact information should

they have queries. Following this, adult participants could give signed consent if they wished (Appendix G, H).

It was also important to acknowledge the on-going nature of consent, especially given that two interviews would be conducted with individuals. Thus, I emphasised that individuals could withdraw at any point, checked they remained happy to take part prior to second interviews and ensured they were happy with the content of transcripts. There was also clear communication that research would only take place if all individuals were and remained happy to be involved, including the child.

### **Child's informed consent**

Particularly pertinent to this inquiry, and often neglected in research within this age-range was how to ensure the child was informed and happy to take part. Being aware of the need to support communication, I chose to give a simple verbal explanation supported by pictures and smiley/sad face cards, explaining I was here to find out what it is like to move from nursery [show photograph of nursery] to school [show photograph of school] (Appendix H).

Recognising the child would need a way to communicate whether they wished to take part or not, I decided to use smiley/sad face cards, asking the child to point to the smiley face if they were happy to talk, or the sad face, if they did not want to. The cards could then be left out so the child could indicate if they wanted to stop at any time by pointing to the sad face card. This is an approach I have used in professional practice, previous research. It does require that the child is able to understand the language used and was tailored to the needs of the particular child within this study. Additionally, it was important to observe body language in order to gauge on-going consent. I considered that presence of a parent would also help to put the child at ease and/or further explain information.

### **Confidentiality**

The research was guided by ethical principles relating to respect and responsibility (BPS, 2009) valuing each individual's right to confidentiality (HCPC, p9). Procedures were adopted to ensure confidentiality throughout, as described within participant information sheets (Appendix F). Additionally, individuals were given opportunities to check transcripts, ensure photographs

of individuals/places had been obscured and to choose a pseudonym should they wish.

### **Respecting participants**

It was possible individuals could experience some unease or upset as a result of taking part in the research. For this reason, in addition to providing my own contact, participants were advised to contact the school SENCO should they wish to talk through issues arising.

Following interviews I gave opportunities to check transcripts, and relating to the child, transcripts and photographs were shared with parent and child. Additionally, during second interviews I planned opportunities where individuals could reflect on previous views (visual and spoken), commenting further if wished.

## Appendix F: Adult information sheet

### Transition to school: Exploring the experiences of children, parents and professionals

You and your child are invited to take part in a research project. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is unclear or if you need more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

#### What is the project's purpose?

Making the transition from nursery to school has been highlighted in research as being an important time for children and those who support them. A smooth transition is suggested to be important for emotional well-being and ability to learn, helping children feel comfortable and settled in their new class. The study will explore individual transition experiences – the child's, parent's and professional's experiences.

The research aims to:

- ❖ Understand transition from different perspectives - children, parents and professionals.
- ❖ Gain a greater understanding of transition to school within a particular context

The research will be completed in July 2016 and participants' involvement will be from May 2015 to September 2015.

#### Why have we been chosen?

Two children (and the adults who support them) will be taking part initially in this study. However, only one case will be written up as part of my Thesis. Your child's school is interested in transition practices supporting children who have had additional professional support in nursery, as they make the transition to reception class, and has identified your child as a potential participant.

#### Do we have to take part?

It is up to you whether you would like to take part or not. If you would like to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep (and asked to sign a consent form). You will still be able to withdraw at any point, without it affecting benefits you are entitled to. You do not need to give a reason.

If you do consent to participate in the research, I will also seek your child's verbal or non-verbal consent, by using pictures and observations of body language to ensure that they are only involved if they are happy for this.

## **What will happen to me and my child if I take part?**

You will be involved from May to September 2015 and the research will be completed in July 2016.

### **❖ *Initial meeting in May 2015***

I will meet with you to explain the project. I will also give you a journal in which you can choose to write, draw or include photographs/messages etc of your experiences during preparation for school and then, starting school. You will be able to share this with me when we meet to talk about your experiences, but it will be yours to keep as a memento of you and your child's experience of starting school.

### **❖ *Conversations in July and September 2015***

You will be asked to take part in two informal interviews/conversations with me – one in July 2015 and one in September 2015. The purpose of these will be to share your experiences of preparing for and starting school. Each interview will be 30 – 40 minutes long and will be at a time and a place of your own choosing. On these two occasions I will also give your child the opportunity to share their experiences with me through non-verbal and verbal means. In order to support them to do this I plan to use pictures, toys and photographs. Your child may also like to give me a tour of their classroom and take photographs of things that are important to them.

Following each interview/meeting, I will type up the conversation and ask you to check that you are happy with the content.

## **Will interviews be recorded and how will this be used?**

Interviews will be recorded using a Dictaphone. The recordings will be transcribed into anonymised text documents and will be used for analysis only. Recordings will be deleted on completion of the research. Photographs of preferences or picture-sorts will also be used to record children's experiences. Children's faces will not appear on these and again, will be used for the purpose of analysis only.

## **What are the possible disadvantages/risks of taking part?**

I do not anticipate that there will be any disadvantages/risks in taking part. If emotional aspects of transition cause distress to you or your child, a member of staff (add name/SENCo/Mentor) will be identified to provide support as necessary.

## **What are the possible advantages to taking part?**

Whilst there may be no immediate benefits to participating in the study, it is hoped that participation will contribute to an understanding of the experiences and needs of young children and those who support them during transition. Additionally, it is hoped that the research may inform school's transition practices.

### **What happens if research stops earlier than expected or if something goes wrong?**

If the research stops earlier than expected, reason(s) will be explained to you. In case of a complaint, please contact:

❖ Researcher: *Carol Hatton*: email / tel: [left blank for confidentiality]

If you feel unsatisfied with how your complaint is handled, you can contact:

❖ Research supervisor: *Martin Hughes* : email / tel: [left blank for confidentiality]

### **Will my taking part in this project be kept confidential?**

All the information collected about you and your child during the research will be treated in confidence. This means that your name or school will not be identified in any reports or publications. Pseudonyms will be used instead of real names and place/setting names will not be included. Any names used in audio recordings will be removed.

Additionally, information will be stored securely. All electronic data will be kept on password-protected systems and audio recordings will be destroyed after the research is submitted (July 2016). The only time I would reveal anything to an appropriate authority, would be if information made me concerned about your safety.

### **What will happen to the results of the research project?**

The study will be submitted as a Doctoral Thesis to The University of Sheffield. The people who might read this in an official capacity are my project supervisor and external examiners. Additionally, my thesis (or summary) may be submitted for publishing in a journal and/or book. However, name(s) or school will not be identifiable in any way.

### **Who has ethically reviewed the project?**

The research has received ethical approval via the Department of Education University of Sheffield's ethics review procedure.

### **Contact for further information**

❖ *Carol Hatton (Researcher)*, 07545 604345, email: [left blank for confidentiality]

❖ *Martin Hughes (Research Supervisor)*, email: [left blank for confidentiality]

N.B. Participants will receive a copy of this information sheet, alongside a signed consent form to keep, if appropriate.

☺ Thank you for considering whether you would like to participate in this study. If you do, please complete the consent form. ☺

Appendix G: Adult consent form



**Title of Project: Transition to school: Exploring the experiences of children, parents and professionals**

**Name of researcher:** Carol Hatton

**Participant Identification Number:**

Please  
initial

- |   |                          |
|---|--------------------------|
| 1. I confirm that I have read the project information sheet above, dated ( <i>INSERT</i> ), and understand what is expected   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2. I understand that participation is completely voluntary and that my child and I can stop participating at any time, without giving a reason. ( <i>Please contact: Carol Hatton at chatton1@sheffield.ac.uk</i> ) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. I confirm that I have been given the opportunity to ask questions regarding the study, and if asked, that questions were answered to my full satisfaction.   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. I understand that responses will be anonymised prior to analysis.  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. I agree to interview(s) being recorded   | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. I agree to anonymised photographs being used to record my child's views  | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. I confirm that myself and my child will take part in the project   | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Your name ..... Signature ..... Date .....

Researcher's name ..... Signature ..... Date .....

*(Signed and dated in presence of the participant)*

N.B. A signed copy of this consent form, alongside an information sheet, will be sent to parents/guardians and [*staff member*]. The original will be retained securely by the researcher.

## Children's information and consent

If the parent has read the parental information sheet and consented to take part, verbal consent will be gained from the child in the presence of the parent. I will give the following information verbally at the start of the study and also, before interviews:

**Researcher:** I'm trying to find out what it's like to move from Nursery class ...

Show photo of  
Nursery class



(No recognisable children)

**Researcher:** ... to Reception class.

Show photo of  
Reception class



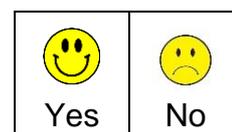
(No recognisable children)

**Researcher:** I'd like to talk to *you* about what this is like.

**Researcher:** Is it okay for me to talk to you? (Show smiley face) 😊

Or do you not want to? (Show sad/'no' face) ☹️  
... It's okay to say no.

**Child:** Responds verbally or by pointing to sad/smiley.



.....  
**Prior to an interview**, if the child agrees, I will conduct the interview. The child will also be given smiley/sad face cards and I will explain: '*you can use the sad face card to tell me to stop whenever you want to.*'

**At the start of the study**, if the child agrees, I will then describe the journal.

**Researcher:** I'd like to give you a book. (Show book)

You can put photos or drawings of your visits to school in it.  
You can draw about what you liked and what you did not like.  
You can take photos (show camera) or draw about what you did (pencil).  
You can also ask a grown up to write things down for you.  
I will come back soon to talk to you, if that is okay.

## **Appendix I: Reflections on pilot study and preparation**

During May 2015 I conducted a pilot study to clarify research decisions and practice interview techniques/resources the methodology employed. This included interviews with a nursery child described by school as having communication difficulties, his parent and a parent whose child was in reception class.

### *Pilot of parent interviews*

The parent interviews gave opportunities to consider whether my narrative interview guide (NIG) (section 4.5.1), provided a helpful tool by which to facilitate conversation. I was particularly interested in the richness of data generated by the open-ended participant-led approach employed at the start of my NIG and the more focused, researcher-led questions I had developed to further support conversation. I was interested to know how helpful the questions were to the interview, any additional areas the parent felt they would have liked to discuss and also, whether the parents felt they had been able to tell their own story, rather than feeling overly led by my questions. Additionally, it was an opportunity to ascertain their views on supporting the child interview.

What was especially interesting about these interviews was their difference. For example, the interview with the nursery parent generated very little talk through the open-ended participant-led approach adopted at the beginning of the interview and I found that drawing on prompts and questions helped to create more depth. It was clear to me that supporting this interview through the use of a journal prior to the conversation may have been particularly helpful in generating a longer and more detailed narrative.

In contrast to this, the interview with the reception parent generated a great deal of rich conversation through the open-ended start of the interview, without the need for many prompts. Some questions flowed naturally into participant-led narratives, with further questions being asked at the end. Prior to asking further questions I felt it worked well to ask first if the parent *wanted* the opportunity to answer further questions or not, allowing her to maintain control of how her narrative was shaped.

When asked, the parent felt she had been able to tell her own story, rather than feeling overly led by questions, and as such, the above approach was one I would use in my main interviews with adults.

Comparison of these two interviews suggested possible differences in the nature of 'before' (nursery) and 'after' (reception) interviews, when individuals may possibly have more to say. As such, the flexible approach I had developed within the interview guide, whereby I could draw upon prompts and questions, would be particularly appropriate for initial interviews.

Additionally, differences between these interviews suggested the necessity to respond to the needs and wishes of the individual. As such, this led me to talk to individuals within the main case study prior to the interview to ensure that the interview approach supported their needs and wishes.

When asked what would have further supported the interview, one parent felt a question around additional support would have helped, a question I then added to my revised interview guide.

When asked about ways to best support their child's conversation, both parents talked of the use of picture-sort activities as being especially helpful and one parent felt it would be helpful to include routines/times of day (e.g. register, playtime, circle time etc), as she saw this as a major difference for her child when moving from nursery to school setting. This was added to my resources. Additionally, conducting interviews within the home environment was felt to be supportive.

### *Child interview*

The interview with the child provided an opportunity to practice using 'tours' of the classroom, the *Talking Mat* resource (TM) and picture cards to elicit views and feelings about school.

The 'tour' was a very helpful way of allowing the child to show me their views/likes/dislikes by showing me and by taking photographs. It would be interesting to compare these within nursery and then reception class settings. It also helped me to become familiar with him and put him at ease. I would use this within my child interview.

However, I considered that it would be more helpful to do this at a separate time to the remainder of the 'interview' as it would give me time to print out photographs which I could then use within the further conversation. Additionally, locating activities at home may have put him at ease. As such, the child interview would be in two parts – one a tour of the classroom and the other an interview at home, if they wished.

The remainder of the 'interview' took place in a separate room with the parent present and at this stage focused loosely on activities through which the child was able to communicate his feelings about school and his likes/dislikes, using picture-sorting activities, TM and emotion cards. I hoped that further conversation about starting school would spring from this.

Through this I came to understand the types of activities, skills and support he valued at nursery and those he thought he would like at school. However, he did not add further verbal communication to this activity, for example relating to visits to school, or what he was looking forward to.

In this light the experience was invaluable as I realised I would need to think very carefully about how activities could elicit a greater depth of communication about the child's experience of transition.

I considered the journal could certainly have been a very helpful tool in this case, allowing the child to show me their pictures and drawings following visits to school/first day etc. Additionally, I felt that making more use of the classroom tour and photographs arising from this could also help to elicit a richer narrative.

Furthermore, I considered that the approach I took with the child in my research would need to be personalised according to the child's individual needs, likes and preferences.

#### *Further preparation*

At this point I had also been able to meet up with potential participants to explain information and gain consent.

I was able to meet up with the child who would be the focus of this study, her mother and the teachers at her nursery / next school to further explain the

research. This was also a useful opportunity to get to know individuals and to talk to them about their preferences.

For example, finding out about the child's play preferences and her likes (eg drawing, pictures, ICT) allowed me to design more individual interview guides, which following conversation with the parent and teacher, would be split over two contexts – nursery 'tours' and home interview (section 4.5.2).

Additionally, observation of Evie within the setting and conversation with Cindy, her mother, highlighted Evie's strengths in verbal understanding, whilst she was described as having additional needs around communicating verbally, described through a label of Verbal Dyspraxia (see Glossary, Appendix A and section 4.3). Understanding around this was also gained from the teacher and EP who had supported her during nursery. This informed the interview guide that would facilitate Evie's narrative, confirming the use of tours and visual activities to facilitate and that verbal prompts from myself may also be helpful.

Discussing views and preferences with adults established that adults would like opportunities to lead the telling of their story and also to be asked further questions. I would need to ensure within interviews that individuals felt empowered to answer only those questions they felt supported *their* story. Additionally, it was an opportunity to clarify the context of interviews and the use of the journal to support conversation.

As such, the pilot interviews and initial meetings with potential participants helped to support my thinking, as described above, and informed aspects of my methodology, allowing me to make changes to my interview guides / approach, so making it more likely that my main research would elicit richer and deeper narratives.

This helped to construct the final details relating to procedures used within the final research approach, as described within chapter 4.

## Appendix J: Pen portraits

- Evie (the child at the centre of the study)

Evie was four years old when we met in May 2015, attending nursery every afternoon and due to start reception class at a new school in September 2015. Evie lives with her mother, father, brother (aged seven) and dog. She likes drawing, craft and Ipad. Observations of Evie and conversation with adults around her, highlighted strengths in verbal understanding, whilst she is described by her mother and teacher as having additional needs through a label of verbal dyspraxia, communicating primarily non-verbally. Evie does not use additional communication aids at home or school.

- Cindy (Evie's mother)

Cindy was 40 years old when I met her in May 2015. She is married to S and has two children – D, who was seven and Evie, who was four at the start of this inquiry. She moved to her present location on the outskirts of a city in the north of England in 2007 just before her first child was born. Before this she worked in an estate agency in another northern city. She describes herself as a stay-at-home mum currently. She describes her two children as having speech and language needs, having met with educational psychology and speech and language therapy professionals regarding both her children. She currently pays for a speech and language therapist to work with her elder son at home

- Kate (Evie's Reception class teacher)

Kate was 25 years old when we met. She teaches in Reception class, alongside two support staff, in a catholic primary school of 211 children on the outskirts of a northern English city. Information shared with me related to her role and school, describing herself as 'Early Years Lead' for two years, teaching a class of 30 children (17 boys, 13 girls) of which eight children have speech and language IEPs.

## Appendix K: Parent journal information

### Transition to school: My story

**Please use this journal to tell your story. What is the transition to Reception class like for you? What are your experiences, thoughts and feelings?**



You can write diary entries and also include drawings, photographs and messages from home/school. Include anything you like!

*The purpose of the journal is to help you to reflect on your experiences. You will be able to share it with me, if you wish, when we meet to talk about transition and I hope it will be helpful in supporting our conversations.*

**Some ideas you may wish to consider are:**

***What are your experiences of supporting your child as they prepare for school?***

- What were school visits/meetings like for you?
- What was it like supporting your child on school visit days?
- Did you do anything else to prepare for September?
- Who/what has helped you to prepare? Are there areas where you feel you need more support?
- What do you think it will be like when your child starts school (for you and for them)? What will be the same? What will be different? You may like to comment on skills, teaching, relationships, roles and managing change.

***What is it like for you when your child starts school?***

- What was the first day like? How do you feel after the first week?
- Who/what has supported the transition to school? What is working well? Is anything difficult?
- What has changed for you and your family? What has stayed the same?
- You may like to comment on new skills, teaching, relationships, roles and managing change.

*You will be able to share this journal with me when we meet to talk about your experiences, but it will be yours to keep as a memento of experience of starting school.*

## Appendix L: Professional journal Information

### Transition to school: My story

**Please use this journal to tell your story. What is the transition to Reception class like for you? What are your experiences, thoughts and feelings?**

You can write diary entries and also include observations, reports, photographs, drawings and messages from home/school. Include anything you like!

*The purpose of the journal is to help you to reflect on your experiences. You will be able to share it with me, if you wish, when we meet to talk about transition and I hope it will be helpful in supporting our conversations.*

**Some ideas you may wish to consider are:**

*What are your experiences of supporting the child as they prepare for school?*

- What were school visits/meetings like for you?
- What was it like supporting the child on school visit days?
- How were you involved in preparing for September?
- Who/what has helped you? Are there areas where you feel you need more support?
- What do you think it will be like when the child starts school? What will be the same? What will be different?
- You may like to comment on skills, teaching, relationships, roles and supporting change.

*What is it like for you when the child starts school?*

- What was the first day like? How do you feel after the first week?
- Who/what do you think has supported the transition to school? What is working well? Is anything difficult?
- What has changed for you and the child? What has stayed the same?
- You may like to comment on new skills, teaching, relationships, roles and supporting change.

## Appendix M: Child journal information

### Starting school: My story

**Please use this journal to tell your story. What is moving to Reception class like for you? What are your experiences, thoughts and feelings?**



You can draw, take photographs, include messages from school, write, or ask an adult to write. Include anything you like!

**Parents/carers may like to support their child to consider some of the ideas below:**

*What are your experiences of preparing for school?*

- What were your visits to school like? What did you do? Who did you meet? What did you like? What was difficult?
- Who/what has helped you to prepare for starting school? How has this helped?
- What do you think it will be like at school? What will be the same as Nursery? What will be different? Will you need to learn new skills? How do you feel about this?
- Did you do anything in the holidays to prepare for school (e.g. buy your school uniform, learn new skills)?

*What is it like starting school?*

- What was your first day like? How do you feel after your first week?
- What do you do? Who do you know at school? What do you like about school? Is anything difficult?
- Who/what has helped you to settle into school?
- What has changed? What has stayed the same? Have you learnt new things?

*You will be able to share this journal with me when we meet to talk about your experiences, but it will be yours to keep as a memento of your experience of starting school.*

## Appendix N: Adult narrative interview guide 1

### Transition to school: Adult Narrative Interview Guide 1

I'd like to talk with you about your experience of supporting transition from Nursery to Reception class for [child's name] and what it has been like for you - your thoughts, experiences and feelings. You might like to think of it as a story or a journey.

I may ask a few questions, but I really want to hear *your* story and how *you* would like to tell it. As part of this you may like to share your journal to support our conversation.

Could you tell me your story, from when you first started thinking about transition to school to this point. Where would that begin for you?

*I envisage that the content of the conversation will be led by the participant and told in the way they choose. Their narrative will be supported by the sharing of their journal (if they wish). Some of the questions below may also form part of the interview, if the interviewee feels they help to facilitate their account.*

#### **Prompts**

That's interesting, can you tell me more? Did you mean...? So you mean ..?

What did that feel like? What was that like for you?

What do you think about that? What makes you say that?

What does that mean for you? How have you made sense of this?

Can you think of an example? Can you think of an experience describing this?

#### **Possible supplementary questions**

- What have visits/meetings been like for you?
- Can you tell me about any additional support received?
- What do you think it will be like when [child's name] starts school? What will be the same? Will there be differences?
- Are there certain skills you feel are important at this time? –for child / you?
- Could you tell me about your relationships during this time?
- How would you describe your role?
- What are your thoughts about teaching and learning in school?
- Who/what has been helpful? What could have been different?
- Anything else? Anything I haven't asked or that you would like to tell me?

## Appendix O: Adult narrative interview guide 2

### Transition to school: Adult Narrative Interview Guide 2

I'd like to learn more about your experience of transition to school, now that school has started. Please feel free to use your journal to support our conversation and I also have some questions I can ask if you'd like.

So, how are things going? Could you tell me what has happened and what it's been like for you since we last spoke?

*As previously, I envisage that the content of the conversation will be led by the participant and told in the way they choose. Some of the questions below may form part of the interview, if the interviewee feels they help facilitate their account.*

#### Prompts

That's interesting, can you tell me more? Did you mean...? So you mean ..?

What did that feel like? What was that like for you?

What do you think about that? What makes you say that?

What does that mean for you? How have you made sense of this?

Can you think of an example? Can you think of an experience describing this?

#### Possible supplementary questions

- What was the first day like? How do you feel after the first few weeks? (you and those around you. Any changes?)
- When we last talked, you spoke of:

Can you tell me a bit more about that and what it means for you now?

- As part of your account, would you like to tell me about any of the following?
  - Skills
  - Your role
  - Visits, meetings
  - Teaching and learning
  - Relationships
- Reflecting back on your experience, how would you describe it?
  - What has it been like for you?
  - What has been supportive? What could have been different?
- Can you tell me what it's been like for you participating in this research project?
- Anything else? Anything I haven't asked or that you would like to tell me?

## Appendix P: Child narrative interview guide 1

### Transition to school: Child Narrative Interview Guide 1

*The content of the child's narrative will be both verbal and pictorial in nature. This will be elicited during child-led 'tours' of the classroom (accompanied by conversation and photographs taken by the child). It will be further supported by a home 'interview' where the child will have the opportunity to review 'Tour' photos, share their journal and engage in 'Talking Mats' sessions, in response to their needs and wishes.*



#### **Part 1: Tours of the classroom**

(Resources: Camera, voice recorder, emotions fan)

**Intro: I'm trying to find out what it's like in Nursery [show photo]. I'd like to talk to you about what it's like. Is that ok? (show smiley face) ... or not (show sad face)?**

**You can tell me all about your nursery by *showing* me and taking photos, if you like [show camera].**

- Can you show me what you *like* in nursery? (Smiley face)  
Would you like to take a photo?  
What do you like doing here?  
How does it make you feel? How else? (Show emotion fans).
- Can you show me what you *don't like* in nursery? (Sad face)  
Would you like to take a photo?  
What do you do here?  
How does it make you feel? How else? (Show emotion fans)

Further Qs may arise naturally within context. Approach to be used flexibly in response to child. Possible Qs:

- Can you show where you go when you're sad/happy?
- Can you show me who helps?

The visit will also be an opportunity to talk to nursery staff, observe and to get to know the child

## Part 2: Conversation at home

Resources: Photo of nursery and school, smiley/sad face cards, emotions fan, journal, Talking Mats resource, 'Tour' photos, voice recorder, camera

I'm trying to find out what it's like to move from Nursery (show picture) to Reception class (show picture). I'd like to talk to you. Is that ok? (show smiley face) or not (show sad face)?

I'll ask some questions, but I want to hear *your* story, what it's like for you. I've brought some pictures to help [show tour photos and TM activity] and I'd love to see your journal, too [point].

### Sharing journal

- I'd love you to tell me all the things you've been doing so far

*Child shows me through their journal (with parent support), pointing to photos, drawings and talking about different parts of their story & what it has been like so far (as able/willing). Support with emotion cards and prompts as appropriate.*

### Photo sort activity: Sharing nursery 'tour' photos / conversations about school

- Shall we look at the photos you took in nursery when I visited? [*Share nursery photos*]
- I know you'll be starting school soon (show pic) ... I'd love to know all about it ... I wonder what you'll do at school? Will you do these things? (point to nursery tour pics)?
- How do you feel about starting school? How else? [child chooses emotion cards to place beneath school pic] [*TAKE PHOTO*].  
*Further talk to arise naturally*

### Talking Mats Activity

**Body & skills (like / dislike scale)** (*What do you do at school? / like?*)

- Let's look at some things you do at school.
- Which do you like? Which don't you like?

Further talk to arise naturally. Summarise the session.

**What I do and support (happy/sad scale)** (*What helps starting school?*)

- What helps you feel happy about school? What doesn't?

Further talk to arise naturally. Summarise session.

### Anything else you'd like to tell me or show me? ...'Thank you'

***Prompts /questions (to be used with all activities, as appropriate)***

*That's interesting, can you tell me more?*

*What is it like? What happened? What happened next?*

*Can you show me? Can you tell me about that?*

*How do you feel? How else?*

What was it like visiting Reception class? What did you do?

Which things did you like/not like?

Can you tell me about your friends? What/who helps you?

## Appendix Q: Child narrative interview guide 2

### Transition to school: Child Narrative Interview Guide 2

*The content of the child's narrative will be both verbal and pictorial in nature. This will be elicited during child-led 'tours' of the classroom (accompanied by conversation and photographs taken by the child). It will be further supported by a home 'interview' where the child will have the opportunity to review 'Tour' photos, share their journal and engage in 'Talking Mats' sessions, in response to their needs and wishes.*

#### **Part 1: Tours of the classroom**

(Resources: Camera, voice recorder, emotions card fan)

**Intro: I'm trying to find out what it's like starting school (show pic). I'd like to talk to you. Is that ok? (show smiley face) ... or not (show sad face)?**

**You can tell me all about your school by *showing* me and taking photos, if you like. [The following questions *may* then be asked]:**

- Can you show me around your new class? What do you do here?
- Last time we met you told me about:

Would you like to show me /tell me more? [Take photos]

- Can you show me what you *like* in Reception class (Show happy)  
Would you like to take a photo?  
What do you like doing here?  
How does it make you feel? How else? (Show emotion fan).
- Can you show me what you *don't like* in Reception class? (show sad)  
Would you like to take a photo?  
What do you do here?  
How does it make you feel? How else? (Show emotion fan)
- Can you show me something different to nursery?
- Can you show me who helps at school?
- What's it like at school? How do you feel? How else? (emotion fan)
- Anything else you want to show me or tell me?

## Part 2: Conversation at home

Resources: Photos (nursery & school), smiley/sad faces, emotions fan, journal, Talking Mats resource, 'Tour' photos, voice recorder, camera

INTRO: Hi, I'm trying to find out what it's like moving from Nursery (show picture) to Reception class (picture). I'd like to talk to you. Is that ok? (smiley face) or not (sad face)? [Child points]

I'll ask some questions, but I want to hear *your* story. I've brought some pictures to help [show tour photos and TM activity] and I'd love to see your journal, too [point].

### Sharing journal

- I'd love you to tell me all the things you've been doing so far

*Child shows their journal (parent support), pointing to photos, drawings and/or talking about parts of their story, what it has been like (as able/willing). Support with emotion cards/prompts as appropriate. TAKE PHOTOS.*

### Photo Activity: Sharing 'Tour' Photos and Conversations about School

- Shall we look at the photos you took? Can you tell me about them? [Share tour photos - likes/dislikes, use emotion cards]
- So, you've moved from Nursery [pics] to Reception class [show pics]:
  - What was that like? What did you feel like? How else? On first day? Now?
  - Is anything different?
  - Last time you told me about ...   
Can you tell me about that?

[Child responds through pointing/photos/emotion cards/talk. TAKE PHOTOS]

### Talking Mats Activity

**'Body and skills' (like / dislike scale)** (*What do you do / like at school?*)

- Let's look at some things you do at school.
- Which do you like? Which don't you like? Not sure?

Further conversation as appropriate. Summarise the session

**'What I do and support' (happy/sad scale)** (*What helps at school?*)

- What helps you feel happy at school? What doesn't? Not sure?

Further conversation as appropriate. Summarise the session.

### Anything else you want to tell me or show me? ... Thank you

***Possible prompts / Qs (to be used with all activities, as appropriate)***

*That's interesting, can you tell me more?*

*What is it like? What happened? What happened next?*

*Can you show me/point? Can you tell me about that?*

*How do you feel? How else?*

What was it like on your first day? What did you do?

What is it like now? Which things do you like/not like doing?

Is anything different to nursery?

What have you learnt?

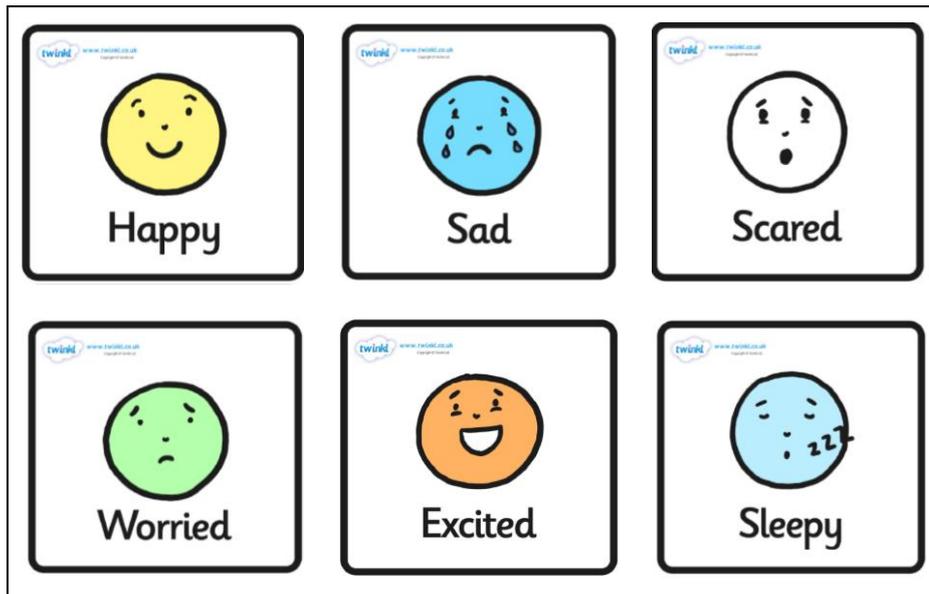
What/who helps you?

## Appendix R: Resources used in child interview

### Tour - Emotion card fan

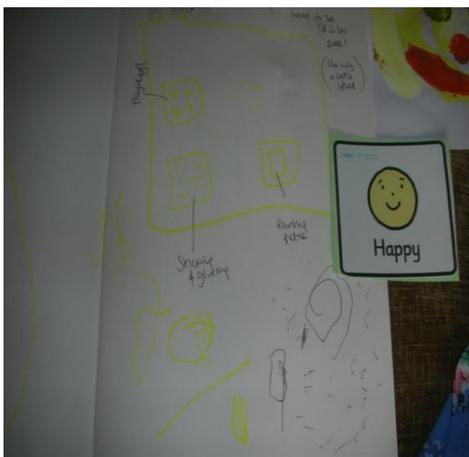


### Emotion cards used in home interview (Twinkl.co.uk)



### Home Interview

#### 1. Sharing journal

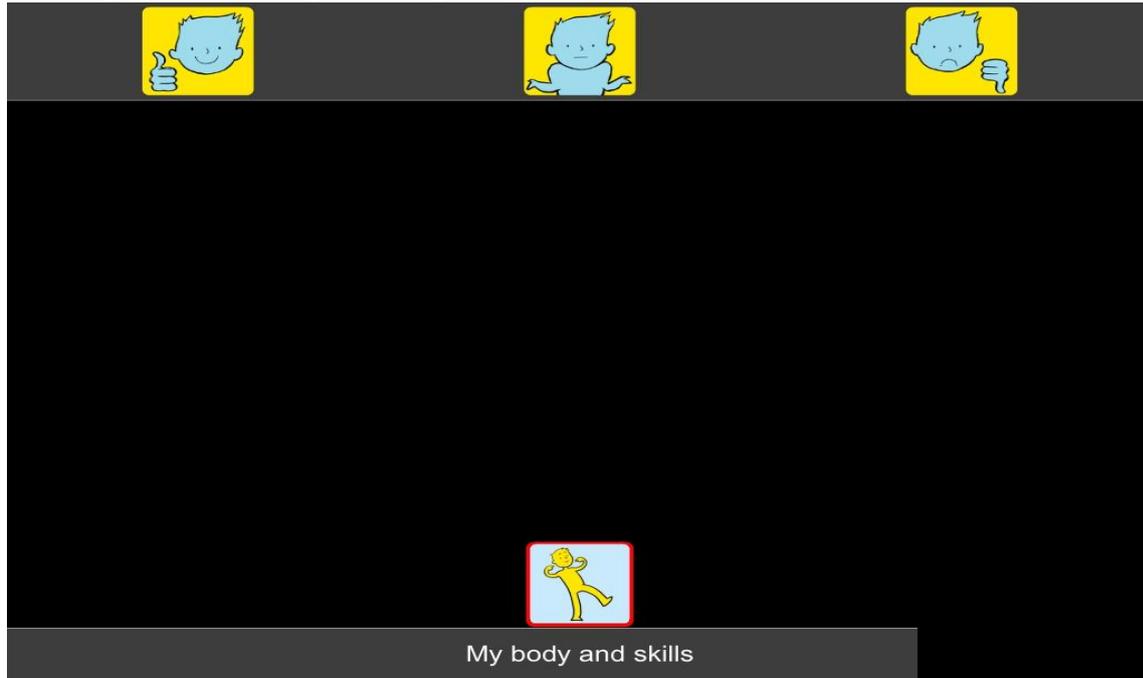


#### 2. Photo-sort activity

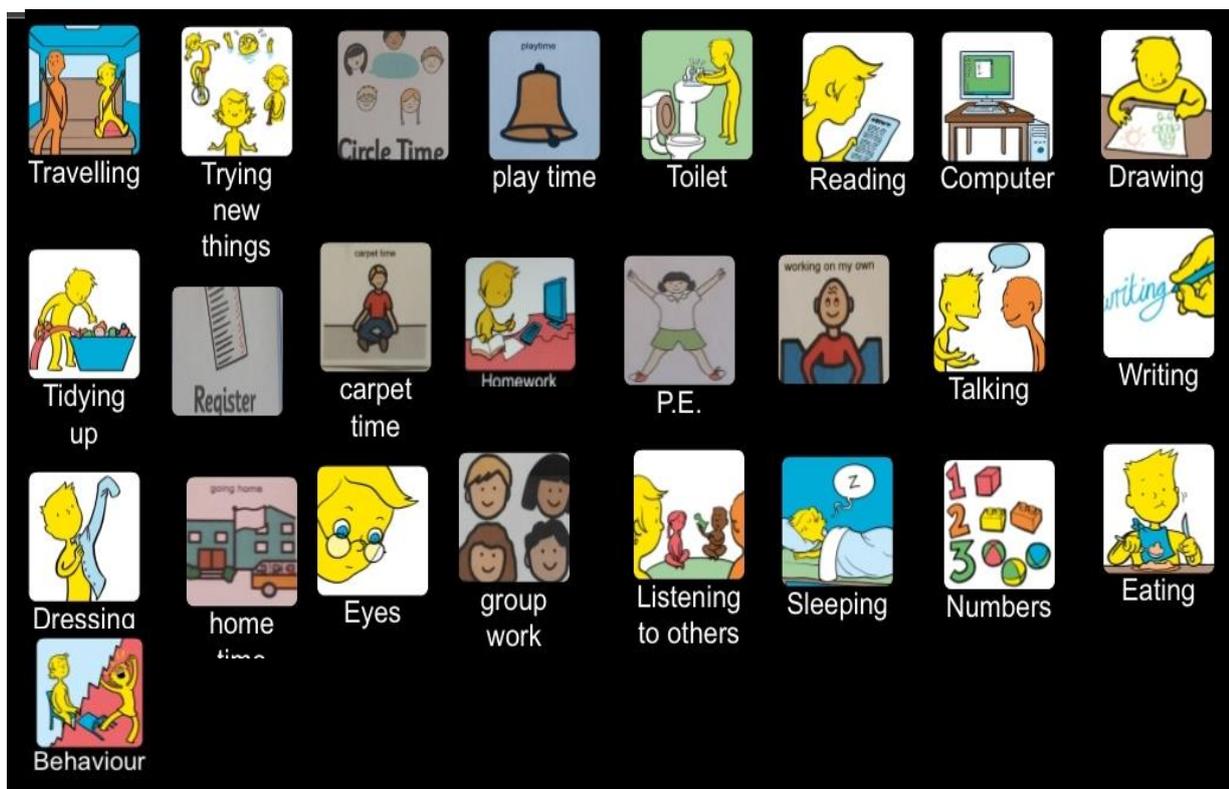


#### 3. Talking Mats (Murphy, 1998), as follows:

## Talking Mats Activity 1: 'Body & skills'



## Picture symbols on starting school (Talking Mats™, Board maker)

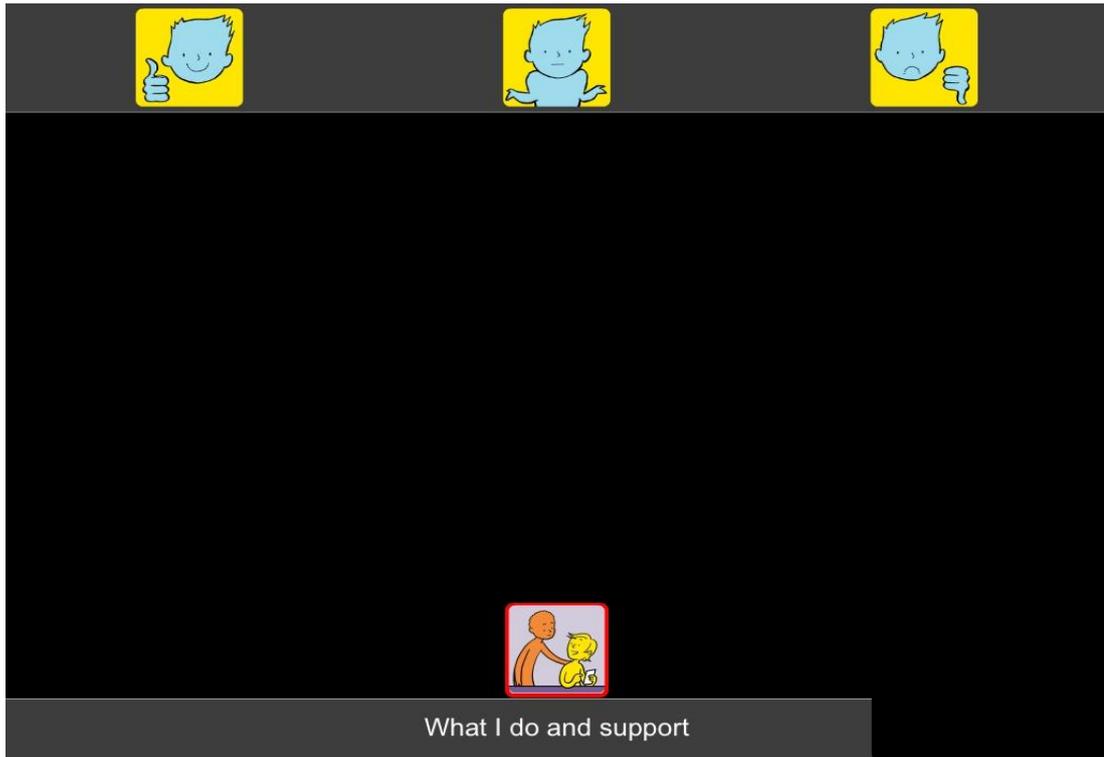


NB picture symbols were described using the associated label, but further detail was given where appropriate, for example:

'Talking' symbol – 'that's two people talking'

'Eyes' symbol – 'looking', 'looking at your work', 'looking at your teacher'

## Talking Mats Activity 2: 'What I do and support'



## Picture symbols on starting school (Talking Mats™, Board maker)



NB picture symbols were described using the associated label, but further detail was given where appropriate, for example:

'Dinner supervisor' symbol – 'dinner time helper'

## Appendix S: Analysis and interpretation

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim into a word document prior to analysis (Appendix T). Following the narrative oriented inquiry (NOI) sequential model (Hiles & Čermák, 2007; 2008), transcripts were read several times and initial reflections noted (Appendix U), before creating a working transcript from which further analysis was conducted.

I analysed the working transcripts through a multi-layered approach using the six NOI interpretive perspectives Hiles and Čermák bring together (drawn from Herman & Vervaeck, 2001; Lieblich et al., 1998; Emerson & Frosh, 2004). I begin by identifying *sjuzet* and *fabula* within narratives, followed by holistic and then categorical analyses of content and form, and finished with a critical analysis in terms of positionality and context.

### *i) Sjuzet and Fabula*

An initial distinction was made between bounded and unbounded aspects of the narrative; that is the *fabula* (*what* is being told) and the *sjuzet* (*how* it is told). The *sjuzet* is described as 'single words, phrases and sometimes entire segments that are concerned with emphasis, reflection, asides, interruptions, remarks and various expressions representing the sequence/causality/significance of events being related in the story' (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 156) and these aspects were underlined as a preliminary stage in analysis, with phrases that seemed to fall into both *sjuzet* and *fabula* marked in bold. As suggested in the model, these aspects were not analysed separately, but instead drawn upon within holistic, categorical and critical interpretive perspectives below.

### *ii) & (iii) Holistic Content and Form* (Lieblich et al., 1998, Pp 62-3; 88)

I gained a holistic-content picture of each story from reading the material until a pattern emerged and writing this as a global impression, noting turning points, contradictions, unusual parts, or omissions within the story, which Lieblich et al (1998) argue may be of critical importance to interpretations. The aim was to 'identify the core narrative, ie a theme that is vivid, permeating the entire text, and is meaningful' (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 157 (21)). I also found it helpful to do this for smaller narratives within each story

(as suggested by Hiles & Čermák, 2008). This allowed me to gain a global impression as well as tracing the overarching story outline through its smaller narratives

I analysed the form of each overarching narrative by considering the progression. The focus here was on the plot and tracing its pattern through turning points and climax points in the story. As such the narrative may diverge from or progress towards the present and could be described in terms of its pattern (eg progression, regression, steady) (see Hiles & Čermák, p 157; Lieblich et al., 1998, p88). (See narrative outlines, Appendices V, W, X, Y, Z, A2, B2, C2).

*(iv) & (v) Categorical content & form* (Lieblich et al., 1998):

Narratives were then analysed in terms of themes or categories, similar in manner to a thematic analysis or content analysis (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 158), through which categories and subcategories were defined and units of analysis were then assigned to each.

Alongside this, themes were analysed in terms of the *sjuzet*, that is how they are told. Linguistic features were explored, for example 'adverbs (e.g. *suddenly*), mental verbs (e.g. I *thought*), denotations of time and place, past/present/future forms of verbs, passive and active verbs, intensifiers (e.g. *really, very*), disruptions of chronological and causal progression, repetitions etc' (Hiles & Čermák, 2008, p 159; Lieblich et al., 1998, p 156) and also aspects such as extra-linguistic features or direct speech. (See examples, Appendices D2, E2).

*(vi) Critical narrative analysis* (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; 2009)

Lastly, the functionality of each story was considered; that is the sort of account the narrator offered, how the narrator positioned themselves in respect to others, to events, to topics or discourses around transition. Emerson & Frosh describe this as a psycho-social approach, embracing aspects of discourse analysis and focusing on 'active constructing processes through which individual subjects attempt to account for their lives' (Emerson & Frosh, 2004; p 7). This involved a micro analysis of the *fabula* and *sjuzet*, but with particular focus on the *sjuzet*, a perspective through which I was able

to explore how each narrator negotiated and positioned themselves. (See Analysis Summaries, Appendices F2, G2, H2).

### *Procedure*

Each of the interviews was analysed using the six perspectives above, firstly July interviews and secondly September interviews, with initial reflections from narrator's July interviews informing conversations in September and interpretations made in the light of their July story. In this way, a holistic interpretation was reached around each narrator's overarching story, including a consideration of themes within, how the story was told and moreover, how themes had changed or developed over transition.

Lastly, interpretations of each story were discussed in relation to each other with the aim of gaining an understanding of transition in a broader sense, whilst also valuing each unique voice.

In common with other qualitative research, the researcher's role in interpretation was acknowledged through reflexivity.

### *Interpretation and Presentation of Narrators' Stories*

Each perspective brought a subtly different perspective or meaning making, but there were many interpretive overlaps and in this respect in presenting interpretations around each story, I found it helpful to synthesise aspects of content and form, of fabula and sjuzet, (as considered in Lieblich et al (1998), *Categorical-form* chapter), moving between each to elucidate meaning within holistic and then categorical perspectives. Where appropriate I have considered the fine detail of how the story is told within the holistic perspective, where the manner of telling embraces the whole story, or where this helps to describe the holistic theme. Additionally, critical perspectives around positioning, power, context and self are also presented alongside key themes across narrators' stories. (See Analysis Summaries, Appendices F2, G2, H2).

In this way through drawing on these different perspectives, a nuanced and multi-storied interpretation was reached around each overarching narrative that embraced their story as a whole as well as themes within it, recognising both the *what* and the *how* of their telling and seeking to capture the story's

development over transition - from the past to present and with a view to the future.

I present holistic, categorical and critical interpretive perspectives relating to each narrator's July and September interviews. Interpretation of the narrator's second interview is made in light of their first. In this way interpretations are drawn across each narrator's overarching transition narrative.

The narrators' stories emerge through both content and form; through both the fabula and the sjuzet of their narratives. As such, in presenting my interpretations, that is, the co-constructed narratives, I have not sought to separate the 'what' and 'how' of their telling, but move between the two in presenting first holistic and then, categorical perspectives of each narrators' July and September stories. Similarly, I integrate critical analysis in terms of performance, positioning and context in an on-going manner throughout stories, before moving on to summarise each narrators' story alongside further critical reflections.

In presenting interpretations I move between the narrative as a whole and smaller narratives in order to make sense of the material. In this way I seek to trace the fabula of the interview through the smaller narrative themes, as well as consider how smaller narratives relate to the whole.

I encourage the reader to refer to working transcripts in order to support their reading of my interpretations.

## Appendix T: Transcript key

The following notations were used during re-transcription

,	Slight pause, less than 1 second
(2)	Number in ( ) indicates approximate pause length, seconds
<i>Italics</i>	Word emphasised by the speaker
[	Speakers overlap
[sighs]	Word in [ ] indicates a non-verbal action or event
???	Words are unclear
<u>Oh gosh</u>	Words highlighted as sjuzet within the narrative
<b>Like no child</b>	Words highlighted as both sjuzet and fabula
No.d segments	Contain one central idea (often comprised of one or two idea units/ sentences)
(Seg. 2)	Quotations from the transcript refer to segment numbers, in this case segment 2
...	Used to illustrate where text has been omitted, eg a quotation taken from part of a sentence

### *Pseudonyms used*

XArea	Anonymised place name
XNursery	Anonymised nursery name
Evie	Pseudonym for the child at the centre of the inquiry
Cindy	Pseudonym for Evie's mother
Kate	Pseudonym for Evie's class teacher

Adapted from procedures used in Emerson & Frosh (2009), Riessman (2008) and examples in Arden (2014), Callwood (2013)

## Appendix U: Initial reflections excerpt

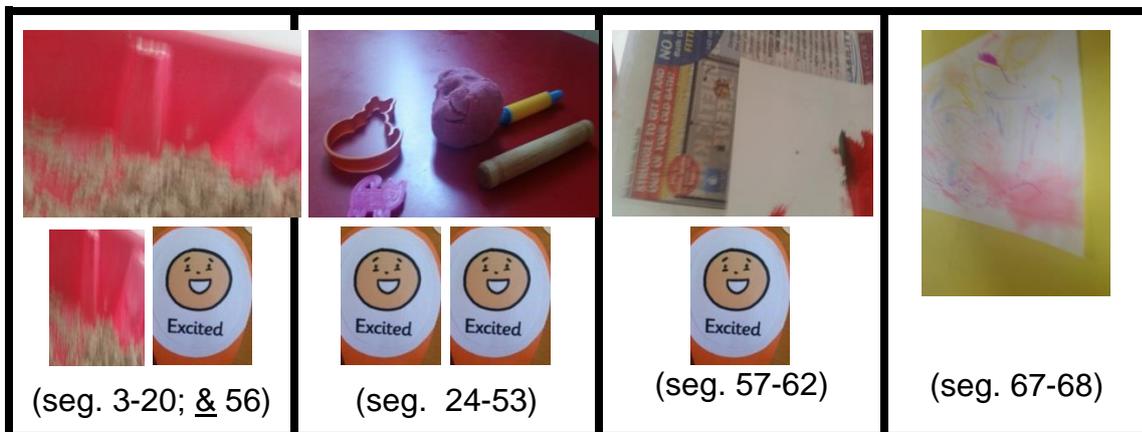
### Initial Reflections: Cindy's July interview

- Much of C's story is communicated through sjuzet, her reflections
- Positive experiences of visits to school /staff visits to home and helpfulness of staff knowing E
- Feels school is prepared for E
- Nursery as a preparation for school, developing her skills, giving time and 'breaking through'
- Relationships with staff have been/are important
- Changing expectations / altered future re parent role
- Comparisons - feeling judged by others, different, embarrassed
- Frustrations over SALT support
- Importance of feeling accepted and understood
- Important to let child surprise you, not make comparisons and to be open and honest with others
- Learning from past transition experiences and feeling more confident about the future eg playgroup, starting nursery, son's experiences
- Re-framing sport day 'difference'
- Challenging behaviour and anxieties over Sports Day
- Impact of son's experiences on this transition
- Impact on family relationships

## Appendix V: Evie's Nursery tour outline

### ***Global Impression: A story about finding Voice: Feeling positive about nursery***

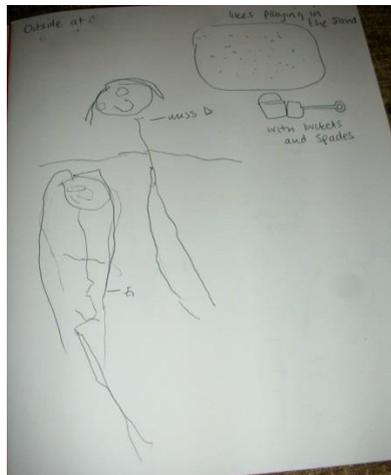
- Feeling happy and excited in the sand (2-20)
- **TP:** Feeling excited about playing playdough with 'pussycat cutters' (24 – 53)
- I **really** like the sand (55-56)
- I like being with Miss G and am excited to paint (57-62)
- **TP:** I choose likes not dislikes (63)
- Miss G says I don't play with trains and roleplay (64-66)
- I Like drawing- Look what I can do! (67-68)



## Appendix W: Evie's Nursery interview outline

### **Global Impression: A story about finding Voice: Feeling positive about nursery and school**

Outside at nursery with Miss D: Sand is my favourite thing (6-22)



School open day: I liked playing playdough, sticking and painting (23-44).

Mum says I was upset at first, but came out with a big smile (45)

I felt happy at school (47-57) [TP]



Drawing butterflies and telling you my favourite colours (60-72) [TP cont]

Feeling happy about buying my school uniform (73 – 80).

I think I'll do drawing, playdough and all the things I like at school (81-109).

I think I'll feel happy at school, happy (110-125)



Things I'll like and things I'm not sure about (127-136)

Computer   Drawing   Ears   Trying new things   Tidying up

Eating   Numbers   Toilet   Trips

Drinking   Reading   Talking   Dressing

Eyes   Writing   Listening   Travelling to others

My body and skills

E O 06/07/2015 10:44

Things that make me happy about school and things that don't (137-143)

Brother/sister   Activities and clubs   Playing

Choosing   Bike/scooter   Friends

Asking for help   Mum

Dad

What I do and support

E O 06/07/2015 10:57

## Appendix X: Evie's Reception tour outline

### **An overarching story: Sharing voice: Enjoying familiar, exploring new, and embracing now**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• [E seems happy in her setting, relating to others and making choices (obs notes)]</li> <li>• <b>TP:</b> Feeling excited about school (4-13)</li> <li>• Feeling excited in the sand (14-34)</li> </ul>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;">Photo of school</div> <div> </div> <div> </div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have friends at school (35-39)</li> <li>• I like inside and outside (40-52)</li> <li>• I still <i>really</i> like playing in the sand (47-52) [chooses to remain]</li> <li>• Feeling happy and excited doing sticking (53-73)</li> </ul>	<div> </div> <div> </div> <div> </div> <div> </div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>TP</b> The writing table is exciting and different (74-86)</li> </ul>	<div> </div> <div> </div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sure about showing you what I don't like (87-90)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is what I <i>can</i> do: Playdough makes me happy (91-97)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When you ask, I tell you I don't like roleplay (98-103)</li> </ul>



- I feel excited playing with shapes outside (104-111)



- I like the letters: I feel excited (112 - 119)



- Playing with the bricks: Carol hasn't seen me do that before (120-122)



- I spend a long time tidying the water with others: it's okay (123-136)



- Joining in school carpet time routines (137-139)

- [Carol talks to Mrs P: She says flexibility, relationships and independence skills are important to me. She thinks I don't like PE. and sometimes carpet time is difficult for me]

## Appendix Y: Evie's Reception interview outline

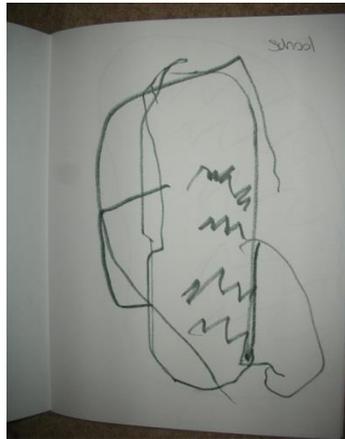
### An overarching story: Sharing voice: Enjoying familiar, exploring new, and embracing now

First day: Mixed feelings and new experiences (7-31)



Lots of writing at school (32-43)

More writing on first day (44-60)



I can draw: Drawing M [dog] on my first day (61-71)

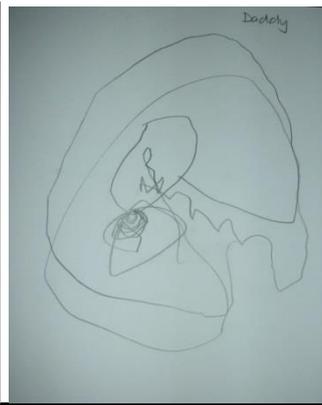
Drawing mummy after my first day at school (72-85)



A drawing of Evie (86-92)



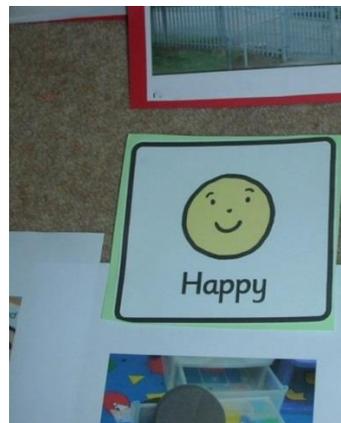
Drawing daddy, too (93-96)



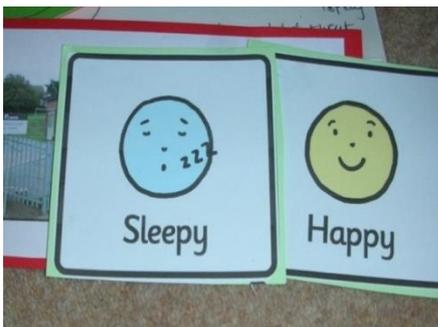
TP: Now feelings:  
Feeling sad and worried  
today (97-115)



Craft is my favourite: It makes me happy (124-133)



Moving to school: Feeling happy  
and sleepy (134-147)



At nursery I wasn't sure about friends,  
now I feel happy (148-155)



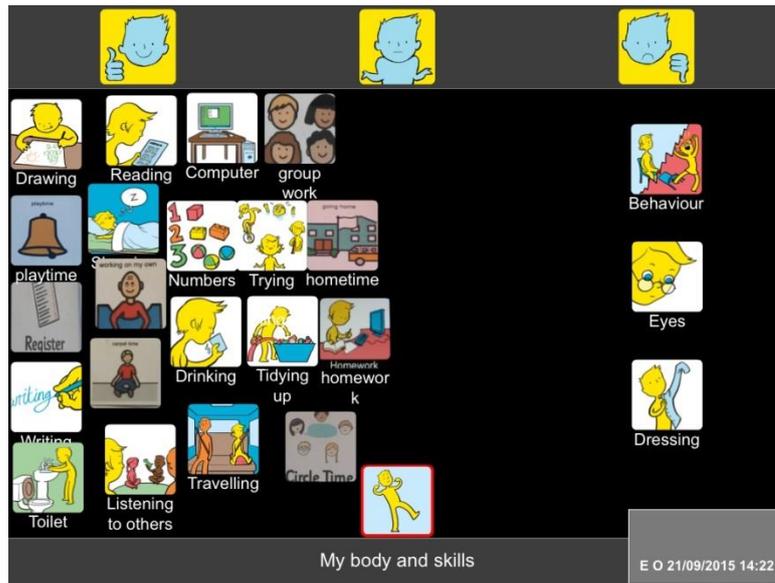
At dinner time I feel happy now (156-164)



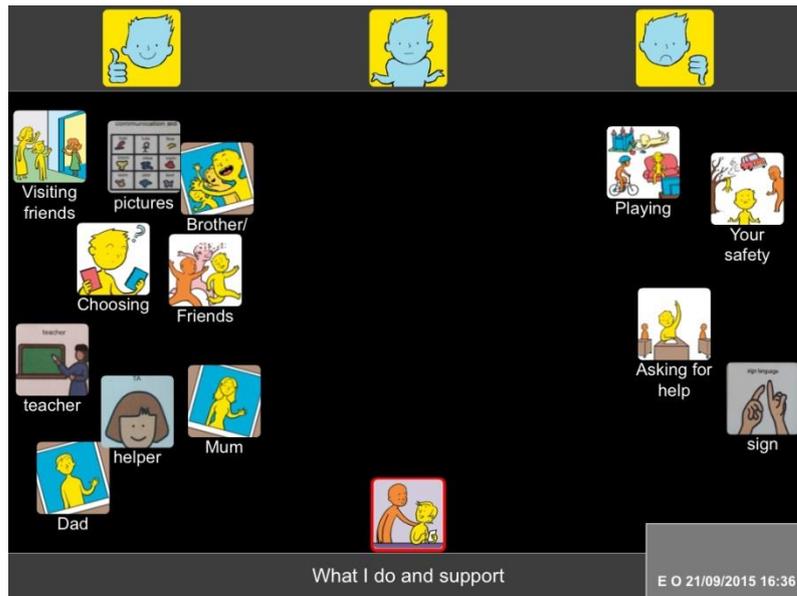
Writing/letters is something very different at school (167-173)



My likes and dislikes at school: Talking Mat Activity 1 (176-197)



Things that make me happy at school and things that do not: TM Activity 2 (198)



## Appendix Z: Cindy's July narrative outline

### ***Global impression: A story of fighting adversity towards a hopeful but uncertain future***

- Starting playgroup: realisation that 'school's gonna be hard'
- A different experience: Understanding and managing behaviour
- TP Coffee at playgroup: 'Like no child's ever screamed before'
- Makes me feel like a freak, like people are judging me
- Family Relationships – wanting to talk
- Making friendships
- TP Breakthrough start to Nursery
- Contrast point -Nursery Sports Day: Difference again?
- Open evening: feeling included
- Speech Therapy and school
- Open evening revisited
- Supportive relationships with school staff: Mrs P
- E's open morning: getting to know school and staff
- Home visit: developing relationships with E
- TP revisit Sports Day recap – reframing the experience of difference
- SALT support and on-going frustrations (My questions start)
- SALT opportunities in London
- Additional support: Nursery relationships
- Thoughts about school: Positive experience and opportunity to develop relationships
- Cindy's role: 'It's like, you know how you've done a full 360 from where you thought your life was'
- Family role and feeling judged / conflicted
- Future concerns: Different futures
- Family Experiences: Different lives
- Extended family: feeling judged
- Starting school: Nursery as preparation and confidence-building
- Parenting skills during transition: not comparing and transparency
- Positive thoughts about school
- Preparing for school: Nursery relationships are key
- Supporting communication (re-visited)
- Closing remarks: In a positive place really

## Appendix A2: Cindy's September narrative outline

### ***Global Impression: An overarching story of overcoming adversity to find acceptance and self***

- Leaving nursery and moving on: feeling ready, excited, positive
- Holiday: marking the break
- New Uniform: Excitement about school
- Seeing signs of independence: involvement and excitement about school
- Postcard Story: Noticing E's agency
- Setting off for school: Excitement and anticipation on first morning
- **TP:** First morning drop off: taking control and breakthrough – 'I was on cloud nine, you know' (seg 59-96) [Letting them surprise, happy to let go]
- Feeling 'on board': handling things differently, adapting to situations
- **Contrast point:** Changes in routine: Different again, difference celebrated
- Routines and working with E: empowering role
- Meet and greet: relationships with teachers and feeling included
- Home-school diary: Feeling included/supported, 'another one of those'
- School dinners: Caring staff, feedback and opportunities to surprise
- E's growing independence at family mealtimes supported by caring staff
- Making friends: a family concern and reassurance from others
- Learning from past experience: 'when she's ready'
- First day journal: learning new things from E, crying at playtime
- My role: developing interests in the garden and feeling happy
- **TP:** Supported by others: feeling understood, accepted and learning to let go
- SALT: Coming to terms with school doing their best
- SALT at home: feeling happy with personal role and control
- Developing skills: Combining speech therapy with school work
- Transition as positive, surprising and as breakthrough
- Support through others: talking, 'not keeping it in'
- Support through 'second time round'
- Nothing would have been better
- Participating in research: power of sharing voice, reflecting and hearing daughter's views

## Appendix B2: Kate's July narrative outline

### ***Global Impression: A story of getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead***

- Long term planning for transition: 'such a big thing', 'takes so many weeks'
- Planning for E's transition: making links with family and staff
- Staff in Reception class: 'so we've got two teaching assistants and then K is the one to one support'
- Home visit: Talking to mum, sharing books – but 'I don't think I got to see a good picture of her needs then'
- Home visit positives: an opportunity to build familiarity that supports later school visit
- **TP story:** The school visit: Getting to know Evie, giving comfort and building relationships
- Visit to E's nursery: Gaining information, making connections, building E's confidence
- **Contrast point:** Observing E within different contexts: responding reflectively
- Seeing the *person*: feeling calm about transition
- Supporting communication
- Targets from nursery and learning with others
- Processes that support familiarity, keeping contact
- Holiday tasks and keeping contact
- Parents' meeting: giving information and making connections
- Personal, social and emotional skills
- School-ready
- Professionals skills during transition: responsiveness, adaptability
- Working with professionals, seeing context, but keeping E central
- Thoughts on teaching and learning: 'it'll change so much'
- **TP recap** School visit as most helpful in supporting transition so far
- Having a full day, having lunch would have been supportive
- Looking ahead to September and start times

## Appendix C2: Kate's September narrative outline

### Global Impression: *Kate's overarching story: A story of finding 'us' and positive change*

- Sharing voice, noticing change
- The first week and a half was difficult
- TP Breakthroughs this week: 'I could've just *cried* with joy'
- Getting to know E and responding to her
- TP revisit: Breakthrough re-visited: Joining in and sharing home news
- Helping E feel safe
- Routines and stability
- First day worries: Well-being and relationships
- TP revisit: Relationship breakthrough and thinking positively ahead - 'everything just, fell into place you know'
- Emotional well-being prioritised
- Lunch time were difficult, whereas now ...
- Supporting at lunchtimes throughout the year
- Lunchtime feedback to mum
- Developing relationship with mum: open and honest communication
- Seeing the person: returning theme
- 'Facilitator of the day': From adaptable to strict routine
- 'I do, I think / like routine as well'
- Contrast point Frustration at nursery relationships but seeing Evie as she is
- TP revisit Transition as home-school partnership and 'nothing like I expected'
- More visits in future, but happy how she's settled
- Relationships with Mum and Mrs P are 'amazing', 'fantastic'
- Mrs P's relationship with E and feedback
- Engaging in the research: valuing reflectivity and verbalising practice

## Appendix D2: Analysis excerpt: Cindy's July story

### Cindy: July Interview

<b>Key: Difference</b>		<b>Mixed relationships</b>	<b>Varying support</b>
<p>D1: Seeing difference, difficulties  D2: Feeling different, judged  D3: Different futures</p>		<p>R1: Family  R2: Supportive and unsupportive  R3: Role</p>	<p>S1: Pre-school as break-through  S2: Support from school  S3: Frustrations around SALT</p>
How told, positioning,	<p>Positioned as different, positions self as facilitator  Reflective, emotional, relational story, pre-school as prep</p>		
Transcript		Notes/ themes	
<p>1. R: Reads intro script ... So, where would that point begin for you?</p> <p><b>Starting playgroup: realisation that 'school's gonna be hard'</b></p> <p>2. Cindy: <u>Yeah, I think, I think really</u>, the bit where it starts is when you <u>sort of</u> take them to like, playgroup was the first place before nursery where I thought I need to, <u>that's where she met H (friend)</u></p> <p>R: Right, yeah</p> <p>Cindy: So, I thought <u>right</u>, I need to <u>really sort of like</u>, work on <u>this</u> because I'd had <u>experience with D (E's brother)</u></p> <p>R: [oh yeah</p> <p>3. Cindy: and I knew it was <u>really kinda</u> important to, to, <u>even though things were difficult for E</u>, to <u>join in</u> and participate and <u>at least</u> if she doesn't want to participate, see what other children do [<u>questioning tone</u>]</p> <p>R: [yeah, yeah</p> <p>4. Cindy: <u>because</u> it's <u>all about isn't it</u>, about her, having that option, of joining, <u>not me deciding</u>, <u>because she finds things hard</u>, <u>not to participate</u>.</p>		<p>Things will be difficult, different? Starts at pre-school</p> <p>S1: Thinking abt sch transition starts at playgroup. <u>Need to</u>, seeing need  R2: Brief ref to making friend, returns later</p> <p>R3: <u>Right</u> – time to act/work on this, <u>facilitating role?</u>.  R1: Causal - Past experience / family exp  <u>Relational</u></p> <p>R2: <u>Importance of joining in</u>, R1: <u>despite difficulty/difference</u>  Reflective, responsive  <u>Other children, me-them?</u>  <u>Uncertainty?</u></p> <p>R3: <u>Emphasis - facilitating agency, co-action</u>, <u>in spite of difficulty (R1)</u>  <u>again reflective</u></p> <p>wants to be part of ..?</p>	

<p>5. <u>So first of all</u>, at playgroup, I asked <u>because I had a relationship with them, and D had been a little bit behind, but not as much as E</u>, I said to them, 'look she's not walking yet, what shall I do' and they said 'oh just bring her, you can stay, not a problem', <u>which is unusual for like a proper playgroup where you're supposed to leave them for, two hours</u>,</p> <p>R: Mmm</p> <p>Cindy: <u>I think it's two hours, you know they don't have any other parents there, so that was like very generous of them</u></p> <p>6. R: Mmm, yeah</p> <p>7. Cindy: <u>and so</u> I stayed and <u>sort of</u>, what I tried to do <u>to start with</u> was help the other kids, and be there for E but it <b>soon turned out</b> that she <u>sort of</u> <b>literally wanted to hug my leg</b></p> <p>8. R: Really</p> <p>9. Cindy: and she <b>wouldn't leave</b>, 'cos she couldn't walk at that point</p> <p>10. R: Oh yeah yeah</p> <p>11. Cindy: <u>So that was really when</u> I first started thinking 'wow, school's gonna be hard' [laughing], 'it's not gonna be as, straight forward' [TP]</p> <p>12. R: So quite early on then really?</p> <p><b>A different experience: Understanding and managing behaviour</b></p> <p>13. Cindy: <u>Yeah, and and I think with D it was very different, 'cos I'd had that experience with somebody, somebody [questioning], my child, having problems, but because the walking was a, fundamental, getting around</u></p>	<p>R1:Comparisons with brother D1:Difference in abilities and D2: Being treated differently at playgroup</p> <p><u>Use of direct speech, reflection</u></p> <p>R2:Devl rels, Supported by others, but different D2</p> <p>R3: Changing role-How to support E?,</p> <p>D1:Different to expectations</p> <p><u>Emotional language, emphasis, extreme</u></p> <p>D1:Awareness of difference/ need. <b>Wouldn't</b>-Frustration?</p> <p><b>TP – D1/D2: School's gonna be hard.</b> Anticipating difficulty, difference, difficult journey ahead</p> <p><u>Transition begins at pre-school, looking ahead,</u></p> <p>Change of role, direction?</p> <p>R1:Within context of past experience of supporting D, comparisons/family, relational</p>
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<p><u>problem</u>, <u>so so</u> I would have to hold her arms, <u>and and</u> literally like walk with two hands, walk her round, she could <i>do</i> that at that point, but if you let go of her hands, she would just fall over</p> <p>R: Oh, yeah</p>	<p>D1: Walking difficulty as an added difference/difficulty</p> <p><u>Emphasizing difficulty</u></p> <p>Difficult parenting role R3, how to facilitate?</p>
<p>14. Cindy: <u>So this is like, she'd be about, just after, I didn't go 'til she was two, so, a lot of the anxiety I felt with her and why she didn't want to leave me,</u> was that, people would want her to sit down with <i>them</i>, and to p-, you know like, do the things with the ladies who were working there, away from me and me to maybe have a coffee and a chat, but <i>she</i> didn't feel comfortable with that, <u>I think because she couldn't like get up and walk away or walk back to me</u> [questioning]. <u>So</u> there was this <i>need</i> to be holding onto me <u>because</u> if I <i>went</i>, she couldn't, get around or make choices [questioning]</p>	<p>R2: Anxiety caused by others' expectations that E would separate from her</p> <p>Why Qs, does she feel people don't understand?</p> <p><u>R3: Positioning – as having greater understanding of E</u></p> <p>R3: Understanding E and her need for support, eg help to get around</p> <p><u>Unsure?</u> D1 difficult</p> <p>S2 Support</p>
<p>15. R: Yeah, so do you mean like facilitating her learning?</p>	<p>R (my lead?) - co-construction of facilitator idea, understanding</p>
<p>16. Cindy: [<u>Yeah, and, and I,</u> I misread a little bit of it at first. I thought <u>oh gosh</u> she's being so clingy, but then as I started to realise her like <i>limitations</i>, I thought no actually, a lot of the way she behaves comes <i>across</i> as naughtiness, <u>you know like</u> there's a <i>lot</i> of screaming and crying [questioning]</p> <p>R: Mmm</p>	<p>R3 – role, parenting</p> <p>D1/D2 Understanding difficulties and reasons for behaviour</p>
<p><b>TP – Coffee at playgroup: 'Like no child's ever screamed before'</b></p>	<p>R2 No other child – again, difference</p>
<p>17. Cindy: Like I'd go and make a coffee, <u>this is like, you know like, five metres away from</u></p>	<p><u>Language=emotional exp</u></p>

<p><u>her</u>, I'd walk into the kitchen to make a coffee,</p> <p>R: Mmm</p> <p>18. Cindy: and, she wouldn't notice for about thirty seconds and I'd be like, 'ooh, this is going well', and she'd look, and like scream, <b>like no child's ever screamed before</b>, and they'd <b>literally</b> pick her up and hand her to me [laughs]</p> <p>19. R: [laughs]</p> <p>20. Cindy: <u>So</u> it was like at <b>that point</b> they were like 'yeah, <u>maybe you</u>, we've got an issue' [questioning]</p> <p>21. R: H-how did that make you <i>feel</i>?</p> <p><b>Makes me feel like a freak, like people are judging me</b></p> <p>22. Cindy: <u>Oooh gosh</u>, it's it's (1) <u>I'll tell you about my sports day last week, because it's probably, <i>that</i> incident at playgroup is probably as bad as the sports day one.</u> [Comes back to this later]</p> <p>23. R: Similar, mmm?</p> <p>24. Cindy: It makes you <b>feel, like a freak</b>, <u>because</u>, you think people are judging you,</p> <p>R: [Mmm]</p> <p>Cindy: for not being able to separate from your child. <u>A lot of it they think probably it's 'cos you hang around too much. Even though they said <i>stay</i>, I don't think they, realised how <i>much</i> I was literally gonna be around her, like sitting doing things with her and she <i>wouldn't</i> do things unless I would sit with her.</u></p> <p>25. <u>So</u> you feel embarrassed 'cos you feel like they're judging you a bit, and then there's</p>	<p><u>Emphasis on distance,</u> <u>drama/emotion of situation</u></p> <p>Context</p> <p>D2: feeling different, managing E's extreme responses to separation public recognition R2. Laughing = Difficult experience?</p> <p>R2/ D2: Staff recognise difficulty /issue, <b>that point</b>, you/we, direct speech - emphasises difference, public recognition</p> <p>D2: difficult exp, judged/ R2 impact on rels</p> <p>Emotionally charged comparison, making sense through reflection</p> <p>Extreme emotion, positioned, othered D2: Feeling different, feeling judged by others R2, you</p> <p>R2 Wanting to be understood and not feeling so (D2)</p> <p>R2 Others' judgement/views</p> <p>D2: Difference in parenting role</p>
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<p>also the upset.</p> <p>26. You can see all these other kids behaving, like you would imagine children to do at two, independent, happy, <u>like like</u> counting. You see kids like, counting, to ten and you're thinking '<u>oh my god</u>, my child's <u>so</u> behind', <u>because obviously E's got the speech dyspraxia, it's obviously affected her learning as well as her speech,</u></p> <p>R: Mmm</p> <p>Cindy: <u>and obviously</u> she had the walking issue</p>	<p>D2: <i>Feeling embarrassed, , judged by others. Again you, positioned as 'other'</i></p> <p>D1: <i>Comparing daughter's abilities with others – different to others</i></p> <p><u>Positioning as different, other</u></p> <p>D1: <i>Impact of speech dyspraxia/feelings</i></p> <p>D1: <i>Impact of delayed walking</i></p>
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## Appendix E2: Cindy - Categorical themes and reflections

<p><b>Reflections during categorical analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although emphasis in this perspective's approach is on fabula, much of Cindy's story is communicated through sjuzet in her reflections</li> <li>• Highlighting the smaller stories within interview was helpful as it led to depth of understanding and also highlighted themes</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Emerging themes</b></p>		
<p><b>Difference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing difference, difficulty</li> <li>• Feeling different, judged</li> <li>• Future concerns</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mixed relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family experience</li> <li>• Role</li> <li>• Supportive and unsupportive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Varying support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery as breakthrough</li> <li>• School support</li> <li>• Frustration with S&amp;L</li> </ul>

### Cindy's categorical themes

<p><b>Theme: Difference</b> - links: with rels, role, support, second time around, contrasts with breakthrough. Theme comes across strongly – difficulty for E, feeling different, judged, embarrassed and impact on future</p>	
Sub-Categories	Key utterances
<p><b>D1: Seeing difference, difficulty</b></p>	<p><u>D had been a little bit behind, but not as much as E</u> (9,5) and she <i>wouldn't</i> leave, 'cos she couldn't walk at that point (15,9)</p> <p>'<u>oh my god</u>, my child's so behind', <u>because obviously E's got the speech dyspraxia, it's obviously affected her learning as well as her speech, and obviously she had the walking issue</u> (37-39,26)</p> <p>'cos it got <i>really</i> bad, at that point, and then E almost being <i>worse</i> (42,27)</p> <p>Home visit: It was the opposite of how yours went. She just literally sat there ... she still wouldn't <i>talk</i> ... but she <u>literally</u> wouldn't open her mouth and the only thing she would do is draw them a picture (209, 211, 213)</p> <p>and there's a lot of, difference between their lives, and mine (354-358)</p> <p>when you've got a child that's got, like, issues (474)</p> <p>SALT support (518)</p>

<p><b>D2: Feeling different, judged, embarrassed</b></p>	<p>Treated differently at playgroup (5)</p> <p>Cindy: Like I'd go and make a coffee, <u>this is like, you know like, five metres away from her</u>, I'd walk into the kitchen to make a coffee,</p> <p>Carol: Mmm</p> <p>Cindy: and, she wouldn't notice for about thirty seconds and I'd be like, 'ooh, this is going well', and she'd look, and like scream, <b>like no child's ever screamed before</b>, and they'd <b>literally</b> pick her up and hand her to me [laughs]</p> <p>Carol: [Laughs]</p> <p>Cindy: <u>So</u> it was like at <b>that point</b> they were like 'yeah, maybe you, we've got an issue' [questioning] (25-29,18-20)</p> <p>Cindy: It makes you <b>feel, like a freak</b>, <u>because, you think people are judging you</u> (33-35, 24)</p> <p><u>So</u> you feel embarrassed 'cos you feel like they're judging you a bit, and then there's also the upset (36,25)</p> <p>Sports day: There must have been <b>like 150 parents, all staring at E</b>, because wherever you put her she'd just walk off and go, and then turn around and like not look at you (83)</p> <p><u>I know it sounds awful, to say that about your child, but I was really embarrassed</u> (95)</p> <p>I was like '<u>oh my god,</u>' and <u>at this point</u> I hadn't felt like that for a long time, <u>you know where you're the one the odd person out</u> [questioning] (115)</p> <p><u>But then</u> it made me a little bit anxious 'cos we were <b>back to that</b>. <u>You know</u>, this is a situation she's not comfortable with and this is how she's reacted, <u>and again, not</u>, that's not the norm now. <u>So</u> it was a bit upsetting really (117)</p> <p>Parents meeting: SENCO role - but it was <i>nice</i> to feel like that was an important <i>part</i> of the learning in that year, and that they've mentioned it. It made me feel not as much of an outcast (127)</p> <p>Sports day recap: <u>but as I say, it was just one of those things</u> ... It's a shame, but, at least we went, at least we tried [laughs] (230, 232, 233, 235)</p> <p>So, I think, I feel embarrassed that other people are gonna start judging me for being at home still [questioning] (337)</p> <p>I do feel like my house wife role, is really old fashioned and people just think it's redundant now (364)</p> <p><u>So, so</u>, me being at home, I feel <u>constantly</u> judged, about the kids, about being at home, especially by family (409)... I feel like they're looking at me and thinking 'it must be something you're doing' (411)</p> <p>But, you do feel embarrassed for not working (444)</p>
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<p><b>D3: Different futures</b> - concerns about future</p>	<p><u>So that was really when</u> I first started thinking '<u>wow</u>, school's gonna be hard' [<u>laughing</u>], 'it's not gonna be as, straight forward' (11)</p> <p>Was going to go back to work when E started school: 'It's like, you know how you've done a full 360 from where you thought your life was gonna go?' (323)</p> <p><u>my life, like you do worry about your kids, you know</u> I worry about, <u>sorry I'm gonna get upset now</u>. I I worry about D getting a job</p> <p>R: Yeah, yeah</p> <p>Cindy: I worry about, you know, will E ever get married?, you know 'cos I don't know <u>how, how</u> [<u>becoming upset, voice wavers</u>] (375-377)</p>
<p><b>Key narratives</b> eg Play group: Making coffee (25-29,18-20), Sports Day (83-115), Home visit, Judged by family (361). Difference highlighted at moments of change/challenge/transition?</p>	

<p><b>Theme: Relationships</b> - with family, friends, school, professionals , relational, systemic</p>	
<p><b>Sub-Category</b></p>	<p><b>Key utterances</b></p>
<p><b>R1: family experience</b></p>	<p><i>Second time around/context</i></p> <p>Continual refs to son - So, I thought <u>right</u>, I need to really sort of like, work on <u>this because I'd had experience with D (E's brother)</u> (2)</p> <p><u>because I had a relationship with them, and D had been a little bit behind, but not as much as E</u> (5)</p> <p><u>Yeah, and and I think with D it was very different,</u> (13)</p> <p>Sports day: Cindy: I mean at least XSports day was activities spread around, no pressure, and then I'm looking and thinking 'oh god', she's going to <i>that</i> one next year, and it was the first time, actually I tell a lie, that I was anxious about next year, thinking 'oh god, this time next year what's she gonna do?' (120)</p> <p>Difficult to separate family experience from E's eg open evening take-home tasks 133 -135, speech therapy (138)</p> <p>Whole sections relating to son's experience –Eg Son's Sports Day (above), Son's exp of school phonics and support by Mrs P (161-182), to E's forming of bond with Mrs P (eg 175, 180-182), understanding how to support E (195+), talking about skills as E starts school (482-498)</p> <p>Talking of family experiences - in park, visiting homes, swimming (380-410), extended family contexts, feeling judged by family (411 – 446)</p>

	<p><i>Family experience - Impact of emotional rollercoaster</i>  Cindy: It really brings it home, so I think my husband and I had quite a lot of chats at that sort of stage, cos I think I was on a bit of an emotional roller coaster, having D, <i>really</i> behind at school,  Carol: Yeah  Cindy: cos it got <i>really</i> bad, at that point, and then E almost being <i>worse</i> [questioning]. I was a bit like, I wanted to talk to him a <i>lot</i> on a night time and he just didn't want to hear it (27)</p>
<p><b>R2: Relationships as both supportive and unsupportive</b>  Link to 'difference', 'support', esp at points of transition</p>	<p><i>friendships</i>  So we became like, good mates and then, with E going off with H, like five metres, <i>ten</i> metres away even sometimes, it was lovely 'cos like I made a friend, and to see E make a friend (40)  <i>That</i>, was like a <i>real</i> positive, I mean that was probably one of the best things that happened there (44)  Erm, so I was a bit nervous, so at least I had somebody to talk to about what was <i>happening</i> at nursery (46)  <i>Unsupportive/negative</i>  See 'difference' theme Judged 27,28,33,36  there's a lot of, difference between their lives, and mine (358), House wife role, 361  SALT: Cindy: Yeah so obviously, we <i>feel</i>, or I feel a little bit let down by the speech therapy in general (142) ...but they're certainly, not telling us how to get that extra help (285).  <i>Supportive</i> - Seen in a new light: At playgroup (51).  Nursery/school - she knows teachers help her ... and they <i>know</i> what she's gonna be like when she gets there, so that for me is, different to D (67)  Mrs P (161-182) And then Mrs P's already formed a <i>bond</i> with E, because she sees her every morning when I drop D off (175)  Home visit: but they just talked to her and they were <i>ever</i> so good with her (213)  Cindy: Erm, and so, I felt really reassured the way she was talking to E. It made, just made me feel comfortable that  Carol: [Yeah  Cindy: that she was you know making an effort and interested in, you know, what E was doing and saying, well <i>not</i> saying, you know [quietly] (210-221)  Trusting and Feeling understood by school:  Well, at the moment I suppose I'm very positive about what's gonna happen, and I like the way that they're very much at XSchool, they learn and things get adapted around them</p>

	<p>(486) I know that because I know that whatever happens, they'll just adapt to that particular child (488)</p> <p>I just think for me, I think it fundamentally comes down to that Miss D has broken through Carol: Mm Cindy: And then you've got J who is very, I don't know, just very confident 'let's make it happen', and then you've got Miss G softly softly, 'come on E, let's have ago.' So you've got those, 'let's make it happen', softly softly and then, Miss D being a bit fun and a bit, you know, cheeky (499-501)</p> <p>Devl rels with parents - Importance of transparency and not comparing (470-483)</p>
<p><b>R3: Cindy's role</b> - supporting daughter/ family during transition – making sense of her role in supporting transition</p>	<p><i>Changing role/expectations</i></p> <p>it soon turned out that she <u>sort of literally</u> wanted to hug my leg (7) and she <i>wouldn't</i> do things unless I would sit with her (24)</p> <p>It's like, you know how you've done a full 360 from where you thought your life was (323)</p> <p>Trying to reconcile stay-at-home role through reflection and concerns about others' views (323) - and I do feel like my house wife role, is really old fashioned and people just think it's redundant now (364)</p> <p>Cindy: I feel like, come September, I will be able to be the housewife that I <i>want</i> to be, finally [laughing] Carol: [Okay, so that'll be a change for you? Cindy: Yeah, that will be the change, but then you think, is that really a job? (1) It doesn't seem to be a job anymore, so I feel a bit like, have I got off lightly? (371-373)</p> <p><i>Empowering and action</i></p> <p>'It's all about her' (14)</p> <p>So, so I knew in September it was make or break time, and I just thought, 'I'm gonna leave her and see what happens.'(52)</p> <p>So we did it and the first week, she cried when I left her every single morning, but after a <i>week</i>, it just stopped (53)</p> <p>Cindy: Yeah, and it makes me feel like I was <i>right</i> to drop her in a little bit at the deep end because, er, again, like playgroup, if you don't give them the opportunity to surprise you, you know, y-your holding them back, aren't you? (61)</p> <p>'working on this' (4), 'and then XNursery was approaching, and I just thought, 'right, it's like make or break.' (33)</p>
<p>NB- Others facilitating understanding/co-action?, agency, choice</p>	

Theme: Support - support she feels she receives, link with relationships	
Sub-Category	Key utterances
S1: Nursery as break-through	<p>and then XNursery was approaching, and I just thought, 'right, it's like make or break.'(33)</p> <p>So, there was a little bit at Playgroup where she was walking and she did break the 5 metre rule. We got there [laughs] (35)</p> <p>Positive transition to nursery –</p> <p>Cindy: <u>So</u> we did it and the first week, she cried when I left her <u>every single</u> morning, but after a <u>week</u>, it just stopped</p> <p>Carol: Right</p> <p>Cindy: <u>And that was a really, good thing, I mean a big positive, and everyone kept</u> saying to me 'oh, how's E doing at, at nursery?' and it, <u>for once</u> I could say, '<u>oh, really</u> good, it's going <u>really well</u>', <u>which I hadn't been able to</u> (53-55)</p> <p>Cindy: I've just sort of said to them, you know that, I feel that she's gone, if you could have seen her at the <i>start</i> going, to where she is <i>now</i>, she's like a different child</p> <p>Carol: So, this year, you feel there's been progress, then?</p> <p>Cindy: Yeah, and it makes me feel like I was <i>right</i> to drop her in a little bit at the deep end because, er, again, like playgroup, if you don't give them the opportunity to surprise you, you know, y-your holding them back, aren't you?</p> <p>Carol: Mmm</p> <p>Cindy: And like I say, if you'd have told me how she was gonna, after I'd had this conversation with S, if you'd have told me how she was gonna be <i>now</i>, last year, when I was thinking about starting XNursery, I would <i>never</i> have believed you, I mean I wouldn't, I just thought, that's not gonna happen. So, yeah, <i>really</i> good. (59-63)</p> <p>that was, XNursery really, for me. I've just seen <i>such</i>, a change (56)</p> <p>Cindy: So that now makes me, having seen her at <i>XSchool</i>, she did cry that day when I dropped her off, but the <i>smile</i> on her face when I picked her up, I <i>genuinely</i> have got <i>no</i> worries, which for me, is like, again, a really big relief (65)</p> <p>No, like I say, I feel really, in a good place really (565)</p> <p>Cindy: Erm (3) I think the only thing you can <i>do</i>, is the confidence that they've given her at XNursery. I think like, for <i>me</i>, part of the reason, she's got her skills is because XNursery have put them all in place (447)</p> <p>I think well, the nursery in a school environment for me, has given her <i>everything</i> she needs to start (451)</p> <p>I think, erm, preparing for school, I think it has to be X Nursery and Miss D (495)</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>S2: Feeling supported by school</b></li> </ul>	<p>Yeah, she's been in school, she's had routine, she knows teachers help her (1.5) Erm and, yes, she's gonna be upset like all the other children'll be upset 'cos it's like, a bit scary, <i>but</i>, she'll be absolutely 100% fine, and they <i>know</i> what she's gonna be like when she gets there, so that for me is, different to D (67)</p> <p>Supported at open evening, take-home activities (142,144)</p> <p>Communicating/exchanging information (156)</p> <p>Supportive open morning for E: Cindy: and apparently she calmed down after that and when they came back she was doing sticking and gluing with Mrs P, so I feel like, they're really preparing for her (189)</p> <p>Additional support, Miss G – (297 – 305)</p> <p>Trusting rels and approach to learning: I know that because I know that whatever happens, they'll just adapt to that particular child (488) ... I like the way they let the children, find their own feet in Reception, so I think that'll be really good for E (493)</p>
<p><b>S3: Frustrations around speech support – SALT &amp; funding</b></p>	<p>Let down by SALT (157, 256, 285) &amp; funding:</p> <p>Cindy: But again for <i>me</i>, I don't really fancy putting my child in a taxi, I can't do both two schools, and it's all just a little bit much for me. I just feel very, I feel (2) [exhales] what's the word (1) frustrated by the MT primary school issue, because I feel it's unfair, that <i>other</i> children, are maybe getting more help than <i>mine</i></p> <p>Carol: Mmm</p> <p>Cindy: just because they're willing to go to a different school (247-249)</p> <p>No funding, no SALT support (251+)</p> <p>So, she's supposed to have some speech and language therapy coming from somewhere, but it's not coming at all (270)</p> <p>Cindy: But really, what my point is, what I feel let down by is that MTPrimary school are saying if you bring your child to our school, she can have three sessions a week of half an hour speech and language therapy from a qualified <i>top</i>, lady (275-285)</p> <p>Cindy: So, it's all just a bit, not thought about, speech and language I think (291)</p> <p>School efforts: [Are superb, and the fact that they've got off their own <i>back</i> an extra speech and language lady, you can't complain can you? (293)</p> <p>SALT recap: (518-)</p> <p>Cindy: Speech and language, NHS - That's been the <i>whole</i> fundamental problem</p>

... there's nobody medically, when she's got a *medical* disability, that wants to help her (518-520)

SG (clinic) have been *fantastic*, don't get me wrong, the child development team, *amazing*, but it's all just stopped (522)

I just think, will *my* child get there, and I feel angry that, you know the NHS'll do *all* these things for everybody else, but they've got somebody, it's a fundamental *life* skill, there's no support (524)

It seems like speech and language is something they just don't seem to get, and yet what they don't realise is it stops her from learning (534)

*Importance of communication* - Watching E communicating her views within research has in turn impacted on Cindy's transition experience – 'I think, it'll be, and especially after what she said this morning, I think she's gonna get a lot out of it' (307)

Key narratives/links: SALT stories, nursery breakthrough stories & school visit.  
Links to relationships, support/feeling different/judged

## Appendix F2: Evie's analysis summary

<b>Evie's Story: Analysis Summary</b>		
<p><b>Holistic perspective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>A story about finding Voice: Feeling positive about nursery and school</i></li> <li>• <i>Moves to</i></li> <li>• <i>An overarching story: Sharing voice: Enjoying familiar, exploring new, and embracing now.</i></li> </ul>		
<p><b>Categorical perspectives (July, then September):</b></p>		
<p><b>Me and what I do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My choices: Likes and dislikes</li> <li>• Familiarity</li> </ul>	<p><b>Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Relationships as important</li> <li>• Mixed feelings</li> </ul>	<p><b>Feeling happy about school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feelings about school</li> <li>• Firsts: first visit, uniform</li> </ul>
<p><b>Me and new skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Familiarity and change</li> <li>• Role/identity as school child</li> </ul>	<p><b>Changing Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enjoying Family</li> <li>• Developing new relationships</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mixed feelings about school</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More Firsts</li> <li>• Mixed feelings and now feelings</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive performance or positioning in terms of what she <i>can</i> do</li> <li>• Identity positions as writer, drawer, learner; positively towards others, skills, new feelings &amp; school-readiness discourses. Power of voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Lens through which we read disability (Goodley &amp; Runswick-Cole, 2012), preferred self (Bruner, 1986; White &amp; Epston, 1990)</li> <li>➤ Continuity across settings (eg Brostrom, 2002; Rous et al., 2010; Sylva, 2004)</li> <li>➤ School readiness (eg Fabian &amp; Dunlop, 2007; Kagan, 2003; High 2008)</li> <li>➤ Relational/family (Gergen, 2009; Dockett et al., 2012; 2013)</li> <li>➤ Role/identity change (Dockett &amp; Perry, 2005; Margetts, 2006/8)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

**Appendix G2: Cindy’s analysis summary**

<b>Cindy’s Story (parent): Analysis Summary</b>		
<b>Holistic perspective</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A story of fighting adversity towards a hopeful but uncertain future  <i>Moves to</i></li> <li>• An overarching story of overcoming adversity to find acceptance and self</li> </ul>		
<b>Categorical perspectives (July, then September):</b>		
<p><b>Difference</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeing difference, difficulty</li> <li>• Feeling different, judged</li> <li>• Future concerns</li> </ul>	<p><b>Mixed relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family experience</li> <li>• Role</li> <li>• Supportive and unsupportive</li> </ul>	<p><b>Varying support</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery as breakthrough</li> <li>• School support</li> <li>• Frustration with S&amp;L</li> </ul>
<p><b>Difference re-storied as breakthrough</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difference re-storied</li> <li>• Breakthrough, Readiness and inclusion</li> </ul>	<p><b>Empowering relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family experience</li> <li>• Supportive others</li> <li>• Power of sharing voice</li> </ul>	<p><b>Role</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Empowering</li> <li>• Reflectivity: Second time around</li> <li>• Self</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Transition as relational; emotional; readiness</i></li> <li>• Moves from feeling positioned, different, ‘other’ to positioning herself as accepted, ‘normal’, part of ‘us’ - ‘successful’ parent, facilitator, ‘me’, positively twds others, new role and school readiness discourses. Power of voice             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➢ Preferred self / lens (Bruner, 1986; White &amp; Epston, 1990) (Goodley &amp; Runswick-Cole, 2012)</li> <li>➢ Stress associated with accessing services (Dockett, 2012; Janus, 2007; Read, 2000; Russell, 2003)</li> <li>➢ Nursery as preparation / Continuity across settings (Brostrom, 2002; DfE, 2011; Rous et al., 2010; Sylva, 2004)</li> <li>➢ School readiness (eg Fabian &amp; Dunlop, 2007; Kagan, 2003; High, 2008; Wood, 2004)</li> <li>➢ Relational/family (Gergen, 2009; Dockett et al., 2012; 2013)</li> <li>➢ Role/identity change (Dockett &amp; Perry, 2012; Griebel &amp; Nielsel, 2009)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

## Appendix H2: Kate's analysis summary

<b><i>Kate's Story (Reception class teacher)</i></b>		
<b><i>Holistic perspective</i></b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A story of getting to know Evie and thinking flexibly ahead</li> </ul> <p>Moves to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Kate's</i> overarching story: A story of finding 'us' and positive change</li> </ul>		
<b><i>Categorical perspectives (July, then September):</i></b>		
<b>Beginning relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Getting to know the person behind paper</li> <li>• Making connections</li> <li>• Context</li> </ul>	<b>Readiness</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School-ready</li> <li>• Responding flexibly</li> <li>• Planning ahead</li> </ul>	<b>Well-being</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting happiness, comfort</li> <li>• Supporting familiarity</li> </ul>
<b>Building relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing relationship with Evie</li> <li>• Further connections</li> <li>• Evie in context of family and class</li> </ul>	<b>Learning together</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understanding Evie</li> <li>• Responding flexibly</li> <li>• Celebrating breakthrough</li> </ul>	<b>Empowering and Including</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional well-being</li> <li>• Giving opportunities</li> <li>• Empowering/sharing voice</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Transition as discovering, reflecting, relational; from professional to personal</i></li> <li>• Positive performance, positive positioning towards Evie, Cindy and school staff, less so towards nursery. Positively towards role she constructs as facilitator, enabler of progress, carer. School ready for Evie as well as Evie ready for school. Normalising transition through positioning Evie in context, included. Connected, personally involved.</li> <li>• Power in sharing voice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Empowering lens (Goodley &amp; Runswick-Cole, 2012; Russell, 2003)</li> <li>➤ Relational (Dockett et al., 2012; 2013; Gergen, 2009)</li> <li>➤ Co-action (Gergen, 2009)</li> <li>➤ Becoming, possible futures (Bruner, 1986; Shotter, 2012)</li> <li>➤ Mediator role (Vygotsky, 1978)</li> <li>➤ School-readiness, social and emotional readiness (Brostrom, 2002; DfE, 2011; Fabian &amp; Dunlop, 2007; Kagan, 2003; High, 2008; Sylva et al., 2004; Wood, 2004)</li> <li>➤ School ready for Evie (Bronfenbrenner, 1998; Brostrom, 2002; DfE, 2011; Wood, 2004)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		

## **Appendix WT: Working transcripts 1-8**

See disc (hard copy). See additional upload (electronic copy)

WT1: Evie's July tour transcript

WT2: Evie's July home interview transcript

WT3: Evie's September tour transcript

WT4: Evie's September home interview transcript

WT5: Cindy's July transcript

WT6: Cindy's September transcript

WT7: Kate's July transcript

WT8: Kate's September transcript